

UC Berkeley

UC Berkeley Electronic Theses and Dissertations

Title

The Hermeneutics of the Veil: Reading Faith in Early Modern Poetry

Permalink

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/5jk932j0>

Author

Jones, Nicole Madeleine Adair

Publication Date

2020

Peer reviewed|Thesis/dissertation

The Hermeneutics of the Veil:
Reading Faith in Early Modern Poetry

by

Nicole M. A. Jones

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the

requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in

Comparative Literature

and the Designated Emphasis

in

Renaissance and Early Modern Studies

in the

Graduate Division

of the

University of California, Berkeley

Committee in charge:

Professor Timothy Hampton, Chair

Professor Victoria Kahn

Professor Diego Pirillo

Summer 2020

The Hermeneutics of the Veil:
Reading Faith in Early Modern Poetry

© 2020

by

Nicole M. A. Jones

Abstract

The Hermeneutics of the Veil:
Reading Faith in Early Modern Poetry

by

Nicole M. A. Jones

Doctor of Philosophy in Comparative Literature

and the

Designated Emphasis in Renaissance and Early Modern Studies

University of California, Berkeley

Professor Timothy Hampton, Chair

“The Hermeneutics of the Veil: Reading Faith in Early Modern Poetry” examines the poetic works of Vittoria Colonna (1490-1547), Torquato Tasso (1544-1595), and John Milton (1608-1674) against the backdrop of the crises of Christianity of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries in early modern Europe that gave Christian hermeneutics a central place in the practice and experience of Christian religion. This dissertation explores how these three poets engage with the complex yet crucial question of how to understand one’s relationship to God, by capitalizing on the form, language, and above all figuration provided by both lyric and narrative poetry. Writing in the 1530s and 1540s during the period of Italian Reform, Colonna’s lyric collection *Sonetti for Michelangelo* (c. early 1540s) wrestles with the theological debates that had been provoked by the Reformation and that called for reflections on the extent to which the Church, community, Scripture, and the Reformist doctrine of *sola fide* were central to salvation. In his post-Tridentine epic *Gerusalemme liberata* (1581), Tasso responds to the religious instability and censorship of the Counter-Reformation, while also exploring the related debates about poetry and the role of allegory in both Christian and literary hermeneutics. Milton’s *Paradise Lost* (1667) and *Samson Agonistes* (1671) reflect on the hermeneutic crisis inherent in the mid-seventeenth-century devotional experience of English Protestantism.

As Colonna, Tasso, and Milton respond to their respective crises, as crises specifically of Christian hermeneutics, they use their poetic works to develop their own theories of hermeneutics in order to make sense of the theological paradoxes, whether Catholic or Protestant, that made faith so difficult; their development of these theories, I contend, is specifically through the image of the veil. In their poems, the veil is at once a textual image, an object and a metaphor, that, as it tends to recur at significant moments of interpretation within the poems, often provokes that interpretation as well. But as the authors respond in their poetry to the specific theological debates that surrounded them, the veil becomes more than just a poetic figure; it becomes a hermeneutic

that points to the opposing hermeneutical approaches it symbolizes: suspicion or doubt, on the one hand, and faith or trust, on the other. As an emblem of this hermeneutical paradigm, the veil thus represents the irreducible tension between suspicion/doubt and faith. It is through this tension that each poet in his or her own way attempts to comprehend the paradox of the practice of early modern hermeneutics as one that seeks certain faith in salvation by inherently uncertain means.

By offering new perspectives into how early modern religious debates across these three texts and periods manifest at the level of form, language, and image, my dissertation also investigates the extent to which early modern poetry becomes a vehicle for theology. I argue that by responding to the religious crises of the early modern period with their own hermeneutic models of Christian interpretation, Colonna, Tasso, and Milton make hermeneutics as much a poetic question as a religious one. They show, even while their poetic works question the extent to which this very phenomenon is possible, that poetry has the capacity to lead to faith.

*For my mom,
who has, without a shadow of a doubt,
always believed in me.*

Table of Contents

Acknowledgements	iii
Introduction: Reading Faith and the Hermeneutic Veil	1
Chapter 1: Beyond the “mortal velo”: Poetics of Paradox in Vittoria Colonna’s <i>Sonetti per Michelangelo</i>	12
Chapter 2: Testing Faith with the Hermeneutic Veil in Torquato Tasso’s <i>Gerusalemme liberata</i>	53
Chapter 3: Veils of Innocence, Ignorance, and Shame: Reasoning Hermeneutics in John Milton’s <i>Paradise Lost</i> and <i>Samson Agonistes</i>	88
Epilogue: The Veil of Poetry	129
Bibliography	133

Acknowledgements

This project would not have been possible without the support of the members of my dissertation committee and the faculty at UC Berkeley. To Diego, thank you for your invaluable guidance on early modern intellectual history that made my research and my arguments immeasurably better. Thank you to Vicky for your constant support over the past six years, for tolerating my urges in seminar papers to compare early modern English literature with Dante, and for being both an exemplary scholar and a wonderful instructor. Finally, to Tim, your endless curiosity and intellectual engagement throughout my time at Berkeley showed me that academic research can be truly joyful. Thank you for helping me find the balance between rigor and fun in writing about early modern poetry. Thanks also go to Frank Bezner for your mentorship throughout my time at Berkeley and for helping in my translations of obscure, sometimes random, Latin and German passages. And to Albert Ascoli for being an invaluable guide through Dante's *Commedia*, and for introducing me, with all your knowledge and enthusiasm, to the delightful madness of Ariosto's *Furioso*.

I am grateful for the support I received in the completion of this dissertation from REMS, the Graduate Division, and the Departments of Comparative Literature, Italian Studies, and English. I'm indebted to Columbia University, whose Visiting Scholar program allowed me to complete this dissertation during a global pandemic.

To Sandy Richmond: your kindness and support throughout my time at Berkeley infinitely improved my quality of life. To Beyond Academia, thank you for being there when I needed you, for the empowerment, and for the fun. To Rita Lindahl-Lynch, for your tireless work to make graduate students' lives easier. To Professors Vikram Chandra and Joyce Carol Oates, for helping me to fill my life with creativity. Thank you also to my undergraduate mentors, Professor Ron Martinez, for being my first guide through the *Commedia*, and Professor Peter Saval, for inspiring me to fall in love with literature.

To my peers and friends at Berkeley: thank you for being such a creative, thriving, and stimulating community. Special thanks to Molly Bronstein, LiHe Han, Jake Malone, Sheri Hellberg, Alex Brostoff, and Linda Louie for the academic conversations and the friendship. To Kate Driscoll, for our delicious wordplay. To Bristin Jones, for your unfailing support and encouragement, both near and far. To Irina, Javier, and Mateo for making me always feel like family. To Nate and Erin, for constant laughter, delicious dinners, and, of course, cats. Erin, thank you for being there for me like a sister.

To my friends outside of Berkeley, especially Kyler, Sergio, Vicky, Greyson, Frannie, Rachel, and Micah, thank you for getting me outside the grad school bubble every so often. To my family in the USA, Australia, and Italy: your support and love made these six years not only possible but enjoyable. To Anna, for keeping me young while always reminding me how old I am. To Aidan, for your curiosity, perspective, and wisdom. To my mom for reading everything I've ever written, for your unconditional love and support, and for making me believe I can do anything. To Ulisse and Clorinda, thank you for your meows of support and epic inspiration.

Finally, to my husband, Antonio, thank you for being the best reason to take a break from dissertating, for building a life with me throughout grad school and filling it with travel, cooking, gardening, adventures, and laughter. I'm so grateful you love books as much as I do. I'm so grateful that, all those years ago in the Dante section of the Biblioteca Nazionale in Florence, you asked me to tell you about the research I was working on.

INTRODUCTION

Reading Faith and the Hermeneutic Veil

I. The Crises of Christianity: Faith Made Hard

Martin Luther's protest of 1517 sparked a crisis, at the center of which was a theological debate about salvation. Before the Reformation, Roman Catholics believed that "The Church as a whole was marching toward salvation, on an earthly pilgrimage, led by the priests and bishops—considered to be the successors of the Apostles."¹ Luther and his Protestant movement challenged this hierarchical structure, which situated individual Christians within the ecclesial community and beneath the authority of the Church,² by rejecting it. Faith, Lutherans argued, should be based on God's grace (*sola fide*) and God's word (*sola scriptura*) and not on the Church,³ which, they said, had been corrupted.

The Reformation of the early 1500s was only the beginning of a series of long-term transformations of Christian theology and practice that would require generations to accomplish.⁴ It was, to say the least, the beginning of a series of religious, political, and cultural crises that would take over early modern Europe during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. And while all of the various Christian movements that proliferated out of the Reformation sought, in their different ways, to understand the crucial matter of salvation,⁵ their theological differences provoked what Ethan Shagan defines as "a period of intense argument over what belief was and how it functioned."⁶ Despite their theological disagreements, all of these groups, Shagan writes, "participated in a common project to make belief *hard*."⁷

At the core of what made belief hard during this period, and the central focus of my critical project, is Christian hermeneutics and the fundamental question that it raised: how to understand one's relationship to God. In the chapters that follow I examine how three early modern poets attempt to answer this question, by engaging their poetic works with the central issues of Christian hermeneutics, and thus responding to the different ways that their respective crises of Christianity made faith hard. Writing in the 1530s and 1540s during the period of Italian Reform, Vittoria Colonna's lyric collection *Sonetti for Michelangelo* (c. early 1540s) wrestles with the theological debates that had been provoked by the Reformation and that called for reflections on the extent to which the Church, community, Scripture, and the Reformist doctrine of *sola fide* were central to salvation. In his post-Tridentine epic *Gerusalemme liberata* (1581), Torquato Tasso responds to

¹ Donald S. Prudlo, "The Catholic Reform," in *Christian Theologies of Salvation: A Comparative Introduction*. Ed. Justin S. Holcomb (New York: New York University Press, 2006), 226-27.

² Prudlo, "The Catholic Reform," 226.

³ Brian Cummings, *The Literary Culture of the Reformation: Grammar and Grace* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 42.

⁴ Philip Benedict, "Religion and Politics in the European Struggle for Stability, 1500-1700," in *Early Modern Europe from Crisis to Stability*. Eds. Philip Benedict and Myron P. Gutmann (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2005), 123.

⁵ Prudlo, "The Catholic Reform," 226.

⁶ Ethan H. Shagan, "How to Do Things with Belief," in *Literature, Belief and Knowledge in Early Modern England: Knowing Faith*. Eds. Subha Mukherji, and Tim Stuart-Buttle (Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan; Springer International Publishing, 2018), 254.

⁷ Ethan H. Shagan, *The Birth of Modern Belief: Faith and Judgment from the Middle Ages to the Enlightenment* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2018), 3.

the religious instability and censorship of the Counter-Reformation, while also exploring the related debates about poetry and the role of allegory in both Christian and literary hermeneutics. Finally, John Milton's *Paradise Lost* (1667) and *Samson Agonistes* (1671) reflect on the hermeneutic crisis inherent in the mid-seventeenth-century devotional experience of English Protestantism. I argue in these chapters that as Colonna, Tasso, and Milton respond to their respective crises, as crises specifically of Christian hermeneutics, they use their poetic works to develop their own theories of hermeneutics in order to make sense of the theological paradoxes that made faith so difficult. How they develop these theories, I contend, is through the image of the veil.

While the Latin word *hermeneutica*, from Plato's Greek *hermeneutike*,⁸ first entered common usage in the seventeenth century,⁹ the practice of Christian hermeneutics by no means begins at the Reformation.¹⁰ The term hermeneutics defines a "theory of interpretation," what "occurs when a really or apparently unfamiliar meaning is made intelligible,"¹¹ and this practice had a long history in the tradition of medieval biblical hermeneutics.¹² Origen of Alexandria (c.184-c. 253) articulated three levels of scriptural meaning—the body, the soul, and the spirit—that would become the foundation of the four levels of biblical exegesis pursued during the Middle Ages:¹³ the *sensus literalis* (the words and histories of the text of the Bible), and the *sensus spiritualis*, which included the "allegorical" (typological or prophetic), the "tropological" (moral), and "anagogic" (related to matters of faith).¹⁴ Origen's separation of the Bible into the body and the spirit, into the *sensus literalis* and the *sensus spiritualis*, was based on the belief that

the Holy Ghost (considered to be the author of Scripture) hid a deeper meaning under the veil of a common story (4.2.7). He scattered purposeful discords and contradictions in his narrative to alert the spirit of worthy and attentive readers to the need for surpassing the literal. Impeded by these obstacles to understanding, readers are stimulated to elicit a hidden, inner, spiritual, moral—in brief, a divine—meaning.¹⁵

This practice of allegoresis during the Middle Ages was in large part the responsibility of the Church and its Fathers.¹⁶ And while the Church believed in the central role of the Holy Spirit to elucidate Scripture to its patristic interpreters, they also held that "the promise of the Holy Spirit's aid in correct interpretation of the Bible exists only in the Catholic Church."¹⁷ It was the Church

⁸ Jean Grondin, *Introduction to Philosophical Hermeneutics*. Trans. Joel Weinsheimer (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994), 21.

⁹ Grondin, *Introduction to Philosophical Hermeneutics*, 17.

¹⁰ Grondin notes that the Reformation is often celebrated as the beginning of hermeneutics on account of the renewed energy *sola scriptura* gave to early modern "hermeneutic reflection" (*Introduction to Philosophical Hermeneutics*, 19).

¹¹ Grondin, *Introduction to Philosophical Hermeneutics*, 18.

¹² Werner G. Jeanrond, "Hermeneutics and Christian Praxis: Some Reflections on the History of Hermeneutics," *Literature and Theology* 2 2 (1988): 177.

¹³ Grondin, *Introduction to Philosophical Hermeneutics*, 30.

¹⁴ Mindele Anne Treip, *Allegorical Poetics and the Epic* (Kentucky: The University Press of Kentucky, 1994), 13.

¹⁵ Grondin, *Introduction to Philosophical Hermeneutics*, 30.

¹⁶ Donald S. Prudlo, "Scripture and Theology in Early Modern Catholicism," in *Christian Theologies of Salvation: A Comparative Introduction*. Ed. Justin S. Holcomb (New York: New York University Press, 2006), 135.

¹⁷ Prudlo, "Scripture and Theology in Early Modern Catholicism," 139.

and the Church alone that was “commissioned to deliver” the Word of God from the Scriptures,¹⁸ from which all knowledge depended.¹⁹ There was a model that emphasized the institution of the Church with its doctors, pastors, and teachers as the “teaching ministry” of the Bible, whose role it was to clarify Scripture on behalf of its followers, by using biblical hermeneutics and allegoresis in order to unveil the deeper meaning of the *sensus spiritualis* beneath its literal words.²⁰

Luther’s protest in the early 1500s reacted to this institutional model. Fueled by his “growing mistrust of the legalized and mystified praxis of administering the gospel of Christ in the church and by his own original reading of the biblical texts,”²¹ Luther articulated the doctrine of *sola scriptura*. By this doctrine he meant to free the Holy Scripture from being “chained” to “arcane mystical interpretations and to Church authority.”²² In doing so, he created a new practice of interpretation, transforming Christian hermeneutics from a task reserved entirely for the Catholic Fathers into a personal task of every individual believer. Luther’s theory of *sola scriptura*, moreover, rejected allegoresis as a mode of scriptural hermeneutics, thereby returning to the *sensus literalis*. As Jean Grondin explains, “Luther’s basic intuition was this: the literal meaning, rightly understood, of itself contains its own proper spiritual significance. It is from the right understanding of the words themselves that the spirit of Scripture grows. The spirit is not to be found in some verbal Beyond; it is encountered in the word as fulfilled by faith.”²³ As Luther sought to give renewed meaning to the words of the Bible, he reinterpreted the medieval conception of the relationship between letter and spirit: scriptural truth was found in the letter by means of the interpreter’s own “spiritual regeneration.”²⁴

The shift that took place in early modern Europe on account of Luther’s doctrine of *sola scriptura* changed the culture’s relationship not only to the Bible but to language and the written word more generally. As Dayton Haskin explains, Luther’s focus on his own individual reading practice “prompted him to study linguistic usage, comparing text with text, concentrating on how biblical language conveys meaning.”²⁵ As Victoria Kahn notes, moreover, “the Reformation produced a new self-consciousness about figurative language and a new obligation for the reader to encounter that language directly.”²⁶ To the extent that individuals were afforded the opportunity to practice their own biblical hermeneutics, to find their own meaning in the Bible, and to draw their own conclusions about doctrinal questions of faith, Lutherans and other Reformed believers were empowered by this shift. And yet, as Shagan convincingly points out, whereas “The Christian Middle Ages were almost wholly innocent of the notion that ‘belief’ consisted in a person’s individual views of religion,”²⁷ Protestantism made faith, for better or for worse, dependent on the “hermeneutical sensibilities” of the individual believer,²⁸ a responsibility that was not easy to manage.

The leaders of the Counter-Reformation and the Council of Trent certainly saw Protestantism

¹⁸ Michael S. Horton, “Theologies of Scripture in the Reformation and Counter-Reformation: An Introduction,” in *Christian Theologies of Salvation: A Comparative Introduction*. Ed. Justin S. Holcomb (New York: New York University Press, 2006), 88.

¹⁹ Grondin, *Introduction to Philosophical Hermeneutics*, 19.

²⁰ Horton, “Theologies of Scripture,” 89-92.

²¹ Jeanrond, “Hermeneutics and Christian Praxis,” 182.

²² Prudlo, “Scripture and Theology in Early Modern Catholicism,” 135.

²³ Grondin, *Introduction to Philosophical Hermeneutics*, 40.

²⁴ Grondin, *Introduction to Philosophical Hermeneutics*, 40.

²⁵ Dayton Haskin, *Milton’s Burden of Interpretation* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1994), 2.

²⁶ Victoria Ann Kahn, *The Trouble with Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020), 76.

²⁷ Shagan, *The Birth of Modern Belief*, 62.

²⁸ Shagan, *The Birth of Modern Belief*, 81-2.

this way, as they condemned a practice of scriptural hermeneutics that relied upon “the corrupt inclinations... of the fallen individual.”²⁹ As the Council convened in Trent to respond to what they saw as a proliferation of Protestant heresies,³⁰ they doubled down on the belief that the practice of Protestant hermeneutics, which put Scripture into the hands of common individuals, was problematic, determining that “For understanding obscure passages, then, the testimony of tradition and the Church Fathers, whose knowledge of Hebrew and Greek was much better than Luther’s, was unavoidably necessary.”³¹ What’s more, as the Council responded to individual doctrinal questions, they left room for further interpretation on matters of Christian salvation but only for the theologians of the Church.³² In direct contrast to how Protestantism made individuals responsible for interpreting their own faith, early modern Catholicism after Trent made faith a matter of obedience to the authority of the Church.

For neither party was faith easy. On the one side, Protestants struggled with the pressures of interpreting by means of *sola scriptura*, with only contradictory, often confusing instructions in theological doctrine to guide them. Protestant believers were asked to continually investigate their faith, confronting doubts and spiritual uncertainty as the only means to avoid the “condition of anaesthetic spiritual lethargy, of dryness, hardness of heart, and lukewarmness,” which Luther condemned.³³ On the other side, Catholics faced the difficulties of according their individual experiences of faith with the Church’s authoritative beliefs. In *The Birth of Modern Belief*, Shagan exemplifies this dilemma by examining the ways that the Catholic Teresa d’Avila’s personal experiences of divine illumination conflicted with the communal authority of the Church which she strove to obey.³⁴ Shagan summarizes the paradox of faith that confronted Protestants and Catholics alike:

If for Protestants the problem was the necessity of an impossible perfection, for Catholics the problem was the necessity of an impossible obedience. Catholics were constitutively committed to the authority of the universal Church, over and above their own individual experience, in defining belief. Yet at the same time, Catholics faced a broad array of spiritual choices, not just about what to believe but about how and why to believe it. Navigating this incongruity—figuring out how to believe as individuals while still subordinating belief to authority—was the great dilemma of early modern Catholicism.³⁵

It is, then, no wonder that, as both Haskin and Kahn point out, the “distinctly literary approach

²⁹ Shagan, *The Birth of Modern Belief*, 81-2.

³⁰ Rivka Feldhay, “Authority, Political Theology, and the Politics of Knowledge in the Transition from Medieval to Early Modern Catholicism,” *Social Research* 73 4 (2006): 1066; Prudlo, “The Catholic Reform,” 225. The Council of Trent was also when “most Catholics surrendered the hope for reconciliation with Protestants and sought to draw a clear border with them.” See Robert Bireley, “Early-Modern Catholicism as a Response to the Changing World of the Long Sixteenth Century,” *The Catholic Historical Review* 95 2 (2009): 237.

³¹ Grondin, *Introduction to Philosophical Hermeneutics*, 41. See also Prudlo, “Scripture and Theology in Early Modern Catholicism,” 138.

³² Shagan, *The Birth of Modern Belief*, 242. For more on the Council of Trent, see John W. O’Malley, *Trent: What Happened at the Council* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2013); John W. O’Malley, *Trent and All That: Renaming Catholicism in the Early Modern Era* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000); Prudlo, “The Catholic Reform,” 241.

³³ Giles Waller, “‘*Qui enim securus est, minime securus est*’: The Paradox of *Securitas* in Luther and Beyond,” in *Literature, Belief and Knowledge in Early Modern England: Knowing Faith*. Eds. Subha Mukherji, and Tim Stuart-Buttle (Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan; Springer International Publishing, 2018), 135.

³⁴ See Shagan, *The Birth of Modern Belief*, Ch. 4.

³⁵ Shagan, *The Birth of Modern Belief*, 146.

to theology” in Protestantism—and indeed the broader religious troubles that hermeneutics caused among both Protestants and Catholics—contributed during this period to the substantial flourishing of religious literature.³⁶ Given the history of biblical hermeneutics and the new focus at the Reformation on the letter and the spirit, on authority and the pursuit of religious knowledge, it is perhaps also no wonder that the religious literature of the period negotiated this paradox of faith by means of the image of the veil.

II. The Hermeneutics of the Veil

As is often pointed out, the metaphor of the veil that describes the practice of allegoresis and typological reading during the Middle Ages—where the *sensus literalis* is the veil that hides the *sensus spiritualis*; where the two Testaments are typologically “veiled” in each other, making them “mutual interpretative keys, each with a ghostly presence in the other”³⁷—also becomes, during the late medieval period and Renaissance, a literary metaphor. With the medieval representation of poetry as *integumentum* or *involucrum* (wrap or covering),³⁸ Dante has his “velame de li versi strani” in *Inferno* 9, and Petrarch refers to the “veil of fiction” in Book 9 of his *Africa*, as does Boccaccio in his *Genealogia deorum gentilium*. Later, Spenser calls poetry a “dim vele,” and John Harrington a “vaile of fables and verse”;³⁹ and this is not to mention the extensive literary debates about the veils of allegory and verisimilitude that take place in the sixteenth century in Italy, which I discuss at length in Chapter 2. As a metaphor for poetry and for Scripture, the veil implies a relationship between truth and reading and begs the question: in what ways does scriptural or literary hermeneutics reveal this truth?

The veil is a convenient metaphor for hermeneutics because as a type of cover, it suggests that something is hidden beneath it: true meaning beneath the words of poetry; God’s Spirit beneath the letter. But in the hermeneutical quest, then, the interpreter’s risk is that she may not find that hidden something. Indeed, Catholics and the practitioners of allegoresis contended that the endeavor of biblical hermeneutics had stakes too high to be undertaken without the guidance of spiritual authorities.⁴⁰ Allegorical reading was meant only for “those of profounder understanding.”⁴¹ The spiritual sense of Scripture, that is the “ultimate mysteries of divine wisdom concealed by the letter,” were disclosed “only to good men made perfect.”⁴² The truth of revelation to believers required the authority of the Church⁴³ because untrained readers of Scripture were bound to get it wrong.

But, as Protestants showed, there was another way of interpreting the Bible that did not rely on this model of allegorical reading. Just as Luther returned to the *sensus literalis* and sought to fulfill its meaning through his own faith, Protestant interpreters claimed their own authority and the hermeneutic freedom to come to their own conclusions about Scripture. More specifically, they used the Bible for “experimental” reading, a practice that involved reading the Bible “in different

³⁶ Haskin, *Milton’s Burden of Interpretation*, x; Kahn, *The Trouble with Literature*, 76.

³⁷ Kevin Killeen, *The Political Bible in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 30-31.

³⁸ Treip, *Allegorical Poetics and the Epic*, 19.

³⁹ See Treip, *Allegorical Poetics and the Epic*, 23.

⁴⁰ Prudlo, “Scripture and Theology in Early Modern Catholicism,” 139.

⁴¹ Treip, *Allegorical Poetics and the Epic*, 8.

⁴² Grondin, *Introduction to Philosophical Hermeneutics*, 30.

⁴³ Feldhay, “Authority, Political Theology,” 1080.

ways: as an account of historical deeds, as a handbook of moral precepts, as a collection of promises and threats, as a book of consolation. Different people read it looking for different things, and the same person sometimes read it primarily in one framework for one set of circumstances, and in a different framework for another.”⁴⁴ For these readers, if the words of the Bible were truly a veil, this veil was not hiding meaning; it contained its own meaning. And what that meaning was depended on the interpreter’s own experience, their own “feeling faith” that gave them the spiritual illumination needed to reveal the meaning they sought.⁴⁵ In this way, the doubt or suspicion that an allegorical reader might bring to the act of interpreting Scripture—the mistrust, moreover, that the letter and poetry might be *only* a veil—did not figure into Protestant hermeneutics, because the literal was also the Bible’s meaning, and faith was all they needed to see that.

Of course, as we have seen, Protestant interpretation was not always so easy and often provoked its own doubts and suspicion. Protestants suffered the fears and anxieties that came with being solely responsible for interpreting the Bible: what if they got it wrong? what if they never experienced true *sola fide* gifted as grace from the Holy Spirit? what if what they thought was the Spirit revealing the meaning of the letter was something else entirely? Protestant despair caused by this uncertainty was a real thing, as I discuss in Chapter 3. For both Catholic and Protestant hermeneutics alike, these different practices of reading point to the two possibilities that the veil image symbolizes: either the letter is a veil hiding truth, or the letter, veil or not, is itself truth.

The question of how to read and find meaning is at the core of the poetic works of Colonna, Tasso, and Milton. In their poems, the veil is at once a textual image, an object and a metaphor, that, as it tends to recur at significant moments of interpretation within the poems, often provokes that interpretation as well. But as the authors respond in their poetry to the theological debates that surrounded them, the veil also becomes more than just a poetic figure; it becomes a hermeneutic that points to the opposing hermeneutical approaches it symbolizes: suspicion or doubt, on the one hand, and faith or trust, on the other. As an emblem of this hermeneutical paradigm, the veil thus represents the irreducible tension between suspicion/doubt and faith: if suspicion and doubt are one possible approach to and outcome of hermeneutics, faith is the other possible approach to and outcome of hermeneutics. My contention in this study is that the three authors I examine use that tension inherent to the image of the veil to reflect on the paradox of the practice of hermeneutics, a practice that ultimately seeks certain faith in salvation, while also causing doubt and/or suspicion for the interpreting practitioner.

Just as David Quint argued in *Origin and Originality* that the “source” as an “image of continuity”⁴⁶ allowed Renaissance writers to “make the source of their texts’ authority the explicit subject matter of their fictions,”⁴⁷ while at the same time using the figure of the source to do that very work, I argue that the veil for Colonna, Tasso, and Milton is both the subject matter of their poems and an interpretive key by which it is possible to understand how the poems reflect on the questions of hermeneutics raised in their respective time periods. The single poetic figure of the veil in their poetic works continually points beyond its own figuration, bringing to bear on the texts the history of hermeneutics, while also becoming the means by which the poets develop in their poetry their own hermeneutic models. This relationship, between poetic figure and interpretive paradigm, is what I term the “hermeneutics of the veil.”

⁴⁴ Haskin, *Milton’s Burden of Interpretation*, 15.

⁴⁵ Haskin, *Milton’s Burden of Interpretation*, 15.

⁴⁶ David Quint, *Origin and Originality in Renaissance Literature: Versions of the Source* (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 1983), 24.

⁴⁷ Quint, *Origin and Originality*, 31.

In Chapter 1, “Beyond the ‘mortal velo’: Poetics of Paradox in Vittoria Colonna’s *Sonetti per Michelangelo*,” I explore how Colonna rearticulates the theological ideas and terminology expressed in the religious writings of Juan de Valdés and in the Italian Reformist treatise *Il Beneficio di Cristo* by means of the veil image. To a large extent throughout the sonnets, the veil image symbolizes spiritual blindness, the inescapable doubts of human experience, and the physical body’s role as an impediment to the intensely desired Valdesian *fede viva*. Yet, the poet shows that the veil also represents divine illumination by its own potential removal and replacement in the “clothing of Christ,” a concept articulated in the *Beneficio* and achieved, among other spiritual acts, through exemplarity. Exhibiting Colonna’s personal involvement in the evangelism of the Italian *Spirituali*, the poetic persona of the collection reflects on the notion of exemplarity and her own evangelizing role among Christian believers. As she looks to Christ and the Virgin Mary as exemplars, the poet identifies their mediational role in her own salvation. What’s more, she associates the image of the veil with this mediation by explicitly making the Virgin a type of veil who tempers the heat and intensity of God’s light on behalf of humankind. In this way, the veil image also comes to symbolize divine revelation, this time not just by its potential absence but by its mediating presence.

As Colonna confronts in the lyric collection the paradoxical hermeneutics of *sola fide*, desiring to achieve the perfect, complete, and spiritually transcendent faith it signifies, while also experiencing ongoing moments of doubt, blindness, uncertainty, and fear, she uses the form of the Petrarchan lyric sequence to comprehend this paradox. The lyric collection takes advantage of the *canzoniere*’s structure to represent Colonna’s spiritual relationship to faith as atemporal. The emphasis on the fragmentation of the poet’s experience means that feelings of faith are just as likely to be expressed early on in the collection as feelings of doubt, and vice versa. By exploiting this absence of chronological experience to show that faith and doubt constitute an ongoing, inescapable tension for the poet, Colonna also shows that the veil image does not transform from a symbol of blindness to a symbol of divine illumination but represents both simultaneously. I argue in this chapter that Colonna’s use of the Petrarchan form allows her to develop her own hermeneutic model by means of the veil image to explain this paradoxical relationship between faith and doubt. Her ultimate goal in this collection, which is moreover a “gift” manuscript that intentionally seeks, in certain ways, to model the ultimate gift of God’s grace, is to be an exemplary hermeneut who mediates on her readers’ behalf the very problem of Reformist hermeneutics. In that hermeneutic paradox, the poet claims, faith and doubt must be embraced as two crucial aspects of the Christian experience.

In Chapter 2, “Testing Faith with the Hermeneutic Veil in Torquato Tasso’s *Gerusalemme liberata*,” I consider how Tasso’s poetic theories, strongly influenced both by the Counter-Reformation and Inquisition and by the literary debates that took place in sixteenth-century Italy, create a paradigm for thinking about Catholic faith from the perspective of poetics: allegory and verisimilitude elucidate the spiritual meaning beneath the otherwise suspect “veils” of poetry and the marvelous. Yet my examinations of the many textual veils in the *Liberata* illustrate how, in the epic poem, Tasso presents this paradigm of poetic or readerly faith as an inadequate model of religious interpretation. Reacting to allegory as both a Christian hermeneutic method and a literary hermeneutic method, Tasso dramatizes the failure of allegorical reading among his fictional characters by showing that it relies on a kind of suspicion that is antithetical to faith.

More specifically, the *Liberata*’s main characters are confronted throughout the poem with the image of the veil as a physical object, a metaphorical figure, and a hermeneutic symbol; and they are repeatedly asked, as they encounter these veils, to interpret each other and the Christian God.

I argue in this chapter that, at the level of narrative, Tasso stages these interpretive moments as explicit “tests” of faith for his characters. He makes their ability to achieve spiritual illumination—to liberate Jerusalem, moreover—actually dependent upon their ability to interpret faithfully rather than suspiciously. Within the poem’s fiction, suspicious interpretation that reads veils and the figures who wear them as mere covers seeking to deceive by hiding truth does not result for these characters in true Christian faith. Instead, Tasso argues, that faith comes from a practice of interpretation that acknowledges the ways in which the veil, and by extension, people, God, and even poetry itself, may exceed their allegorical significations. As Tasso responds to the Counter-Reformation’s insistence on allegory as the only means to reconcile the veil of poetry with the truth of Catholicism, his poem develops a hermeneutic model that rethinks this relationship between poetic and religious truth, suggesting, against the suspicion of allegory, that reading poetry just takes a little faith.

In Chapter 3, “Veils of Innocence, Ignorance, and Shame: Reasoning Hermeneutics in John Milton’s *Paradise Lost* and *Samson Agonistes*,” I examine Milton’s poetic works within the context of seventeenth-century English Protestant culture to illustrate how the poet develops a hermeneutic model in his poetry whose origin is the Fall. In *Paradise Lost*, Milton’s poetic project seeks to explain the paradox of the Fall by dramatizing Adam and Eve’s prelapsarian hermeneutics, as the pair themselves try to understand the relationship between faith and reason, suspicion and trust in interpretation. The image of the veil figures prominently in Milton’s explanation of their transgression at the Fall, as he tracks their transformation from innocent to ignorant to shameful. Moreover, Milton stages the Fall for Adam and Eve as not just a moment of disobedience, but as shift in their hermeneutic practices: as Adam and Eve realize the difference between faith and reason, by learning that their “veil of innocence” has been replaced by the “robe of shame,” they become aware of the hermeneutic veil’s double potential—the same paradigm faced by Milton’s contemporary Protestant peers. The Fall becomes for them the original confrontation with the proliferation of meaning caused by interpretive uncertainty.

This uncertainty inherent in postlapsarian hermeneutics is dramatized as the central provocative force of *Samson Agonistes*. As Samson attempts to understand—by reading Dalila, by reading God, by reading himself—what caused his imprisonment and how best to respond, he becomes trapped in the hermeneutic circle of suspicion that interprets everything as a deceptive veil perpetually masking truth. Through the dramatic poem’s attention to this unresolved problem of interpretation, Milton presents his readers with the very same hermeneutic paradigm facing Samson: the inescapable uncertainty caused by interpretation. But if the ultimate goal is faith in salvation, desperately sought to varying degrees by Adam and Eve, Samson, and seventeenth-century Protestants, Milton shows that the only way to achieve this is by interpreting. Though hermeneutics, as signaled by the image of the veil, may lead to suspicion/doubt or to faith—and both are always two inherent possibilities—that very fact makes hermeneutics a necessary practice for Christian believers. How one perseveres through the fear and the uncertainty, Milton shows in these poems, is through a combination of reason, remembering the fundamental doctrinal principle that hope is not lost because Christ promises redemption; and belief, trusting that principle to be true.

III. Towards a Modern Hermeneutics

Well into modernity, the image of the veil provides a paradigm for conceptualizing hermeneutics.

Paul Ricoeur notably builds his theory of the hermeneutics of suspicion out of the critiques of Marx, Nietzsche, and Freud, the “masters of suspicion,” who seek to unearth the ideologies and “false consciousness” hidden beneath some masking or veiling symbol or myth.⁴⁸ Ricoeur’s own hermeneutics of suspicion seeks to do the same:

According to the hermeneutics of suspicion, the true meaning, the correct understanding, of religion, comes about only as a result of unmasking⁴⁹ its appearances to allow the underlying reality to appear. There are many disagreements among these three hermeneutics of suspicion [Marx, Nietzsche, Freud], but the conflict of their interpretations is nonetheless unified by their common interest in finding the true meaning by stripping away the false meaning.⁵⁰

Through this hermeneutics of suspicion, Marx exposes religion as a consolation for the inequality of class; Nietzsche exposes religion as the refuge for the weak; Freud exposes religion as an illusion meant to replace the failed father.⁵¹

However, the hermeneutics of suspicion makes up only one side of the hermeneutic process for Ricoeur. While suspicion seeks “a demystification” or “reduction of illusion,”⁵² the hermeneutics of faith constitutes “the manifestation and restoration of a meaning.”⁵³ The difference is between enigma, the provocation to unfold or “dis-implicate,” and kerygma, a proclamation, preaching, or revelation.⁵⁴ The difference is, in other words, between the drive to unveil and the aim to reveal. As John Thompson summarizes:

Thus, according to one view, hermeneutics is construed as the restoration of a meaning addressed to the interpreter in the form of a message. This type of hermeneutics is animated by faith, by a willingness to listen, and is characterised by a respect for the symbol as a revelation of the sacred. According to another view, however, hermeneutics is regarded as the demystification of a meaning presented to the interpreter in the form of a disguise. This type of hermeneutics is animated by suspicion, by a skepticism towards the given, and it is characterised by a distrust of the symbol as a dissimulation of the real.⁵⁵

What’s more, for Ricoeur, reconciliation of the hermeneutics of suspicion with the hermeneutics of faith is possible because, he writes, hermeneutics is “animated by this double motivation: willingness to suspect, willingness to listen; vow of rigor, vow of obedience.”⁵⁶ The hermeneutics of suspicion and the hermeneutics of faith do not represent a forked road of

⁴⁸ Paul Ricoeur, *Freud and Philosophy: An Essay on Interpretation*. Trans. Denis Savage (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 1970).

⁴⁹ Throughout his writings, Ricoeur uses the term “unveil” to mean the same as “unmask.” He also refers to the “mask” as “mythic clothing” and “mythic wrapping.” See Paul Ricoeur, *Essays on Biblical Interpretation*. Ed. Lewis S. Mudge (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1980), 57, 76.

⁵⁰ David Stewart, “The Hermeneutics of Suspicion,” *Literature and Theology* 3 3 (1989): 298.

⁵¹ Stewart, “The Hermeneutics of Suspicion,” 300-302.

⁵² Ricoeur, *Freud and Philosophy*, 27.

⁵³ Ricoeur, *Freud and Philosophy*, 27.

⁵⁴ Ricoeur, *Freud and Philosophy*, 18.

⁵⁵ John B. Thompson, “Editor’s Note,” in Paul Ricoeur, *Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences: Essays on Language, Action and Interpretation*. Ed. and trans. John B. Thompson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016, originally published 1981), xvii.

⁵⁶ Ricoeur, *Freud and Philosophy*, 27.

hermeneutical choices, but rather a sequence in a single hermeneutical process: the first step carries out a hermeneutics of suspicion in order to expose the ideology “hidden” beneath the veil/mask/cover of the symbol; the second step seeks meaning in the symbol once it has been decoupled from its ideological weight and is free to be considered in its own right.⁵⁷ Such a process aims ultimately to “save the myth,”⁵⁸ where the new faith in the myth or symbol that is achieved post-exposure is qualified and transformed by the initial suspicion of it.

The faith that results from this hermeneutic model, which first suspects in order to “demythologize,”⁵⁹ and then listens in order to “remythitize,”⁶⁰ constitutes for Ricoeur not “the first faith of the simple soul, but rather the second faith of one who has engaged in hermeneutics, faith that has undergone criticism, postcritical faith... It is a rational faith, for it interprets; but it is a faith because it seeks, through interpretation, a second naïveté.”⁶¹ In this way, the ultimate goal of Ricoeurian hermeneutics is to achieve self-understanding, self-reflection, self-knowledge,⁶² as Ricoeur writes:

myth is something else than an explanation of the world, of history, and of destiny. Myth expresses in terms of the world—that is, of the other world or the second world—the understanding that man has of himself in relation to the foundation and the limits of his existence. Hence to demythologize is to interpret myth, that is, to relate the objective representations of the myth to the self-understanding which is both shown and concealed in it.⁶³

The restoration of meaning, therefore, comes about through the interpreter’s “participation” in the meaning of the text, through her willingness to listen to it, and through her ability to hear its message.

Four hundred years earlier, the dialectic Ricoeur formulates between the hermeneutics of suspicion and the hermeneutics of faith is already evident in the poetic works of Colonna, Tasso, and Milton. Their poetic engagement with the image of the veil as a symbol of Christian hermeneutics points both to the opposing *significations* of the veil—that it hides true meaning; that it is true meaning—and to the opposing hermeneutic *approaches* symbolized by the veil—suspicion or doubt, on the one hand; faith or restoration, on the other. But there are also crucial differences between the Ricoeurian theory and those posited by the earlier modern authors that are worth briefly exploring.

Whereas the Ricoeurian model seeks first to suspect and unveil and only then to restore and reveal, the hermeneutic models developed by Colonna, Tasso, and Milton are instead built upon the tension between suspicion/doubt and faith as the two simultaneous, and always inherently possible, sides of one experience. Rather than understand hermeneutics as a two-step process of suspicion/doubt and then faith, the early modern poets make both suspicion/doubt and faith

⁵⁷ Gert Jacobus Malan, “Ricoeur on Myth and Demythologising,” *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies* 72 4 (2016): 5.

⁵⁸ Malan, “Ricoeur on Myth and Demythologising,” 6.

⁵⁹ Ricoeur, *Essays on Biblical Interpretation*, 60.

⁶⁰ Ricoeur, *Freud and Philosophy*, 54.

⁶¹ Ricoeur, *Freud and Philosophy*, 28.

⁶² Paul Ricoeur, “Reply to Lewis Mudge,” in *Essays on Biblical Interpretation*. Ed. Lewis S. Mudge (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1980, originally published between 1974-1979), 43.

⁶³ Ricoeur, *Essays on Biblical Interpretation*, 60.

possible approaches and thus possible outcomes at every interpretive moment, because their hermeneutic models reflect the cultural preoccupation with hermeneutics during a critical religious period: for both Catholics and Protestants, Christian hermeneutics was a central aspect of the experience of religion, and the tension between suspicion/doubt and faith was an inherent part of that experience. In this way, while Ricoeur's hermeneutics seeks a "postcritical" or "rational" faith in order to find a "second naïveté"—what Ricoeur calls the "areligious sense of revelation"⁶⁴—Colonna, Tasso, and Milton interpret interpretation in their poetic works to respond to a very real spiritual crisis, where faith was a matter of truth and lies, conformity and heresy, and even life and death. As direct responses to the crises of their periods, therefore, their poetic works also develop a spiritual *practice*.⁶⁵

And that is not all they do. By developing hermeneutic theories through poetry, these authors do not merely respond to the role of Christian hermeneutics in early modern Catholicism and Protestantism; their hermeneutic theories also reflect on the role of poetry in that very process. As Colonna, Tasso, and Milton use poetry in their differing ways as the means by which to engage directly with hermeneutic questions, they meditate on what role poetry plays in matters of faith. Because of this, I would argue, as Ricoeur conceptualizes how the double hermeneutics allows the interpreter to "participate" in the meaning of the symbol or the myth, to find his or her "second naïveté" as part of a process of self-reflection, Colonna, Tasso, and Milton are, four hundred years earlier, making that process possible. By engaging with the paradoxes of early modern Christian hermeneutics in their poetic works, they turn literature into a vehicle for their own theology, for teaching, for self-discovery, for self-reflection, for truth, both human and divine. These early modern poets pave the way for modern theorists like Ricoeur to eventually transform Christian hermeneutics into literary hermeneutics because they show, even as their poetry questions the extent to which this very phenomenon is even possible, that poetry itself may have the capacity to spark faith.

⁶⁴ Mark I. Wallace, "From Phenomenology to Scripture? Paul Ricoeur's Hermeneutical Philosophy of Religion," *Modern Theology* 16 3 (2000): 305. For more on Ricoeur's faith as a "post-religious faith," see Vincent P. Pecora, "Suspicion...Hermeneutics...Religion?" *Religion & Literature* 48 2 (2016): 185.

⁶⁵ For more on the relationship between Ricoeur's dual hermeneutic theory and the practice of Christian theology, see Jeanrond, "Hermeneutics and Christian Praxis," 175; Richard S. Briggs, "Trust and Suspicion: Approaches to a Holy Text that Invites Little Approach," in *Theological Hermeneutics and the Book of Numbers as Christian Scripture* (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 2018), 35-52.

CHAPTER 1

Beyond the “mortal velo”: Poetics of Paradox in Vittoria Colonna’s *Sonetti per Michelangelo*

In this chapter I examine Vittoria Colonna’s early 1540s manuscript for Michelangelo Buonarroti, her good friend and fellow intellectual, in light of the doctrines of faith put forth by the highly influential texts that surrounded her. Specifically, I draw first from the writings of Juan de Valdés, the Spanish exile in Italy who played a key role in developing a Reformist theology around the Lutheran concept of *sola fide*, his influence most significantly on the Reform-minded *Spirituali* of the peninsula, Colonna included. Based on a blend of Erasmian culture, *alumbradismo*,¹ and Lutheran doctrines² from his time at the University of Alcalá de Henares,³ Valdés’ *Dialogo de doctrina christiana* (1529)⁴ and *Alfabeto cristiano* (1536)⁵ emphasize the primacy of faith over works⁶ and reflect the central Valdesian belief in divine illumination.⁷ In addition to these two works, I also read Colonna’s collection alongside the highly influential early 1540s bestseller, *Il Beneficio di Cristo*, authored originally by the Sicilian Benedetto Fontanini da Mantova and later revised by the *spirituale* Marcantonio Flaminio, the popular treatise promoting the benefit of Christ’s sacrifice for humanity. Through an examination of these surrounding texts, I explore how, in the 103 sonnets of the gift manuscript for Michelangelo, Colonna responds to the religious crisis of the Italian Reform period by building on the terminology and ideas of Valdés and the *Beneficio* and thereby developing a poetics that is centered around the inescapable tension between faith and doubt.

Central to Colonna’s engagement with faith and doubt is the image of the veil and the semantic field associated with it. Throughout the collection, veils, mantles, clouds, ice, and fog come to reflect spiritual blindness, ignorance, distance from God, and thus doubt. Conversely, the removal of the veil reflects the gift of divine illumination and thus faith. But the heavy presence of veiling imagery throughout the sonnets is due to more than just its significance as metaphorical blindness. Following the theological ideas laid out by Valdés and the *Beneficio*, Colonna uses the image of the veil to represent the earthly, human body that must be removed not only for the sake of spiritual illumination but also in preparation for the “new” body’s reclothing in the justice of Christ, the gift of faith. In her poetics, the poet emphasizes the transformation of the old body to the new, the

¹ Massimo Firpo, *Juan de Valdés and the Italian Reformation*. Trans. Richard Bates (London; New York: Routledge, 2015), 20. More specifically, *alumbradismo* relies on the idea that divine illumination as the source of a correct interpretation of Scripture means that one must trust that interpretation to the revelation of the Spirit rather than any human learning or knowledge. See also Massimo Firpo, “Introduzione,” in Juan de Valdés, *Alfabeto cristiano. Domande e risposte della predestinazione catechismo*. Ed. Massimo Firpo (Turin, Italy: Einaudi, 1994), vii-cl.

² Firpo, *Juan de Valdés*, 24.

³ Teodoro Fanlo y Cortés, “Cenni biografici su Juan de Valdés,” in Juan de Valdés, *Il Dialogo della dottrina cristiana*. Ed. Teodoro Fanlo y Cortés (Turin: Claudiana, 1991), 17.

⁴ Published anonymously in 1529, the *Dialogo* was later printed by the time of Valdés’ death in 1541. See Brian Richardson, *Manuscript Culture in Renaissance Italy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 175.

⁵ For more on its editorial history, see Camilla Russell, *Giulia Conzaga and the Religious Controversies of Sixteenth-Century Italy* (Belgium: Brepols Publishers, 2006), 62 (note 58). Russell notes that the text was written between 1536 and 1538 and circulated around 1537. It was published anonymously in Venice in 1545.

⁶ Diana Robin, *Publishing Women: Salons, the Presses, and the Counter-Reformation in Sixteenth-Century Italy* (Chicago; London: The University of Chicago Press, 2007), 31.

⁷ Firpo, “Introduzione,” xxii.

physical to the spiritual; and the veil image as spiritual blindness finds its renewed other in the metaphor of spiritual clothing: the “veil of blindness” is replaced by the *Beneficio di Cristo*’s “clothing of Christ.”

If the veil in Colonna’s collection symbolizes both blindness and the potential for reclothing in Christ, the image also symbolizes mediation and the possibility for revelation—the means by which *sola fide* is made achievable. Colonna associates the Virgin Mary with the image of the veil by way of affirming the Virgin’s mediational role in salvation. In this way, she transforms the veil image into a mechanism for spiritual mediation and thus divine revelation, where the “veil of blindness” is superseded by the “veil of mediation,” which manifests the “clothing of Christ.” By representing the Virgin as a mediatrix, the poet also emphasizes the importance of exemplarity, a concept fundamental to salvation in the writings of Valdés and the *Beneficio*. In the collection, Colonna models the Virgin’s mediation, presenting herself also as an exemplar who mediates on behalf of her readers by offering the gift manuscript and its evangelical message as their spiritual guide. The point, I argue, is for Colonna to show that just as the veil’s mediating function redeems its blinding function, so too, as Valdés claims outright, does faith redeem doubt.

But the poet undertakes this poetic project not only by responding directly in her poems to the theological ideas of the Reformist thinkers who surround her. As a collection of sonnets, the poems capitalize on the form of the Petrarchan lyric sequence (the form itself being transformed during the period into a Reformed poetics), in order to present, through its treatment of the veil image, the poet’s theological claim about the relationship between faith and doubt. Exploiting the absence of narrative and chronology in the lyric collection, Colonna scatters her representations of the veil image throughout the 103 sonnets sometimes as a symbol for spiritual blindness, at other times as a symbol for the potential of the clothing of Christ, and at other times still as a symbol of divine mediation. In this way the veil image does not undergo a chronological transformation from one symbol to another, but rather accumulates these significations: across the sonnets, the veil image comes to symbolize all three simultaneously. The veil’s “transformation” in the collection is thus more accurately described as one from poetic to hermeneutic, from mere symbol to a *process* of spiritual faith. The theology that Colonna produces, exemplifies, and thus mediates for her readers in this poetics of paradox⁸ is a process of spiritual illumination based on the comprehension—her own, her readers’—that the veil image symbolizes three distinct ideas at once, and by extending that paradoxical quality from the figurative veil to the hermeneutic veil, Colonna’s theology claims indirectly to her readers that faith and doubt too exist simultaneously. For that reason, her poems suggest, both faith and doubt must be embraced, as Valdés and the *Beneficio* encourage, as two sides of the ongoing experience of Reformed Christianity.

I. Valdés and Italian Reform

The pre-Tridentine first half of the Cinquecento in Italy was a period filled with spiritual uncertainty and conflicts over theological interpretation.⁹ To more fully understand the theological

⁸ I take this term from Giles Waller’s article on Luther’s so-called “poetics of paradox,” which examines Luther’s belief that contradiction and paradox in language could serve to cultivate “more spiritually alert readers,” where, in contrast, “unqualified positives... ‘make people careless.’” See Giles Waller, “‘*Qui enim securus est, minime securus est*’: The Paradox of *Securitas* in Luther and Beyond,” in *Literature, Belief and Knowledge in Early Modern England: Knowing Faith*. Eds. Subha Mukherji, and Tim Stuart-Buttle (Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan; Springer International Publishing, 2018), 139.

⁹ Brian Cummings, *The Literary Culture of the Reformation: Grammar and Grace* (Oxford: Oxford University Press,

ideas of Valdés, the *Beneficio*, and of course Colonna, we must spend some time surveying the complex backdrop that contextualizes the writings, to which we shall shortly turn. There is no better place to begin than with Lutheranism and the concept of justification through grace by faith, the doctrine of *sola fide* at the core of Martin Luther's writings, which was at the center of Reformist thinking on the Italian peninsula.

Through a reading of Saint Paul via Saint Augustine,¹⁰ Luther argued that no person could earn their own salvation, but was justified solely by faith.¹¹

Faith is a living, daring confidence in God's grace, so sure and certain that the believer would stake his life on it a thousand times. This knowledge of and confidence in God's grace makes us glad and bold and happy in dealing with God and with all creatures. And this is the work which the Holy Spirit performs in faith.¹²

Luther's message promoted the "inner freedom of every believer through justification by faith,"¹³ that rejected the need for works or acts for salvation;¹⁴ as Luther writes, "Works...are dead things."¹⁵ Instead, *sola fide* was founded upon the belief that grace is God's free gift, contrary to the late-medieval conception of one's gradual transformation by doing good, and Luther argued that "Only through God's gift of grace, which is faith in Him, can they be saved."¹⁶ While works would not lead to faith, justification, or salvation, faith on the other hand could inspire good works,¹⁷ for the love for God who has freed the Christian bounds him or her to act according to God's will.¹⁸ Moreover, Luther argued, every Christian had a double nature.¹⁹ The spiritual, new, internal body corresponded to faith, which vivified the body; the physical, old, external body corresponded to works, which mortified the body.²⁰ And, of course, Luther's goal for Reformation centered around rethinking faith and works not merely on the individual level, but in the Church as well, for he saw the papacy as the Anti-Christ and sought to reform both ecclesiastical offices and religious practices.²¹

While the Lutheran doctrine of *sola fide* was shared by many Italian reformers in the 1530s and 1540s,²² his reception on the peninsula was complicated. Luther became associated with

2002), 5.

¹⁰ Abigail Brundin, "Volume Editor's Introduction," in Vittoria Colonna, *Sonnets for Michelangelo: A Bilingual Edition*. Ed. Abigail Brundin (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), 14.

¹¹ Tryntje Helfferich, "General Introduction," in Martin Luther, *On the Freedom of a Christian with related texts*. Ed. and trans. Tryntje Helfferich (Indianapolis; Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company, 2013), x.

¹² Martin Luther, *Preface to the Epistle of St. Paul to the Romans (1522, Revised 1546)*, in Timothy F. Lull, and William R. Russell, *Martin Luther's Basic Theological Writings* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress Publishers, 2012), 79.

¹³ Firpo, *Juan de Valdés*, 94.

¹⁴ Helfferich, "General Introduction," 1.

¹⁵ Martin Luther, *On the Freedom of a Christian with related texts*. Ed. and trans. Tryntje Helfferich (Indianapolis; Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company, 2013), 27.

¹⁶ Helfferich, "General Introduction," xix.

¹⁷ Luther, *On the Freedom of a Christian*, 34.

¹⁸ Helfferich, "General Introduction," 1. According to Luther's theology, man is denied "the power of achieving either virtue or justification by his own free will." See Charles Trinkaus, "The Problem of Free Will in the Renaissance and the Reformation," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 10 1 (1949): 58.

¹⁹ Luther, *On the Freedom of a Christian*, 19.

²⁰ Luther, *On the Freedom of a Christian*, 31-32.

²¹ John W. O'Malley, *Trent: What Happened at the Council* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2013), 12.

²² Virginia Cox, *Women's Writing in Italy: 1400-1650* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008), note 154.

“anticlericalismo,” his image linked “esclusivamente o alla ribellione al papa e alla chiesa di Roma o alla mostruosità fisica e morale, senza quasi che penetrasse... alcun elemento dei suoi reali presupposti dottrinali.”²³ Luther’s name became synonymous with heresy,²⁴ and Inquisitors in Italy tended to see Lutheranism, Erasmianism, and the Spanish movement of *alumbradismo* as one single heresy.²⁵ A testament to the complexity of theological transformation taking place, people tended to confuse the ideas of Erasmus, Luther, and Calvin²⁶ in a period where there was no recognizable organization of “Reformation” in Italy as there was in England,²⁷ and where what Reform there *was* was “theologically untidy, crammed with paradox.”²⁸

Prosecuted by the Spanish Inquisition for his Lutheran tendencies in Spain, Juan de Valdés fled to Italy around 1530-1531²⁹ and was condemned as a “most subtle Lutheran” by 1534.³⁰ While Valdés never articulated “the Lutheran proclamation *de justificatione fide sola* in his writings,”³¹ he privileged the justification by faith alone and the “benefit of Christ” guided the Holy Spirit above human knowledge or reason.³² As he diverged from the Lutheran doctrine of *sola scriptura*,

²³ Ottavia Niccoli, “Il mostro di Sassonia: Conoscenza e non conoscenza di Lutero in Italia nel Cinquecento,” in *Lutero in Italia: Studi storici nel V centenario della nascita*. Ed. Lorenzo Perrone (Piedmont, Italy: Marietti, 1983), 23. For more on Luther’s influence in Italy, see Cesare Cantù, *Gli eretici d’Italia: Discorsi storici*. 3 vols. (Turin: Società l’Unione Tipografico, 1866); Silvano Cavazza, “‘Luthero fidelissimo inimico de messer Jesu Christo’: La polemica contro Lutero nella letteratura religiosa in volgare della prima metà del Cinquecento,” in *Lutero in Italia: Studi storici nel V centenario della nascita*. Ed. Lorenzo Perrone (Piedmont, Italy: Marietti, 1983), 65-94.

²⁴ Firpo, *Juan de Valdés*, 58; Niccoli, “Il mostro di Sassonia,” 23.

²⁵ Firpo, *Juan de Valdés*, 23. For more on the relationship between Valdés and Erasmus, see Russell, *Giulia Conzaga*, 68. For more on Erasmus in Italy more generally, see Carlos M.N. Eire, *War Against the Idols: The Reformation of Worship from Erasmus to Calvin* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986); Silvana Seidel Menchi, “Alcuni atteggiamenti della cultura italiana di fronte a Erasmo,” in *Eresia e Riforma nell’Italia del Cinquecento: Miscellanea I*. Eds. Luigi Firpo, Giorgio Spini, Antonio Rotondò, and John A. Tedeschi (Chicago; Florence: Sansoni, 1974), 69-133.

²⁶ Anne Overell, *Italian Reform and English Reformations, c.1535-c.1585* (Hampshire, UK; Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2008), 4.

²⁷ Overell, *Italian Reform and English Reformations*, 3.

²⁸ Overell, *Italian Reform and English Reformations*, 3. See also Alexander Nagel, *The Controversy of Renaissance Art* (Chicago; London: University of Chicago Press, 2011), who writes that, “After 1550, by contrast, the Protestant-Catholic divide was an established fact that would henceforth structure all thinking about questions of faith in the West” (3). Before 1550, the division between Catholic and Protestant did not really exist (Overell, *Italian Reform and English Reformations*, 2). Indeed, *sola fide* was declared heretical by the Catholic authorities at the Council of Trent.

²⁹ Firpo, *Juan de Valdés*, 29.

³⁰ Firpo, *Juan de Valdés*, 28. For more on the textual relationship between Luther and Valdés, see Concetta Ranieri and Sergio M. Pagano, *Nuovi documenti su Vittoria Colonna e Reginald Pole*. Ed. Sergio M. Pagano and Concetta Ranieri (Vatican: Collectanea Archivi Vaticani, 1989), who identify various places where Valdés included direct translations of Luther into his *Dialogo* without attribution (76), while acknowledging the difficulties in making these connections.

³¹ Robin, *Publishing Women*, 31.

³² Salvatore Caponetto, *The Protestant Reformation in Sixteenth-Century Italy*. Trans. Anne C. Tedeschi and John Tedeschi (Truman State University, MO: Thomas Jefferson University Press, 1999), 65. Firpo points out how Erasmian culture, Lutheran doctrines, and other reformist ideas blended and coexisted in Valdés’ writings without clear origins (Firpo, *Juan de Valdés*, 25). The effect of this mixing of ideas in Valdés’ writings is the “stratificazioni complesse e messaggi talora inattesi,” which are not always easy to identify, as the author rarely cited the origins of his thinking in a given text (Firpo, “Introduzione,” xxxix). Fanlo y Cortés makes the point that rarely did Valdés include marginal notes in his works, and nevertheless, the Bible remained the most important source for him (Fanlo y Cortés, “Cenni biografici su Juan de Valdés,” 44). Firpo also shows how Valdés’ *Diálogo de doctrina christiana* reflects clear Lutheranism that masquerades as Erasmianism: “l’autore non aveva esitato a inserire a piene mani in quelle pagine brani interi tradotti da opere di Lutero, Melantone, Ecolampadio, facendosi quindi promotore di una propaganda eterodossa che si serviva del nome di Erasmo per mascherare quelli degli eresiarchi tedeschi ormai

“la ragione umana” became for Valdés a “strumento inaffidabile per la conoscenza dei misteri divini,” which meant that studying Scripture, according to him, could be risky, “inutile e controproducente” without the spiritualism of faith and divine illumination.³³ For Valdés, faith, or *fede viva*,³⁴ did not come from Scripture, but instead, resulted “from the work of the Spirit in making the Word of God speak directly to one’s individual conscience,”³⁵ and yet paradoxically, the Bible still remained the source of that divine illumination, bypassing the Church fathers and institutions and advocating for the individual’s role in spiritual understanding.³⁶

Valdés ultimately disagreed with Luther on the separation from the Catholic Church, arguing that such a division “non può nascere se non da mera superbia, la quale non può stare insieme con la carità et con il spirito di Dio.”³⁷ As Massimo Firpo writes, Valdés “both absorbed and transcended the Protestant experience, rejecting its disruptive force, its denunciation of the Roman Anti-Christ, to stop on the threshold of the individual conscience.”³⁸ Valdés’ focus on the “inner illumination of the spirit” reached through revelation or divine inspiration, rather than on Scripture as the source, thus placing human wisdom or reason beneath the spiritual and the grace of God, made him ultimately “wholly incompatible with Protestant theology.”³⁹

Valdés’ influence on Italian religious thought was most profoundly among the *Spirituali*, a group of prelates, intellectuals, and noblewomen, Colonna included, who gathered first in Naples and then later at Viterbo after Valdés’ death.⁴⁰ The *Spirituali*⁴¹ emerged as a discernible group from the mid-1530s with their “rapturous support” for Bernardino Ochino, “Italy’s most famous preacher and general of the fledgling Capuchin order.”⁴² These Reform circles of the *Spirituali* were highly mobile and aimed to create “networks of cultural and intellectual exchange throughout Italy.”⁴³ The *Spirituali* saw themselves as followers of neither Luther nor Calvin; their focus was on the theology of justification by grace through faith, an evangelical evolution of Luther’s *sola*

formalmente condannati” (Firpo, “Introduzione,” xl). For more on the Erasmian “cover” for Lutheran propaganda in Valdés’ writings, see Fanlo y Cortés, “Cenni biografici su Juan de Valdés,” 20, 47. For more on the difficulty of clearly identifying the theological ideas in Valdés’ writings, see Russell, *Giulia Conzaga*, 72, 73; Cantù, *Gli Eretici d’Italia*, 384; Carlo Ossola, “Tradizione e traduzione dell’*Evangelio di San Matteo* di Juan de Valdés,” in *Eresia e Riforma nell’Italia del Cinquecento: Miscellanea I*. Eds. Luigi Firpo, Giorgio Spini, Antonio Rotondò, and John A. Tedeschi (Chicago; Florence: Sansoni, 1974), 239-268; Perez Zagorin, *Ways of Lying: Dissimulation, Persecution, and Conformity in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1990), 83.

³³ Firpo, “Introduzione,” lxix. See also Firpo, *Juan de Valdes*, 36.

³⁴ Jose C. Nieto, *Juan de Valdes and the Origins of the Spanish and Italian Reformation* (Geneva: Librairie Droz, 1970), 317.

³⁵ Alexander Nagel, “Gifts for Michelangelo and Vittoria Colonna,” *Art Bulletin* 79 4 (1997): 655.

³⁶ Brundin, “Volume Editor’s Introduction,” 13.

³⁷ Firpo, “Introduzione,” xcvi (from *Processo Carnesecchi*, 325-27). See also, Firpo, *Juan de Valdés*, 116.

³⁸ Firpo, *Juan de Valdés*, 113.

³⁹ Firpo, *Juan de Valdés*, 36. For more on this incompatibility, see Eire, *War Against the Idols*; Cantù, *Gli Eretici d’Italia*.

⁴⁰ Elisa Novi Chavarria, “Reti di potere e spazi di corte femminili nella Napoli del Cinquecento,” in *Donne di potere nel Rinascimento*. Eds. Letizia Arcangeli, and Susanna Peyronel (Rome: Viella, 2008), 361-374. It was through Colonna that Michelangelo was introduced to the *Spirituali* at Viterbo. See Sarah Rolfe Prodan, *Michelangelo’s Christian Mysticism: Spirituality, Poetry, and Art in Sixteenth-Century Italy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 83. For more on the transmission of Valdés’ ideas through writings, sermons, and discussions, see Richardson, *Manuscript Culture*, 175.

⁴¹ Overell, *Italian Reform and English Reformations*, 2. The term was their own and came into use from about 1540, deriving from their focus on “matters of the spirit and on the attainment of salvation by the individual” (Richardson, *Manuscript Culture*, 175).

⁴² Russell, *Giulia Conzaga*, 47.

⁴³ Nagel, *The Controversy of Renaissance Art*, 8.

fide, as articulated in the *Beneficio di Cristo*,⁴⁴ which the Reformers of the Viterbo circle sought to popularize.⁴⁵ The position of the *Spirituali* was a combination “della dottrina della giustificazione per sola fede da un lato e della ferma volontà di salvaguardare l’unità della Chiesa dall’altro.”⁴⁶ Though the *Spirituali* did maintain “collective goals related to reform within the Roman Catholic Church” (while also “mutually fostering personal spiritual development”⁴⁷), they did not seek to break with the Church, but on the contrary believed that their Protestant discussions of doctrine might rekindle their faith, renew the Church, and reconcile it with the Protestant world.⁴⁸

Against the background of the theological confusion of the early 1540s in Europe, the group of *Spirituali* were divided on many things,⁴⁹ except for the central Valdesian principle of justification by faith.⁵⁰ Firpo helpfully summarizes this position of the *Spirituali*:

What they had sought and found in Valdesian spiritualism had been a way to keep in their consciences faith in the unique saving power of grace, without being sucked into the maelstrom of ecclesiological “consequences” and doctrinal controversies. In this way... while sharing its religious foundations, they sharply distanced themselves from the Reformation itself, condemning the historical break that had been its most authentic strength.⁵¹

Indeed, the *Spirituali* used Valdés’ spiritualism as a means of offering a more “positive outlet, a possible mediation, or margin of compatibility with Roman orthodoxy, to prevent religious dissent from hardening into an irreversible break with the Church.”⁵² Moreover, Valdés’ theology provided a path for those experiencing “profound religious restlessness,” who were struggling to find their way in their “difficult spiritual search after the schism in Christendom and the emergence of discord among the nascent Protestant churches.”⁵³ Valdés articulated a so-called “Christian

⁴⁴ Prodan, *Michelangelo’s Christian Mysticism*, 87; Rinaldina Russell, “Vittoria Colonna’s Sonnets on the Virgin Mary,” in *Maria Vergine nella Letteratura Italiana*. Ed. Florinda M. Iannace (Stony Brook, NY: Forum Italicum Publishing, 2000), 125.

⁴⁵ Prodan, *Michelangelo’s Christian Mysticism*, 85.

⁴⁶ Firpo, “Introduzione,” xiii.

⁴⁷ Prodan, *Michelangelo’s Christian Mysticism*, 113.

⁴⁸ Robin, *Publishing Women*, 32; Firpo, *Juan de Valdés*, 138.

⁴⁹ Ranieri and Pagano divide the *Spirituali* into two main groups: those who wanted to “staccarsi dalla rigida ortodossia della Chiesa, accettando la dottrina, comune anche ai luterani... della giustificazione per la sola fede, ma soltanto questa”; and those who went much farther “a negare la messa e i sacramenti, il culto dei santi e il purgatorio, e ad accettare la predestinazione di tipo calvinista” (Ranieri and Pagano, *Nuovi documenti*, 76). For further reading on the divisions among the group, see Russell, *Giulia Gonzaga*, 47; Tommaso Bozza, *La riforma cattolica: Il Beneficio di Cristo* (Rome: Libreria Tombolini, 1972), 71; Robin, *Publishing Women*, 31.

⁵⁰ Though by 1540, Valdés was also seen by some to have infected all Italy with heresy (Firpo, *Juan de Valdés*, 115). The doctrine of *sola fide* was officially declared heretical in 1547 (Brundin, “Volume Editor’s Introduction,” 16).

⁵¹ Firpo, *Juan de Valdés*, 134. As Firpo writes, moreover, the Counter-Reformation would soon put an end to the “religious ambiguities and political illusions of the spirituali” (137).

⁵² Firpo, *Juan de Valdés*, 119.

⁵³ Firpo, *Juan de Valdés*, 66. As Ambra Moroncini summarizes, “The religious stance that in Italy, between the 1530s and 1540s, distinguished itself for its reformist spirituality conformed to the *sposa Christi*..., but without a clear split from the Church of Rome, was the so called Italian Evangelism, regarded by scholars more as a religious attitude than a unified movement. Its roots have been found in the humanism and Neo-Platonism of the preceding century, with further connections to Savonarola’s creed, but a decisive role in its distinctive doctrinal and social characteristics has been connected to the Christian mysticism of the Spanish reformer Juan de Valdés.” See Ambra Moroncini, *Michelangelo’s Poetry and Iconography in the Heart of the Reformation* (London; New York: Routledge, 2017), 23.

pluralism,”⁵⁴ insisting that God communicates Spirit more to some, less to others, in different ways, and to varying degrees. Fundamentally, faith for Valdés involved a variety of experiences of gradual progress and relied on hope to grow.⁵⁵

When Valdés died in 1541, the center of the *Spirituali* circle shifted from Naples to Viterbo around Reginald Pole,⁵⁶ the British cardinal who had arrived in Italy in 1521 to study and live,⁵⁷ and who gave new life to Valdés’ ideas among the literary and theological *cenacolo*⁵⁸ of the *Spirituali*,⁵⁹ also known as the “Ecclesia viterbiensis.”⁶⁰ In 1541, Pole was appointed governor of the city of Viterbo, and his house became a meeting-place for figures such as Giulia Gonzaga, the dedicated disciple of Valdés and the inheritor of his writings after his death,⁶¹ not to mention the leading female patron of the *Spirituali*;⁶² Marcantonio Flaminio, the later reviser of *Il Beneficio di Cristo*, who brought copies of Valdés’ writings to the city;⁶³ and Pietro Carnesecchi, a leader among the *Spirituali* around Valdés in Naples and a close friend of Vittoria Colonna’s.⁶⁴

Colonna too came to live in Viterbo that same year in order to be close to Pole, who was both her friend and spiritual advisor.⁶⁵ The two became the “prime movers” of their circle,⁶⁶ Pole acting not just as a guide for Colonna’s spiritual meditation, but as the “head of the mystical body of their *ecclesia*,”⁶⁷ her “dirittissimo et sincerissimo ministro de Dio.”⁶⁸ In his guidance, he encouraged her to follow Valdesian theology⁶⁹ but warned her against Luther and Calvin.⁷⁰ In effect, Colonna

⁵⁴ Firpo, *Juan de Valdés*, 44.

⁵⁵ Firpo, *Juan de Valdés*, 44. For more on Valdés’ emphasis on the reformation of the person rather than the Church, see Giuseppe Müller, and Ermanno Ferraro, *Vittoria Colonna, Marchesa di Pescara: Vita, fede e poesia nel secolo decimosesto per Alfredo Reumont* (Turin: Loescher, 1892), 144.

⁵⁶ Firpo, *Juan de Valdés*, 116.

⁵⁷ Overell, *Italian Reform and English Reformations*, 8.

⁵⁸ Robin, *Publishing Women*, 31.

⁵⁹ Firpo, *Juan de Valdés*, 116.

⁶⁰ Prodan, *Michelangelo’s Christian Mysticism*, 83. For more on the changes after Valdés’ death (or more specifically after 1542), with the birth of the Roman Inquisition, the “rinvio” of the Council of Trent, and the flight of Bernardino Ochino, the most famous and most popular preacher in Italy, see Adriano Prosperi, *L’eresia del Libro Grande: Storia di Giorgio Siculo e della sua setta* (Milan: Feltrinelli, 2000); Paolo Simoncelli, *Evangelismo italiano del Cinquecento: Questione religiosa e nicodemismo politico* (Rome: Istituto Storico Italiano per l’Età Moderna e Contemporanea, 1979), esp. Ch. 2.

⁶¹ For more on the relationship between Giulia Gonzaga and Valdés, see Russell, *Giulia Gonzaga*, 43; Susanna Peyronel, “I Carteggi di Giulia Gonzaga,” in *Donne di potere nel Rinascimento*. Eds. Letizia Arcangeli, and Susanna Peyronel (Rome: Viella, 2008), 709-42.

⁶² Russell, *Giulia Gonzaga*, 3.

⁶³ Flaminio continued to receive copies of Valdés’ writings from Giulia Gonzaga and was their custodian after the author’s death. He was the supplier (and possibly the only one) of Valdés’ manuscripts after 1542 (Richardson, *Manuscript Culture*, 177). In 1535, Valdés met Giulia Gonzaga through Colonna, and together they launched the *Spirituali* movement in Naples, which Colonna soon joined (Robin, *Publishing Women*, 15; 17-18).

⁶⁴ Both Carnesecchi and Flaminio condemned the “falsa dottrina” dei protestanti e le vane ‘imaginationi’ di quanto si erano lasciati accecare dalla ‘superbia humana, amatrice delle novità et nimica delle vie comuni’” (Flaminio, *Lettere*, December 31, 1547, quoted in Firpo, “Introduzione,” xcvi).

⁶⁵ Richardson, *Manuscript Culture*, 177. She remained there until the summer of 1543, though the group started to disband in 1542, before she retired, ill, to a convent in Rome (Robin, *Publishing Women*, 35).

⁶⁶ Prodan, *Michelangelo’s Christian Mysticism*, 83. For more on Colonna’s leadership, see Virginia Cox, *Lyric Poetry by Women of the Italian Renaissance* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2013), 8.

⁶⁷ Prodan, *Michelangelo’s Christian Mysticism*, 114. See also Nagel, “Gifts for Michelangelo,” 649.

⁶⁸ Prodan, *Michelangelo’s Christian Mysticism*, 109-10.

⁶⁹ Emidio Campi, “Vittoria Colonna and Bernardino Ochino,” in *A Companion to Vittoria Colonna*. Eds. Abigail Brundin, Tatiana Crivelli, and Maria Serena Sapegno (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2016), 374.

⁷⁰ Robin, *Publishing Women*, 32. Indeed, at the Council of Trent, Pole gave a “point-by-point refutation of Lutheran

was not exactly “Protestant” in her thinking. As A. Amy Bernardy puts it, she was “favorevole ad una riforma sì, ma al modo italiano: al modo di Santa Caterina e del Petrarca; al modo di Dante e del Savonarola.”⁷¹ Still, what is clear is that Colonna wanted to reform the Church and was a “buona discepolina” of Valdés and Bernardino Ochino, the capuchin friar and a charismatic preacher who had “a decisive influence on Colonna’s life and poetry.”⁷² In fact, Ochino, Pole, and Valdés are heralded as the poet’s three main spiritual influences.⁷³ While Pole was her “maestro spirituale,”⁷⁴ she clearly met with Ochino multiple times before he left Italy, who is supposed, like Pole, to have influenced her to turn to Valdés.⁷⁵ Concetta Ranieri and Sergio Pagano also emphasize the clear relationship between Colonna’s thinking and Valdesian theology through the organization of the *Spirituali*, for “elle, attraverso i rapporti con questo gruppo, approfondì e meditò temi valdesiani, mentre sembra che si incontrasse a Napoli con lo stesso Valdés.”⁷⁶

While it is clear that the *Spirituali* had a significant influence on Colonna, her biographical relationship to faith is also complicated. As Emidio Campi points out that despite the thematics of her poetry, the poet never outright stated her religious views.⁷⁷ Indeed, it is not clear, as A. Giorgetti

doctrine” (Robin, *Publishing Women*, 32). Interestingly, as Firpo points out, during the Council, Pole was one of the papal legates presiding, while at the same time using his own house to prepare books for print, and thus clearly hoped the outcome of the Council would favor Valdés’ thinking (Firpo, *Juan de Valdés*, 121-22). In the end, Pole chose obedience to the Church over reform, eventually renouncing the theology of salvation of the *Spirituali* (Overell, *Italian Reform and English Reformations*, 8, 13). About Colonna, Ranieri and Pagano make the point that she seems to have known directly some of the principle works of Luther about justification (Ranieri and Pagano, *Nuovi documenti*, 78).

⁷¹ A. Amy Bernardy, *La vita e l’opera di Vittoria Colonna* (Firenze: Felice le Monnier, 1927), 83.

⁷² Russell, “Vittoria Colonna’s Sonnets,” 125. Ochino’s “brand of religiosity,” Russell writes, moreover, “stressed the inward side of Christianity, thus eschewing all forms of activism and implicitly denying the value of dogmas, church laws and sacraments” (125). Emidio Campi reads the thematics of Colonna’s poetics through her historical relationship to Bernardino Ochino, and his central question tries to understand the extent to which her *rime* reflect the poet’s own personal relationship to Valdés and Ochino and the doctrinal ideas of the *Spirituali*. Through an extensive engagement with her poetry, Campi seeks to locate the poet’s biographical faith in her poetics. Dennis McAuliffe also reads the poet and the poetic persona constructed in the poems as one and the same. See Dennis J. McAuliffe, “Neoplatonism in Vittoria Colonna’s Poetry: From the Secular to the Divine,” in *Ficino and Renaissance Neoplatonism*. Eds. Konrad Eisenbichler and Olga Zorzi Pugliese (University of Toronto Italian Studies: Dovehouse Editions Canada, 1986), 109. For more on Ochino’s association with Colonna, see Carole Levin, Debra Barrett-Graves, Jo Eldridge Carney, W. M. Spellman, Gwynne Kennedy, Stephanie Witham, *Extraordinary Women of the Medieval and Renaissance World: A Biographical Dictionary* (Westport, Connecticut; London: Greenwood Press, 2000), 54. For Colonna’s defense of Ochino and the Capuchins, see Joseph Gibaldi, “Vittoria Colonna: Child, Woman, Poet,” in *Women Writers of the Renaissance and Reformation*. Ed. Katharina M. Wilson (Athens; London: The University of Georgia Press, 1987), 27. For more on Ochino’s eventual investigation into his connection to Valdés’ thinking (and subsequent flight to Switzerland), see Firpo, *Juan de Valdés*, 120. For Ochino’s celebration of the figure of Mary as the supreme example of faith (an element that finds a central place in Colonna’s poetry), see Russell, “Vittoria Colonna’s Sonnets,” 127. For Ochino’s “Lutheran tendencies, see Gibaldi, “Vittoria Colonna.”

⁷³ Ranieri and Pagano, *Nuovi documenti*, 75. On this relationship of figures, see Müller, and Ferraro, *Vittoria Colonna, Marchesa di Pescara*, 145-46, 157; Russell, *Giulia Gonzaga*. For more on the tension between Colonna’s relationships to Ochino and Valdés, see Rolan H. Bainton, *Women of the Reformation in Germany and Italy* (Minneapolis, Minnesota: Augsburg Publishing House, 1971), 203, 214; Stephen Bowd, “Prudential Friendship and Religious Reform: Vittoria Colonna and Gasparo Contarini,” in *A Companion to Vittoria Colonna*. Eds. Abigail Brundin, Tatiana Crivelli, and Maria Serena Sapegno (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2016), 360-361; Cantù, *Gli Eretici d’Italia*, 410; Margaret L. King, *Women of the Renaissance* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1991), 142-143.

⁷⁴ Ranieri and Pagano, *Nuovi documenti*, 74.

⁷⁵ Campi, “Vittoria Colonna and Bernardino Ochino,” 373.

⁷⁶ Ranieri and Pagano, *Nuovi documenti*, 75.

⁷⁷ Campi, “Vittoria Colonna and Bernardino Ochino,” 371. Campi writes, moreover, “Biblical themes... expressed in the emblematic language of the new Valdesian movement... That said, there is no escaping the fact that, in terms of theological history, it remains very difficult to identify and describe Colonna’s religious convictions with any

remarks, if she was truly a Protestant Reformist who had no opportunity to express her beliefs openly, or a Catholic who wanted only to change some parts of the institution.⁷⁸ Many scholars have noted that had Colonna lived through the Council of Trent, she likely would have had to confront the Inquisition for heresy.⁷⁹ As Pagano writes, “Vittoria Colonna non fu mai oggetto di un vero procedimento inquisitoriale forse solo perché la morta, sopraggiunta la sera del 25 febbraio 1547, la salvò da quei processi e da quelle condanne del S. Offizio che la sua amicizia e filiale devozione per il Pole avrebbero reso probabili in un immediato futuro.”⁸⁰ Still, Fiora Bassanese makes the point that, while Colonna’s views and those of her Reformist friends “occasionally bordered on heresy,” the “definition of heterodoxy in the pre-Tridentine years was somewhat fluid.”⁸¹ And indeed, neither Colonna, Michelangelo, Pole, or the authors of the *Beneficio di Cristo* can be said to belong to either the Reformation or the Counter-Reformation, as these categories themselves during this period of Italian Reform were not clearly separated.⁸² Yet, however we might speculate about Colonna’s religious leanings, it is still the case that, along with other literary women intellectuals who had broadly come together around the shared subscription to the theology

certainty” (371). For more on the relationship between Colonna’s poetics and the history behind her possible biographical faith, see Claudio Scarpati, “Le rime spirituali di Vittoria Colonna nel codice Vaticano donato a Michelangelo,” *Aevum* 78 3 (2004), 715-16. Fiora Bassanese’s argument is more explicit, making the claim that Colonna’s religious poetry reflects the poet’s expression and practice of her faith by exploring how her poems reflect the understanding that literature, like painting or sculpture, is an agent of “moral transformation and self-discovery.” See Fiora A. Bassanese, “Vittoria Colonna’s Man/God,” *Annali d’Italianistica* 25 (2007): 263. Other scholars point to Colonna’s poetic treatment of the Virgin Mary as a clear sign of her Catholicism. See Virginia Cox, *The Prodigious Muse: Women’s Writing in Counter-Reformation Italy* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2011), and Cox, *Lyric Poetry by Women*. Conversely, Moroncini in *Michelangelo’s Poetry* argues that the presence of Christ and Mary in Colonna’s poetry and the absence of the Catholic Church is evidence of the poet’s devotion to the doctrine of justification by faith alone (45). Other scholars who discuss this tension include Matteo Residori, “Introduction,” in *Michelangelo’s Poetry and Iconography in the Heart of the Reformation* (London; New York: Routledge, 2017), 3; Gibaldi, “Vittoria Colonna,” 30; Moroncini, *Michelangelo’s Poetry*, 107; Marilyn Migiel, and Juliana Schiesari, “Introduction,” in *Refiguring Women: Perspectives on Gender and the Italian Renaissance*. Ed. Marilyn Migiel, and Juliana Schiesari (Ithaca; London: Cornell University Press, 1991), 1-15.

⁷⁸ A. Giorgetti, “Vittoria Colonna e la sua fede: Osservazioni del Sig. Professor Benrath e replica del Barone A. Reumont,” *Archivio Storico Italiano* 10 131 (1882): 242-247. Maria Inguanti calls this a “vera crisi spirituale,” which “cominciò con la conoscenza del Valdes e la frequenza alle riunioni in casa di lui.” See Maria Inguanti, *Le donne della riforma in Italia* (Rome: Battista, 1968), 20. For more on the *Spirituali* and Nicodemism, the practice of religious dissimulation that took place in this period in Italy, see Zagorin, *Ways of Lying*, 83, 86-7; Carlo Ginzburg, *Il nicodemismo: Simulazione e dissimulazione religiosa nell’Europa del ’500* (Turin: Giulio Einaudi, 1970), 105-6; Albano Biondi, “La giustificazione della simulazione nel Cinquecento,” in *Eresia e Riforma nell’Italia del Cinquecento: Miscellanea I*. Eds. Luigi Firpo, Giorgio Spini, Antonio Rotondò, and John A. Tedeschi (Chicago; Florence: Sansoni, 1974), 5-68; Eire, *War Against the Idols*.

⁷⁹ Gibaldi, “Vittoria Colonna,” 27; Ranieri and Pagano, *Nuovi documenti*, 32.

⁸⁰ Sergio M. Pagano, “Vittoria Colonna e l’Inquisizione,” in *Nuovi documenti su Vittoria Colonna e Reginald Pole*. Ed. Sergio M. Pagano and Concetta Ranieri (Vatican: Collectanea Archivi Vaticani, 1989), 31.

⁸¹ Bassanese, “Vittoria Colonna’s Man/God,” 265.

⁸² Regarding the “fluidity” of these movements, Nagel describes the period of the first half of the sixteenth century as “an experimental period in the spheres both of art and of religion. In the fifteenth century, concerns over the propriety of religious art arose only sporadically. After the middle of the sixteenth century, the whole matter of art and reform became the official concern of a church actively organizing itself against the now-established fact of the Protestant schism” (Nagel, *The Controversy of Renaissance Art*, 2).

of Valdés,⁸³ she gave “the religious reform movement in Italy life and direction.”⁸⁴ This is despite the fact that, as Diana Robin argues, Colonna was an “outsider in some ways: in part because she was a woman and in part because she was neither a priest nor a credentialed theologian.”⁸⁵ But she was, of course, still an acclaimed author by the beginning of the 1530s—a literary celebrity, in fact.⁸⁶

II. The Gift Manuscript and *Il Beneficio di Cristo*

It is out of this religious context in the early 1540s that Colonna gifted to Michelangelo a manuscript of 103 spiritual sonnets, otherwise known as the Vatican manuscript.⁸⁷ While there is evidence of four manuscripts containing Colonna’s spiritual poetry, only two have survived: the Vatican manuscript for Michelangelo and the Ashburnham manuscript for Marguerite de Navarre.⁸⁸ Unlike the latter, Michelangelo’s manuscript is the only collection of spiritual poems likely compiled by Colonna under her own control and thus shows her “scelta di componimenti”⁸⁹—a fact that sets the manuscript apart and one reason that I have chosen to focus exclusively on this collection. Furthermore, of the Vatican manuscript’s 103 sonnets dedicated to

⁸³ Robin, *Publishing Women*, 203. Firpo also points out that the fact that Vittoria Colonna and other noblewomen can be called the Valdesian “discepoli e seguaci” highlights “le affinità del valdesianesimo italiano con l’*alumbradismo* spagnolo degli anni venti-trenta, contrassegnato da numerose e significative presenze femminili e da un’inconfondibile impronta aristocratica” (Firpo, “Introduzione,” lxiii).

⁸⁴ Robin, *Publishing Women*, 191. For more on Colonna’s humanist education and the influence of intellectual and political forces on her life, see Gibaldi, “Vittoria Colonna”; Katharina M. Wilson, “Introduction,” in *Women Writers of the Renaissance and Reformation*. Ed. Katharina M. Wilson (Athens; London: The University of Georgia Press, 1987), ix-xl; Marjorie Och, “Vittoria Colonna in Giorgio Vasari’s ‘Life of Properzia de’ Rossi,’” in *Wives, Widows, Mistresses, and Nuns in Early Modern Italy: Making the Invisible Visible through Art and Patronage*. Ed. Katherine A. McIver (Farnham: Ashgate, 2012), 119-137.

⁸⁵ Robin, *Publishing Women*, 32. Robin also explores how women-led salons were the “primary vehicle by which elite women first entered the commercial print world of sixteenth-century Italy.” The salons for poets to gather became “cells for the dissemination of ideas for religious reform that the Church would soon criminalize as heretical” (xix-xx). Not only that, but, as Virginia Cox has shown, Colonna’s status as a “figure of the pious and refined female writer was one of considerable discursive utility to male clerical letterati”; as women’s spiritual poetry could be seen as “practices of devotion,” women poets provided an “ideal to which secular men might be encouraged to aspire” (*The Prodigious Muse*, xix).

⁸⁶ Robin, *Publishing Women*, 14.

⁸⁷ This was a few years before the Valgrisi edition of Colonna’s poetry was printed in 1546, which was printed in Venice by Vincenzo Valgrisi and promoted by Donato Rullo without Colonna’s consent, as discussed by Scarpati, “Le rime spirituali,” 693; and Richardson, *Manuscript Culture*, 17. 93 of the sonnets for Michelangelo were published in the Valgrisi edition (Scarpati, “Le rime spirituali,” 694). While Colonna and her contemporary Veronica Gamba “went through moments in which they seriously considered entreaties from men to allow their verse to go to the press,” neither yielded (Richardson, *Manuscript Culture*, 16). Instead “Colonna wished to disseminate her own poems both singly and gathered together, as in the cases of the manuscript collections that she sent as gifts” (Richardson, *Manuscript Culture*, 17). For further reading, see also Abigail Brundin, “Vittoria Colonna in Manuscript,” in *A Companion to Vittoria Colonna*. Eds. Abigail Brundin, Tatiana Crivelli, and Maria Serena Sapegno (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2016), 39-68; Maria Serena Sapegno, “The Rime: A Textual Conundrum?” in *A Companion to Vittoria Colonna*. Eds. Abigail Brundin, Tatiana Crivelli, and Maria Serena Sapegno (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2016), 140-94.

⁸⁸ Antonio Corsaro, “Manuscript Collections of Spiritual Poetry in Renaissance Italy, 1490-1540,” in *Forms of Faith in Sixteenth-Century Italy*. Ed. Abigail Brundin and Matthew Treherne (Hampshire, UK; Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2009), 39.

⁸⁹ Scarpati, “Le rime spirituali,” 693.

spiritual poetry, only a number were reproduced in the Ashburnham manuscript,⁹⁰ and ten sonnets from Michelangelo's collection were not published elsewhere⁹¹ and remained unknown until their modern publication.⁹² Since the Ashburnham manuscript also includes *rime amorose* from Colonna's earlier production, while the Vatican manuscript contains only *rime spirituali*,⁹³ I have chosen in this examination to look at the only extant collection of spiritual poetry likely compiled by the author herself, in order to explore in this chapter the extent to which the collection presents, as Claudio Scarpati writes, a "testimone vivo dei temi di meditazione che l'autrice sentiva di proporre al suo interlocutore in anni di intense discussioni religiose."⁹⁴

The broader manuscript culture, in which the Vatican manuscript was produced specifically *as* a manuscript rather than a printed book, speaks to the quality and significance of the intimate poetic space of the poet's spiritual meditation. In fact, Concetta Cavallini writes that the private production of the manuscript allowed Colonna to be "capable de s'exprimer librement mais aussi de chercher sa voie dans un moment de trouble et de changements."⁹⁵ Specifically, the choice to circulate material as manuscripts rather than in print fostered close communication and solidarity,⁹⁶ gave authors more control over the circulation of their work, increased intimacy among literary circles, and created a more exclusive and elite scribal culture.⁹⁷

In his book, *Manuscript Culture*, Brian Richardson explores, moreover, both the general aspects of manuscript circulation—for example, censorship evasion to help texts stay under the radar when print was formally policed by the state but when there was no system in place to control manuscript production;⁹⁸ the freedom for self-fashioning in content and linguistic usage;⁹⁹ more personal gift-giving¹⁰⁰—while at the same time evaluating the importance of manuscripts for women specifically at the time.¹⁰¹ He writes that manuscripts and scribal exchanges more generally allowed women to "circulate their writings without incurring any social dishonour,"¹⁰² as they provided an important means of entering into literary dialogue with other poets and gaining

⁹⁰ The exact details of the shared sonnets are controversial: Corsaro, "Manuscript Collections," notes that only 26 were reproduced in the Ashburnham manuscript (39), while Scarpati, "Le rime spirituali," writes that 45 sonnets from the Vatican manuscript are not present in the Ashburnham manuscript (694).

⁹¹ Scarpati, "Le rime spirituali," 694.

⁹² Corsaro, "Manuscript Collections," 39. For more on the problem of gathering Colonna's poems and letters, see Ranieri and Pagano, *Nuovi documenti*, 65; Alan Bullock, "Nota sul Testo," in Vittoria Colonna. *Rime*. Ed. Alan Bullock (Rome: Laterza, 1982), 225.

⁹³ Abigail Brundin, "Vittoria Colonna and the Virgin Mary," *The Modern Language Review* 96 1 (2001): 80; Corsaro, "Manuscript Collections," 39.

⁹⁴ Scarpati, "Le rime spirituali," 693.

⁹⁵ Concetta Cavallini, "Vittoria Colonna, femme-poète 'spirituale' et les *Rime spirituali* di sette poeti illustri de Scipione Ammirato (1569)," in *Les Muses Sacrées: Poésie et Théâtre de la Réforme entre France et Italie*. Ed. Véronique Ferrer and Rosanna Gorris Camos (Geneva: Librairie Droz, 2016), 187.

⁹⁶ Richardson, *Manuscript Culture*, 1.

⁹⁷ Richardson, *Manuscript Culture*, 2.

⁹⁸ Richardson, *Manuscript Culture*, 4. As Richardson notes, in the case of controversial opinions against the authority of the Church of Rome, "one likely attraction of the scribal medium was that the clandestine production and circulation of manuscripts were very difficult to police; another was its ability to target well-disposed readers and to create bonds between them" (170). This is true for the *Spirituali*, since, Richardson goes on, "The expression and the sharing of their ideas and sympathies in writing did not lend themselves naturally to print, especially once their works became a matter of concern for the Roman Inquisition, established by Pope Paul III in 1542" (175).

⁹⁹ Richardson, *Manuscript Culture*, 5, 11.

¹⁰⁰ Richardson, *Manuscript Culture*, 5.

¹⁰¹ At the time, the two major women poets taking advantage of this "carefully managed scribal publication" were Veronica Gambara and Vittoria Colonna (Richardson, *Manuscript Culture*, 16).

¹⁰² Richardson, *Manuscript Culture*, 16.

recognition and were “especially important for women who, from a position of relative isolation, were seeking acceptance into the circles of lyric poets in the course of the Cinquecento.”¹⁰³ Of course, as a post-Petrarchan *canzoniere*, the manuscript’s form too functioned within a tradition of social action and community, what Jonathan Culler refers to as “a European intellectual and affective community through European Petrarchism.”¹⁰⁴

The connection to community, manifesting both through the manuscript’s materiality and through the formal aspects of the Petrarchan lyric sequence, is important, and we shall return to it later in this discussion. Equally important to the discussion of Colonna’s poetic writings is the status of her manuscript as a gift. In her research on books as gifts in the sixteenth century, Natalie Zemon Davis argues that “the turning of the dedication away from the preoccupations of patronage into more general social or religious uses is one of the most striking features of the sixteenth-century book,” where “everything could be made explicit and the dedications themselves could draw heavily on the language of gifts and responsibilities.”¹⁰⁵ While in one sense a personal gift that marked the “improvised back-and-forth of friendship and intimacy,”¹⁰⁶ the book also came to embody “something not just created by us, but inherited, given by God, given by others. The book was a privileged object that resisted permanent appropriation and which it was especially wrong to view only as a source of profit.”¹⁰⁷

Numerous scholars have explored the gift quality of Colonna’s manuscript for Michelangelo as an aspect of their shared faith. Alexander Nagel discusses how Colonna and Michelangelo were preoccupied with the “ethics and aesthetics of the gift” as a way of seeking an alternative to the latter-day

‘economization’ of religious devotion, to the prevailing system of works, indulgences, and ‘endowments’ in which art production had become so centrally implicated. And their rejection of these ‘modern’ abuses likewise led to an emphasis on gift giving as a means of restoring originary and thus purer religious values... a potential avenue for the reform of the religious image and a privileged model for the type of internal religious experience they espoused.¹⁰⁸

The conception of art as a gift was elaborated by Michelangelo and Vittoria Colonna in such a way as to remove it from the economy of the “excessive reliance” on contracts.¹⁰⁹ Indeed, the idea of the gift manuscript became closely connected to the concept of the divine gift of justification through grace by faith,¹¹⁰ especially as that concept was articulated in the highly influential

¹⁰³ Richardson, *Manuscript Culture*, 101.

¹⁰⁴ Jonathan Culler, *Theory of the Lyric* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2015), 305.

¹⁰⁵ Natalie Zemon Davis, “Beyond the Market: Books as Gifts in Sixteenth-Century France,” in *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 33 5 (1983): 79.

¹⁰⁶ Zemon Davis, “Beyond the Market,” 81.

¹⁰⁷ Zemon Davis, “Beyond the Market,” 87.

¹⁰⁸ Nagel, “Gifts for Michelangelo,” 666.

¹⁰⁹ Nagel, “Gifts for Michelangelo,” 649. The controversy over gifts and art also arose from the Calvinist belief that “images were inherently in contradiction to the tenets of the Christian religion.” Calvin believed images should be “cultivated as an art, which he considered a gift from God. The only ‘pure and legitimate use’ of art, for Calvin, was thus as a secular pursuit” (Nagel, “Gifts for Michelangelo,” 666).

¹¹⁰ See Alexander Nagel, *Michelangelo and the Reform of Art* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 172; Brundin, “Volume Editor’s Introduction,” 32; Prodan, *Michelangelo’s Christian Mysticism*, 85. For more on the relationship between Valdesian theology and gifts, see Nieto, *Juan de Valdes*.

spiritual book, *Il Beneficio di Cristo*.¹¹¹

The *Beneficio* expounded upon the doctrine of justification by faith, but with a foundation of radical theological simplification, avoiding many of the anti-papal polemics and doctrinal controversies of Protestantism and instead proclaiming the positive and liberating message that every believer can defeat sin.¹¹² Indeed, the *Beneficio* was not entirely Protestant, with its many contradictions in a mix of ideas from Scripture to those of Luther, Calvin, and Valdés.¹¹³ The text represented, as many scholars have argued, “a distillation of Valdesian doctrine, as articulated both by the Spanish theologian and his disciples,”¹¹⁴ that played a crucial role “in this period of uncertainty, in forming the thought of leading Spirituali and in creating a sense of common purpose.”¹¹⁵ Indeed, as Stephen Bowd points out, written importantly in the vernacular, the *Beneficio* was central to the evangelizing project of the *Spirituali* to disseminate the ideas of Valdés.¹¹⁶

Promoting the benefit of Christ for humanity, the title of the text refers, as Richardson writes, “to the redeeming gift that the grace of God gave to Christians through the crucifixion of Christ, and the work, in which the influence of Valdés (as well as that of Luther and Calvin) is evident,

¹¹¹ Nagel, “Gifts for Michelangelo,” 650; Prodan, *Michelangelo's Christian Mysticism*, 111, 118.

¹¹² Firpo, *Juan de Valdés*, 96.

¹¹³ Firpo, *Juan de Valdés*, 97. The text's original author, the Sicilian Benedetto Fontanini da Mantova, was a friend of both Valdés and the *spirituale* Marcantonio Flaminio. Later, Flaminio rewrote the first draft adding some passages from Calvin's *Institutio*, and it was printed in Venice during its second phase of circulation in 1543 (97-8).

¹¹⁴ Robin, *Publishing Women*, 35. Scholarship on the origins of the ideas in the *Beneficio* is notoriously controversial, in particular concerning the relationship of the text to Valdesian and Calvinist doctrines. Tracing the relationship throughout the text of the original edition and the Valdesian “infiltrazioni” possibly added by Flaminio later, Tommaso Bozza argues that the text is fundamentally different from Valdés and actually Calvinist. See Tommaso Bozza, *Calvino in Italia* (Rome: Arti Grafiche Italiane, 1966), 13, 21; Bozza, *La riforma cattolica*. In contrast, Carlo Ginzburg and Adriano Prosperi give significant prominence to Valdesian theology in the *Beneficio*, arguing that the centrality of experience in the work is fundamentally Valdesian; that Valdesian theology and meditation is, moreover, the “nociolo” of the work. See Carlo Ginzburg, and Adriano Prosperi, “Le due redazioni del *Beneficio di Cristo*,” in *Eresia e Riforma nell'Italia del Cinquecento: Miscellanea I*. Eds. Luigi Firpo, Giorgio Spini, Antonio Rotondò, and John A. Tedeschi (Chicago; Florence: Sansoni, 1974), 135-204; Carlo Ginzburg, and Adriano Prosperi, *Giochi di pazienza: Un seminario sul Beneficio di Cristo* (Turin: Einaudi, 1975); Prosperi, *L'eresia del Libro Grande*; Cantù, *Gli Eretici d'Italia*; Massimo Firpo, *Valdesiani e spirituali: Studi sul Cinquecento religioso italiano* (Rome: Edizioni di Storia e letteratura, 2013). For further discussion, see Bowd, “Prudential Friendship,” 365; Russell, *Giulia Conzaga*; Richardson, *Manuscript Culture*, 179; Robin, *Publishing Women*; Nagel, “Gifts for Michelangelo”; Firpo, “Introduzione”; Moroncini, *Michelangelo's Poetry*, 27; and Caponetto, *The Protestant Reformation*, 79.

¹¹⁵ Richardson, *Manuscript Culture*, 180.

¹¹⁶ Bowd, “Prudential Friendship,” 366. For more on the sixteenth-century evangelism in Italy, see Moroncini, *Michelangelo's Poetry*, 23. For more on the importance of the use of the vernacular in Italian evangelism in this period, see Franco Pierno, “Introduction,” in *The Church and the Languages of Italy before the Council of Trent*. Ed. Franco Pierno (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 2015), 1-8; Androniki Dialeti, “The Publisher Gabriel Giolito de' Ferrari, Female Readers, and the Debate about Women in Sixteenth-Century Italy,” *Renaissance and Reformation / Renaissance et Réforme* 28 4 (2004): 5-32; Carlo Dionisotti, *Scritti di storia della letteratura italiana*. 3 vols. Ed. Tania Basile, Vincenzo Fera, and Susanna Villari (Rome: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 2008), especially the essay entitled, “La lingua italiana da Venezia all'Europa”; Robin, *Publishing Women*; Stefano Dall'Aglia, and Massimo Rospocher, “Introduction,” in *Voices and Texts in Early Modern Italian Society*. Eds. Stefano Dall'Aglia, Brian Richardson, and Massimo Rospocher (London; New York: Routledge, 2016), 1-19; Franco Pierno, *La parola in fuga: Lingua italiana ed esilio religioso nel Cinquecento* (Rome: Edizioni di Storia e letteratura, 2018); Carlo Dionisotti, *Geografia e storia della letteratura italiana* (Turin: Einaudi, 1999, originally published 1967). For more on Colonna's use of the vernacular in particular, see Helena Sanson, “Vittoria Colonna and Language,” in *A Companion to Vittoria Colonna*. Eds. Abigail Brundin, Tatiana Crivelli, and Maria Serena Sapegno (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2016), 195-233.

centers on the concept of justification by faith alone.”¹¹⁷ In its development of the core idea of justification by faith, the *Beneficio* gives the concept of the gift a central role. Christ is God’s primary and most important gift, from which everything else—grace, faith, justification—derives.¹¹⁸ Moreover, faith and justification are defined in the text through an explanation of this gift of Christ:

se per lo peccato di uno [Adamo] molti sono morti, molto maggiormente la grazia di Dio e il dono, che procede da la grazia, la qual ci viene da un uomo, Iesù Cristo, abondò in molti... sì come Cristo è più potente di Adamo, così la giustizia di Cristo è più gagliarda del peccato di Adamo, e se il peccato di Adamo fu bastante a costituirci peccatori e figliuoli d’ira senza alcuna colpa nostra attuale, molto maggiormente sarà bastante la giustizia di Cristo a farci giusti e figliuoli di grazia senza alcune nostre buone opere, le quali non possono esser buone, se, prima che le facciamo, non siamo noi fatti buoni e giusti per la fede, come afferma eziandio santo Agostino.¹¹⁹

The gift of God’s grace through Christ’s sacrifice is all that is necessary to justify believers who have been blemished by Adam’s original sin. But the point of the gift, the text goes on, is completely lost on those who think works might be necessary for that justification, as if God’s gift of Christ’s sacrifice is not enough:

pretendiamo di volerci giustificare e impetrare la remissione de’ nostri peccati con le nostre opere, quasi che i meriti, la giustizia, il sangue di Cristo a ciò far non basti, se non vi aggiungemo le nostre sozze giustizie e macchiate di amore proprio, di interesse e di mille vanità, per le quali abbiamo più tosto da domandare a Dio perdono che premio.¹²⁰

Capacity for faith in divine grace is itself the “gift of gifts,”¹²¹ a core idea that is evident in the exchanges between Michelangelo and Colonna,¹²² where faith is the most prized spiritual gift by which all others are made available, through the interconnectedness of all the benefits that derive from firm faith,¹²³ and where “it is divine grace, which pours down like rain through the lady to the poet.”¹²⁴ Indeed, Colonna’s *Sonetti per Michelangelo*, the evangelizing goals of the *Spirituali*

¹¹⁷ Richardson, *Manuscript Culture*, 178.

¹¹⁸ Benedetto da Mantova, and Marcantonio Flaminio, *Il Beneficio di Cristo con le versioni del secolo XVI: Documenti e testimonianze*. Ed. Salvatore Caponetto (Florence, Italy: Sansoni; Chicago, IL: The Newberry Library, 1972), 16.

¹¹⁹ *Il Beneficio di Cristo*, 21. All citations of the text are taken from this edition.

¹²⁰ *Il Beneficio di Cristo*, 23.

¹²¹ Nagel, “Gifts for Michelangelo,” 652.

¹²² See Letters 125, 157, 182 in Vittoria Colonna, *Carteggio*. Ed. Ermanno Ferrero and Giuseppe Müller (Turin: Loescher, 1892).

¹²³ Prodan, *Michelangelo’s Christian Mysticism*, 93.

¹²⁴ Prodan, *Michelangelo’s Christian Mysticism*, 118. Michelangelo’s personal relationship to the gift—and Colonna’s gift manuscript in particular—has a complex history: Michelangelo experienced anxiety about the meaning of the gift, feeling an obligation to repay her, since, as Nagel notes, he invokes “the parallel to divine grace. Through this parallel he understands that Vittoria’s gift, like divine grace, is already given; it cannot be earned or paid for. To attempt to do so is to deny its unsolicited, gratuitous nature, and thus to resist it as a gift,” for the “gift goes in one direction and is not to be understood as a payment for a service or a loan to be repaid,” an idea which parallels those of the *Beneficio* (Nagel, “Gifts for Michelangelo,” 650-51). For more on Michelangelo’s biographical relation to the *Spirituali* through Colonna, see Emilio Mattucci, “Vittoria Colonna, Pietro Carafa e Michelangelo nella stagione della ‘Riforma,’” in *Michelangelo e Dante*. Ed. Corrado Gizzi (Milan: Electa, 1995), 113-114; Augusto Galassi, *Michelangelo e Vittoria Colonna: Un amore nella Roma rinascimentale* (Rome: Edizioni Universitarie Romane, 2011); Maria Forcellino,

combine with the social and rhetorical form of the Petrarchan collection in such a way that the fact of the manuscript's gift status in turn addresses the larger theological questions of *solafideism* and the practice of Christian faith that surrounded the poet. As Zemon Davis argues, "In a profound sense, the religious reformations of the sixteenth century were a quarrel about gifts, that is, about whether humans can reciprocate to God, about whether humans can put God under obligation, and about what this means for what people should give to each other."¹²⁵

An intellectual noblewoman writing in the vernacular both in the religious context of the *Spirituali* centered around Christian evangelism and in the broader social and literary world that produced and was produced by figures such as Pietro Bembo, Baldassare Castiglione, and Ludovico Ariosto, Colonna was in a unique position to play this role. Indeed, while her involvement among the *Spirituali* provided her not only the opportunity but the spiritual and poetic language to undertake the project of the collection, her manuscript's post-Petrarchan status also gives important context to understanding its place in the Cinquecento literary world. As many literary scholars and historians have noted, Petrarchism flourished in sixteenth-century Italy, especially after Bembo, the so-called "leading Petrarchist" of the first half of the century,¹²⁶ codified Petrarchism, thus sublimating the "tradition of erotic lyric" into a form of "Neoplatonic spiritual quest, and the lady a kind of spiritual guide."¹²⁷ Petrarchism thus became a way to mediate "gendered interactions,"¹²⁸ giving women interlocutors a prominent place in the humanist Petrarchan model,¹²⁹ and transforming the trope of the female "beloved" into one that reflected, among other relationships, the intellectual friendships between men and women.¹³⁰

Of course, as scholars of sixteenth-century women poets have also shown, the codification of Petrarchism also gave women a particular cultural access¹³¹ and allowed Colonna specifically to flourish in turn as the "Matriarch of Italian Petrarchism."¹³² In fact, her *Rime* of 1538 was the first collection of poetry by a woman to be printed in the vernacular in Italy in her own name.¹³³ And

Michelangelo, Vittoria Colonna e gli spirituali: Religiosità e vita artistica a Roma negli anni Quaranta (Rome: Viella Libreria, 2009). For more on Colonna's fictionally constructed presence as a spiritual guide in Michelangelo's poetry, see Kristina Herrmann Fiore, "Disegni di Michelangelo in omaggio a Vittoria Colonna e tracce del poema di Dante," in *Michelangelo e Dante*. Ed. Corrado Gizzi (Milan: Electa, 1995), 95-112; Sara M. Adler, "Vittoria Colonna: Michelangelo's Perfect Muse," *Italica* 92 1 (2015): 5-32; Corsaro, "Manuscript Collections"; Moroncini, *Michelangelo's Poetry*.

¹²⁵ Natalie Zemon Davis, *The Gift in Sixteenth-Century France* (Wisconsin: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2000), 100.

¹²⁶ Brian Richardson, "Sixteenth-Century Italian Petrarchists and Musical Settings of their Verse," in *Voices and Texts in Early Modern Italian Society*. Eds. Stefano Dall'Aglia, Brian Richardson, and Massimo Rospochoer (London; New York: Routledge, 2016), 125.

¹²⁷ Cox, *The Prodigious Muse*, 46. For Bembo's codification of Petrarchism, see Cox, *Lyric Poetry by Women*; Cox, *Women's Writing in Italy*. See also Cox, *The Prodigious Muse*, who explores the codification in terms of the development from love lyric to spiritual poetics, especially in women's writing. For Colonna's relationship with Bembo and his influence on the "literary Tuscan" of her verse, see Sanson, "Vittoria Colonna and Language," 203; Scarpati, "Le rime spirituali"; Brundin, "Vittoria Colonna in Manuscript"; Müller and Ferrero, *Vittoria Colonna*, 129. For Bembo's ardent support of women's writing, see the excellent study by Aileen A. Feng, *Writing Beloveds: Humanist Petrarchism and the Politics of Gender* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2017). As Rolan Bainton points out, Colonna was responsible for Bembo's elevation to the cardinalate (*Women of the Reformation*, 202). For more on Bembo's role in Church Reform, see Dionisotti, "Pietro Bembo e la nuova letteratura," in *Scritti di storia*.

¹²⁸ Feng, *Writing Beloveds*, 7.

¹²⁹ Feng, *Writing Beloveds*, 103-4.

¹³⁰ Feng, *Writing Beloveds*, 132.

¹³¹ Moroncini, *Michelangelo's Poetry*, 20.

¹³² Moroncini, *Michelangelo's Poetry*, Ch. 2.

¹³³ Susan Haskins, "Volume Editor's Introduction," in *Vittoria Colonna, Chiara Matraini, and Lucrezia Marinella*:

her post-Petrarchan amorous poetry innovatively utilized the Petrarchan love tropes to mourn the death of the poetic persona's "deceased consort,"¹³⁴ thus avoiding, as Bassanese writes, "the sexual nexus to the Petrarchan subtext," and instead allowing the constructed persona to move "from grief and praise of the deceased to a quest for spiritual elevation through the intercession of the lost love."¹³⁵

Petrarch's legacy can be seen not only in the way post-Petrarchan women poets utilized his model to develop an amorous poetics based on married or fulfilled love. Taking a larger historical view of the literary tradition during the sixteenth century, Gigliola Fragnito explores in her essays *In museo e in villa* how the Reformation also led poets to explore "una religiosità interiorizzata" through a new religious Petrarchism, what Fragnito refers to as "Il Petrarca spirituale."¹³⁶ Indeed, when Colonna began to turn from *rime amorose* to *rime spirituali* in 1538,¹³⁷ the result was a further transformation of Petrarch's poetics into a new spiritual model, what Joseph Gibaldi refers to as the "perfect balance" between "Neoplatonism and Christianity, within the framework of sixteenth-century Petrarchism."¹³⁸ As Virginia Cox also explores across her studies, Colonna forged a "new model of religious poetry, drawing on the models of contemporary love lyric to express a passionate yearning for God"¹³⁹ that clearly established a tradition for later women writers.¹⁴⁰ Abigail Brundin's work on Colonna extensively examines Petrarch's influence on Colonna's poetics specifically, and shows that Colonna was "intensely aware of the important connection between her religious beliefs and her poetic production, and took altogether seriously the duty that she had to ensure that the latter was a well-judged response to the former."¹⁴¹ More specifically, Brundin argues that the particular structure and form of the Petrarchan *canzoniere*, "by its nature both cyclical and intimate, beginning and ending in the consciousness of the individual poet and a process of examining and lamenting the state of his soul," gave Colonna an "exclusively personal focus" and the capacity for the very important "self-reflexive tendency" of the Reform period.¹⁴² What's more, as I shall also explore in this chapter, Brundin shows how Colonna's post-Petrarchan spiritual poetics do not reflect a chronological development of the soul, but rather demonstrate a "universal contemplation of the mystery of faith that leads full circle,

Who is Mary? Three Early Modern Women on the Idea of the Virgin Mary. Ed. and trans. Susan Haskins (Chicago; London: The University of Chicago Press, 2008), 47. For Colonna's place in the debate around Church Reform and the *questione della lingua*, see Dionisotti, "La lingua italiana da Venezia all'Europa," in *Scritti di storia*. For more on Colonna's relationship with Castiglione and his influence on the language of writing and speaking in the *Cortegiano*, see Sanson, "Vittoria Colonna and Language." For more on Castiglione's defense of women, see Dialetti, "The Publisher"; Müller and Ferrero, *Vittoria Colonna*, 111; Brian Richardson, *Printing, Writers and Readers in Renaissance Italy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999). For more on the roles played by the literary figures that surrounded Colonna both in the standardization of the vernacular and in the development of the larger print, literary, and vernacular cultures of the Cinquecento, see Dialetti, "The Publisher"; Gordon Bruce, *John Calvin's Institutes of the Christian Religion: A Biography* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University, 2016), 15.

¹³⁴ Brundin, "Volume Editor's Introduction," 35.

¹³⁵ Bassanese, "Vittoria Colonna's Man/God," 270. As Katharina Wilson writes, moreover, the post-Petrarchism of many Renaissance women poets like Vittoria Colonna, Gaspara Stampa, and Veronica Gambara, focused not on the Petrarchan themes of betrayal or erotic frustration but rather on the theme of fulfilled love ("Introduction," xiii).

¹³⁶ Gigliola Fragnito, *In museo e in villa: Saggi sul rinascimento perduto* (Venice: Arsenale, 1988), 12, 15, 20, 51.

¹³⁷ Russell, "Vittoria Colonna's Sonnets," 125. From 1540, Colonna focused entirely on religious poetry (Ranieri and Pagano, *Nuovi documenti*, 66).

¹³⁸ Gibaldi, "Vittoria Colonna," 29.

¹³⁹ Cox, *Lyric Poetry by Women*, 8.

¹⁴⁰ Cox, *The Prodigious Muse*, 2.

¹⁴¹ Brundin, *Vittoria Colonna and the Spiritual Poetics*, xi.

¹⁴² Brundin, *Vittoria Colonna and the Spiritual Poetics*, 6.

culminating and beginning in the inevitable fact of the individual and her relationship with Christ.”¹⁴³ It is in this way that Colonna creates a new Petrarchism in her religious poetry that embodies a “reformed religious programme”¹⁴⁴ based on a “reformed spiritual poetics.”¹⁴⁵

In the examinations that follow I explore how Colonna develops a poetics of paradox within the post-Petrarchan model that is centered around the hermeneutic paradigm provided by the veil, as it builds on the terminology and theology of both Valdés’ *Alfabeto cristiano* and *Dialogo della doctrina cristiana* and *Il Beneficio di Cristo*, and capitalizes on the structural and formal aspects of the Petrarchan *canzoniere*.¹⁴⁶ In doing so, I argue, she makes in the lyric collection a theological statement about how understanding the relationship between faith and doubt is part of the *process* of Reformed Christianity and presents herself as an exemplar of this hermeneutic process, one who mediates her readers’ own spiritual experience through the poems, which are, in the end, the poet’s gifted guide to others’ potential divine illumination.

III. Valdesian *fede viva*

As I have noted above, Valdés’ *Alfabeto cristiano*¹⁴⁷ focuses on interiority of faith, where true faith is not manifested in outward practices but in the heart,¹⁴⁸ that faith coming from the gift of God of divine inspiration, following the Lutheran doctrine of *sola fide*.¹⁴⁹ To be more specific, central to Valdés’ thinking in the text is the distinction between *fede viva* and *fede morta*:

quando dico fede non intendo della fede che solamente crede l’historia di Christo, perche

¹⁴³ Brundin, “Volume Editor’s Introduction,” 34.

¹⁴⁴ Brundin, *Vittoria Colonna and the Spiritual Poetics*, 11.

¹⁴⁵ Brundin, *Vittoria Colonna and the Spiritual Poetics*, 2. For more on Colonna’s role as a post-Petrarchan woman poet, see Virginia Cox, “Women Writers and the Canon in Sixteenth-Century Italy: The Case of Vittoria Colonna,” in *Strong Voices, Weak History: Early Women Writers & Canons in England, France, & Italy*. Eds. Pamela Joseph Benson and Victoria Kirkham (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2005), 14-31; Benfell, “Translating Petrarchan Desire”; McAuliffe, “Vittoria Colonna and Renaissance Poetics”; Cox, *Women’s Writing in Italy*. For more on Colonna’s reformed poetics, see Gigliola Fragnito, “‘Per lungo e dubbioso sentero’: l’itinerario spirituale di Vittoria Colonna,” in *Al crocevia della storia: poesia, religione e politica in Vittoria Colonna*. Ed. Maria Serena Sapegno (Rome: Viella, 2016), 177-213.

¹⁴⁶ For an excellent treatment of the tradition of Petrarchism between Petrarch’s death and Colonna’s own period, see Feng, *Writing Beloveds*. Feng shows how the “humanist Petrarchism” of the fifteenth century was developed by neo-Latin Italian women poets, ultimately concluding that “the poetic tropes that gave a voice to women in the publishing world of sixteenth-century Italy were the same ones that men had used to render women’s voices ineffectual in the previous century” (208). For more on Colonna’s Petrarchan poetics, see also Dennis J. McAuliffe, “Vittoria Colonna and Renaissance Poetics, Convention and Society,” in *Il Rinascimento: aspetti e problemi attuali*. Ed. Vittore Branca, Claudio Griggio, Marco Pecoraro, Elisanna Pecoraro, Gilberto Pizzamiglio, Eros Sequi (Florence: Olschki, 1982), 531-541; V. Stanley Benfell, “Translating Petrarchan Desire in Vittoria Colonna and Gaspara Stampa,” in *Translating Desire in Medieval and Early Modern Literature*. Ed. Craig A. Berry and Heather Richardson Hayton (Tempe, AR: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2005), 109-131; Maria Serena Sapegno, “‘Poco giova aver candide e grosse perle senza saperle infilar di modo che l’una favorisca l’altra,’” in *Al crocevia della storia: poesia, religione e politica in Vittoria Colonna*. Ed. Maria Serena Sapegno (Rome: Viella, 2016), 119-135.

¹⁴⁷ Giulia Gonzaga and Valdés composed the *Alfabeto* together, and he left the manuscripts to her at his death with permission to revise, edit, and publish the works. She first brought the text of the *Alfabeto* to publishers in 1545, and it was republished along with a reprinting of the revised version of the *Beneficio* and some of Valdés’ other works, like the *Dialogo de doctrina christiana*, though Gonzaga did not include her name as coauthor of the *Alfabeto* (Robin, *Publishing Women*, 18-9; Firpo, “Introduzione,” xiii-xiv, xxi).

¹⁴⁸ Robin, *Publishing Women*, 24.

¹⁴⁹ Firpo, “Introduzione,” lxxi.

questa può bene stare et sta senza charità: et imperò la chiama san Giacomo fede morta, la quale tengono i mali christiani et tengono similmente i demonii dello 'nferno. Ma intendete che quando dico fede intendo di quella fede che vive nell'anima, guadagnata non con industria né con artificio humano ma mediante la gratia di Dio con lume sovranaturale, la quale fede dà credito a tutte le parole di Dio, così alle minacce sue come alle sue promissioni, di tale modo che quando sente dire che Christo disse che quello che crederà et si battezerà si salverà, et che quello che non crederà si dannerà, dà tanto credito a queste parole, tenendole per certissime, che non tiene dubbio alcuno della sua salvatione.¹⁵⁰

In Valdesian thought, *fede morta* is the simple belief in Christ's sacrifice, while *fede viva* is faith in God that comes from the light (*lume*) of God's illumination and is not created through "industria né con artificio humano" (works). In a way similar to Luther's distinction between Law and Gospel, Valdés sees the relationship between *fede morta* and *fede viva* as the distinction between *Legge* and *Evangelio*: "la legge ci insegna ciò che habbiam da fare, et l'evangelio ci dà spirito con lo quale possiamo adimpire... la legge mortifica et l'evangelio vivifica."¹⁵¹

In her poetic collection, as in Sonnet 5, Colonna uses the same language to describe the experience of divine illumination:

Quando, vostra mercé, quasi presente
Scorge la fede viva ad una ad una
L'alma gratie divine, e poi le aduna
Tutte in un punto il cor lieto e ardente.¹⁵²

God's "gratie" infuse the poetic persona's heart with faith, such that with "amorosa mente," the poet writes, "veggio il sol." The poetic persona undergoes spiritual enlightenment, whereby God's grace, which is manifested in the sonnet as "bei raggi suoi" and results in her "fede viva," "disparir l'ombre e dimostrarsi il vero." There is a crucial connection between faith, light, vision, and, ultimately, divine illumination in this sonnet, a connection that recurs throughout the collection, especially as the image of the veil becomes a central motif of the sonnets, as I shall show.¹⁵³ Here, the poetic persona's *fede viva* is nothing if not perfect, the ultimate gift of grace from God.

And yet the fact that there are "ombre" that must be dissolved by divine grace and *fede viva* hints at a more complicated picture. Indeed, Valdés' explanation in the *Alfabeto cristiano* of the distinction between *fede viva* and *fede morta* comes out of the lamentation by the fictionally constructed Giulia Gonzaga. In their dialogue, she tells the fictional Valdés that she experiences uncertainty, fear, and doubts about her faith. She asks him what to do about the "confusione,

¹⁵⁰ Juan de Valdés, *Alfabeto cristiano. Domande e risposte della predestinazione catechismo*. Ed. Massimo Firpo (Turin, Italy: Einaudi, 1994), 43. All citations of the *Alfabeto cristiano* are taken from this edition.

¹⁵¹ Valdés, *Alfabeto cristiano*, 21. See William R. Russell, "Introduction," in Timothy F. Lull, and William R. Russell, *Martin Luther's Basic Theological Writings* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress Publishers, 2012), xix; Fanlo y Cortés, "Cenni biografici su Juan de Valdés," 49.

¹⁵² All citations of the sonnets are taken from Vittoria Colonna, *Sonnets for Michelangelo: A Bilingual Edition*. Ed. Abigail Brundin (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005).

¹⁵³ Moroncini connects the faith-light relation back to Paul: "A recurring allegory in the spiritual sonnets by Colonna, the 'great light' of faith effectively portrays the fundamental thought of Pauline spirituality" (Moroncini, *Michelangelo's Poetry*, 131). Other poems with similar expressions and language to describe the poetic persona's relationship to God in later sonnets include Sonnet 16, where Christ is Colonna's "viva luce"; Sonnet 17, where Colonna sees God's "Si vivo del [s]uo sol raggio," which is the "santo foco acceso" that illuminates "la virtù viva e ardente / Del vero e de l'amor."

perplexità et inquietudine”¹⁵⁴ in her heart; from where he thinks “nasca la confusione, dubbio et perplexità” that she feels; and how she might get rid of it. She describes her experience of “faith” as a contradictory “tempesta d’effetti, d’appetiti, d’imaginationi et di diversità di voluntadi.”¹⁵⁵ The textual Valdés explains to Giulia that her lack of faith is the reason for her doubt and confusion—that is, more specifically, the lack of “il lume sopranaturale col quale solamente si truova, vede et conosce la verità.”¹⁵⁶ With just “un poco di lume di fede” those who doubt can pacify their own souls, and Giulia can calm her confusion and *inquietudine*.¹⁵⁷

A similar tension between doubt and confusion and faith and tranquility are described in Colonna’s collection. In Sonnet 13, the poet emphasizes the absolving and salvific power of God’s goodness. Speaking directly to Christ, she first recalls how “le tue luci scorte / Esser ai santi padri a l’alta corte, / U’ lor condusse il valor più che umano.” Once again, through the imagery of light and vision, God’s shining eyes become the symbol of his grace, guidance, and the justification of those who have faith. The language and imagery directly recall Valdesian thought, where faith is the abandonment of human light for divine light and the trust in the guidance and the gift of that light.¹⁵⁸ In the same sonnet, the poet then turns to her own experience to describe God’s resolving effects on her own “confusione, dubbio et perplexità”:

Ma legar i contrari miei pensieri,
 Aprir per forza l’indurato petto,
 Far ch’in me sian l’ardenti voglie spente
 Onde vadano al ciel i desir veri,
 Sol de la tua bontà fie vero effetto.

God’s “bontà” is the grace that calms the poetic persona’s contradictory thoughts, so that she returns to the “desiri veri” of the implied *fede viva*. The emphasized “Sol” at the opening of the final line of the sonnet that signifies God’s unique role in the poetic persona’s experience of faith alludes to *sola fide* or justification by faith alone. And in effect, by the end of the sonnet, she has clearly reached relatively uncontested faith, her “ardenti voglie” and confusion calmed. And yet there is nevertheless a tension between the experience of doubt before the intervention of the God-gifted grace or “bontà” and the resolution of that doubt, which reflects the Lutheran paradox of the “free Christian”: faith is out of the Christian’s hands, but that means that there is nothing he or she can do about it.¹⁵⁹

In his *Dialogo della doctrina christiana* (1529), the only text of Valdés’ published during his lifetime,¹⁶⁰ the author further nuances the difference between the two types of faith. The first type of faith, *fede morta*, is otherwise known as *certezza* or *credenza*

delle cose che non abbiamo mai visto; questa può essere morta, senza opere, e la può avere

¹⁵⁴ Valdés, *Alfabeto cristiano*, 8.

¹⁵⁵ Valdés, *Alfabeto cristiano*, 11.

¹⁵⁶ Valdés, *Alfabeto cristiano*, 13.

¹⁵⁷ Valdés, *Alfabeto cristiano*, 13.

¹⁵⁸ Firpo, *Juan de Valdés*, 37.

¹⁵⁹ “No one can give oneself faith. One cannot take away one’s own unbelief” (Luther, *Preface to the Epistle of St. Paul to the Romans*, 79).

¹⁶⁰ This work initially passed the scrutiny of Spanish Inquisitors but was quickly withdrawn from circulation for “emendation.” See Daniel Crews, “Juan de Valdés,” in *Oxford Bibliographies* (Last modified April 17, 2017. Retrieved December 2019).

un ladro e un brigante, sebbene imperfetta; di questa dovete sapere che la sacra Scrittura parla poche volte ed è di questa che san Giacomo dice che quando non è accompagnata dalla carità è morta; vuol dire che vale poco.¹⁶¹

Any “Christian” can have *fede morta*, for this faith is, in a sense, simply the familiarity with the story of Christ’s sacrifice. This is not true faith in Christ’s justifying power, which is the kind of faith that instead *enacts* the justification. That kind of faith, the much more important *fede viva*, is what Valdés calls *fiducia*:

così come se, quando udiamo alcune parole di Dio, dopo aver creduto che sono sue e veritiere, poniamo tutta la nostra fiducia in Dio, che le realizzerà, allora abbiamo la fede viva, la quale è radice delle opere di carità; e così, come dalla radice dell’albero spuntano i rami, e dove c’è radice è impossibile che a suo tempo non ci siano i rami, così, dove c’è una fede come questa, è impossibile che non ci siano opere di carità, se veramente c’è. Vi dico di più: questa fede di cui parlo, che i teologi chiamano fede formata, genera come un fuoco vivo nel cuore dei fedeli, per mezzo del quale ogni giorno di più si purificano e si avvicinano a Dio; perciò io la paragono al fuoco, perché, così com’è impossibile che il fuoco non riscaldi, altrettanto impossibile è che questa fede non operi opere di carità, perché, se non le operasse, non sarebbe più vera fede.¹⁶²

Fiducia, fede viva, fede formata is the total trust in the story, grace, and justifying and salvific power of God.¹⁶³ Works of charity come out of this faith, though of course not as a means to reach faith, and this type of faith is like a living fire (“fuoco vivo”) in the hearts of the faithful.¹⁶⁴ Interestingly, for Giulia in the *Alfabeto*, *fede morta* or “certezza” is experienced as more like *incertezza* or doubts. And this is also the case for Colonna in her *rime*, who explicitly describes her doubts in Sonnet 22 as “gelo e nebbia.” She runs toward God, who melts the ice from her eyes and removes “gli ombrosi veli” that block her vision and hinder her *fiducia*. It is specifically God’s “divina luce and fiamma ardente”—his divine light and burning flames—that transform her icy, cold, blind *fede morta* into *fede viva*.

In addition to this emphasis on *fede viva*, we see in Sonnet 22 for the first time the image of the veil explicitly used in the sonnet as a symbol of blindness and lack of faith. Just as Valdés uses light imagery to represent faith and truth,¹⁶⁵ Colonna describes how the “ombrosi veli” that chill and darken her mind (“fredda ed oscura... la mente”) must be removed (and in this sonnet they are) for the poet to experience that spiritual transcendence. Claudio Scarpati goes so far as to call moments like this a conversion, noting that the “movimento verso l’acquisto è vissuto come luce e fiamma, come dissolvimento delle nebbie, disvelamento faticoso, desiderio di accedere al calore

¹⁶¹ Juan de Valdés, *Il Dialogo della dottrina cristiana*. Ed. Teodoro Fanlo y Cortés (Turin: Claudiana, 1991), 126. All citations of this text are taken from this edition.

¹⁶² Valdés, *Il Dialogo della dottrina cristiana*, 126.

¹⁶³ Valdés specifies even further with the distinction between believing “in Dio” and believing “a Dio.” The former means “che deve credere tutte le cose che si trovano, scritte da Dio, nella sacra Scrittura.” Believing “a Dio” means “che deve credere e avere intera fiducia in Dio, come nel suo fine ultimo, e nelle promesse di Dio; qualora tutto gli sembri al di sopra della ragione umana, in tal caso dunque è necessario che la ragione sia soggiogata all’obbedienza della fede” (Valdés, *Il Dialogo della dottrina cristiana*, 126-7). I return to the relationship between human reason and faith at a later stage.

¹⁶⁴ For more on Valdés’ two types of faith, see Fanlo y Cortés, “Cenni biografici su Juan de Valdés,” 51.

¹⁶⁵ Valdés, *Alfabeto cristiano*, 18.

vivificante della divinità.”¹⁶⁶ In her book, *Protestant Poetics*, Barbara Lewalski explores the biblical metaphor of light and veils in seventeenth-century Protestant poetry in England, many of her observations applicable to Colonna’s poetics as well. For example, Lewalski writes, “The pilgrimage often takes place through a dark, cloudy land, thereby assimilating to the pilgrimage trope what is perhaps the most characteristic combination of metaphors in Vaughan—the representation of life on earth in terms of darkness, deadness, clouded or veiled vision; and life to come... as true light, unclouded vision.”¹⁶⁷ Throughout the collection, Colonna utilizes the light and veiling imagery in a similar way, describing, in Sonnet 85, for example, the blinding effects of veils of doubt, where she struggles to see “di mille ornati veli avvolto / Il chiaro e puro vero, e poi con mille / Finte di carità vive faville / Coprir l’amaro petto un dolce volto.” In Sonnet 68, too, the veil is used to describe the blindness of all of humanity: “Il limbo, i sassi, i monumenti, il velo / Posto a nostri occhi, e l’ombra e le figure.”¹⁶⁸ For the poetic persona, the veil is a central metaphorical symbol that must be overcome for the sake of spiritual transcendence, since it represents the blindness, darkness, and coldness that is antithetical to true faith.

The question of conversion, transcendence, or spiritual elevation is also important in the collection given its post-Petrarchan status. Experiences of metamorphosis of the poetic persona are central to the progression of the Petrarchan lyric sequence, where, as Terence Cave writes, Petrarch hopes for spiritual elevation through love, and other Renaissance sonneteers also use the space of poetry to seek “a metamorphosis of the self, an extension or redemption of emotional experience” of one kind or another.¹⁶⁹ In Colonna’s poems, the problem posed for the poetic persona—what must be transcended—is presented as the metaphorical coldness, the darkness, the

¹⁶⁶ Scarpati, “Le rime spirituali,” 695.

¹⁶⁷ Barbara Lewalski, *Protestant Poetics and the Seventeenth-Century Religious Lyric* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1979), 107.

¹⁶⁸ For more on this sonnet, see Sapegno, “The Rime: A Textual Conundrum?”

¹⁶⁹ Terence C. Cave, “Ronsard as Apollo: Myth, Poetry and Experience in a Renaissance Sonnet-Cycle,” *Yale French Studies* 47 (1972): 78, 80. For more on Petrarch’s quest for spiritual salvation within the context of his focus on earthly love and his hopes for earthly glory, see Christopher Kleinhenz, “Petrarch and the Art of the Sonnet,” in *Francis Petrarch, Six Centuries Later: A Symposium*. Ed. Aldo Scaglione (North Carolina: University of North Carolina Press, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill for its Department of Romance Studies, 1975), 177; and Albert Russell Ascoli, “Petrarch’s Middle Age: Memory, Imagination, History, and the ‘Ascent of Mount Ventoux,’” in *A Local Habitation and a Name: Imagining Histories in the Italian Renaissance* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2011, originally published 1990), 21-58. Indeed, Ascoli’s essay examines Petrarch’s broader relationship to conversion throughout his works and his ultimate failure in the *RVF* to transcend the physical for the spiritual. For more on the post-Petrarchan sonnet collections and lyric sequences that proliferated during the Renaissance, see Mary B. Moore, *Desiring Voices: Women Sonneteers and Petrarchism* (Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 2000), 10; William J. Kennedy, *The Site of Petrarchism: Early Modern National Sentiment in Italy, France, and England* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003); Concetta Carestia Greenfield, “The Poetics of Francis Petrarch,” in *Francis Petrarch, Six Centuries Later: A Symposium*. Ed. Aldo Scaglione (North Carolina: University of North Carolina Press, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill for its Department of Romance Studies, 1975), 213-22; Roland Arthur Greene, *Post-Petrarchism: Origins and Innovations of the Western Lyric Sequence* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014); Germaine Warkentin, “‘Love’s sweetest part, variety’: Petrarch and the Curious Frame of the Renaissance Sonnet Sequence,” *Renaissance and Reformation / Renaissance et Réforme* 11 1 (1975): 15; Cynthia Grant Tucker, “Meredith’s Broken Laurel: Modern Love and the Renaissance Sonnet Tradition,” *Victorian Poetry* 10 4 (1972): 351-65; Norman C. Stageberg, “The Aesthetics of the Petrarchan Sonnet,” *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 7 2 (1948): 132-37; François Rigolot, “Qu’est-ce qu’un sonnet? Perspectives sur les origines d’une forme poétique,” *Revue d’Histoire littéraire de la France* 84 1 (1984): 3-18; Carol Thomas Neely, “The Structure of English Renaissance Sonnet Sequences,” *ELH* 45 3 (1978): 359-89. Among many of these post-Petrarchan and Renaissance lyric scholars, attention is focused by and large on male poets or on love lyrics, which has led to the crucial work on religious lyrics by women poets by scholars like Virginia Cox, Abigail Brundin, and Aileen Feng, as already noted.

blindness of earthly experience, otherwise experienced as religious doubts. Unlike Petrarch's, Colonna's means to overcome this problem is not love but rather faith, and yet, as is evident in the paradoxical theology of Valdés with which Colonna engages, faith is not so easy. In this way, Colonna's sonnets function as a site for the complex psychological experience of oscillating between faith and doubt, just as Petrarch's collection too innovatively turned the form of the lyric collection into a "site" for the lover's own "fluctuating psychological states" in the amorous experience,¹⁷⁰ what John Freccero has called the illusory "serial juxtaposition of dimensionless lyric moments."¹⁷¹

As central to Colonna's "conversion poetics," the image of the veil also has a Petrarchan predecessor, in whose collection the veil is presented as a "doloroso *impedimento* che nasconde la vista degli occhi di Laura, sottraendo luce vitale."¹⁷² Whereas in his collection the veil physically blinds Petrarch by hiding Laura, the veil metaphorically blinds Colonna in hers thus effectively hiding God. The Petrarchan dialectics of cold-hot, dark-light, ice-fire are also evident in this relationship between blindness and vision, where the cold, dark, ice, and veil in Colonna's poem are associated with the former, and the hot, light, fire, and removal of the veil are associated with the latter. Abigail Brundin extends this comparison between Colonna and Petrarch further, noting that both experience a kind of "entrapment": Petrarch within the bonds of love that "becomes a cause of celebration if that love is spiritual rather than earthly"; and the solafideist Christian (i.e., Colonna) with her self-abandonment "to the action of God's grace on [her] soul, so that [her] acceptance of [her] powerlessness to instigate change provides testament to the depth of [her] faith."¹⁷³ Both for Petrarch and for Colonna, the image of the veil becomes linked to their experiences of this entrapment by symbolizing, respectively, his inability to access Laura and her inability to access God.

Just as Petrarch struggles with his own physicality in his pursuit of Laura, so too does Colonna struggle to overcome her own physicality in her pursuit of divine illumination.¹⁷⁴ And both types of physicality in the two collections are associated with veils. In the *RVF*, Petrarch's "donna velata" becomes a *topos* before Laura's death, her face often hidden from him on account of her physical veil. After she dies, the image of the veil in his collection takes on new meaning. In Sonnet 268, Petrarch writes, "l'invisibil sua forma è in paradiso, / disciolta di quel velo / che qui fece ombra al fior degli anni suoi."¹⁷⁵ Laura's physical body in the *RVF* is a veil that gets removed at her death, remaining on earth along with Petrarch: the body is "lo corporeo velo,"¹⁷⁶ where "le membra fanno a l'alma velo."¹⁷⁷ And the bodily veil is not only Laura's; Petrarch describes his own desire to effectively *die* in order to join Laura in heaven: "Così disciolto dal mortal mio velo / ch'a forza mi tien qui, foss'io con loro / fuor de' sospir fra l'anime beate!"¹⁷⁸ And likewise, the poet writes: "Volo

¹⁷⁰ Cave, "Ronsard as Apollo," 86.

¹⁷¹ John Freccero, "The Fig Tree and the Laurel: Petrarch's Poetics," *Diacritics* 5 1 (1975): 34.

¹⁷² Loredana Chines, *I veli del poeta: Un percorso tra Petrarca e Tasso* (Rome: Carocci, 2000), 17. See especially Petrarch's sonnets 11 and 38.

¹⁷³ Brundin, *Vittoria Colonna and the Spiritual Poetics*, 6.

¹⁷⁴ For more on the poetic persona's desire "to transcend the physical altogether, to escape the 'prison' of her human form and the insufferable weight of this earthly life," see Brundin, *Vittoria Colonna and the Spiritual Poetics*, 83.

¹⁷⁵ Francesco Petrarca, *Canzoniere*. Ed. Sabrina Stoppa (Torino: Einaudi, 2011). For more on Petrarch's reaction to Laura's death (both in real life and in the poems), see Ronald L. Martinez, "Mourning Laura in the *Canzoniere*: Lessons from Lamentations," *MLN* 118 1 Italian Issue (2003): 1-45.

¹⁷⁶ Petrarca, *Canzoniere*, Sonnet 264.

¹⁷⁷ Petrarca, *Canzoniere*, Sonnet 77.

¹⁷⁸ Petrarca, *Canzoniere*, Sonnet 313. For more on the metaphor of the veil as a body in Petrarch's sonnets, see Luca Marcozzi, "The Metaphor of the *Corpus Carcer* in Petrarch's *Canzoniere* and in the Lyrical Tradition," in *The Body*

con l'ali de' pensieri al cielo / sì spesse volte che quasi un di loro / esser mi par ch'han ivi il suo tesoro, / lasciando in terra lo squarciato velo."¹⁷⁹ The veil imagery extends further to other types of "clothing," when the poet expresses the same desire in slightly modified language: "O felice quel dì che, del terreno / carcere uscendo, lasci rotta et sparta / questa mia grave et frale et mortal gonna."¹⁸⁰ The veil is a "terreno carcere" that is very clearly linked to the body, the poet's "mortal mio velo" elsewhere, as in Sonnet 331, referred to as "questa noiosa et grave carne," which gets shed for "altro pelo."¹⁸¹

In Colonna's collection, the poet echoes Petrarch's use of the veil as an obstruction denying his access both to the physical Laura and to the spiritual Laura after her death, but she does so within the context of *fede morta* and *fede viva*, as they refer to the "old" and the "new" bodies, in a sense, elevating "il materiale petrarchesco."¹⁸² In Sonnet 81, Colonna confronts this physical-spiritual tension:

Vorrei l'orecchia aver qui chiusa e sorda,
Per udir coi pensier più fermi e intenti
L'angeliche voci e i dolci accenti
Che certa pace in vero amor concorda.

"L'orecchia," the physical ear, functions for the Colonna persona as an impediment to the spiritual "hearing" of her "pensier più fermi e intenti." She expresses the desire specifically to close and deafen (to mortify) the physical ear for the "angeliche voci" through her spiritual ear, which brings "certa pace" and "vero amor" and thus vivifies. While no literal veils are mentioned here, the physical body is likened to a veil (here, of the ears) that threatens to block out the other spiritual voices, as the poetic persona's "ombrosi veli" blind and hinder her *fede viva* elsewhere. But the physical body in the collection is also connected to the image of the veil more directly. In Sonnet 9, addressing Christ, the poet recounts how Mary's body, a "mortal velo," was already from the beginning surrounded by "mille rai" that were then brightened and became amplified through Christ's grace. She asks now that Christ pray to Mary that Mary pray to him for her (Colonna's) ultimate salvation. She asks that he help rid her of her own mortal veil, her "umana scorza," that ties her as a knot ("nodo") to earth. In this way, the poet transforms the Petrarchan veil into an image that represents both the physical body and the mind's lack of faith and thus reflects the Valdesian *fede morta*, which challenges the poetic persona's search for *fede viva*. Of course, the emphasis on God's active role in removing the veils of blindness by his gift of grace, is also central to the Reformist tone Colonna brings to the post-Petrarchan imagery.

But in Colonna's *canzoniere*, the emphasis on God's grace as the means of this potential

in *Early Modern Italy*. Ed. Julia L. Hairston and Walter Stephens (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2010), 24-41.

¹⁷⁹ Petrarca, *Canzoniere*, Sonnet 362.

¹⁸⁰ Petrarca, *Canzoniere*, Sonnet 349.

¹⁸¹ Petrarca, *Canzoniere*, Sonnet 331. For a deeper exploration of veils in Petrarch's *RVF*, see Chines, *I veli del poeta*; Margaret Brose, "Fetishizing the Veil: Petrarch's Poetics of Rematerialization," in *The Body in Early Modern Italy*. Ed. Julia L. Hairston and Walter Stephens (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2010), 3-23; James V. Mirollo, *Mannerism and Renaissance Poetry: Concept, Mode, Inner Design* (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 1984); Richard L. Poss, "The Veil in *Rime* 52: Petrarch's Secular Butterfly," *Italian Culture* 7 (1986-1989): 7-16; Susanne Sara Thomas, "Petrarch, Tournier, Photography, and Fetishism: The Veil in the *Rime Sparse*," *Romance Quarterly* 43 3 (1996): 131-141; Ornella Moroni, "Il velo: un *excursus* nella letteratura italiana," in *Abito e identità: ricerche di storia letteraria e culturale*. Ed. Cristina Giorcelli (Palermo; Roma: Mazzone, 2009), 69-94.

¹⁸² Scarpati, "Le rime spirituali," 702.

spiritual transcendence does not come without doubt or fear. In Sonnet 12, Colonna waits for Christ, her “caro sposo,”¹⁸³ “con l’orecchie e con gli occhi avidi intenti.” The centrality of the physical eyes reflects the relationship between seeing and faith, and yet the tone of the sonnet is anxious, uncertain, and even fearful. While her physical attentiveness to Christ seeks to “onorarlo... / avendo al cor gli altri desiri spenti,” that is faith through the mortification of the “old” body, the poetic persona’s fear is that Christ may call her out as an example of faithlessness: “Ecco la cieca, a cui non si scoverse / Con tanti chiari raggi il suo bel sole.” To be “la cieca” would be the one whose “occhi del corpo” were not capable enough to reach the divine understanding as might the “occhi dell’anima.”

Elsewhere in the collection Colonna highlights the tension between the poetic persona’s ability at times, as in Sonnet 11, to overcome her physicality by means of her “occhio interno,” which allows her to “vede / l’alta cagion divina e acquista fede,”¹⁸⁴ and her failure at other times to transcend the obstruction of her physical memory. In Sonnet 73, the poet describes how “In ciel,” her mind “sees” among “mille stelle... un sol che splende,” but when her mind returns from heaven, “la memoria” retains little.¹⁸⁵ The “sol vivo” imagined spiritually becomes “una fosca ombra” when rendered by the poet’s earthly hand or spoken in human words. The poet ends the sonnet with an explanation of this disconnect: “Quant’ei si vuol talor mostrar discerne / La mente, e sol quand’ei le presta l’ali / Vola, e mentre le nebbie apre e disgombrava.” The physical body and mind are covered by “nebbie” and shadows; they are effectively veiled and may be unveiled only when and to the extent that God chooses to reveal himself. In the context of Valdés’ two types of faith, the “veiling” of the poetic persona’s physical body that blinds her spiritual or mental vision of God represents a similar relationship between *fede viva* and *fede morta*, along with psychological tension between the hope for the former and the fear of the latter. In the context of the Petrarchan *canzoniere*, moreover, the contradictory experiences scattered throughout Colonna’s lyric collection point to the poetic persona’s fluctuating psychological experience of Christian spirituality that may seem to be overcome in Sonnet 11 only to resurface anxiously sixty-or-so poems later.

While Colonna’s desires to transcend the physical body echo Petrarch’s poetics, her fears of failing to transcend echo the expressions of doubt by the fictional Giulia in the *Alfabeto cristiano*: that as much as she might identify the problem of the physical body denying spiritual transcendence, she has no way of personally overcoming it. In reply, Valdés helpfully elaborates on the means by which his fictional interlocutor can transform her *fede morta* into *fede viva*, specifically through the mortification of the “old self” (physical), which simultaneously vivifies the “new self” (spiritual).¹⁸⁶ He tells her that mortification occurs through the denial of desires, the “nemico,”¹⁸⁷ on earth,¹⁸⁸ which is aided, for instance, through the nightly examination of everything done during the day, the communication with a spiritual person about those actions,¹⁸⁹

¹⁸³ Luther articulates a bride-bridegroom (faithful-Christ) relationship in his *On the Freedom of a Christ*, where the wedding ring both symbolizes and is symbolized by faith (Luther, *On the Freedom of a Christian*, 25-6). While the image of marriage with Christ is clearly from Luther, Chapter 4 of the *Beneficio di Cristo* also develops the image.

¹⁸⁴ Likewise, in Sonnet 31, the Colonna persona describes how “Sol con l’orecchia interna attenta al vero” can she shed her “voglie” on earth and experience the “vivo zelo” of the divine.

¹⁸⁵ An experience that recalls Dante’s *topos* of inexpressibility as he attempts to remember and represent in words the memories of his approach to God in *Paradiso*.

¹⁸⁶ Valdés, *Alfabeto cristiano*, 73.

¹⁸⁷ Valdés, *Alfabeto cristiano*, 75.

¹⁸⁸ Valdés, *Alfabeto cristiano*, 74.

¹⁸⁹ Valdés, *Alfabeto cristiano*, 82.

and prayers to God that he revivify one's faith.¹⁹⁰ Valdés advises Giulia that if she cannot find the path toward God using "gli occhi del corpo," she should look with "gli occhi dell'anima,"¹⁹¹ the very practice we see Colonna attempt to develop with her "occhio interno."

But more than this, Valdés also makes an argument for why spiritual doubt is actually a good thing. He explains to Giulia that blindness and lack of faith are "reliquie del peccato originale," which is made up of two things, "la colpa" and "la mala inclinazione." At baptism, we are forgiven the *colpa*, and during life, little by little, "curando et medicando con la gratia sua" we are forgiven the *mala inclinazione*.¹⁹² Valdés goes on, explaining that *Legge* leads to *conscientia* of these sins, which leads to humility, then grace, then justification, then salvation.¹⁹³ He cites Saint Paul: "la legge è come un pedagogo o governadore che ci conduce et porta a Christo, accioche mediante la fede siamo giustificati."¹⁹⁴ So, Valdés tells Giulia, doubt is good, feelings of contradiction are good,¹⁹⁵ because "la contradditione" is the "primo effetto della predicatione evangelica"¹⁹⁶—a sign that she already "ascolate la dottrina."¹⁹⁷ Not only that, but he also acknowledges that the faith of justification is hard work: "molto spirituale ha d'essere quello che ha da tenere la fede tanto viva quanto conviene per essere giustificato per quella."¹⁹⁸ And admitting one's lack of faith, one's doubts, one's feelings of uncertainty are an important part in the process of reaching that *fede viva*; more faith comes from asking for help from God than trying to simply believe in one's own faith alone: "per questa via guadagnerete più che persuadervi che credete."¹⁹⁹ The weaker one's faith, the greater will be God's grace to strengthen that faith, but one must confess the weakness to God and trust in Christ.²⁰⁰

Brian Cummings contextualizes this kind of theology by pointing to the way in which the intellectual world of the Reformation is "a world poised between the clarity of faith and the melancholy of skepticism."²⁰¹ He points out how Lutheran *sola scriptura* aspires to "end all doubt by subscription to the one word of God" but only "compounds doubt, and creates difference."²⁰² Indeed, this is another important point of distinction for Valdés, who believed that only faith guided

¹⁹⁰ Valdés, *Alfabeto cristiano*, 45.

¹⁹¹ Valdés, *Alfabeto cristiano*, 84.

¹⁹² Valdés, *Alfabeto cristiano*, 16.

¹⁹³ Valdés, *Alfabeto cristiano*, 20.

¹⁹⁴ Valdés, *Alfabeto cristiano*, 21. This idea comes directly from Luther, who writes in *On the Freedom of a Christian* that the Old Testament is law and shows man's incapacity to fulfill the commandments: "Thus he is rightly humbled and reduced to nothing in his own eyes." But then the gospel, the New Testament, which is "the divine promise or assurance" (23), appears, and tells man to believe in Christ, "for what is impossible for you to achieve through all the works of the commandments—which are necessarily numerous, and yet useless—will be easy and quick for you through faith" (24).

¹⁹⁵ Valdés, *Alfabeto cristiano*, 17.

¹⁹⁶ Valdés, *Alfabeto cristiano*, 18.

¹⁹⁷ Valdés, *Alfabeto cristiano*, 19.

¹⁹⁸ Valdés, *Alfabeto cristiano*, 44.

¹⁹⁹ Valdés, *Alfabeto cristiano*, 44.

²⁰⁰ Valdés, *Alfabeto cristiano*, 48.

²⁰¹ Cummings, *The Literary Culture*, 5.

²⁰² Cummings, *The Literary Culture*, 26. Cummings paraphrases Montaigne's ironization of Lutheran interpretation, language, and certainty: "Luther expressed absolute faith in language, when Luther himself made such faith in language impossible. Luther is denigrated as the apostle of literalism, of the literal interpretation of the sacred text and of the sanctity of literal interpretation" (29). He also presents Thomas More's reception of how Luther invited people to read scripture themselves and find their own authority in that reading: "Luther has rewritten the laws of reading so as to favour the individual against the institution of the church. Rather than the Pope being the arbiter of all meaning, in Luther's account the meaning of scripture is the arbiter of the Pope... Yet the arbiter of that meaning... is left undecided... subject to the arbitrary whim of the individual" (44).

by the spiritual light of God could approach the mysteries of Scripture without risking being useless or even counterproductive.²⁰³ In fact, for Valdés, reaching *fede viva* was not just a matter of believing in God's grace, but explicitly dismissing one's own sense of merit: "quanto più perfetta fuste tanto manco merito trovereste in voi. Et è così che quello che sta più appresso alla gratia di Dio sta più lontano da pensare che la merita."²⁰⁴ The "old" body that must be "mortified" is "cieco con la ragione sua humana."²⁰⁵ Knowing God does not come through "ingegno et industria humana," but through "lume di fede ispirata per lo spirito santo."²⁰⁶ Though both come from faith, experience is more important than knowledge²⁰⁷ because it is the experience that makes one aware of the gift of faith, which is the foundation of experience (not the other way around), as Teodoro Fanlo y Cortés summarizes: "La certezza della giustificazione, strettamente connessa all'esperienza cristiana, non è un fatto intellettuale, ma certezza vitale che produce in noi la pace della coscienza e conferma la nostra vocazione."²⁰⁸

This privileging of experience over human knowledge or reason is also a central aspect of Colonna's collection which frequently downplays human reason. In Sonnet 14, the poetic persona gazes upwards at the sun in order to raise herself high enough that "le turbe intorno / Non fesser ombra al mio basso intelletto." The description acknowledges that shadows and doubts cloud her mind, attributing its susceptibility to the lowliness of her human reason, to its inferiority in relation to God's grace and faith in general. In the same sonnet, she contrasts the "ombra" of her human reason to the "bel lume adorno" of God, which she hopes will penetrate her "indegno petto" with its brightness. In Valdesian fashion, Colonna's acknowledgement of her doubts and mental limitations are what allow her to experience, in the subjunctive space of this poem, the ultimate "candida fede," marked by God's words which banish her "vizio" with his "valore" and thus bring about her salvation.

Sonnet 74 further describes the problem of "ragione umana" in relation to the figure of Doubting Thomas, who believes only after he sees. Colonna writes that Christ admonishes Thomas: "maggior è il merto / Di creder l'invisibile, per quella / Virtù che non ha in sé ragione umana." Not only is faith not reached through human reason, the poet concludes, it is actually hindered by it, because—and here we come back to Valdés—subscribing to human reason means not mortifying the physical body and thus not vivifying the soul, denying the experience of God's grace and *fede viva*. In the later Sonnet 87, Colonna refers to Thomas' intellectual effort, which results in outright doubt (again, the opposite of faith), as an error of "la man cieca e smarrita / Piegandol dal camin de gli altri usato." But then, in that same sonnet, the poet learns her own lesson from these words, explaining for her readers and the rest of humankind, "Il ciel fu a lui col bel costato aperto, / A noi la strada assai più corta e piana / Per fede di trovar l'orma sua bella." She uses Thomas as a negative example of human reason, in a way similar to how he failed to use the faithful believers ("gli altri") for his own faith. In Sonnet 47 too, the "umano velo" causes humanity to merely glimpse the "bei rai" of the "gran sole" of God, while those who are unveiled and already saved—"li spirti eletti sempre in cielo"—can experience that light in full. Hence while the human body is a veil that precludes vivification of the "new" spiritual body, human reason also becomes a "veil" that obstructs faith and divine light. The veil thus symbolizes the doubts generated both by the veiled body and by the veiled mind.

²⁰³ Firpo, *Juan de Valdés*, 36.

²⁰⁴ Valdés, *Alfabeto cristiano*, 45.

²⁰⁵ Valdés, *Alfabeto cristiano*, 51.

²⁰⁶ Valdés, *Alfabeto cristiano*, 60.

²⁰⁷ Fanlo y Cortés, "Cenni biografici su Juan de Valdés," 56.

²⁰⁸ Fanlo y Cortés, "Cenni biografici su Juan de Valdés," 57.

Where the veil signifies not only doubt, lack of *fede viva*, and/or the absence (yet) of divine illumination in Colonna, the Valdesian solution to the problem of this doubt is proactive. We have already heard some of his advice to Giulia Gonzaga, but the full guide involves a twelve-step plan that begins with realizing one is not on the path to God and choosing to find that path, and moves on to the various “cognitioni” or meditations of the world, the self, and God in order to free oneself of love of the world, things, and the self, and to fall in love with God alone through Christ.²⁰⁹ Valdés tells Giulia in the *Alfabeto* that the remedy to doubt is simply to have faith (as if it were that easy), for “la felicità dell’uomo consiste in conoscere con lume di fede Iddio per Christo et nella unione dell’anima con Dio mediante la fede, speranza et charità.”²¹⁰ Indeed, in her examination of Doubting Thomas, Colonna points out that God’s response to Thomas’ doubt is to offer, through the proof of his wound, “Ardenti rai ch’a vera ed umil fede / L’indurato suo cor tosto converse.” Faith converts “l’indurato suo cor” in Sonnet 74, as it purges the mind of its “alto intelletto” in Sonnet 25, where “il saggio,” who looks upon the heavens intellectually as a sign of “alta causa,” becomes imprisoned by his own earthbound, limited, and otherwise blind reason and requires the inflaming effects of “la gioiosa speme” on his heart. The challenge for Giulia and for Colonna is thus comprehending the tension between the belief that true faith is possible, for that is the nature of God’s gift of grace, and the frustration that that faith continues to feel inaccessible.²¹¹

Indeed, Colonna’s collection reflects this tension in how it models the Petrarchan fluctuations of the poetic persona’s psychological experience that oscillates between the affective conditions of faith and doubt. And the tension manifests, in the sonnets we have examined, through the image of the veil, where veils and related images signify blindness, obstruction, and lack of faith, the removal of the veil the much-desired sign of divine grace and illumination. But there is also more to Colonna’s treatment of the veil image, which becomes evident when read alongside the *Beneficio di Cristo*, a text that implicitly grants the veil greater spiritual capacity by its association with and potential to be replaced by the clothing of Christ.

IV. Dressing in Christ: Beyond the Veil of Doubt

Il Beneficio di Cristo represents, as Nagel writes, “the mingled strains of reforming thought in Italy.”²¹² While the authorial and editorial history of the text is controversial, as I note above, it is nevertheless the case that the language of the *Beneficio* draws heavily on that of Valdés and is highly relevant to the examination of Colonna’s poetry. Like the works of Valdés, the *Beneficio* uses the theology of “fede santa e viva.”²¹³ Salvation occurs through Christ, who we reach through “viva fede”: “corriamo con li passi della viva fede a lui nelle braccia, il quale ci invita gridando: ‘Venite a me tutti voi che siete affannati e aggravati, e io vi recrearò.’”²¹⁴ But there is a central

²⁰⁹ Valdés, *Alfabeto cristiano*, 72.

²¹⁰ Valdés, *Alfabeto cristiano*, 14.

²¹¹ For more on Colonna’s adoption in her poetics of Valdés’ position on the interrelationship of faith and doubt, see Brundin, *Vittoria Colonna and the Spiritual Poetics*, 45.

²¹² Nagel, “Gifts for Michelangelo,” 649.

²¹³ *Il Beneficio di Cristo*, 27.

²¹⁴ *Il Beneficio di Cristo*, 19. A similar definition of *fede viva* is found in one of Flaminio’s letters to Teodorina Sauli in 1542: “Questa fede consiste in dar credito all’Evangelio, cioè alla felice nova che è stata publicata da parte di Dio per tutto il mondo, cioè che Dio ha usato il rigore della sua giustizia contro a Cristo, castigando in lui tutti i peccati nostri. Chiunque accetta questa buona nova e la crede veramente, ha la vera fede, e gode la remissione de’ peccati, ed è riconciliato con Dio, e di figliuolo d’ira diventa figliuolo di grazia, e recupera la imagine di Dio, entra nel regno di Dio, e si fa tempio di Dio...per mezzo di questa fede, la quale è opera di Dio e dono di Dio” (30). The editorial notes

difference between the *Beneficio* and Valdés that is relevant to this study of Colonna's poetics, particularly on the matter of doubt. As we have seen, Valdés embraces doubt as a means of acknowledging one's explicit need for God's grace and guidance. Instead, the *Beneficio* is much stricter in its evaluation of doubt: "per la incredulità sua morirebbe in esilio e disgrazia del suo re."²¹⁵ There are consequences for doubt: "Chi non dà fede a questo bando non gode di questo perdono generale; ma per la sua incredulità rimane in esilio sotto alla tirannide del diavolo, e vive e more in estrema misera, vivendo e morendo in disgrazia del Re del cielo e della terra."²¹⁶ In fact, the *Beneficio* condemns doubt as sin:

Oh quanto è grave questo peccato della incredulità, la quale, quanto è in sé, priva Dio della sua gloria e della sua perfezione, oltra al danno della propria dannazione e del continuo cruciato della mente, che sente in questa vita la misera coscienza. Ma all'opposto colui che si accosta a Dio con vero cuore nella certezza della fede, credendo alle promesse di lui senza una minima suspizione, tendendo per certo che tutto quello, che Dio promette, conseguirà.²¹⁷

The harshness of the statement reflects the Lutheran idea that lack of faith—here "suspizione"—is the worst sin of all because it accuses God of lying.²¹⁸ Conversely, the true believer "vive in continua pace e in continua allegrezza, lodando e ringraziando sempre Dio, che l'ha eletto alla gloria della vita eterna."²¹⁹ And moreover, the blessed are the "beati, delli quali Dio ha determinato che, senza fatica e senza alcuna osservazione, per la fede sola, siano giustificati presso a Dio."²²⁰ While it seems obvious that Colonna's poetic persona, in her sincere and humble striving for *fede viva*, would never go so far as to accuse God of lying or approach him through *suspizione*, her doubts nevertheless play a central role in how she grapples with her own faith and humanity's faith more generally. Her faith is not experienced "senza fatica," and her poetics clearly reflect the internal struggle of lacking the perfection of *fede viva*. Contrary to what the *Beneficio* seems to require, she does not live in "continua pace" and "continua allegrezza," her poems often fraught with anxieties about faith and fears about her ultimate inability to achieve *fede viva*.

But there is another concept in the *Beneficio di Cristo* that helps to show where Colonna positions herself between what Abigail Brundin has called the *Beneficio*'s "more militant line" when it comes to doubt, that "condemns the weak Christian for succumbing to the devil and failing to manifest absolute and complete faith,"²²¹ and the contrasting Valdesian notion that "doubts are positive, reflecting the work and effort that the Christian is expending in maintaining his faith."²²² This is the concept of "dressing in Christ." The authors of the *Beneficio* assert that "i veri cristiani" are "vestiti delle giustizia del suo Cristo e liberati per lui dalla maledizione della Legge."²²³ The *Beneficio* is clear that doubt means being "misero e miserabile e povero e cieco e nudo," whereas faith means "vesti[rsi] di vestimenti bianchi, cioè della innocenza di Cristo, accioché non appa

point out that from the word "Chiunque" onwards the idea comes directly from *Romans* and Valdés.

²¹⁵ *Il Beneficio di Cristo*, 31.

²¹⁶ *Il Beneficio di Cristo*, 32.

²¹⁷ *Il Beneficio di Cristo*, 32.

²¹⁸ Caponetto, *Il Beneficio di Cristo*, 32 (note 6).

²¹⁹ *Il Beneficio di Cristo*, 32.

²²⁰ *Il Beneficio di Cristo*, 37.

²²¹ Brundin, *Vittoria Colonna and the Spiritual Poetics*, 55.

²²² Brundin, *Vittoria Colonna and the Spiritual Poetics*, 55.

²²³ *Il Beneficio di Cristo*, 44.

la verogna della tua nudità, cioè la bruttura delli tuoi peccati.”²²⁴ It is interesting that doubt is associated with both blindness and nakedness because it returns us to the tension between human physicality and *fede viva* and draws attention to the Valdesian emphasis on the experience of divine illumination as the source of faith. But more than just an experience, the suggestion in the *Beneficio* is that faith is completely transformative, moving the body to soul, the old to new. Where “noi per la fede ci vestiamo di Cristo,” and where the body is dressed physically in its “mortal velo,” the soul gets spiritually dressed directly in Christ himself.²²⁵

While the body in the *Beneficio* is not described in terms of veils,²²⁶ Colonna’s collection develops the very idea of dressing oneself in Christ through explicit veiling imagery. In Sonnet 60, the poet begins with the effects of God’s light on her faith:

Quando dal lume, il cui vivo splendore
Rende il petto fedel chiaro e sicuro,
Si dissolve per grazia il ghiaccio duro
Che sovente si gela intorno al core.

The “ghiaccio duro” is effectively the veil of doubt that surrounds the poet’s heart, and it is removed, “si dissolve,” through the “lume” from God that transforms the hardened heart into “fedel chiaro e sicuro.” Colonna goes on in the next quatrain to develop the image of clothing more explicitly:

Sento ai bei lampi del possente ardore
Cader de le mie colpe il manto oscuro,
E vestirmi in quel punto il chiaro e puro
De l’innocentia prima e primo amore.

The removal of the veiling ice around the poetic persona’s heart is described furthermore as the removal of the “manto oscuro” of her sins. Indeed, we have seen this very transformation occur elsewhere, as in Sonnet 22, when the poet describes her doubts as the “gelo e nebbia” that are melted, her “ombrosi veli” removed, through God’s “divina luce and fiamma ardente.” Likewise in Sonnet 85, discussed earlier, the poet is able to see through “mille ornati veli” and discern “il chiaro e puro vero.” In this Sonnet 60, however, the process of faith is not limited solely to the removal of the veil—(here the associated “manto,” to be precise)—through God’s “bei lampi del possente ardore,” but involves the subsequent *reclothing* of the body with the “replacement” dress of Christ, “de l’innocentia prima e primo amore.”

And yet, despite the newfound clarity of the poetic persona in these first two quatrains, the

²²⁴ *Il Beneficio di Cristo*, 44. Salvatore Caponetto, in his notes on the text, cites Revelations 3:17-18 as the source for this idea (25). For more on the source of the phrase “clothing oneself in Christ” as Calvinist, see Russell, *Giulia Conzaga*, 105.

²²⁵ *Il Beneficio di Cristo*, 47. The idea of the incorporation of Christ is a Pauline image from Eph. 4:22-24. The idea in the *Beneficio* reflects both Valdés and Luther and Calvin. For more on this relationship of reformist ideas, see Moroncini, *Michelangelo’s Poetry*, 27. See also Brundin, *Sonnets for Michelangelo*, note 169

²²⁶ The only mention of the word “velame” in the *Beneficio* is used to represent the sacrament of communion, which is described in the text as “il velame del santissimo sacramento” and is explicitly listed as a means by which those who are “sollicitati a dubitare della remissione de’ nostri peccati” might be reminded of the celebration of Christ’s death and thus render “le nostre afflitte conscienze sicure della nostra reconciliazione con Dio” (*Il Beneficio di Cristo*, 60). Though not rhetorically the same as Colonna’s, this veil is directed toward the same outcome, faith.

concluding sestet still remains doubtful:

E se ben con segreta e fida chiave
Serro quel raggio, è sì schivo e sottile
Ch'un sol basso pensier par che lo sdegni,
Onde leggier se 'n vola, io mesta e grace
Rimango e pregol che d'ogni ombra vile
Mi spogli onde tornar tosto si degni.

The poet fears that her faith, the “raggio” of divine light, will be lost. Her fear arises once again from the doubts she has about her own blind, human mind and the “basso pensier” that might drive away her faith. Despite the profound transformation from the “manto oscuro” to the clothing of Christ that seems to take place in the first part of the poem, the poet regresses in the final tercet. We are not even in a subjective, hypothetical space now, but a present indicative one, in which the poetic persona imagines herself without the light of God and faith. Not only that, but the initial veils of doubt, implied in “ogni ombra vile,” have also returned, such that she needs additional divine aid to “spogliere” those shadows, those veils, from her mind once again.

In the *Beneficio*, the fear of losing the clothing of Christ is represented as legitimate. Just as one “si veste di Cristo” by knowing that Christ “[è] suo per fede con tutta la sua giustizia, santità e innocenza,” because “la fede certamente fa che noi possediamo Cristo e tutto quello che è di lui... se noi il crediamo, e creder che per questa celeste veste noi siamo grati e accetti nel conspetto di Dio,”²²⁷ so too can one *lose* the clothing of Christ. According to the tract, the devil and other evils threaten to “spogliarci di questa santissima fede.”²²⁸ Forgetting Christ’s sacrifice, for example, removes the clothing of Christ, and thus the Christian needs tools to defend against these threats.²²⁹ Prayers, communion, the memory of baptism,²³⁰ and the trust in predestination are all means of retaining that clothing,²³¹ for “è ottimo remedio contro alla diffidenza e timore, che non è amico della carità cristiana, la memoria della nostra predestinazione e elezione a vita eterna fondata nella parola di Dio.”²³² But should one realize that they do not feel the “mirabili effetti” of faith and therefore come to understand that they are lacking in “la fede cristiana,” requesting God’s help is all that is needed. The text emphasizes the power of prayer to God for help as “un fervente desiderio fondato in Dio” and encourages Christians to request aid explicitly when it comes to doubt: “Signore, aiuta la nostra incredulità!”²³³

Colonna’s sonnets are filled with such prayers to Christ, as in Sonnet 34, where she requests his aid inside her heart to “mostrasser fede viva e speme ardente.” And she describes how he replies, how he *does* aid her. Yet, however important the act of prayer might be, Colonna understands that God’s grace is not dependent on her requests and that his gift of faith originates from that grace, not because of her prayers. Likewise in Sonnet 80, the poet reflects on God’s power, directly associating it both with the imagery of veiling and with the fears that arise in the *Beneficio* and elsewhere in her own sonnets of losing one’s faith. “L’occhio grande e divino,” which sees everything and everywhen, “toglie dal petto ardente sua mercede / I dubbi del servil

²²⁷ *Il Beneficio di Cristo*, 52.

²²⁸ *Il Beneficio di Cristo*, 59.

²²⁹ Luther also focuses on remedies against temptation as Chapter VI of the *Beneficio* does.

²³⁰ The initial justification and dressing in Christ occur at baptism (*Il Beneficio di Cristo*, 60).

²³¹ *Il Beneficio di Cristo*, 59.

²³² *Il Beneficio di Cristo*, 68-9. This idea comes from Valdés.

²³³ *Il Beneficio di Cristo*, 59.

freddo timore.” God is all-seeing and all knowing—“i momenti tutti e l’ore, / Le parole, i pensier, l’opre e la fede / Discerne”—such that “né velar altrui concede / Per inganni o per forza un puro core.” No one can—or should, for that matter—veil their own hearts from God.

While these instances of veiling and unveiling reflect the doubt-faith dialectic we have seen elsewhere in the collection, the association in the *Beneficio* between faith and the clothing of Christ and the further association Colonna makes in her *rime* between the clothing of Christ and the removal of the veil suggest something more. In Sonnet 60 discussed above, Colonna uses the veil image to represent the condition of doubt and then the concept of dressing in Christ to represent the condition of faith to show another part of the process of spiritual transcendence: the veil has the potential to be replaced with the clothing of Christ, just as doubts have the potential to be replaced by faith. What’s more, Colonna’s association of the veil with the *Beneficio*’s concept of dressing in Christ and her attempt in poems like Sonnet 80, as mentioned just above, to retain that clothing for herself through prayer also serves to highlight how she understands doubt in light of the *Beneficio*’s position on it. While God’s role in removing one’s “dubbi del servil freddo timore” is obvious, she shows, in line with Valdesian thinking as well, that it is also important for believers to attempt to remove their own veils of doubt—by means of prayer, for example—for the sake of receiving the clothing of Christ. At the end of Sonnet 80, Colonna addresses her readers, explaining their role in unveiling themselves by banishing doubts, as the *Beneficio* insists, and “con la speme accesa e dolor vero / Aprir dentro passando oltra la gonna / I falli nostri a solo a sol con lui.” Here, “gonna” is at once the physical body and the doubts that must be overcome for spiritual transcendence. In this way, the veil of blindness is, like the “manto oscuro” of Sonnet 60, an important part of that spiritual process because, however paradoxically, its removal constitutes the clothing of Christ.

Of course, this conception of the veil’s potential to become the clothing of Christ, just as doubts can be transformed into faith, is not as easily resolved for Colonna as the *Beneficio* implies it should be. What Colonna is grappling with as she tries to understand the veil of blindness in the context of the clothing of Christ, as, respectively, doubt and faith, is how to manifest this faith in terms of the paradoxical doctrine of *sola fide*. Though she continues to experience feelings of doubt, she understands that she has the power to remove the veil, in the way that the *Beneficio* asserts that believers have the power to simply not doubt, to simply have faith. In a sense, the experience of faith posited by the doctrine of *sola fide* is two-sided: the believer banishes his doubts and removes his own veil, while at the same time God replaces that veil with the clothing of Christ. But of course, to “remove” one’s own doubts is the very same act as believing that God’s grace grants the faith necessary to remove the doubts in the first place. As Colonna’s use of the veil image, which responds directly to the concept of dressing in Christ presented in the *Beneficio*, transforms the veil from a mere symbol of spiritual blindness to one that signifies its theological opposite—that is, the potential for spiritual illumination—Colonna’s collection gets at the theological tension caused by *sola fide*. The point in the *Beneficio* seems to be the unsatisfying and confusing command to *just have faith*. It is only in Colonna’s turn to exemplarity and mediation, I argue, that she finds a less paradoxical and more comprehensible way of understanding the solafideist relationship between faith and doubt.

V. Revelation Mediated through Exemplarity

While the image of the veil symbolizes first spiritual blindness and the absence of faith, and then,

through its association with the clothing of Christ, the potential to transform doubt into faith, it is only when Colonna turns her attention in the collection to exemplarity that the image of the veil becomes a symbol of mediation that grants access to divine revelation and illumination. The poet follows the guidance of the *Beneficio di Cristo*, which emphasizes the importance of spiritual exemplarity in matters of Christian faith. As she looks to her own exemplars—notably the Virgin Mary—the poetic persona in turn follows the Virgin’s exemplarity and in doing so models the Virgin’s mediation, a relationship which Colonna associates with the image of the veil. As part of Colonna’s evangelism, this mediation is presented in the collection as the gift of spiritual guidance from Colonna to her readers, and to Christian believers more generally.

The general solution to the experiences of doubt and fear presented in the *Beneficio* remains overwhelmingly paradoxical in its simplicity: first, the text instructs, “guardiamoci dai peccati quanto più possiamo,”²³⁴ and then “avendo noi accettato la grazia del Evangelio, per la qual l’uomo e ricevuto da Dio per figliuolo, non dobbiamo dubitare della grazia e benevolenza di Dio.”²³⁵ In order to have faith, simply have faith, for the true Christian does not have to fear: “l pio cristiano non ha da dubitare della remissione dei suoi peccati, né della grazia di Dio.”²³⁶ But there are other, slightly more tangible actions the believer can take to relieve his feelings of doubt: prayers, meditations, communion, and remembering the predestination accorded at baptism are all means of dressing oneself in Christ. And exemplarity, the *Beneficio* asserts, drawing from Calvin and Valdés, is another one of these actions, an “altro modo del vestirsi di Cristo, il quale possiamo chiamar esemplare, perché il cristiano dèe regolare tutta la vita sua all’esempio di Cristo, conformandosi con lui in tutti i pensieri, le parole e le operazioni, lasciando la mala vita passata e vestendosi della nuova, cioè di quella di Cristo.”²³⁷

The importance of exemplarity, the text goes on, paraphrasing an entire passage from Luther, is that:

Poiché Cristo, non avendo bisogno di me, m’ha ricuperato col suo proprio sangue, et è divenuto povero per arricchir me, medesimamente io voglio dare la roba e la vita propria per amore e salute del prossimo; e, sì come io mi sono vestito di Cristo per lo amore che mi ha portato, così voglio io che ’l mio prossimo in Cristo, per lo amore che io li porto per amore di Cristo, si vesta di me e delle mie facultà.²³⁸

Modeling Christ’s sacrifice, his gift of grace, means *giving* oneself, one’s things, and one’s life for the health and love of one’s neighbor. The act of following the example of Christ is a direct means of growing faith and “vestirsi di Cristo” because it continually recognizes the sacrifice of Christ for humankind, the sacrifice’s imitation continually enriching the experience of faith of the imitator. Furthermore, the text argues, the importance of exemplarity is connected to the importance of community building:

eccitando nelli animi nostri uno amore ardente verso il prossimo, perché qual strimolo maggiore ci può incitare allo amor mutuo, che vedere che Cristo, donando sé medesimo a noi, non solamente ci invita a donarci l’uno a l’altro, ma, in quanto si fa commune a tutti noi, fa ancora che tutti noi in lui siamo una medesima cosa; onde dobbiamo desiderare e

²³⁴ *Il Beneficio di Cristo*, 71.

²³⁵ *Il Beneficio di Cristo*, 72.

²³⁶ *Il Beneficio di Cristo*, 77, 79.

²³⁷ *Il Beneficio di Cristo*, 54.

²³⁸ *Il Beneficio di Cristo*, 54.

procurare che in tutti noi sia una sola anima.²³⁹

Such a project of exemplarity for the sake of community building necessarily returns us to the emphasis placed by Valdés on listening and responding to the doctrine, or *Legge*, of the *Evangelio*, a central component, as we have seen, of overcoming *fede morta* for *fede viva*, as articulated to the fictional Giulia in the *Alfabeto cristiano*. And, of course, the importance of this evangelism in the *Beneficio* also returns us to the project of the *Spirituali*, defined by Paolo Simoncelli as consisting “nell’accentuazione della vita morale cristiana secondo la *pratica* e la riduzione della *dottrina* dell’Evangelo.”²⁴⁰

In specific instances throughout her collection, Colonna emphasizes the importance of exemplarity in her own experience of Christian faith. In Sonnet 89, the poet depicts Christ as the ultimate example, whose baptism in the “sacro fiume” not only purified himself but also “lavar seco tutto ’l seme umano.” Collectivity is important in Colonna’s collection, as it is in the *Beneficio*, because of the fact that Christ now continually “dona il pegno / Con la colomba ed ei con l’opra umile,” his actions providing salvation to the entirety of humanity. In response, the poet calls on herself and her readers to follow Christ’s exemplarity: “Ubidir dessi al suon de l’infinita / Virtute, e creder sempre a sì bel segno, / Seguendo poi l’esempio alto e gentile.”

But the *Beneficio*’s emphasis on exemplarity as central to community, and the evangelical project of the *Spirituali* which is evident in Colonna’s sonnets, beg the question of which community exactly the poet is addressing in these poems. As Jonathan Culler points out in his treatment of the lyric, Petrarchan lyric poems utilize lyric address as “rhetorical strategy” to triangulate the message of the poems.²⁴¹ In the case of Petrarch, the triangle connects the lover, the beloved, and the lover’s social audience, who rather than the beloved herself become the true interlocutors of the poetic persona. For Colonna, who’s subject (and object) is God, the triangulation connects the poetic persona, God or Christ, and her spiritual peers—here, also her readers. As Culler notes, furthermore, the lyric triangulation also emphasizes the division between “private” and “public” spaces²⁴² (for Colonna, the terms “individual” and “communal” are perhaps more helpful²⁴³) that in turn reflects the Renaissance lyric’s engagement with “social action”—action that might include “positing a conception of an intense, often divided inner affective life, promoting literate culture through [the sonnets’] success as a socially valued virtuoso display in courtly or aristocratic settings, and advancing the prestige of national languages,”²⁴⁴ among other types of work. Indeed, while the sonnets in their manuscript form become the personal gift for Michelangelo, the poetically constructed space that the poems develop make a point of addressing a much broader community of believers whom the poet divides in terms of their conditions as true or false Christians. Her collection’s social “work” seeks to spread the evangelical message to those believers about the true *fede viva*.

In Sonnet 54, the “spirti beati” fight on God’s behalf, “Non di ferro o d’orgoglio o d’ira armati, / Ma di concetti in Dio stabili e veri.” The poetic persona describes her desire to witness their battle

²³⁹ *Il Beneficio di Cristo*, 67. The origin of this sentiment is Calvinist.

²⁴⁰ Simoncelli, *Evangelismo italiano*, xx.

²⁴¹ Culler, *Theory of the Lyric*, 206.

²⁴² Culler, *Theory of the Lyric*, 315.

²⁴³ It is worth pointing out that as a response to Italian Reform during the 1530s and 1540s, the poet’s focus on both the communal and the individual aspects of faith testifies to the ambiguous doctrine of *sola fide* within the Italian Reform context: her *solafideism* is neither entirely individual as it is for Protestants, nor is it entirely communal, as it is (and will become more strictly after Trent) for Catholics.

²⁴⁴ Culler, *Theory of the Lyric*, 320-21.

“con puri alti pensieri” (the mind untethered by its human reason or blinding, metaphorical veils) against “i nemici, che in se stessi alteri / Insuperbir dal proprio amor legati.” The enemies of the blessed are those who have not learned the Valdesian process of “unloving” oneself in order to love only God. They are the false Christians who are “ciechi ed ingrati / Sol per imagin false arditì e ferì.” Colonna positions her poetic persona against the false Christians. Indeed, the parallel between the poetic persona’s “puri alti pensieri” and the angels’ “concetti... stabili e veri” serves to show her alignment against the enemies “ciechi ed ingrati.” She denounces the enemies’ “proprio amor” over Christ’s “infinito amore,” thus implicitly aligning herself not only against the false Christians and enemies but with the blessed souls.

A similar hierarchy between true and false Christians is established both in Valdés’ writings and in the *Beneficio*, where the latter defines true Christians as “inamorati del suo Dio e armati della notizia della loro predestinazione, non temono la morte, né ’l peccato, né ’l diavolo, né l’inferno”; they know themselves to be “salvi e gloriosi, e che per questa fiducia si santificano come Cristo è santo.”²⁴⁵ True Christians are, moreover, “vestiti delle giustizia del suo Cristo e liberati per lui dalla maledizione della Legge”;²⁴⁶ the “vero cristiano, cioè colui che si tiene giusto per la giustizia di Cristo, non domanda se le buone opere sono di precetto o no, ma, commosso e incitato da una violenza di amor divino, s’offerisce prontissimo alle opere sante e cristiane, né mai cessa dal bene operare.”²⁴⁷ The language of “veri cristiani” is contrasted directly with the “falsi cristiani,” otherwise described as “li nemici” of the true Christians, who cause “le ignominie e le persecuzioni” that the true Christians must tolerate,²⁴⁸ and the “cristiani licenziosi,” who “non servando il decoro delli figliuoli di Dio, deeno esser trattati come servi e tenuti in timore, infin che gustino quanto è soave il Signore, e che la fede faccia in loro gli effetti suoi.”²⁴⁹ The same language is found in Valdesian theology, which describes the antithesis between “la fede morta dei falsi cristiani e la fede viva di quanti invece conoscono la libertà evangelica, tra lettera e spirito, tra governo della prudenza umana e governo dello spirito.”²⁵⁰ The distinction reflects, moreover, the Valdesian relationship between *Legge* and *Evangelio*, where the former corresponds to “falsa religione” because it is superstitious and the latter corresponds to “vera religione” because it embraces grace from Christ.²⁵¹

Throughout her collection, Colonna continues to distinguish between these two types of believers in a similar way, deliberately positioning herself against the false Christians. In Sonnet 59, Colonna situates her poetic persona not merely as above the false Christians, able to recognize their errors and evils; here she fights to defend her faith against the doubters:

Parrà forse ad alcun che non ben sano
Sia il mio parlar de l’invisibil cose,
Tanto a l’occhio mortal lontane ascose,
Che son sopra l’ingegno e corso umano.

Within the poetics of faith and veiling that the poet develops throughout the collection, the “invisibil cose,” which the non-believers might claim are “non ben sano,” are those things that the

²⁴⁵ *Il Beneficio di Cristo*, 70.

²⁴⁶ *Il Beneficio di Cristo*, 25.

²⁴⁷ *Il Beneficio di Cristo*, 44.

²⁴⁸ *Il Beneficio di Cristo*, 55.

²⁴⁹ *Il Beneficio di Cristo*, 78.

²⁵⁰ Firpo, “Introduzione,” lxxxiii.

²⁵¹ Firpo, “Introduzione,” lxxxix.

poet sees with her internal, unveiled eyes rather than with “l’occhio mortal.” They are the ideas and beliefs that require faith because they are above the “ingegno” of the human mind. “Costor,” she goes on, have not experienced the same enlightenment that she has, to be able to identify the “Glorie del mondo” as “ventose” and “in vano.” Instead, her “fede” guides her, urging her on toward “il desire e... i grandi / Oblighi eterni al mio dolce Signore,” in spite of those doubts of others. That the means by which the poetic persona *sees* the truth is faith should of course come as no surprise. In Sonnet 97 too, the poetic persona compares her faith to an impenetrable rock that holds steady against the waves that try to crash around it, but “Se salda il trova, ... / cade in se medesima l’onda.” Her own faith is a similar rock, against which the “profonda / Acqua mondana irata,” the metaphorical waves of doubt, try to crash. The poetics of faith in this poem involves first the poetic persona’s fixed gaze on heaven (“Fermo al ciel gli occhi”) and then finding the true, “living rock” on the (metaphorical) shore, the “viva pietra” that is Christ, in whom, she says, “mi fido.”

We can see in these expressions of faith the poet’s evangelical drive: she seeks to see the truth, to defend the truth, and, importantly, to help others find the truth against the attacks by false Christians, by non-believers, by skeptics, and by enemies. Indeed, the entire collection is structured around this very project of exemplarity and guidance. Following the Petrarchan trope of metapoetically drawing attention to the poems as poems and addressing their purpose, Colonna opens the *canzoniere* in Sonnet 1 with an invocation to “il Signor, onde ’l rimedio venne.” Using the imagery of Christ’s corporality, where she describes the sonnet as a body made up of “puro inchiostro” (the “prezioso sangue”) and “Vergata carta” (the “sacro corpo”), the poet declares that she will write for others, “ad altrui,” what Christ has suffered. From the opening poem, the poet clearly positions herself as the spiritual guide for her readers. But she also requests from God that he be her guide in turn: “Quel sol, che alluma gli elementi e ’l cielo, / Prego ch’aprendo il suo lucido fonte / Mi porga umor a la gran sete eguale.” The illumination sought in this request is not merely the standard poetic illumination requested from one’s literary “muse,” but, of course, announces the more profound spiritual stakes of her collection. As Ambra Moroncini notes, “This inner faith was also emphasized in the sonnet of conversion with which Colonna introduced her spiritual poetry, thereby confessing her resolve to abandon the sources of Parnassus in order to seek eternal life, which is faith in Christ on the Cross.”²⁵² One clear goal of the poet’s is to not only exemplify Christ’s light, grace, and goodness, but in that exemplification to demonstrate also how one reaches the *fede viva* of that illumination and grace, as Brundin writes about this opening sonnet:

The poet’s sense of the evangelical impact of her poetic enterprise is also significant, indicating her awareness that, even as she edge towards an increasingly reformed understanding of the role of faith in salvation, she reserves an active role for poetry in demonstrating, to herself and others, the nature of a new kind of personal and communal illumination: “Sì ch’io scriva ad altrui quel qu’ei sostiene.”²⁵³

The project of Colonna’s mediation of the divine in her poems connects even more profoundly to the *Beneficio di Cristo*, where exemplarity does not solely signify acting with love and generosity toward “il prossimo,” but means explicitly “becoming another Christ”:

²⁵² Moroncini, *Michelangelo’s Poetry*, 107.

²⁵³ Brundin, *Vittoria Colonna and the Spiritual Poetics*, 45. Fiora Bassanese interprets this opening sonnet as exemplifying the “personal relationship” of the poet with Christ, suggesting that her project is not only evangelical, but a means of “devotion and self-reflection” as well (Bassanese, “Vittoria Colonna’s Man/God,” 272).

In questo medesimo modo noi, ricchi e abbondanti dei beni di Cristo, dobbiamo essere ubbidienti a Dio, e offerire e donare le nostre opere e ogni cosa nostra e noi medesimi alli prossimi e fratelli nostri in Cristo, servendoli in tutti i loro bisogni et essendoli quasi un altro Cristo.²⁵⁴

The advocacy of exemplarity as a direct mechanism for faith and justification in the *Beneficio* invites the reader not only to place emphasis on the poet's guidance of others but also on her own personal relationship with Christ, where exemplarity goes both ways: from Christ to the exemplary Christian, to the "prossimo" Christian.

In her poetry, Colonna highlights the role of exemplarity as a part of mediation of divine revelation. In Sonnet 100 specifically the poetic persona is positioned among those on earth searching for faith and, in that search, also guidance; she thus addresses the Virgin:

Eterna luna, alor che fra 'l sol vero
E gli occhi nostri il tuo mortal ponesti,
Lui non macchiasti e specchio a noi porgesti
Da mirar fiso nel suo lume altero.²⁵⁵

As the "Eterna luna" to the sun, the Virgin mediates between the eyes of humankind and God, the "sol vero." The mediation of the "moon" tempers God's blinding light in such a way that "Lui non macchiasti," the poet writes, but rather allows those human eyes a mirror in which to look directly into the otherwise impenetrable and inaccessible "lume altero" of God. What looks like implicit veiling imagery in this first quatrain becomes explicitly about veils in the second:

Non l'adombrasti, ma quel denso e nero
Velo del primo error, coi santi onesti
Tuoï prieghi e i vivi suoi raggi, rendesti
D'ombroso e grave candido e leggiero.

The Virgin's mediating light, which tempers God's blinding light and in a way acts like a veil for "gli occhi nostri"—here explicitly one that is revelatory—has the additional function of also removing the human "Velo del primo error." The Virgin mediates God's "vivi suoi raggi," not only "veiling" them to make them visible, but in such a way that instead of casting a shadow over *him* ("Non l'adombrasti"), she removes the shadow over humankind. This tempering is made explicit in the first tercet in the transformation from dark to bright, night to light: "Col chiaro che da lui prendi l'oscuro / De le notti ne togli, e la serena / Tua luce, il calor suo temprà sovente."²⁵⁶

Lewalski's exploration of the Protestant poetics in seventeenth-century English devotional poetry draws attention to the biblical metaphors of light and veils as they relate to faith:

Further tension is introduced through texts wherein veils and obscured vision are given a

²⁵⁴ *Il Beneficio di Cristo*, 54. This passage is paraphrased from Luther's *De libertate cristiana*.

²⁵⁵ For more on Colonna's treatment of the Virgin Mary in her sonnets, on how the centrality accorded Mary in the collection positions Colonna as more Catholic than Protestant, and on how faith is conceived in Colonna's work in terms of the passionate, physical bond between creature and creator, see, respectively, Cox, *The Prodigious Muse*, 33, 65; Cox, *Lyric Poetry by Women*, 8-9; Cox, *Women's Writing in Italy* (2008), 73.

²⁵⁶ Sapegno discusses this sonnet, referring explicitly to the motif of the "mortal velo" but not connecting the image to the other kinds of veils at play here (Sapegno, "The Rime: A Textual Conundrum?" 181).

positive value—Christ’s flesh as a veil hiding the majesty of the godhead lest we be blinded... and the association of faith with blindness in 2 Corinthians 5:7, “For we walke by faith, not by sight,” and in Hebrews 11:1, “Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.”²⁵⁷

This reversal from negative to positive is exactly what we see in Sonnet 100, where the value of the veil goes from symbolizing doubt, the inability to reach *fede viva*, and the overall lack of spiritual illumination, to mediating, tempering, and thus revelatory. Furthermore, the Virgin’s removal of the “denso e nero / Velo del primo error” is transformed by God’s “vivi suoi raggi” into “candido e leggiro,” the new light replacing the “veil” like the clothing of the “innocentia” of Christ that replaces the “manto oscuro” in Sonnet 60.

In another instance, in Sonnet 53, the poet turns once again to the Virgin Mary as the ultimate mediatrix for guidance and exemplarity and develops the image of the veil now as one that is directly involved in spiritual revelation:

Stella del nostro mar chiara e sicura,
Che il sol del paradiso in terra ornasti
Del mortal sacro manto, anzi adombrasti
Col virginal velo la sua luce pura.

The “mortal sacro manto” that adorned the “sol del paradiso” refers of course to Mary’s role in Christ’s incarnation, where the “mortal” aspect of that “manto” brings us back to the representation of the veil, mantle, or clothing as the physical, earthly body (just as we see in Petrarch and elsewhere in Colonna’s sonnets). But the “virginal velo” that covers “la sua luce pura” also refers to the Virgin’s ongoing mediating role in the spiritual illumination of those on earth. Her veil, metaphorically herself, mediates between the earth and the heavens, as evidenced by this very poem and Colonna’s invocation of her more generally as part of her poetics of faith. The Virgin mediates between human and divine both by removing the human veil of original sin and by placing the divine veil of her own light to allow God to be revealed.

In line with the exhortation of the *Beneficio* that the faithful Christian demonstrate his or her faith in relation to others by “essendoli quasi un altro Cristo,” Colonna cultivates a similar relationship of direct exemplarity and imitation with the Virgin Mary.²⁵⁸ In Sonnet 26, Mary’s exemplary faith is something that the poetic persona seeks to directly mirror:

E fermato il desio fermar le piante
Sovra un gran monte; ond’io mi specchio e tergo
Nel bello esempio e ’l pensier drizzo e ergo
Dietro l’orme beate e l’opre sante.

The poetic persona mirrors herself in Mary and imitates the Virgin’s exemplary “orme” and “opre sante.” In taking the Virgin as a means in her poetics of faith of increasing or enhancing that faith, since the Virgin is a central figure of mediation for God, Colonna also establishes a clear model of

²⁵⁷ Lewalski, *Protestant Poetics*, 90.

²⁵⁸ Other models that Colonna takes as exemplars include Catherine of Alexandria in Sonnet 83. Colonna thinks of Catherine not only as a model for herself, but as a model for countless others on earth. More specifically, Catherine is a model of the “viva” and “verace” faith that the poetic persona has sought throughout the entire collection. Interestingly, Catherine’s body also has a “mortal velo.”

exemplary mediation. Mary is not just a mediator for Colonna; as the poetic persona imitates the Virgin, she becomes a mediator for readers.

Furthermore, the poet's mediation between the divine and her readers manifests in those sonnets where Colonna makes direct requests to God on behalf of the unfaithful souls on earth.²⁵⁹ In Sonnet 4, the poet writes:

Di vero lume abisso immenso e puro,
Con l'alta tua pietà, le luci amiche
Rivolgi a questi quasi vil formiche,
Saggi del mondo, c'hanno il cor sì duro.

The description of "Saggi del mondo, c'hanno il cor sì duro" is clearly evocative of the statements Colonna makes elsewhere in the collection about her own insolent human reason and "indurato petto" (Sonnet 13). But she goes on in this sonnet with the specifics of her request to God:

Rompi de l'ignoranza il grosso muro
Ch'ancor li copre di quelle ombre antiche
Del vecchio Adamo, fredde empie nemiche
Al caldo raggio tuo chiaro e sicuro.

It should come as no surprise that the problem for these unfaithful "vil formiche" on earth is their doubt, here attributed to the "grosso muro" of "ignoranza" created by the "ombre antiche" (another kind of veil) at Adam's original sin. It should also come as no surprise that the solution to this problem is the "caldo raggio... chiaro e sicuro" of God. Colonna's rhetorical role in this sonnet does effectively mirror the veil-removing, revelation-through-light-imagery that we see in the figure of the Virgin in Sonnets 53 and 100.

The poet's mediation and exemplarity bring us back to the status of the Vatican manuscript as a gift for Michelangelo and the broader context of the "gift" in Italian Reformist thinking, the highest and most exemplary gift of all being God's gift of justification through grace by faith. As I have discussed, the opening sonnet establishes the poet's apparent project in the collection: to write as a guide for others of Christ's sacrifice. Sarah Prodan certainly reads the collection's end goal in this way, contextualizing Colonna's broader goal as one of teaching and exemplarity:

Vittoria Colonna's letters as well as her writings seem to have served an almost dogmatic spiritual function echoing Valdés's guidance in the *Alfabeto Cristiano* to seek advice from those who have been illuminated through the light of others so that they may then illuminate you. For Colonna, and the Viterbo circle more generally, the illumination was noetic and was effected by the Holy Spirit operating through the group's members. In the Viterbo community, justification by grace through faith was exemplified and the words they exchanged, in poetry or prose, were thought to promote the spiritual life of both originator and recipient.²⁶⁰

If the opening sonnet frames the collection as having this Valdesian "dogmatic spiritual function,"

²⁵⁹ Of course, this is not to suggest that the unfaithful are truly the readers of Colonna's manuscript. But within the rhetorical space of the sonnet, where the poetic persona effectively gives voice to the poet herself, we have at least the suggestion that the requests to God mediate on behalf of a potential struggling readership.

²⁶⁰ Prodan, *Michelangelo's Christian Mysticism*, 120.

the final two sonnets of the collection respond to that initial conceit. In Sonnet 102, the poet dedicates an entire poem to explaining the guiding role of her poetry:

Ma dal foco divin, che 'l mio intelletto,
Sua mercé, infiamma, convien ch'escan fore
Mal mio grado talor queste faville,

Et s'alcuna di lor un gentil core
Avien che scaldi, mille volte e mille
Ringraziar debbo il mio felice errore.

She affirms the “foco divin” as, first and foremost, acting on her mind—something her readers may have doubted in the sonnets that the poet fills with uncertainty, anxiety, and fear about the quality of her *fede*. Here there seems to be no question that hers is a *fede viva*, inflamed by spiritual illumination. As Brundin notes about this sonnet, “The manuscript gift for Michelangelo is firmly established as divinely inspired and conferred, and thus the poet’s authority is also subtly reconfirmed.”²⁶¹ The poet’s hope is that from “queste faville” perhaps the “gentil cor” of one of her readers will be affected, warmed by her fire and the mediated spiritual illumination that she conveys, like the Virgin, from God to others. Interestingly, she refers to this process as “il mio felice errore,” suggesting not that the altruistic intentions of circulating such work as a way of mediating divine illumination is an error, but that ultimately the effects of divine illumination only *happen* to come through the poet herself, through her “rozza incolta rima” whose “cura prima” is not beautiful poetry but the promotion of *fede viva* and justification by faith, for of course every spark of grace comes from God alone.²⁶²

Almost ironically, the final poem returns to the doubt that we have seen elsewhere in the collection, despite the sense of authority and security suggested, if not outright stated, in the penultimate sonnet:

Temo che 'l laccio, ov'io molt'anni presi
Tenni li spirti, odisca or la mia rima
Sol per usanza, e non per quella prima
Cagion d'averli in Dio volti e accesi.

The poetic persona becomes concerned not just about her real intentions for this manuscript but with her faith more generally, fearing that her sonnets may not truly be inflamed (“accesi”) with spiritual illumination from God. She repeats the verb “Temo” in the first two quatrains, admitting her fear of the idea that her own faith is entirely misconceived. The humble pride of Sonnet 102 for her “rozza incolta rima” is replaced in Sonnet 103 with doubts about the verses that she has

²⁶¹ Brundin, *Sonnet for Michelangelo*, note 291.

²⁶² Brundin writes about this sonnet that “The poet’s self-effacing denouncement of her work in the quatrains reads as a standard literary ploy to establish modesty and humility, especially when read alongside the statements that follow” (Brundin, *Sonnet for Michelangelo*, note 289). For more on the self-deprecation of the poet regarding her poetry, see McAuliffe, “Vittoria Colonna and Renaissance Poetics,” 541; Abigail Brundin, “Poesia come devozione: leggere le rime di Vittoria Colonna,” in *Al crocevia della storia: poesia, religione e politica in Vittoria Colonna*. Ed. Maria Serena Sapegno (Rome: Viella, 2016), 162. Virginia Cox thinks of this humility as part of the early sixteenth-century culture of Petrarchism and “Neoplatonic high-mindedness, which allowed even the most ‘decent’ women to speak of love without compromising their social position” (Cox, *The Prodigious Muse*, 47).

made “con sorda lima.” Likewise, she doubts even that “cura prima” of Sonnet 102, here questioning what has been her true “prima / Cagion” for writing in the first place. The feelings of “falsa stima” and the inability to see their good use (“giovar”) echo the earlier feelings of doubt that she expresses elsewhere in the manuscript. And she hopes—though it is a violent, fearful hope, and not a joyous one—that her faith is true and therefore that God will recognize it as true and burn her heart with his fire: “Esser dee il canto vèr colui ch’ascolta / Dal cielo, e al cor non a lo stil riguarda.”

Up until this final sonnet, which stresses the same anxious doubts it seemed the poet had resolved, the “gift” of Colonna’s manuscript had appeared to be the evangelical message that by the end of the collection the veils of doubt are removed, faith is achieved, the fear and anxiety of living without *fede viva* and divine illumination are completely relieved. Indeed, Jonathan Culler outlines a crucial difference between Petrarchan love lyrics and post-Petrarchan spiritual lyrics. In a Petrarchan sonnet, he notes, “Love is taken to structure one’s existence, which becomes an oscillation between affective extremes rather than a teleological development (as in the Christian scenario).”²⁶³ This distinction draws our attention to the fact that throughout Colonna’s *canzoniere*, which is of course emphatically Christian, there is no obvious teleological development. This final sonnet is a testament to that absence in its reversal of whatever resolution the previous sonnet may have evoked. Contrary to Culler’s characterization, we see in Colonna’s sonnets the same fluctuations that the Petrarchan lover experiences, her poetic persona’s affective conditions oscillating, to no apparent end (even at the end), between feelings of faith and feelings of doubt.

My argument here is that this inconsistency is precisely the point that the poet wants to make and a fundamental consequence—I believe intentionally pursued—of her use of the Petrarchan model. Colonna’s spiritual *canzoniere* follows the poetic persona’s dialectical experience within the fragmentary and atemporal space of her 103 lyric poems.²⁶⁴ She feels in an early sonnet that her veil of blindness is removed by God only to experience much later in the collection that she is just as veiled as she ever has been. This is because the lyric sequence in its present tense is not bound by narrative or chronology. As Culler notes, “the past tense is a narrative tense and provokes the desire to know what happens next.”²⁶⁵ If we were to write the “narrative” of Colonna’s lyric collection, we might say that it depicts a process of spiritual transcendence, whereby the poet’s doubts are initially symbolized by the imagery of the veil of blindness, which is then transformed into a symbol that has the potential to become the clothing of Christ (that is, faith); and finally, the veil image takes on an entirely transcended signification becoming a mediating figure, metaphorically likened to the Virgin Mary herself, and thus leading to true faith and divine revelation. By jumping around Colonna’s collection in my examinations, this is, in a way, exactly how I have told the story of the veil in Colonna’s poetics.

What I want to argue, however, is that Colonna represents the veil image as symbolizing three different significations within the atemporal space of her sonnets in order to show that the veil image reflects all three significations, not chronologically, but simultaneously. Interpreted in this way, the veil is transformed throughout the *canzoniere*, not from one symbol to another, but from a mere symbol, a mere poetic figure, into a hermeneutic, into a *process* of spiritual faith. As a hermeneutic veil reflecting this process, the point is that faith is ongoing, that it too can occur, and

²⁶³ Culler, *Theory of the Lyric*, 315.

²⁶⁴ For more on the sonnet’s dialectical form within a given poem, see Paul Oppenheimer, “The Origin of the Sonnet,” *Comparative Literature* 34 4 (1982): 293, 299; Amanda Holton, “An Obscured Tradition: The Sonnet and its Fourteen-Line Predecessors,” *The Review of English Studies* 62 255 (2011): 384.

²⁶⁵ Culler, *Theory of the Lyric*, 277.

in fact must coexist, as Valdés and the *Beneficio* assert, alongside doubt. The “narrative” of faith that is told in the collection is the poet’s—and others’—comprehension of this paradox, which must be continually revisited, faith and doubt held simultaneously in an ongoing experience of religious hermeneutics. The “narrative” of Colonna’s collection is not chronological, nor is it necessarily dramatized in the sonnets: there is no definite moment of transformation or spiritual illumination that has taken place by the end of the 103 sonnets. Instead, the “narrative” is theoretical; it is the development—and the communication—of the process of spiritual illumination based on a hermeneutics of faith that understands doubt and faith as two parts of one experience. The “narrative” is thus the future potential of the interpreter, of the believer, a potential that is represented and contained in the (multi-signifying) image of the hermeneutic veil.

The Petrarchan form is central to Colonna’s poetic project because it allows her to draw on its elements in its social work—the “problem” to be overcome, the motif of entrapment, the psychological oscillations, the hope for spiritual elevation, and so on. But she capitalizes on this form for theological ends, ultimately developing a hermeneutics of faith that builds upon the religious thought of Valdés and the *Beneficio* and comes to understand that doubt and faith are two sides of the solafideist experience by understanding that these are the same two sides of the hermeneutic veil. The way that Colonna mediates on behalf of her readers is by communicating this hermeneutics of the veil, by showing that faith and doubt coexist. The gift that Colonna gives to her readers is her own exemplarity, her guidance as an interpreter of the process of spiritual transcendence and faith, which demonstrates that a transformation from blindness to mediation is possible but also that, until the very last sonnet, faith and doubt are a packaged deal, that doubt is, moreover, part of the process of faith.

Colonna’s gift of exemplarity and mediation on behalf of her readers to understand the paradox of *sola fide* (that all it takes is faith alone), is ultimately also a response to and meditation on the Reformed belief in justification as God’s ultimate gift of gifts: If one believes in *sola fide*, why do doubts seem to persist? In Sonnet 39, the poetic persona asks if it is better to give a gift or simply to accept one:

Suol nascer dubbio se di più legarsi
 Il donare ad altrui segno è maggiore,
 O se ’l ricever con pietoso amore
 Pegno è sicuro assai di più obbligarsi.

She answers her own question by recalling once again how “il vero amante, Dio” came to earth in human form to give the gift of “suo amore / Divino” that removed “il nostro errore / Umano.” Humankind thus remained, after receiving these “larghi doni,” both humble and grateful while also so “sicuro” in the faith in God’s gifts, “Sì che di fede viva e d’amor arda.” The poet concludes this affirmation of *sola fide* and *fede viva* and the certainty of justification by faith with an explanation of why it seems impossible to rid oneself of all doubts entirely:

Ma la tanta sua luce il nostro oscuro
 Occhio, da color falsi qui turbato,
 Quanto risplende più, meno riguarda.

The brighter God’s light, illumination, goodness, and grace, the harder it is for our obscured, veiled, human eyes to see. Paradoxically, that grace is all the more reason to believe.

CHAPTER 2

Testing Faith with the Hermeneutic Veil in Torquato Tasso's *Gerusalemme liberata*

In one of the most climactic moments of the *Gerusalemme liberata* (1581)—perhaps *the* moment of greatest divine revelation—the archangel Michael reveals to Goffredo the army of God fighting alongside the Christians:

S'offerse a gli occhi di Goffredo allora,
invisibile altrui, l'agnol Michele
cinto d'armi celesti; e vinto fòra
il sol da lui, cui nulla nube vele.
“Ecco,” disse “Goffredo, è giunto l'ora
ch'esca Sion di servitù crudele.
Non chinare, non chinare gli occhi smarriti;
mira con quante forze il Ciel t'aiti.

Drizza pur gli occhi a riguardar l'immenso
essercito immortal ch'è in aria accolto,
ch'io dinanzi torrotti il nuvol denso
di vostra umanità, ch'intorno avvolto
adombrando t'appanna il mortal senso,
sì che vedrai gli ignudi spirti in volto;
e sostener per brevi spazio i rai
de l'angeliche forme anco potrai. (18.92-3).¹

Invisible to everyone else, Michael removes the “nuvol denso” of Goffredo's humanity, of his human perception and “mortal senso,” that otherwise prevents him from witnessing the divine immortal army that has come to his aid in the conquest of Jerusalem. Importantly, Michael tells Goffredo, the angels that he shall witness are themselves “ignudi spirti”: they are right there, “in aria accolto,” where no veil or cloud covers them. It is Goffredo's blindness, a fault of his humanity, that has veiled his perception of them at that moment.

The vision from the archangel comes unsolicited. In the lead up to Michael's descent, Goffredo expresses no obvious doubts about his faith in his Christian soldiers. Indeed, some have observed that Goffredo's expressions of any sentiments whatsoever are few and far between in the poem, making him a “*mannequin* destinato a sostenere un soggetto politico-religioso preliminarmente scelto dall'autore.”² Nevertheless, he is offered this “spettacol grande,” a combination of angelic spirits and the souls of Goffredo's recently killed comrades who are now in heaven; and by the vision, the captain's faith is renewed, as he understands in that moment that “a tutti la vittoria arride” (18.97).

The divine revelation provided Goffredo here makes for a secure conclusion to the narrative,

¹ Torquato Tasso, *Gerusalemme Liberata*. Ed. Franco Tomasi (Milano: BUR Classici, 2015). All citations of the poem are taken from this edition.

² Giovanni Getto, *Nel mondo della Gerusalemme* (Florence: Vallecchi, 1968), 10.

not only for the fictional characters of the poem, but also for its readers. We see the celestial army alongside Goffredo and thus, like him, have no reason to doubt the Crusaders' inevitable win. Such certainty may be expected, for Goffredo is the elected captain seen by God from above, who "con quel guardo suo ch'a dentro spia / nel più segreto lor gli affetti umani, / vide Goffredo" (1.8). Indeed, when Gabriel descends in Canto 1 it is not only to announce Goffredo's election; he also reveals (*rivelare*) God's "mente" to the captain (1.17). And Goffredo is left "a i detti, a lo splendore / d'occhi abbagliato, attonito di core" (1.17). The concentration on Goffredo's eyes at this moment is important and recurs throughout the poem,³ where Goffredo's chosenness continually permits him a special kind of vision beyond that of the other "regular" soldiers. Generally speaking, he sees and interacts with the divine in ways no one else can. So, Goffredo's unveiling in Canto 18 by the angel Michael should thus come as no surprise: his ability to see the celestial army is all part of the privilege of being divinely chosen by the heavenly Father.

Yet, as the title of this chapter suggests, there is more to be said about the image of the veil and questions of faith in this passage, not to mention throughout Tasso's *Liberata*. Indeed, understanding Tasso's relationship to both the religious and literary contexts of his time is fundamental to illuminating the paradigm of faith that governs Tasso's poetic theory, a paradigm which in turn provides a necessary means for reading his use of the veil image (and its related semantic field of mists, clouds, and mantles) not only in Canto 18 but throughout the *Liberata*. In fact, I argue in this chapter that Tasso's poem responds to both the early modern Catholic⁴ and literary emphases on allegory as an interpretive model. By using the image of the veil to depict how the *Liberata*'s main characters interpret the Christian God and each other, Tasso dramatizes the failure of allegorical reading by showing that it involves a kind of suspicion that is antithetical to faith. More specifically, I argue, Tasso stages "tests of faith" in the poem that are, at their core, tests of reading. He shows that those interpreting characters who reject the model of allegory in favor of a new interpretive model (one that acknowledges the ways that the characters they interpret might exceed their allegorical significations), are the only characters to also achieve true Christian faith within the poem's fiction. At the level of narrative, Tasso develops a theory of hermeneutics in response to both the religious and literary crises of his time, using the image of the veil and the hermeneutic paradigm it provides to think, moreover, about the relationship between poetic and religious truth.

I. Veils of Literary Hermeneutics

In the episode of Goffredo's unveiling quoted above, we can glimpse the religious context driving Tasso's poem, scholars interpreting the character of Goffredo as a symbol of the Counter-Reformation, a man of "totale distacco da ogni umana passione... ma solo lo sprona la fede, e lo zelo religioso," who embodies the "tipo generico di una religiosità combattiva e di una politica religiosamente ordinata, quali la cultura posttridentina attivamente proponeva."⁵ Indeed, as Beatrice Corrigan points out, Tasso "shows himself the supreme poet of the Counter Reformation

³ Marilyn Migiel also points out Tasso's consistent return to eyes and vision in the poem. See Marilyn Migiel, "Secrets of a Sorceress: Tasso's Armida," *Quaderni d'Italianistica* 8 2 (1987): 153.

⁴ I use John O'Malley's term "early modern Catholicism" to refer to the reformed theology of the period after the Council of Trent. Elsewhere I use "Counter-Reformation" to describe the institutional response to the Reformation during the middle decades of the sixteenth century. See John W. O'Malley, *Trent and All That: Renaming Catholicism in the Early Modern Era* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000), 5.

⁵ Getto, *Nel mondo della Gerusalemme*, 10.

by converting the casual vagary of a young pagan warrior into the ascesis of a Christian hero.”⁶ Timothy Hampton too interprets Goffredo as a representation of “authoritarian religious centralization of the Counter-Reformation,”⁷ where the poem attempts to “transform the chivalric code of its heroes into a single-minded mode of action centered on the group,”⁸ a “Counter-Reformation response to the errors of humanist culture.”⁹ And Diego Pirillo points to how Goffredo’s role in the *Liberata*, to fight “both internal and external opponents,” and to “first restore the unity of his Christian army before defeating the pagans and reconquering Jerusalem,” reflects “the Counter-Reformation controversies, which regarded Protestantism as an internal threat to Christianity parallel to the external threat constituted by Islam.”¹⁰

This very battle scene in Canto 18 is, according to Giovanni Getto, an extended allegory for the unity of the Catholic Church as “un mistico corpo” of “la chiesa militante e la chiesa trionfante,” a communal body that links “la nostra esistenza” with the world beyond, with the “altri uomini che già hanno compiuto la loro missione terrena e che, accanto a noi in maniera invisibile e arcana, ancora ci ispirano e ci assistono, proseguendo nella celebrazione di quella fede per la quale sono vissuti e sotto il cui segno sono morti.”¹¹ With similar language V. Stanley Benfell notes how Tasso’s “Counter-Reformation epic thus adapts the generic convention of the divine machinery to portray a God who favors, and brings about, a militant Christianity under a single, divinely appointed leader.”¹² Indeed, numerous Tasso scholars have proclaimed the overwhelming Counter-Reformation emphasis in the *Liberata* more generally. For Decio Pierantozzi, it is “la più grande interpretazione dell’età controriformistica.”¹³ Rosa Giulio notes its post-Tridentine penitential moments.¹⁴ And Andrew Wadoski connects Tasso’s well-known preoccupation with poetic unity to the Counter-Reformation, writing that, “The poem’s drive to unity was, on the one hand, responsive to the fragmenting of the structures of faith brought on by the Protestant Reformation and, on the other, shaped by the debate over the narrative and conceptual fluidity of

⁶ Beatrice Corrigan, “The Opposing Mirrors,” *Italica* 33 3 (1956): 178.

⁷ Timothy Hampton, *Writing from History: The Rhetoric of Exemplarity in Renaissance Literature* (Ithaca; London: Cornell University Press, 1990), 100.

⁸ Hampton, *Writing from History*, 100.

⁹ Hampton, *Writing from History*, 101. For an historical discussion of Catholicism’s “victory” over Augustinian and biblical humanism during the Council of Trent, see A.G. Dickens, *The Counter Reformation* (Norwich, UK: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1969), 132. For more on Goffredo’s chosen status, see Sergio Zatti, *The Quest for Epic: From Ariosto to Tasso*. Trans. Sally Hill and Dennis Looney (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2006), 104; Andrew Fichter, “Tasso’s Epic of Deliverance,” *PMLA* 93 2 (1978): 267. Of course, Tasso too, in his prose writings, describes Goffredo’s exemplarity: in the *Allegoria* (1581), Goffredo is the only one who represents “la moral virtù.” See Torquato Tasso, *Opere*. 3 vols. (Milan: Società Tipografica de’ Classici Italiani, 1824), 609. In a letter to Silvio Antoniano in 1576, Tasso writes: “sol Goffredo in tutto buono e pio ci vien rappresentato.” See Torquato Tasso, *Lettere poetiche*. Ed. Carla Molinari (Parma: Fondazione Pietro Bembo; Guanda, 1995), 351. For more on the epic hero in the Renaissance as an exemplar, see Baxter Hathaway, *The Age of Criticism: The Late Renaissance in Italy* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1962), 144.

¹⁰ Diego Pirillo, *The Refugee-Diplomat: Venice, England, and the Reformation* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2018), 103.

¹¹ Getto, *Nel mondo della Gerusalemme*, 10. For further interpretations of the poem itself as “a literary embodiment of the Catholic Reformation,” see Massimo Leone, “Converting Knights: A Semiotic Reading of Spiritual Change in Four Italian Chivalric Poems,” *Signs and Society* 2 1 (2014): 111.

¹² V. Stanley Benfell, “Tasso’s God: Narrative Authority in the *Gerusalemme Liberata*,” *Modern Philology* 97 2 (1999): 184.

¹³ Decio Pierantozzi, “La *Gerusalemme liberata* come poema religioso,” *Studi tassiani* 32 (1984): 37.

¹⁴ Rosa Giulio, *Tempo dell’inquisizione tempo dell’ascesi: Spiritualità religiosa e forme letterarie dal Tasso al Settecento* (Salerno: Edisud, 2004), 49.

Ariosto's *Orlando furioso*.”¹⁵

Broadly speaking, the Counter-Reformation weighed heavily on Tasso both during the writing and revision processes of the *Liberata* and in his personal relationship to faith. In an oft-cited letter to Scipione Gonzaga in 1579, Tasso confesses to God: “non mi scuso io, Signore, ma mi accuso, che tutto dentro e di fuori lordo e infetto de’ vizi de la carne e de la caligine del mondo.”¹⁶ He goes on in the same letter to list his spiritual doubts about creation, about the sacraments, about the authority of the papacy, and even about the incarnation of Christ.¹⁷ His biggest fear, he admits, is not knowing how to resolve his lack of faith, or if that is even possible.¹⁸ Ultimately, in the same letter, the poet finds consolation in God’s goodness that forgives “incredulità” like his,¹⁹ for the fact that it is not caused by “ostinazione” or “malignità” and certainly abhors and despises the very name of Luther.²⁰ And yet, the poet, desiring reassurance about his orthodoxy, notably sought to be interrogated by the Inquisition for possible (involuntary) heresy.²¹

These doubts are understood by many as a fundamental part of Tasso’s poetic personality, with scholars like Antonio Corsaro following the poet’s constant insecurities about the “integrità del suo poema e l’onore della sua persona” before the Counter-Reformation and the Inquisition.²² Pierantozzi explores Tasso’s concerns in the *Lettere poetiche* to “cristianizzare” the Platonism he had included in the *Liberata*,²³ which was held during the Counter-Reformation as “religiosamente pericoloso.”²⁴ Moreover, in readings of specific aspects of Tasso’s *corpus*, Giulio evaluates Tasso’s preoccupation with the magic of his *Liberata* (specifically, the black magic of Ismeno), an element the poet believed to be at risk for condemnation or censorship by the Inquisition.²⁵

However excessive Tasso’s fears of the “incubo dell’Inquisizione”²⁶ have come to seem, the poet was not wrong to worry: censorship was a powerful force during the second half of the sixteenth century. The suppression of paganism and superstitions was a central aim of the Counter-Reformation.²⁷ The Roman *Indexes* established after Trent banned all books dedicated to black

¹⁵ Andrew Wadoski, “Spenser, Tasso, and the Ethics of Allegory,” *Modern Philology* 111 3 (2014): 367. For a reading of the *Liberata* against the Counter-Reformation and sacramental theory, see Walter Stephens, “Metaphor, Sacrament, and the Problem of Allegory in *Gerusalemme Liberata*,” *I Tatti Studies in the Italian Renaissance* 4 (1991): 217-247.

¹⁶ Torquato Tasso, *Opere*. 5 vols. Ed. Giorgio Petrocchi (Milan: Mursia, 1964), 923.

¹⁷ Tasso, *Opere* (Petrocchi), 923.

¹⁸ Tasso, *Opere* (Petrocchi), 924.

¹⁹ Tasso, *Opere* (Petrocchi), 924.

²⁰ Tasso, *Opere* (Petrocchi), 924.

²¹ Walter Stephens, “Tasso and the Witches,” *Annali d’Italianistica* 12 (1994): 183. In his article, Stephens also discusses the motivations, including Tasso’s mental health issues, behind Tasso’s desire to undergo interrogation.

²² Antonio Corsaro, *Percorsi dell’incredulità: Religione, amore, natura nel primo Tasso* (Rome: Salerno, 2003), 27. For more on how Tasso’s “dubbi” in this particular letter relate to his spiritual faith, see Maria Vailati, *Il tormento artistico del Tasso dalla Liberata alla Conquistata* (Milan: Marzorati, 1950). For more on Tasso’s anxiety about his capacity to believe, see Tobias Gregory, “Tasso’s God: Divine Action in *Gerusalemme Liberata*,” *Renaissance Quarterly* 55 2 (2002): 560.

²³ Pierantozzi, “La *Gerusalemme liberata*,” 30.

²⁴ Pierantozzi, “La *Gerusalemme liberata*,” 32. For more on the seriousness of Tasso’s Platonism, see Annabel M. Patterson, “Tasso and Neoplatonism: The Growth of his Epic Theory,” *Studies in the Renaissance* 18 (1971): 105-133.

²⁵ Giulio, *Tempo dell’inquisizione*, 42. For more on Tasso’s anxieties about specific elements in his poetry, see Stephens, “Metaphor, Sacrament,” whose article explores Tasso’s evasion of ever openly theorizing aspects of his poem for fear that “ecclesiastical authorities would view it as a transgressive appropriation of Tridentine sacramental theory” (225).

²⁶ Giulio, *Tempo dell’inquisizione*, 88.

²⁷ Jennifer Helm, *Poetry and Censorship in Counter-Reformation Italy* (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 63.

magic, enchantments, divinatory arts (among other related elements)²⁸—evil deeds known as “*mira*.”²⁹ The issue of censorship was further complicated by the fact that, unlike *mira*, “marvels and wonders played important roles in Catholic faith and life as well.”³⁰ Only miracles and fantasies from the Catholic point of view, that is, “divine wonders,” were allowed, since “these wonders were to be understood as signs of God’s greatness, and to be officially acknowledged by the Roman Church and admired.”³¹ The Inquisition’s rules surrounding marvels and *mira* made poetic treatment even thornier: “from a censorial perspective it could be judged a profanation and abuse to use Christian miracles instead of pagan *mira* or to combine pagan and Christian tales of wonders in order to sublimate profane poetry.”³²

Generally speaking, literary censorship during the sixteenth century was prompted in part by the belief by some that the growing humanist tradition used a “pagan wisdom” in its study of literature, politics, ethics, philosophy, music, education, among other humanist subjects.³³ Censorship became a sticking point in the “program for church reform,”³⁴ especially when two Camaldolese monks petitioned Pope Leo X with a letter that demanded censorship of contemporary writing by arguing that they were “not against the poetic or philosophical works of ancient authors but considered the poetic and literary works of their contemporaries poor replicas of early pagan writings, products of depravity that should not be allowed.”³⁵ Indeed, while Quattrocento humanists believed that learning led to virtue, and that the aim of much humanistic writing was to “stimulate the positive moral development of the individual, especially the young person,”³⁶ certain early sixteenth-century religious leaders argued that “pagan literature had no value in comparison to Holy Scripture and could be harmful.”³⁷ Demand for literary censorship by these voices was based, moreover, on the criticism of the Church’s low educational levels among the clergy and on the distrust of liberal arts, which, “instead of leading to truth, certitude, and wisdom,” they believed, “produced falsity, ambiguity, and controversy.”³⁸

In the middle years of the century, the Council of Trent responded both to these concerns and to the “thinly veiled Nicodemistic attitudes” and practices of early sixteenth-century Italian Reform that had connected inner piety and mental prayer.³⁹ Since religious texts were central in

²⁸ Helm, *Poetry and Censorship*, 64.

²⁹ Helm, *Poetry and Censorship*, 69.

³⁰ Helm, *Poetry and Censorship*, 62.

³¹ Helm, *Poetry and Censorship*, 69.

³² Helm, *Poetry and Censorship*, 69.

³³ Helm, *Poetry and Censorship*, 5.

³⁴ Helm, *Poetry and Censorship*, 2.

³⁵ Helm, *Poetry and Censorship*, 3.

³⁶ Paul F. Grendler, *The Roman Inquisition and the Venetian Press, 1540-1605* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1977), 66.

³⁷ Grendler, *The Roman Inquisition*, 67.

³⁸ Grendler, *The Roman Inquisition*, 67-8. For more on the relationship on vernacular literature in particular and censorship, see Gigliola Fragnito, “Introduction,” in *Church, Censorship, and Culture in Early Modern Italy*. Ed. Gigliola Fragnito. Trans. Adrian Belton (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 1-12; Gigliola Fragnito, “The Central and Peripheral Organization of Censorship,” in *Church, Censorship, and Culture in Early Modern Italy*. Ed. Gigliola Fragnito. Trans. Adrian Belton (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 13-49; Ugo Rozzo, “Italian Literature on the Index,” in *Church, Censorship, and Culture in Early Modern Italy*. Ed. Gigliola Fragnito. Trans. Adrian Belton (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 194-222; Vittorio Frajese, “Riforma e antiriforma nella storia dei volgarizzamenti biblici,” *Studi Storici* 39 1 (1998): 23-40.

³⁹ Giorgio Caravale, “Private and Public Devotion in Late Renaissance Italy: The Role of Church Censorship,” in *Domestic Devotions in Early Modern Italy*. Ed. Maya Corry, Marco Faini, and Alessia Meneghin (Leiden: Brill, 2019), 389-407. For more on Nicodemism in early modern Europe, see Carlo Ginzburg, *Il nicodemismo*:

shaping Italian devotion and private piety in the early modern period,⁴⁰ Church censorship and the Roman Inquisition therefore “played important roles in the post-Tridentine decades in trying to restrain these opposing devotional excesses.”⁴¹ Their goal was to “purify” the Church,⁴² and thus, as the 1564 Index of Trent ruled, books by good authors could be permitted “if passages describing heresy, impiety, divination or superstition were cleansed.”⁴³ Not only that, but “the reception of the marvelous by a heterogenous readership (learned, unlearned, clerical, religious, and lay)” was also a criterion of censorship,⁴⁴ meaning that, as a post-Tridentine poet, Tasso would have to walk the line between adhering to the rules of the Inquisition by representing only Catholic marvels in his poetic works, while also making sure that such representations could not be misinterpreted as heretical or otherwise religiously problematic by his various readers.

And censorship during this period was not the only influential force confronting Tasso. His connections to the Este family in Ferrara—his literary patrons—also exacerbated the poet’s preoccupations with his poetic reputation. As Elena Crepaz writes, Tasso’s court in Ferrara was not “la Corte serena” that Castiglione had written about, a “mondo della libertà dell’individuo, dell’autonomia del proprio destino, dell’eticità dei suoi assunti.”⁴⁵ Instead, Crepaz goes on, Tasso’s Ferrara was rather a “torbido mondo di intrigo, viziata da ipocrisie, minata nel suo sviluppo economico e sociale da interferenze straniere,”⁴⁶ influenced, of course, by the “peso negativo della Controriforma.”⁴⁷ Indeed, as Diego Pirillo also notes, part of this controversy at the Court of Ferrara surrounded the princess Renata di Francia, the mother of Alfonso II and a Calvinist.⁴⁸ In his study, *Ossessione turca*, on Christian-Turkish relations and conflict during the early modern period, Giovanni Ricci points to the controversy of Renata as “una notoria calvinista,” who, even after she returned to France in 1560 after the death of her husband, Ercole II d’Este, nevertheless left in Ferrara “la macchia dell’eresia.”⁴⁹ Ricci argues that Renata’s Calvinism motivated her son

Simulazione e dissimulazione religiosa nell’Europa del ’500 (Turin: Einaudi, 1970); Albano Biondi, “La giustificazione della simulazione nel Cinquecento,” in *Eresia e Riforma nell’Italia del Cinquecento: Miscellanea I*. Eds. Luigi Firpo, Giorgio Spini, Antonio Rotondò, and John A. Tedeschi (Chicago; Florence: Sansoni, 1974), 5-68; Perez Zagorin, *Ways of Lying: Dissimulation, Persecution, and Conformity in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1990); Carlos M.N. Eire, *War Against the Idols: The Reformation of Worship from Erasmus to Calvin* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986).

⁴⁰ Marco Faini, “Vernacular Books and Domestic Devotion in Cinquecento Italy,” *Journal of Early Modern Christianity* 6 2 (2019): 300.

⁴¹ Caravale, “Private and Public Devotion,” 396.

⁴² Donald S. Prudlo, “The Catholic Reform,” in *Christian Theologies of Salvation: A Comparative Introduction*. Ed. Justin S. Holcomb (New York: New York University Press, 2006), 241.

⁴³ Helm, *Poetry and Censorship*, 65. For an excellent and thorough historical overview of censorship during the Cinquecento in Italy, with discussions of how the Inquisition responded to different types (poetry/prose, Latin/vernacular) of literature, auto-censorship by some authors, and the “alleanza” between authors and censors, see Adriano Prosperi, “Censurare le favole. Il protoromanzo e l’Europa cattolica,” in *Il romanzo*. Ed. Franco Moretti (Turin: Einaudi, 2001), 71-106. See also Silvia Ferretto, “Inquisitori, censori, filosofi sullo scenario della controriforma,” *Studi Storici* 51 1 (2010): 261-72.

⁴⁴ Helm, *Poetry and Censorship*, 70.

⁴⁵ Elena Crepaz, “Le Celebrazioni Farraresi di Torquato Tasso,” *Lettere Italiane* 6 4 (1954): 390.

⁴⁶ Crepaz, “Le Celebrazioni,” 390.

⁴⁷ Crepaz, “Le Celebrazioni,” 389. For more on the “artificial, and even oppressive, nature of courtly life and courtesy” that Tasso may have experienced in Ferrara, see George W. McClure, “Women and the Politics of Play in Sixteenth-Century Italy: Torquato Tasso’s Theory of Games,” *Renaissance Quarterly* 61 3 (2008): 781.

⁴⁸ Pirillo, *The Refugee-Diplomat*, 105. As Adriano Prosperi shows, moreover, tensions at Ferrara were heightened not just by the princess’ Calvinism, but also by the ways that the city attracted radical reformers. See Adriano Prosperi, *L’eresia del Libro Grande: Storia di Giorgio Siculo e della sua setta* (Milan: Feltrinelli, 2000).

⁴⁹ Giovanni Ricci, *Ossessione turca: In una retrovia cristiana dell’Europa moderna* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2002), 60.

Alfonso II to attempt to prove himself by launching a crusade against the Turks on the Danube,⁵⁰ an act which he sees reflected in Tasso's *Liberata*, as the poet sought to make his patron a "sorta di reincarnazione di Goffredo di Buglione, principe guerriero e santo."⁵¹ Indeed, Pirillo likewise shows how Tasso links Alfonso II to the hero Rinaldo, who "like Achilles in the *Iliad*, returns to fight with the Christian army only after a long absence," the literary dedication in the *Liberata* therefore not only alluding to the "contemporary controversies between the Este and Rome, which ended in 1598 with the devolution of Ferrara to the Papal States in the absence of a natural heir,"⁵² but also showing how the Estensi sought to reshape their image beyond the family's heretical past—what Ricci calls a "trasfigurazione letteraria," to bring about "una nuova gloria estense."⁵³

Given this politico-religious and sociocultural environment in which Tasso found himself during the second half of the sixteenth century, it is no wonder that he concerned himself so obsessively both with the religious aspects and with the supernatural elements of his poem. Indeed, Tasso's lengthy discussions of truth, fiction, and the *meraviglioso verisimile* in his two *Discorsi* and other prose writings closely reflect not just the poetics of the period, but Counter-Reformation censorship too, which required, moreover, not that a narrated story be true, but that it "seem possible and credible from the perspective of Catholic faith."⁵⁴ The literary debates around Tasso and his predecessor Ludovico Ariosto, whose highly successful and entertaining romance *Orlando furioso* provided a kind of model for poetic *meraviglie* in the genre, were thus not merely about poetics.⁵⁵ The comparison involved, for Tasso at least, the issue of religious faith as well, for the *Furioso* had already been expurgated by the censorial authorities for its unauthorized subject matter.⁵⁶ And Tasso expressed his fears in a letter to Scipione Gonzaga in 1576 that the Inquisition might not allow his own book to be published either.⁵⁷

In his *Discorsi dell'arte poetica* (1587), Tasso articulates a theory of verisimilitude to address problems of readerly faith:

Per questo, dovendo il poeta con la sembianza della verità ingannare i lettori, e non solo persuader loro che le cose da lui trattate sian vere, ma sottoporle in guisa a i lor sensi che credano non di leggerle, ma di esser presenti e di vederle e di udirle, è necessitato di guadagnarsi nell'animo loro questa opinione di verità; il che facilmente con l'autorità della istoria li verrà fatto.⁵⁸

Verisimilitude, for Tasso, is an intrinsic part of poetry because poetry is imitation, and imitation

⁵⁰ Ricci, *Ossessione turca*, 59.

⁵¹ Ricci, *Ossessione turca*, 62.

⁵² Pirillo, *The Refugee-Diplomat*, 105.

⁵³ Ricci, *Ossessione turca*, 62. For more on the archive of the Ferrarese Inquisition, see Guido Dall'Olio, "Il controllo dell'eresia tra zelo religioso e ragion di Stato (1530-1570)," in *Storia di Ferrara*. 6 vols. Ed. Adriano Prosperi (Ferrara: Corbo, 1987-2004), 6:216. For more on Renata di Francia's Calvinism, including her personal visits and correspondence with Calvin himself, see Chiara Franceschini, "La corte di Renata di Francia (1528-1560)," in *Storia di Ferrara*. 6 vols. Ed. Adriano Prosperi (Ferrara: Corbo, 1987-2004), 6:185-214.

⁵⁴ Helm, *Poetry and Censorship*, 70.

⁵⁵ Tasso himself points out in the *Discorsi dell'arte poetica* that "poco dilettevole" is the poem that has no *meraviglie*. See Torquato Tasso, *Discorsi dell'arte poetica e del poema eroico*. Ed. Luigi Poma (Bari: Laterza, 1964), 6.

⁵⁶ Helm, *Poetry and Censorship*, 64. Indeed, as Wadoski notes, "For Tasso, epic forms and actions served as a corrective to the errors of romance narrative, errors embodying those spiritual or moral faults both the heroic protagonist and the reader of the poem must master and reject in their quests for redemption" ("Spenser, Tasso," 382).

⁵⁷ Tasso, *Lettere poetiche* (to Gonzaga, 1576), 420.

⁵⁸ Tasso, *Discorsi dell'arte poetica*, 5.

means “far simile.”⁵⁹ But verisimilitude is also a trick of deception (“inganno”) of the readers, clearly tied to the issue of faith, as Tasso elaborates in the second *Discorsi del poema eroico* of 1594: “dove manca la fede, non può abbondare l’affetto o il piacere di quel che si legge o s’ascolta; ma dovendo il poeta con la sembianza della verità ingannare il lettore, suol diletтарlo con la varietà delle menzogne.”⁶⁰ Verisimilitude gets tricky when the marvelous is added into the mix. Using pagan gods to justify “miracoli” that cannot be explained by “virtù naturale”⁶¹ not only goes against the laws of censorship established by the Inquisition, but also causes a poetic disconnect between the fiction of the poem and the truth it purports to imitate. “Subito cessa il verosimile,” Tasso writes, “perché non può esser verosimile a gli uomini nostri quello ch’è da lor tenuto non solo falso, ma impossibile; ma impossibil è che dal potere di quelli idoli vani e senza soggetto, che non sono e non furor mai, procedano cose che di tanto la natura e l’umanità trapassino.”⁶² Readerly faith is lost when verisimilitude fails. Verisimilitude fails when Catholic faith is not properly observed.⁶³

Composed in 1575-76, the period Tasso referred to as the “revisione romana,”⁶⁴ the *Lettere poetiche* to his revisor friends⁶⁵ describe the manifold “dubbi” that plagued him, “radical uncertainties,” as Lawrence Rhu has called them.⁶⁶ Almost every self-criticism, frustration with plot holes, lack of clarity about a character, and general uncertainty about an episode’s verisimilitude is described as a “dubbio” by the author; and Tasso complains, “Questi dubbi mi danno gran fastidio e volentieri vorrei che si rimovessero.”⁶⁷ Among these, one recurring “dubbio” relates to the concept of “*soluzione per machina*,” the use of which Tasso questions throughout the poetic letters⁶⁸ and defines outright in the *Discorsi del poema eroico*: “Attribuisca il poeta alcune operazioni, che di gran lunga eccedono il poter de gli uomini, a Dio, a gli angeli suoi, a’ demoni o a coloro a’ quali da Dio o da’ demoni è concessa potestà, quali sono i santi, i magi e le fate.”⁶⁹ As Rhu notes, “Tasso’s original arguments about the heavenly apparatus in a modern epic aimed to replace deities with their Christian counterparts in the name of Aristotelian mimesis.”⁷⁰ The marvelous is made credible when attributed to Christian divine interventions. Another way of putting it, as Tasso does in the second *Discorsi*, is that verisimilitude in the imitation of divine action is central to the *soluzione per machina* because it acts as a veil for truth: “la verità, la quale è mescolata con alcune cose finte e composte dall’artificio del poeta, non sia nascosta sotto un

⁵⁹ Tasso, *Discorsi dell’arte poetica*, 7.

⁶⁰ Tasso, *Discorsi del poema eroico*, 84.

⁶¹ Tasso, *Discorsi dell’arte poetica*, 6.

⁶² Tasso, *Discorsi dell’arte poetica*, 6.

⁶³ For more on Tasso’s treatment of verisimilitude in the *Discorsi* especially, see Claudio Gigante, “Introduzione,” in *Giudicio sovra la Gerusalemme riformata di Torquato Tasso*. Ed. Claudio Gigante (Rome: Salerno, 2000), xi-xlix; Bortolo Tommaso Sozzi, “Introduzione,” in *Opere di Torquato Tasso*. 2 vols. Ed. Bortolo Tommaso Sozzi (Turin: Tipografia Capretto, 1968, originally published 1955), 7-25.

⁶⁴ Carla Molinari, “Introduzione,” in *Lettere poetiche di Torquato Tasso*. Ed. Carla Molinari (Parma: Fondazione Pietro Bembo; Guanda, 1995), xlv. The letters were printed together with the *Discorsi* in 1587 (Sozzi, “Introduzione,” 16).

⁶⁵ The group included Scipione Gonzaga, Sperone Speroni, Pier Angelo da Barga, Flaminio de’ Nobili, e Silvio Antoniano (Sozzi, “Introduzione,” 16).

⁶⁶ Lawrence Rhu, “From Aristotle to Allegory: Young Tasso’s Evolving Vision of the *Gerusalemme Liberata*,” *Italica* 65 2 (1988): 122.

⁶⁷ Tasso, *Lettere poetiche* (to Gonzaga, 1576), 370. For Tasso’s expression of doubt about the poem, period, see also his letter to Gonzaga in October 1575 (222).

⁶⁸ See Tasso, *Lettere poetiche* (to Gonzaga, 1575), 192. See also his letter to Luca Scalabrino, 1575 (206-7).

⁶⁹ Tasso, *Discorsi del poema eroico*, 96.

⁷⁰ Rhu, “From Aristotle to Allegory,” 118.

manto quasi contrario di sozze invenzioni e di brutte parole, ma dentro un *pio velame* di cose oneste e di nomi splendidi e illustri.”⁷¹

The “pio velame” of verisimilitude of divine intervention points to the broader paradigm of poetic faith and doubt, which governs Tasso’s poetic thinking and is connected closely to religious faith and doubt.⁷² He wrestles in the *Lettere poetiche* to convince himself, for example, that God’s aid in Canto 13, after which “di mano in mano tutte le cose succedono prospere,” is verisimilar enough.⁷³ And it is not just the veil of verisimilitude that must conform to Catholic truth, but the related “veil of allegory” as well, as Jennifer Helm writes: “Allegorization demanded allegories to conform to the Catholic concept of the world created by the Catholic God and protected by his providence.”⁷⁴ Tasso understood allegory as also a “gentilissimo velo”⁷⁵ that provided signification of obscure actions;⁷⁶ allegorical meaning (“l’allegorico senso”)⁷⁷ uncovered the veil of poetry, beneath which could be seen its “dottrina morale.”⁷⁸ The marvelous, therefore, became the falsehood of poetry that was “ancorato all’allegoria” and, through its verisimilitude, whether by *soluzione per machina* or some other poetic technique, could hide “una verità sublime dietro l’apparenza della finzione.”⁷⁹

Tasso’s theories of verisimilitude and allegory, which are closely framed by Counter-Reformation theology, clearly reflect a paradigm of faith that uses the image of the veil as the expression of that paradigm. On the level of Christian readerly faith, the marvelous, and poetry more generally, are the veils that hide deeper meaning; that deeper meaning becomes accessible (like the Inquisition also claimed) by means of allegory and verisimilitude, the latter achieved when early modern Catholic truth and poetic depiction accord. What is interesting, and at the core of my discussion in this chapter, is that this paradigm of poetic faith articulated in Tasso’s theories is curiously not the paradigm of faith that he develops in the *Liberata*. As much as Tasso emphasizes allegory in his prose works, in the *Liberata*, I argue, he reveals this interpretive model to be problematic and ultimately antithetical not just to faith between people but also to faith in God.

Tasso is responding, I believe, to the use of allegory as both a religious and a literary means of interpretation. On the one hand, as Jennifer Helm has shown, allegory during this period provided an answer to what the Church saw as the problem of reading, that Christian readers would be incapable of fully understanding a poetic text and that they would thus need help in their interpretations.⁸⁰ Of course, this was the same concern that Reformed Catholicism had about the

⁷¹ Tasso, *Discorsi del poema eroico*, 84. My emphasis.

⁷² For more on the rule of “Verity of Religion,” see Helen M. Briggs, “Tasso’s Theory of Epic Poetry,” *The Modern Language Review* 25 4 (1930): 457-473; Bortolo Tommaso Sozzi, “Nota Introduttiva al *Discorsi dell’arte poetica*,” in *Opere di Torquato Tasso*. 2 vols. Ed. Bortolo Tommaso Sozzi (Turin: Tipografia Capretto, 1968, originally published 1955), 655.

⁷³ Tasso, *Lettere poetiche* (to Gonzaga, 1575), 46.

⁷⁴ Helm, *Poetry and Censorship*, 96.

⁷⁵ Tasso, *Discorsi del poema eroico*, 79.

⁷⁶ Tasso, *Allegoria*, 604.

⁷⁷ Tasso, *Allegoria*, 609-10.

⁷⁸ Tasso, *Lettere poetiche* (to Gonzaga, 1576), 462.

⁷⁹ Gigante, “Introduzione,” xxiv. For more on the Tasso’s relationship to allegory, see Rhu, “From Aristotle to Allegory”; Michael Murrin, *The Allegorical Epic: Essay in its Rise and Decline* (Chicago; London: The University of Chicago Press, 1980) 93, 121-23. For a history of allegory in Italian poetic theory from Dante to Tasso and the concept of poetry as a veil, see Robert L. Montgomery, Jr., “Allegory and the Incredible Fable: The Italian View from Dante to Tasso,” *PMLA* 81 1 (1966): 45.

⁸⁰ Helm, *Poetry and Censorship*, 70.

Protestant Reformation's insistence that an individual believer could undertake his or her own study of Scripture. Without the aid from authoritative theologians,⁸¹ the Church argued, Protestants could have no way of clarifying obscure passages.⁸² As David Quint writes, "Allegory locates the text's value in a source of truth and authority that lies outside the text itself—normally in an earlier text or series of texts that have been granted an authoritative or sacred status."⁸³ In this way, just as the Catholic Church after the Reformation sought to redefine "faith" in terms of obedience to the authority of the Church and its Fathers,⁸⁴ allegory as an authorizing device can be seen as another religious mechanism for interpretive control. (Indeed, the role of the Inquisition in censoring literature on the levels of image, action, and meaning attests to this position.)

In the *Liberata*, Tasso responds indirectly to this notion of allegory as a mechanism of religious interpretive control by likening it to a kind of suspicion that does not truly lead to faith, whether poetic or Christian. As Ethan Shagan has shown, early modern Catholic faith during Tasso's period was complicated and paradoxical: "Whereas for Protestants the issue was largely about psychological depth—you may think you believe, but really you do not—for Catholics the pressing issue was control: anything outside of the Church's authority potentially failed the test of belief."⁸⁵ Shagan goes on: "Belief became instead the credenda of what the Church taught, and disobedience to the Church, or even independent traditions outside of the Church, were increasingly species of unbelief."⁸⁶ While my argument in this chapter does not seek to make a case about Tasso's historical faith, it is important to acknowledge that belief in early modern Europe was a "problem,"⁸⁷ one that made Tasso feel, as scholars have noted, that religion was "un sogno, una speranza di trovare la Verità,"⁸⁸ and that caused for the poet a "crisi della certezza del sapere."⁸⁹ Confronted with allegory and obedience as the Catholic models of faith, Tasso sought to prove his religious obedience to the Inquisition, all the while struggling with his feelings of religious doubt.⁹⁰ Ultimately, I argue, he finds religious allegory wanting.

At the same time, Tasso is also responding in his epic poem to the use of allegory as a device of literary hermeneutics (and the two uses are connected, to be sure). In his chapter on Tasso in

⁸¹ Donald S. Prudlo, "Scripture and Theology in Early Modern Catholicism," in *Christian Theologies of Salvation: A Comparative Introduction*. Ed. Justin S. Holcomb (New York: New York University Press, 2006), 139.

⁸² Jean Grondin, *Introduction to Philosophical Hermeneutics*. Trans. Joel Weinsheimer (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994), 41.

⁸³ David Quint, *Origin and Originality in Renaissance Literature: Versions of the Source* (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 1983).

⁸⁴ Ethan H. Shagan, *The Birth of Modern Belief: Faith and Judgment from the Middle Ages to the Enlightenment* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2018), 28-9; Rivka Feldhay, "Authority, Political Theology, and the Politics of Knowledge in the Transition from Medieval to Early Modern Catholicism," *Social Research* 73 4 (2006): 1080.

⁸⁵ Shagan, *The Birth of Modern Belief*, 87.

⁸⁶ Shagan, *The Birth of Modern Belief*, 87. Indeed, as Pirillo argues, Tasso's "ambivalent representation of the first crusade" in the *Liberata* does not celebrate the Counter-Reformation "fight against heresy" but rather points to the "plurality of orthodoxies and religious truths" of the period (*The Refugee-Diplomat*, 117). For more on the "divergent visions of orthodoxy" rather than "a rigid and unyielding Catholic faith" produced at the Council of Trent, see Neil Tarrant, "The Ambiguities of Censorship in Post-Tridentine Italy: The Case of Physiognomy," *Praternature: Critical and Historical Studies on the Preternatural* 8 2 (2019): 172.

⁸⁷ Ethan H. Shagan, "How to Do Things with Belief," in *Literature, Belief and Knowledge in Early Modern England: Knowing Faith*. Eds. Subha Mukherji, and Tim Stuart-Buttle (Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan; Springer International Publishing, 2018), 254.

⁸⁸ Vailati, *Il tormento artistico*, 17.

⁸⁹ Giulio, *Tempo dell'inquisizione*, 18.

⁹⁰ Of course, Tasso sought to do this, as Leone argues, within the plot of his poem ("Converting Knights," 109), which makes what I see as his ultimate rejection of allegory also within the plot of his poem all the more fascinating.

Origin and Originality, Quint argues for the ways that Tasso's *Liberata* functions as a reply to Ariosto's *Furioso*, which "proceeds at its *thematic* level to charge all literary texts with mendacity and bad faith; by doing so, it reduces that time-honored storehouse back into a junkyard which the text—on its own authority—turns into allegorical meaning."⁹¹ "That poets lie is a Renaissance commonplace," Quint goes on, "but the defenders of poetry justify its lies in the name of a higher truth. But the 'higher' truth delivered from Ariosto's moon is merely that poets lie."⁹² By drawing attention in his poem to how allegorical reading is based on suspicion that inherently fails to recognize anything besides (or beyond, or, god-forbid, within) the veil, Tasso rejects Ariosto's claim that there is no meaning in poetry except allegorical meaning, just as he rejects (however implicitly) that such allegorical meaning can only ever be dictated, and thus must be obeyed, by the authority of the Church. He also shows, in the dramatization of reading as "tests" of faith, that allegorical reading is not what leads to true faith in God. That Tasso the author truly intended to challenge the authority of the Catholic Church in the ways this argument suggests is not my claim. Rather, my discussion of Tasso's ultimate rejection of both religious and poetic allegory seeks to explore how Tasso responds to the fraught problem of poetic and spiritual belief during the Counter-Reformation's crisis of Christianity.

II. Hermeneutic Models of Reading People

i. Beneath the Veil

The interpretive model that Tasso develops in the *Liberata* begins with the image of the veil as a symbol of suspicious reading in the episode of Sofronia's attempted martyrdom before the pagan king Aladino in Canto 2. At the canto's opening, the wizard Ismeno conspires with Aladino to steal the image of the *Madre* that is kept in the Christians' secret temple "in un velo avvolto" (2.5). Ismeno convinces Aladino that his magic will make the image, once secured in Aladino's mosque, "fatal custodia a queste porte" (2.6), a certain defense against the advancing Christian army. They carry out the plan, and Ismeno performs his black magic. But the next morning, the image is gone. The narrator Tasso interprets the events as a mystery with only two possible answers: "O fu di man fedele opra furtiva, / o pur il Ciel qui sua potenza adopra" (2.9). He adds, "ben è pietà che, la pietade e 'l zelo / uman cedendo, autor se 'n creda il Cielo" (2.9), the comment clearly connecting the miraculous theft to the (presumed Catholic) divine intervention. Tasso even seems to enjoy the dramatic irony that sets apart this Christian interpretation from that of Ismeno and Aladino who, from their pagan perspective, fail to interpret the act as a divine miracle at all: "non s'appone, / ché 'l Cielo, opra sua fosse o fosse altrui, / celolla ad onta de gl'incanti a lui" (2.10).

The *Madre*'s material veil foreshadows the further problems of reading that the Christian Sofronia will cause in the same canto. When we meet Sofronia she is "in vel ristretta" (2.18) and yet neither covers herself nor exposes her beauty, what Eugenio Refini calls her "seduzione involontaria":⁹³

⁹¹ Quint, *Origin and Originality*, 85.

⁹² Quint, *Origin and Originality*, 91.

⁹³ Eugenio Refini, "Giuditta, Armida e il velo della seduzione," *Italian Studies* 68 1 (2013): 88. Giampiero Giampieri, *Il battesimo di Clorinda: Eros e religiosità in Torquato Tasso* (Tuscany: Edizioni dell'Erba, 1995) reads this stanza as implying Sofronia's prostitution (48).

La vergine tra 'l vulgo uscì soletta,
 non coprì sue bellezze, e non l'espose,
 raccolse gli occhi, andò nel vel ristretta,
 con ischive maniere e generose.
 Non sai ben dir s'adorna o se negletta,
 se caso od arte il bel volto compose.
 Di natura, d'Amor, de' cieli amici
 le negligenze sue sono artifici. (2.18).

For a woman who is so beautiful that not even Love allows her to remain entirely covered by the metaphorical “veil” of her “angusta casa” (2.14)—what has until now maintained her impeccable virginal reputation—and instead “la riveli / d'un giovenetto a i cupidi desiri” (2.15, emphasis mine), it is significant that the meaning of Sofronia’s beauty becomes an interpretive problem based on her veil. “Non sai ben dir,” Tasso writes to us and to Sofronia’s readers among the “vulgo,” whether the way she wears her veil reflects entirely natural beauty or whether it is intentional, an artificial act to make herself merely *seem* natural. There is an implied suspicion of Sofronia’s self-presentation as potentially false and misleading, and Tasso the narrator includes us in his close focus on how she wears her veil, drawing us into his anxiety about how to read what lies beneath it.

This anxiety mounts when Sofronia confesses to Aladino that she herself stole the image of the Virgin. From our privileged perspective as readers, we understand the intentions behind her false confession: to sacrifice herself in order to save the other Christians of the city. But she successfully deceives Aladino with her “magnanima menzogna” (2.22). He is “confuso... quasi conquiso” (2.20) because of her beauty but otherwise believes her story and arrests her. The subsequent physical unveiling, when “‘l velo e ‘l casto manto” (2.26) are ripped from her body, suggests a symbolic unveiling of Sofronia’s deception, for, however magnanimous from the Christian perspective, it is still a “menzogna.” Of course, the physical veil and the hermeneutic possibilities that it symbolizes creates a tension between unveiling and revelation that hinges on interpretation. Unveiling is motivated by the suspicion of the veil as a surface hiding something more profound, whereas revelation seeks to see the person beneath the veil as more than just the interplay between cover and hidden secrets. Here, Aladino desires to unveil Sofronia’s deception by removing her physical veil. And yet that physical removal leads to no deeper revelation, as he fails to discern the truth of her actions and intentions, suggesting already that revelation requires more than just the veil’s mere removal.

Only a few stanzas later, as Sofronia is placed on the pyre as punishment, and the pagan warrior Clorinda arrives, Tasso presents an alternate model of reading, one that does not fixate on unveiling as the sole path to truth. Even from her physically distanced position, without having witnessed the rest of the scene, Clorinda hears the details of Sofronia and Olindo’s impending execution and, without pause, immediately understands their innocence: “imaginò ben tosto / ch’egualmente innocenti eran que’ due” (2.44). As if by a miraculous capacity for insight,⁹⁴ Clorinda’s interpretation neither suspects nor doubts Sofronia but understands Sofronia’s motivations as a

⁹⁴ Indeed, Tasso’s *revisori* did express concerns that this episode constituted a *soluzione per machina*, though the poet himself disagreed (Tasso, *Lettere poetiche*, to Scalabrino, 1575, 88-89). Gregory, “Tasso’s God,” notes how “The poem bears indications that Tasso was unsure just how far he wanted to go with his Christian supernatural. At times the narrative voice hedges on the presence of supernatural characters, suggesting divine intervention as a possibility without asserting it outright” (565).

Christian martyr in a way that her readers (the narrator included) have seemed to lack up to this point.⁹⁵ In this episode, the veil image signals a test of faith in Sofronia's character and intentions, and only Clorinda passes because she does not seek simply to tear away the veil. The problem of failing this interpretive test of faith is that it reduces Sofronia's character to a mere veiled body, which, by the very presence of the veil, these readers then believe to be uninterpretable.⁹⁶ Instead, by Clorinda's ability to read beyond Sofronia's literal body, she becomes the only person within the poem to see "the mild-mannered Sofronia known to all the inhabitants of Jerusalem" as "the vigorous defender of the faith."⁹⁷ Revelation and correct interpretation is possible, Clorinda shows, through a reading that, unlike Aladino's, does not immediately suspect deception.

ii. Against Intentional Deception

If Sofronia's veil causes problems of interpretation for her readers, at least she is Christian, so the trickery of her veil and her false confession come to represent an "inganno legittimo."⁹⁸ In Canto 4, instead, the pagan Armida's veil symbolizes "quello [inganno] malvagio."⁹⁹ When we first meet her, Armida has been advised by her uncle Idraote to transform herself into a sweet maiden, in order to lead astray the Christian army: "Vela il soverchio ardir con la vergogna, / e fa' manto del vero a la menzogna" (4.25). She must metaphorically veil her boldness with modesty, hiding her true nature beneath the metaphorical "manto" created by "ogn'arte feminil ch'amore alletti" (4.25). Yet already, Armida's physical body veils the "true" character inside, as Idraote describes her: "O diletta mia, che sotto biondi / capelli e fra sì tenere sembianze / canuto senno e cor virile ascondi" (4.24). Curiously, this initial description makes clear that Armida's physical beauty is real; she is "la bella Armida, di sua forma altera" (4.27), not veiled by a false or magical beauty.

Still, when she enters the camp, her material veil is central to Tasso's development of her presentation:

d'auro ha la chioma, ed or dal bianco velo
traluca involta, or discoperta appare.
Così, qualor si rasserena il cielo,
or da candida nube il sol traspare,
or da la nube uscendo i raggi intorno
più chiari spiega e ne raddoppia il giorno. (4.29).

Likened to the sun's golden rays peeking through the clouds, Armida's shining golden hair held within the white veil affects a "redoubling" of her beauty: beautiful sun inside beautiful clouds; beautiful hair inside a beautiful veil. But the veil's dissimulating nature is also continually reinforced in this episode, first by the fact that the very story Armida tells to manipulate the

⁹⁵ Considering Clorinda's subsequent reprimand of Aladino, Virginia Cox points out that the Sofronia-Clorinda episode "reproduces precisely in a spiritual key the standard chivalric episode in which the female warrior is taunted before a fight by a contemptuous male antagonist who rapidly learns the error of his ways." See Virginia Cox, *The Prodigious Muse: Women's Writing in Counter-Reformation Italy* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2011), 43.

⁹⁶ See Refini "Giuditta, Armida," on the material veil as a "présence allusive" (79) in the poem.

⁹⁷ Richard Sáez, *Theodicy in Baroque Literature* (New York; London: Garland Publishing, 1985), 32.

⁹⁸ Refini, "Giuditta, Armida," 88.

⁹⁹ Refini, "Giuditta, Armida," 88.

Christian army involves the reference to her uncle's "maligno suo pensiero interno" hidden beneath "contrario manto" (4.45), his true plans for her masked by a deceptive veil, which is the very reason she stands a "vergine peregrina e fuggitiva" before the soldiers (4.36).¹⁰⁰ Like her physical veil, Armida's speech also hides her real nature and intentions, as Tasso writes, "muta eloquenza ne' suoi gesti espresse, / e celò sotto sì mentito aspetto / il suo pensier ch'altrui non diè sospetto" (4.85).

The deceptive material and metaphorical veils that hide Armida's "ardir" by making her seem beautiful and innocent clearly function as an interpretive test for the soldiers of the Christian army. Armida is depicted here, as numerous scholars have noted, as the dangerous female temptress who seeks to lead the knights astray.¹⁰¹ "She is both sorceress and seductress," Marilyn Migiel writes, "like the characters of classical and Renaissance literature on whom her character is modelled: Circe, Medea, Alcina."¹⁰² Unforgivingly in my opinion, Luisa Del Giudice goes so far as to call Armida a "contagion which spreads and causes innumerable crises ending in death, desertion, exile."¹⁰³ Melinda Gough, in particular, reads Armida's character as a symbol of poetry and allegory itself, where "Armida seems in part to represent the poetic dangers Tasso warns against in the *Discourses on the Heroic Poem* when he compares stylistic excesses to 'Sirens.'"¹⁰⁴ In Gough's reading, the Renaissance metaphor of poetry as a Siren or Circe connects the veil of poetry to the veils of (female) beauty, "often exposed as an empty lie,"¹⁰⁵ where Tasso's female characters come to embody "the pleasures and dangers of poetry and poetic language."¹⁰⁶

Undoubtedly, Armida's goal in Canto 4 is to deceive the Christian army into believing both her plight and her beauty; and the knights are convinced. Armida's crying even causes them in turn to imitate her tears, though Tasso writes ironically that "Questo finto dolor da molti elice / lagrime vere, e i cor più duri spetra" (4.77). Armida is successful enough among the soldiers to also elicit their imitation of her supplication for aid from Goffredo. Eustazio argues on Armida's behalf that "al servizio di Dio già non si toglie / l'uom ch'innocente vergine difende" (4.80), to which she responds by brightening her face and "asciugandosi gli occhi co 'l bel velo" (4.84). Here, the "bel velo" at the center of Armida's seductive and supplicating act alters the veil's relationship to truth. Refini points out that "se Sofronia si fa portavoce di una 'magnanima menzogna' che nasconde la verità, Armida incarna una verità apparente che riveste la menzogna."¹⁰⁷ And not only that, Armida's success is also based on the Christian soldiers' willing participation and belief in her act. By means of her veil and her storytelling, she provocatively invites the imagination of her audience to make true the "menzogna" of her deception.¹⁰⁸ In mentally "unveiling" Armida's physical body,¹⁰⁹ the soldiers move farther away from being able to correctly understand the (veiled) truth

¹⁰⁰ Sáez also observes the irony of Armida's story in light of her own deception (*Theodicy in Baroque Literature*, 44).

¹⁰¹ Melinda J. Gough, "Tasso's Enchantress, Tasso's Captive Women," *Renaissance Quarterly* 54 2 (2001): 523-552.

¹⁰² Migiel, "Secrets," 149.

¹⁰³ Luisa Del Giudice, "Armida: *Virgo Fingens* (The Broken Mirror)," in *Western Gerusalem University of California Studies on Tasso*. Ed. Luisa Del Giudice (London: Out of London Press, 1984), 33. For a negative reading of Armida as a symbol of dissimulation and falsehood, see Gough, "Tasso's Enchantress"; Zatti, *The Quest for Epic*, 207-8; Sergio Zatti, "Epic in the Age of Dissimulation: Tasso's *Gerusalemme liberata*," in *Renaissance Transaction: Ariosto and Tasso*. Ed. Valeria Finucci (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1999), 122.

¹⁰⁴ Gough, "Tasso's Enchantress," 530.

¹⁰⁵ Gough, "Tasso's Enchantress," 526.

¹⁰⁶ Gough, "Tasso's Enchantress," 524.

¹⁰⁷ Refini, "Giuditta, Armida," 91.

¹⁰⁸ For a similar analysis, see Refini, "Giuditta, Armida," 92. Migiel attributes her success to the "unthreatened superiority of her gaze" that draws the soldiers into her story ("Secrets," 149).

¹⁰⁹ Sáez, *Theodicy in Baroque Literature*, 43-53.

of her dissimulation.¹¹⁰

Of course, she does not affect everyone alike. Goffredo is doubtful of Armida's story: "il dubbio cor volve e sospende / fra pensier vari, e non sa dove il pieghi" (4.65). He fears "i barbari inganni" and resolves himself at least to the understanding that Armida's pagan condition does not bode well for truth, as "non è fede in uom ch'a Dio la neghi" (4.65). He remains "così dubbioso" and "a terra vòlto / lo sguardo tiene, e 'l pensier volve e gira" (4.76), before (at least initially) denying her request for aid. Getto reads Goffredo's reaction as evidence of his "responsabilità morale,"¹¹¹ where he and Tancredi resist Armida because they are "assorti nel loro sogno (religioso e amoroso rispettivamente)."¹¹² In this reading, the two men essentially pass the test of faith that Armida's veil signals because they are preoccupied with other issues. But Migiel offers a more ambivalent reading of Goffredo's so-called "immunity" to Armida's deception. She argues that Goffredo's reaction can be turned on its head and read as a failure to "unmask" Armida's deception, specifically because "he fails to look at her at all."¹¹³ Given Tasso's extensive focus on eyes and vision in the poem, Migiel points out, it is remarkable that Goffredo's usual attentiveness to his interlocutors is absent in his interaction with Armida.¹¹⁴ For Migiel, Armida's eyes are not described by the narrator because Armida's perspective is the one privileged in this episode; she is the one with interpretive power.¹¹⁵

As far as the veil's hermeneutical test of faith is concerned, Goffredo and the other soldiers do indeed fail to interpret Armida correctly. In a similar way, the soldiers who follow Armida out of the camp also fail to remain faithful to their Christian duty. What is more interesting about the interaction between the Christian men and Armida is Armida herself. The veil image associates Armida with deception, it is true. But the very fact that she resists unveiling by the soldiers, evading their interpretation of her in the ways noted above, suggests that her character is more than the material object that covers her. Migiel's interpretation concludes that we cannot unmask Armida because she does not merely deceive; she also *perceives*.¹¹⁶ Here, I see a similar dialectic with respect to the tests of faith signaled by the veil: Armida is not merely the test of the Christian army; she also has the capacity to be tested herself. Another way of putting it would be to challenge Gough's reading above that Armida is merely a symbol of the "the pleasures and dangers of poetry and poetic language." The conclusion in Gough's article, that "beneath [Armida's] veil is not a higher truth, not spirit, but more matter, body, letter,"¹¹⁷ unproductively reduces Armida's character to nothing more than her physical veil and the deceptive intention it symbolizes, just as the

¹¹⁰ Another way of thinking about the tension created by Armida's character is as Zatti does in his "Epic in the Age of Dissimulation," where "[Armida's] fascination results from a game of transparencies issuing from her external semblance (the visible covered, the hidden uncovered), an eroticism of veils and mantles meant to awaken the others' desire without satisfying it" (122). The unsatisfied desire provoked by the material veil is exactly what allows the false narrative of Armida's story to persist.

¹¹¹ Getto, *Nel mondo della Gerusalemme*, 36.

¹¹² Getto, *Nel mondo della Gerusalemme*, 35.

¹¹³ Migiel, "Secrets," 153.

¹¹⁴ Migiel, "Secrets," 153.

¹¹⁵ Migiel, "Secrets," 155.

¹¹⁶ Migiel, "Secrets," 159.

¹¹⁷ Gough, "Tasso's Enchantress," 533. For more on Armida as product of both traditions of Petrarchan lyric and Ariostan romance, whose veil signals the "literary genealogy" of heroines who exploit their "lethal capacity to precipitate the experience of erotic desire," see Ayesha Ramachandran, "Tasso's Petrarch: The Lyric Means to Epic Ends," *MLN* 122 1 (2007): 188-89. While of course the prevalence of such veiled figures as Laura and Angelica in the early modern cultural imagination cannot be denied, this reading still does not do justice either to the character of Armida beyond her veils or to how I see Tasso developing her as the poem goes on.

paradigm of Tasso's poetic theory of allegory does. Such a reduction, like that of Sofronia's veil in Canto 2, leaves no room for Armida's potential to be anything else or to grow as a character, because it assumes that Armida can only be understood through the eyes of the men who fail to properly look at her.

iii. Beyond Suspicious Allegory

Armida is not just a veil nor is she pure allegory. Rather, her character development, most notably in Cantos 14-16, proves the extent to which she exceeds her allegorical signification as merely deceptive. Armida's initial presence in Canto 14 is mediated through Ascalona's narration to Carlo and Ubaldo, the two knights who must journey to Armida's island to rescue the captive Rinaldo. Presented through Ascalona's lens, Armida is the evil witch who, having set up Rinaldo's armor to simulate his death and rouse suspicions among the Christians ("di sospetto / sparse quel seme in lor," 14.55), then deceptively lured the knight onto her island (14.59). But even through Ascalona's suspicious interpretation, Armida's character becomes more complex. While Rinaldo sleeps, Ascalona recounts, Armida uses "suo velo" (14.67) to wipe the sweat from his forehead. As she does so, she falls in love with him:

E quei ch'ivi sorgean vivi sudori
accoglie lievemente in un suo velo,
e con un dolce ventillar gli ardori
gli va temprando de l'estivo cielo.
Così (chi 'l crederia?) sopiti ardori
d'occhi nascosi distemperar quel gelo
che s'indurava al cor più che diamante,
e di nemica ella divenne amante. (14.67).

Armida's material veil does not *cause* her transformation from "nemica" to "amante," but it does focus our attention onto Rinaldo's "occhi nascosi," which themselves bring about the "distemperar" of her transformation as she falls in love. Formally, the use of the material *velo* at the beginning of the stanza also foreshadows that transformation not least because, in Tasso's *ottava rima*, *velo* is linked compositionally to *gelo*, the Petrarchan ice covering Armida's heart that gets removed as she emotionally changes.

Already we see that the veil image here moves beyond the mere interpretation problem associated with it in Canto 4. Beneath Armida's material and metaphorical veils, the passage suggests, is in fact more than just deception and body; love is beneath her veil. And yet, the veil image continues also to signify Armida's deception. As Armida moves from enemy to lover, so does Rinaldo, though his is not an *unveiling* like the dissolution of ice over Armida's heart, but a *veiling*. Charmed by her garden,¹¹⁸ lulled to sleep by her singing, and overtaken by "Quel serpe" who "si fa donno / sovra i sensi di lui possente e forte" (14.65), Rinaldo becomes her lover because he gets mentally blinded. Ascalona warns Carlo and Ubaldo that to rescue Rinaldo they must remove this symbolic "veil" by holding a mirror up to the knight-lover, revealing the true nature

¹¹⁸ The place has its own disguising incantation, an "ombra oscura e bruna," that veils the island as a paradise (14.70). The mountain in the middle of Armida's garden is described as "tra le nubi nasconde la fronte" (15.33); the islands are "feconde e vaghe e liete, / ma pur molto di falso al ver s'aggiunge" (15.37).

of who he has become (a kept man).¹¹⁹ Thus Carlo and Ubaldo travel to Armida's garden with the dual goal of revealing Rinaldo to himself and unveiling Armida as simply the deceptive sorceress they believe her to be. Completing the mission without falling for Armida's tricks becomes the test they must all pass in Canto 15.

Tasso certainly emphasizes the veil image as central to these tricks. When the knights arrive at the "fonte del riso" (15.57), they articulate the stakes of the journey: "Or qui tener a fren nostro desio / ed esser cauti molto a noi conviene: / chiudiam l'orecchie al dolce canto e rio / di queste del piacer false sirene" (15.57). As if on cue, a beautiful woman emerges naked from the pool, the water wrapping around her breasts like "un bel velo" (15.59). She approaches the men seductively, pulling down her hair to make "un aereo manto" (15.61) around her body. But Carlo and Ubaldo harden their hearts against "que' vezzi perfidi e bugiardi" (15.65) because they have been trained by Ascalona to see through these veils. Or rather, they have been trained to not see through the *material* veils, to not *imagine* what lies beneath them, but instead to simply recognize them as veils and thus as deceptive. By interpreting the material veil over the woman's body as the superficial cover hiding her seduction and thus their failure, the knights are able to reduce the meaning of her veil to nothing more than that deception. Avoiding the veil's trap here means avoiding the literal or imagined unveiling of the nymph—what the soldiers in Canto 4 failed to do. The test for Carlo and Ubaldo is to recognize the deceptive material veil as the test (which they pass by this very recognition) and thus to dissolve its power.

With a scene like this it becomes more obvious why scholars, early modern and modern, would associate pagan women like Armida with the so-called "dangers" of poetry. Indeed, the subject matter in this episode threatens both the poem's epic unity and its religious orthodoxy. The notorious Ariosto-Tasso literary quarrels debate the problem of injecting romance elements (and here, half-naked, partially veiled pagan women, no less) into a heroic Christian narrative. From mid-century, Italian literary critics and theorists argued over genre, with the Counter-Reformation and Inquisition, on the one hand, and the rediscovery of Aristotle's *Poetics*, on the other, as two crucial backdrops to motivate their positions.¹²⁰ Ariosto's magic and romance could be allegorized and thus understood as moral instruction, Pigna argued.¹²¹ But the romance, because of its multiplicity and its desire to please too many, should not be considered to be poetry at all, Minturno countered.¹²² Pellegrino, in his *Il Carrafa* of 1584, wrote that the uncontained nature of Ariosto's poem led him to fall into the "romance trap."¹²³ Many saw Tasso's *Gerusalemme liberata*, a foil for the *Orlando furioso*, as the only successful epic, because it adhered to Aristotle's rules of unity and verisimilitude, and because it had a clear morality with its "exaltation of the faith"¹²⁴ and its Christian ends.¹²⁵

And again, there were obvious political reasons during this period for a poet to be concerned about the "romance trap." The Inquisition censored not just the superstitious and the supernatural

¹¹⁹ For more on the tradition of the rivalry between the "veil of allegory" and the "mimetic mirror," see Albert Russell Ascoli, "Mirror and Veil: *Così è (se vi pare)* and the Drama of Interpretation," *Stanford Italian Review* 7 1-2 (1987): 38.

¹²⁰ For a fundamental and extensive analysis of the context and details of literary criticism during the sixteenth century in Italy, see Bernard Weinberg, *A History of Literary Criticism in the Italian Renaissance*. 2 vols. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1961).

¹²¹ Weinberg, *A History of Literary Criticism*, 967.

¹²² Weinberg, *A History of Literary Criticism*, 971.

¹²³ Weinberg, *A History of Literary Criticism*, 995.

¹²⁴ Lombardelli, 1581, in Weinberg, *A History of Literary Criticism*, 983; 1028.

¹²⁵ Campanella, 1596, in Weinberg, *A History of Literary Criticism*, 1068.

but also the “sublimation or deification of female characters in love poetry,” as censors saw a poet’s “expression of adoration for a woman” as idolatrous.¹²⁶ A broader theme like the marvelous, love was censored by the Inquisition for fear that it would seduce readers to “carnal desire,” which would distance them from God and lead them to “commit yet more sins.”¹²⁷ As I note early on in this chapter, Tasso expressed his concern about romance (and dangerous poetry in general) as connected directly to the threats of seductive women, writing in the *Discorsi del poema eroico* about the “vizii di leggiere, i quali tutti dee fuggire il poeta eroico... ma schifi Scilla e Cariddi, e le Sirti, e le Sirene, oltre tutti gli altri mostri di questo mare, perch’elle incantano chi ascolta troppo attentamente.”¹²⁸ Generally speaking, the disunity of Ariosto’s romance threatened Tasso’s own poem’s “internal potential for heresy.”¹²⁹ And indeed, his *Conquistata* famously rewrites the *Liberata*, eliminating much of the “problematic” material from the original to transform the revision from “quasi terrena” to “celeste.”¹³⁰ But even during the *Liberata*’s revision years, the poet labored over the problems of unity and verisimilitude that arose from magic and diverging romance episodes.¹³¹ In one of his poetic letters to Silvio Antoniano in 1576, Tasso admits that the “mirabile” is “necessarissimo” to the heroic poem.¹³² And yet, in a letter to Gonzaga in 1575, he worries that both the Sofronia episode and the Armida subject matter are “più tosto da romanzo che da poema eroico.”¹³³ By the mid 1580s, he felt he could no longer defend the *Liberata*, filled as it was with “ingiustificabili (in questa nuova ottica) inserti romanzeschi.”¹³⁴

But the poet still faced the problem of writing an enjoyable epic that used romance within the Christian framework. Gordon Teskey summarizes the dilemma: “This simple action [the siege of Jerusalem], however, required complications and delays if the epic was to hold any interest or to go on at any length.”¹³⁵ Furthermore, “if the theoretical requirements of unity and mimetic verisimilitude are strictly adhered to, the poem is dull; but if these requirements are not adhered to, the poem is deemed incorrect and unsophisticated and is subject to scorn as a mere romance, not a worthy revival of classical epic.”¹³⁶ With Tasso’s emphasis on delight as a means rather than an end in itself, Annabel Patterson points out, the poet had to “justify the romance elements in his own poem, particularly the presence of the enchantress Armida,” by establishing “the principle that epic may include amorous and sensually delicious episodes; and that an epic hero may make

¹²⁶ Helm, *Poetry and Censorship*, 66.

¹²⁷ Helm, *Poetry and Censorship*, 143. Helm notes that certain books of literary value like the *Furioso* and the *Decameron* were tolerated more than others, though they were still required to undergo censorship (144).

¹²⁸ Tasso, *Discorsi del poema eroico*, 251. As Weinberg and others point out anyway, the *Discorsi del poema eroico* rework the original *Discorsi dell’arte poetica* with a new emphasis on the value of instruction and teaching (*A History of Literary Criticism*, 685).

¹²⁹ Wadoski, “Spenser, Tasso,” 367.

¹³⁰ Torquato Tasso, *Giudicio sovra la Gerusalemme riformata*. Ed. Claudio Gigante (Rome: Salerno, 2000) 12.

¹³¹ Gordon Teskey, “Allegory and Renaissance Critical Theory,” in *Spenserian Moments* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2019), 236.

¹³² Tasso, *Lettere poetiche* (to Antoniano, 1576), 354-5.

¹³³ Tasso, *Lettere poetiche* (to Gonzaga, 1575), 30.

¹³⁴ Gigante, “Introduzione,” xxiv.

¹³⁵ Teskey, “Allegory,” 236.

¹³⁶ Teskey, “Allegory,” 236. On this dilemma across Tasso’s prose writings and the *Liberata* itself, see Daniel Javitch, “Tasso’s Critique and Incorporation of Chivalric Romance: His Transformation of Achilles in the *Gerusalemme Liberata*,” *International Journal of the Classical Tradition* 13 4 (2007): 516; Cox, *The Prodigious Muse*, 37; Patterson, “Tasso and Neoplatonism,” 127. Ascoli also helpfully explores Tasso’s poetic and religious position as at the center of the tension between the poets Dante and Ariosto. See Albert Russell Ascoli, “Liberating the Tomb: Difference and Death in *Gerusalemme Liberata*,” *Annali d’italianistica* 12 (1994): 170.

love as well as war.”¹³⁷

In the *Giudicio sovra la Gerusalemme riformata* of 1592, Tasso aims to navigate this epic-romance line through allegory, writing, “Io mi servo più de l’allegoria in quelle parti del mio poema ove più mi sono allontanato da l’istoria, estimando che dove cessa il senso literale debba supplire l’allegorico e gli altri sensi: nondimeno ho avuto risguardo di non usare allegoria che paia sconvenevole ne la figura e ne l’apparenza.”¹³⁸ And his *Allegoria* of 1581 sets out to do this officially. Demons represent impediments to “la cristiana beatitudine,” the work asserts. Ismeno and Armida are the “ministri del diavolo,” two “diaboliche tentazioni che insidiano a due potenze dell’anima nostra.” They are effectively the source of all sin, Ismeno representing the temptation to “ingannare con false credenze la virtù... opinatrice,” and Armida the temptation to appetite and lust.¹³⁹ It is worth remembering that, in this very text, only a few paragraphs later, Tasso describes allegory as the sense or meaning that “sotto il velo delle loro azioni si nasconde.”¹⁴⁰ Thus, if we take Tasso’s word for it there, Armida and her romance elements would symbolize nothing more than a veil for the allegorical meaning of diabolical temptation, deception, and seduction hidden underneath.

But this is not actually how Tasso represents her in the *Gerusalemme liberata*. In his treatment of her in the poem, he does not adhere to the paradigm of interpretation expressed by his theory of allegory, not least in Canto 16 when Carlo and Ubaldo arrive to metaphorically “unveil” her. The knights find the lovers at the center of Armida’s garden. Her veil is a defining feature of her initial description: “Ella dinanzi al petti ha il vel diviso” (16.18), as she is caressed by Rinaldo. Then Carlo and Ubaldo witness the two as they famously “mirano in vari oggetti un solo oggetto: / ella del vetro a sé fa specchio, ed egli / gli occhi di lei sereni a sé fa spegli” (16.20); the pagan woman gazes upon herself, Rinaldo at her, “ella in se stessa ed egli in lei” (16.21). The love mirror foreshadows the mirror of disillusionment that the knights bring to rescue Rinaldo. At the opportune moment, Ubaldo holds out the “adamantino scudo” (16.29), within which Rinaldo finally sees himself: “si specchia in lui qual siasi e quanto / con delicato culto adorno” (16.30). And the knight’s shifting vision, from the erotic mirror to the chivalric mirror (importantly, it is a shield), from the beloved to the self, enacts an awakening: “Quel uom da cupo e grave sonno oppresso / dopo vaneggiar lungo in sé riviene” (16.31).

Curiously, at this revelation—the metaphorical lifting of the “grave sonno” that previously blinded Rinaldo—the knight is prompted instinctively to hide and cover himself for shame: “Si chiuderebbe e sotto il mare e dentro / il foco per celarsi, e giù nel centro” (16.31). But Ubaldo reprimands him and calls him to arms; and at the encouragement, Rinaldo completes the process by physically removing his “vani fregi e quelle indegne / pompe, di servitù misera insegne” (16.34) before they depart. Corrigan calls this moment “the supreme test for Rinaldo, the culminating result of his pride and rebellious self-will, and the preparation for the exploit which he has been chosen by heaven to perform.”¹⁴¹ And indeed, he *does* pass the “test.” By recognizing the truth of his own transformation from knight to lover, and by seeing himself honestly without the veils of romance clouding his vision, he is able to free himself from the trap of Armida’s garden.

But considered in this way, Rinaldo’s rescue is remarkable because it does not involve Armida at all. In Canto 4, her veils of innocence and beauty clearly signify an interpretive test of reading

¹³⁷ Patterson, “Tasso and Neoplatonism,” 122.

¹³⁸ Tasso, *Giudicio*, 51.

¹³⁹ Tasso, *Allegoria*, 607.

¹⁴⁰ Tasso, *Allegoria*, 609-10.

¹⁴¹ Corrigan, “The Opposing Mirrors,” 170.

and faith that most of the soldiers fail: they believe her storytelling, they believe her beauty, and they are therefore prepared to abandon their Christian duty because they are unable to perceive these veils as deceptive. But in Canto 16, Rinaldo is the one who is veiled, mentally by love and physically by the “vani fregi” and “insegne,” and his missing vision returns only when he correctly sees and interprets his own self, thus enacting his own unveiling.¹⁴² Of course, this episode constitutes one of Tasso’s greatest moments of notable diversion from Ariosto’s *Orlando furioso*.¹⁴³ The “hag unveiling topos,” as Migiel refers to it, is obviously missing from the moment of Rinaldo’s escape.¹⁴⁴ As Gough points out, despite the association of Armida with deception, Tasso insistently “refuses to unmask her beauty”; the restoration of Rinaldo’s “manhood,” Gough adds, occurs without “revealing the enchantress to be decrepit and ugly beneath her charmed exterior.”¹⁴⁵ Where the test for Ariosto’s Ruggiero requires unveiling Alcina by means of the magic ring, the test for Rinaldo requires instead his internal understanding of his own self.

And because of this, what happens to Armida in Canto 16 is even more interesting than it would be if she really were nothing but a veil, an illusion, or the allegory of deception and lustful temptation. When she realizes Rinaldo has left her, Armida immediately tries to use her “arti” to bring him back (16.36). When those fail, she remembers her “supplice beltà” (16.37) and tries that. Distraught, she runs after him, uncharacteristically forgetting her bellicose honor, which the narrator points out: “Ahi! Dove or sono i suoi trionfi e i vanti?” (16.38). The narrator judges Armida’s attempts to retain Rinaldo, accusing her of loving him only as a means to love herself: “amò d’essere amata, odiò gli amanti” (16.38). And yet such an accusation ignores the obvious complexity of Armida’s character. In Canto 14, we watch her genuinely fall in love—no small matter. And even if Armida’s love for Rinaldo *were* motivated purely by self-love, that fact in itself would add further complexity to her character (and perhaps even prompt a reinterpretation of her motivations to lead astray the soldiers in Canto 4—as a means of finding lovers who worship her, rather than just an act of war?). The narrator seems set on reducing Armida to mere deception even as his very assertions of that deception are inconsistent and demonstrate the ways that Armida is multi-dimensional as a character.

Armida quickly realizes in Canto 16 that her charms have no effect on Rinaldo and so changes tactics. She openly admits her deceptions: “Anch’io le genti / cristiane odiai, no ’l nego, odiai te stesso. / Nacqui pagana, usai vari argomenti / che per me fosse il vostro imperio oppresso” (16.45). Her honesty is striking because it replaces the “hag unveiling topos.” Instead of being physically unveiled by Rinaldo or another external power, Armida chooses to “unveil” herself morally. And because she is not reduced to a figure defined only by veils, she also has the opportunity to reveal her humanness. She continues: “t’ingannai, t’allettai nel nostro amore; / empia lusinga certo, iniquo inganno” (16.46). But she also adds, “fedele / sono a te solo” (16.47). This confession demonstrates Armida’s changed relationship not just to Rinaldo but to herself. Attempting to use her veils or arts or charms to call him back would never have worked, both because Rinaldo in the stanzas preceding has reached a level of understanding about his own self that makes his self-revelation stronger than her material and metaphorical veils, and also because Armida’s character, at the moment when Tasso chooses not to reduce her to the veiled hag trope, becomes something more than just those veils and arts and deceptions.¹⁴⁶

¹⁴² For a similar comparison between Rinaldo’s perception here and the Christian soldiers’ in Canto 4, see Migiel, “Secrets,” 159.

¹⁴³ Gough, “Tasso’s Enchantress,” 523.

¹⁴⁴ Migiel, “Secrets,” 159.

¹⁴⁵ Gough, “Tasso’s Enchantress,” 530.

¹⁴⁶ As Corrigan writes, “for Ruggiero it is Alcina who is changed from an object of desire to one of loathing. But

But Armida's sincerity, as I read it here, is evident neither to all scholars nor to the characters Carlo and Ubaldo who must get Rinaldo off the island before he falls into what they believe is another of Armida's traps.¹⁴⁷ When Armida argues that Rinaldo should at least hear her out, that he can still choose to leave after she has pled her case, Ubaldo affirms this reasoning: "Qual più forte di te, se le sirene / vedendo ed ascoltando a vincer t'usi?" (16.41). Ubaldo still sees Armida's "beltà" and "preghi" (16.41) as a test that Rinaldo must pass to prove that his sense of duty as a knight is stronger than her seduction. When Rinaldo does eventually respond to Armida, there is a wariness in his reaction, for he can barely look at her: "Ei lei non mira; e se pur mira, il guardo / furtivo volge e vergognoso e tardo" (16.42). And yet his eventual response demonstrates not that he sees beyond Armida's veils, but that he sees Armida beyond Armida's veils: "Errasti, è vero, e trapassasti i modi, / ora gli amori essercitando, or gli odi: / ma che? son colpe umane e colpe usate: / scuso la natia legge, il sesso e gli anni" (16.53-4). To show his good faith, both interpersonally and spiritually, Rinaldo pledges himself to her as her "cavalier" (16.54). In this way, Rinaldo passes the test of faith staged here, but it is a different test than the one Ubaldo means. Rinaldo does not unveil Armida but instead finds a better way to read her, acknowledging her humanity and her complexity. Where Ubaldo and Carlo see only veils of "beltà" and "preghi," Rinaldo sees her flaws as human mistakes that can ultimately be forgiven.

Of course, a few stanzas later, Armida the abandoned lover will go on to declare her revenge, but much of that ends up being just talk. What is truly significant about Canto 16 is that Tasso tests Rinaldo against the powers of Armida's deceptive veils without actually reducing Armida's character to those veils. In this episode, the veils transform from external markers of Armida's function as a test for male interpreters, to symbols of Armida's own transformation, first from enemy to lover, and then from an allegorical trope to a developed and complex person. She is thus not just the test but also the tested. Moreover, Rinaldo's decision to return to the Christian camp is not motivated by the simple disillusionment of Armida or the unveiling of her beauty. Instead, Rinaldo's own sense of duty and Christian morality drives his departure. His faith is still tested in this episode, but not by Armida. Rather, Rinaldo becomes his own test because his faith is not regained by his suspicion of her but by his belief in himself and in his duty. What this means is that Armida is therefore free to be more than just a veil, more than just a test, and more than mere allegory. She is a person, flawed and complex, yes, but nevertheless sympathetic and thus redeemable.

III. Hermeneutic Tests and Lessons in Faith

i. Unveiling to Revelation

Armida's development from test of faith to "tested" is a pattern in the poem, also recognizable in the storylines of Clorinda and Erminia and signaled by the veils and disguises used by the two pagan women. From the moment we meet Clorinda back in Canto 2, as she appears just in time to save Sofronia and Olindo from their martyrdom on Aladino's pyre, she is difficult to recognize:

though Armida remains as beautiful and desirable as ever in Rinaldo's eyes, he himself, under the operation of Grace, has become a new person, a mature and steadfast Christian hero instead of an impetuous undisciplined youth" ("The Opposing Mirrors," 175).

¹⁴⁷ Del Giudice, for example, reads Armida as a "mastra d'inganni" and suspicious until the very end of the poem ("Armida: *Virgo Fingens*," 48).

“ecco un guerriero,” Tasso writes, “(ché tal pareva) d’alta sembianza e degna” (2.38). Not even the narrator is initially sure who it is, and he must describe the pieces of armor—“Le tigre, che su l’elmo ha per cimiero... famosa insegna” (2.38)—in order to identify the “guerriero” as actually Clorinda. Tasso explains why identifying her proves both difficult and yet possible (for those able to recognize her armor): “Costei gl’ingegni femminili e gli usi / tutti sprezzò sin de l’età più acerba,” and “armò d’orgoglio il volto, e si compiacque / rigido farlo, e pur rigido piacque” (2.39). Clorinda’s disdain for feminine habits and clothing, on the one hand, and her masculine self-presentation, down to the armor she wears in battle, on the other, paradoxically disguise her femininity while simultaneously revealing her as the *donna guerriera* Clorinda.

But the extent to which Clorinda can or cannot be recognized in the *Liberata* quickly becomes a plot point: the Christian knight Tancredi, who also happens to be in love with her, consistently struggles to recognize her. In Canto 3, they fight on the battlefield, and though Clorinda wears her helmet with its famous insignia, Tancredi does not realize who she is; his sword cuts through her helmet and sends it flying. Only as he affects a physical unveiling of the warrior woman does he see who she is, her defining blonde hair blowing in the wind. Incredulous of Tancredi’s blindness, the narrator comments directly to his character: “Tancredi, a che pur pensi? a che pur guardi? / Non riconosci tu l’altero viso?” (3.22). Clorinda’s introduction in the previous Canto 2 heightens the dramatic irony of Tancredi’s failure to properly see her: though we readers could not recognize Clorinda before, we have by now learned the lesson of how to identify the signs of her unique features. Unfortunately, Tancredi has not, a fact that intensifies the dramatic irony even more when he goes on to accidentally kill her later in the poem. Properly reading Clorinda is a test that Tancredi fails repeatedly, and its consequence is not only her death, but also the reduction of character. As Emily Wilson argues, “failed attempts at recognition draw attention to problems of personal identity.”¹⁴⁸ Tancredi’s bad reading risks reducing Clorinda’s identity in the way that inadequate interpretations of Sofronia and Armida do.

And before Clorinda’s death at Tancredi’s hand, her personal identity does indeed receive considerable and unexpected development. In Canto 12, Clorinda’s trusted servant Arsetes reveals the pagan warrior’s backstory. Explaining that he received a divine message prompting him to tell her the truth (12.36), Arsetes admits that Clorinda is secretly Christian by birth. He tells her that he hid the truth from her, for he did not believe it to be true until now: “mia fé vera e l’ombre false / stimai” (12.38). Arsetes explains that, according to the messenger from his dream, Clorinda must learn her Christian “sorte” (12.39) in order to be baptized before she dies. As he gives her the news, the revelation prompts a test of religious faith for Arsetes, as he considers his newly provoked doubts about his paganism, admitting about Christianity, “Forse è la vera fede” (12.40).

If the narrative twist causes Arsetes to question his religion in this way, it would presumably cause as much for Clorinda, whose entire personal identity appears, at this news, to hang in the balance. But she responds unfazed by the information: “Quella fé seguirò che vera or parmi, / che tu co ’l latte già de la nutrice / suggir mi fèsti e che vuoi dubbia or farmi” (12.41). Suddenly doubting her paganism to subscribe to Christianity by the new information would be neither adequately verisimilar nor a “pass” in any test of Christian faith, for it would reduce both Clorinda’s character and Christian faith itself to nothing more than a whim. The test of spiritual faith is not a matter of simply changing one religion for another; it is about finding faith through personal growth, as the development of her narrative shows.

¹⁴⁸ Emily Wilson, “*Quantum Mutatus ab Illo*: Moments of Change and Recognition in Tasso and Milton,” in *Epic Interactions: Perspectives on Homer, Virgil, and the Epic Tradition*. Ed. M. J. Clarke, B. G. F. Currie, and R. O. A. M. Lyne (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 279.

In the climax of that narrative (her death), Tancredi's test of interpretation coincides with Clorinda's test of faith, and both are associated with the motif of unveiling and revelation. Once again, Tancredi fails to recognize Clorinda, and this time it is fatal.¹⁴⁹ As she lays wounded on the ground, he literally unveils her by removing the helmet from her head: "Tremar sentì la man, mentre la fronte / non conosciuta ancor sciolse e scoprio. / La vide, la conobbe, e restò senza / e voce e moto. Ahi vista! ahi conoscenza!" (12.67). But while Tancredi grapples with the result of his misrecognition, Clorinda experiences spiritual revelation from the Christian God, with "parole ch'a lei novo un spirto ditta, / spirto di fé, di carità, di speme: virtù ch'or Dio le infonde, e se rubella / in vita fu, la vuole in morte ancella" (12.65). Leone summarizes nicely: "The narrative of Clorinda's death contains a double turning point: Tancredi uncovers Clorinda's truthful identity, while she discovers her truthful religion."¹⁵⁰ Moved by this new faith, she requests baptism from Tancredi, distinguishing in her speech between "corpo" and "alma" (12.66): she fears nothing for her body but wants to cleanse her soul. (Tasso the author motivated here, as Corrigan points out, by the Counter-Reformation's intent on restoring the sacraments to spiritual life.)¹⁵¹ And so, while Tancredi's guilt continues to afflict him, she dies with her eyes "al cielo affisa" (12.69), peacefully, happily, converted.¹⁵²

Here we may see the difference between their tests. The tragedy of Tancredi's misrecognition, apart from accidentally killing his beloved, is that he represents another poor reader of women, even on the literal, physical, most obvious level, as Wilson explains:

The difficulty for Tancredi is to disentangle the real Clorinda from her multiple different roles. But the recognition of any aspect of Clorinda involves the failure to recognize its converse. He can recognize her as a warrior only by not seeing that she is a woman. He can recognize her as his victim only by not seeing that she dies redeemed.¹⁵³

And yet, Clorinda does not experience it as a tragedy. Her material unveiling converges with her spiritual revelation precisely because Tancredi's failure to interpret her body and external clothing leads her to her own ability to interpret herself:¹⁵⁴ he causes her death which prompts her faith. Clorinda's character development happens to result in Christian conversion, aligning Christian faith with her personal growth, but that growth is what is most important. What seemed initially to be a story about Tancredi's inability to physically recognize Clorinda beneath the veil of her armor, becomes one about Clorinda's newfound ability to spiritually recognize herself. The material veil drives the plot from Tancredi's misrecognition to Clorinda's self-recognition, before being converted itself from a symbol of literal unveiling to one of divine revelation.

In a similar way, Erminia's narrative in the poem also reflects this tension between the veil's association with tests of reading for those asked to interpret her and tests of personal development

¹⁴⁹ The dramatic irony of Tancredi's inability to recognize Clorinda is intensified here by the fact that in Canto 12 Clorinda does not wear her own identifiable armor, Erminia having run off with it. Thus, any learning Tancredi might have undergone to better read her by her clothing is foiled by this unexpected disguise.

¹⁵⁰ Leone, "Converting Knights," 117.

¹⁵¹ Corrigan, "The Opposing Mirrors," 177.

¹⁵² Leone, "Converting Knights," points out how both tears and the motif of gazing at the sky are important elements in conversion after the Council of Trent (97).

¹⁵³ Wilson, "Quantum Mutatus ab Illo," 283.

¹⁵⁴ Saez describes Clorinda's disguise as one that hides her from herself as well as the rest of the world (*Theodicy in Baroque Literature*, 27).

and faith for the princess herself. In Erminia's story too, though in differing ways, physical unveiling coincides with spiritual revelation. But whereas Armida and Clorinda are introduced in the poem as interpretive tests for others, before experiencing their own character development and undergoing their own tests later on, Erminia's perspective is privileged from the moment we meet her. Her initial description in Canto 3 involves the "manto de l'odio" (3.19), the metaphorical cloak beneath which she hides her star-crossed love for Tancredi. And in Canto 6, she expresses her relationship to the material veil as a symbol of female constraint that someone like Clorinda does not have to experience thanks to her knightly armor: "A lei non tarda i passi il lungo manto, / né 'l suo valor rinchiude invida cella" (6.82); Erminia could only dream of having Clorinda's freedom of clothing: "Ah perché forti a me natura e 'l cielo / altrettanto non fèr le membra e 'l petto, / onde potessi anch'io la gonna e 'l velo / cangiar ne la corazza e ne l'elmetto?" (6.83). Masked by her *velo* and *gonna* are the qualities that Erminia wishes she could reveal. Physically unveiled, she would be free from her feminine "tema o vergogna" (6.82); she would be less "timida e dogliosa" (6.86). What is remarkable about this description is that Erminia, from the beginning, is her own reader, interpreting her own self. And for Erminia, removing the veil means not unveiling some surface layer that impedes external understanding; it means revealing her own interior qualities.

Still, Erminia cannot escape the fact that she may still constitute an interpretive test of faith for others.¹⁵⁵ In Canto 19, Erminia recognizes the spy Vafrino who has been sent to the Egyptian camp near Gaza to uncover the plans of war against Goffredo. Erminia reveals herself to him with the intention of striking a deal: he will return her to the Christians (to Tancredi, really), if she gives up the pagans' plot. But though he has no obvious reason to be, Vafrino is skeptical, not because Erminia is a pagan, but because she is a woman: "Così gli parla, e intanto ei mira e tace; / pensa a l'esempio de la falsa Armida. / 'Femina è cosa garrula e fallace: / vòle e disvòle; è folle uom che se 'n fida.' / Sì tra sé volge" (19.84). In the world of Tasso's poem, the story of Armida's infamous test of faith, which led so many Christians astray because they failed to "correctly" unveil her deception, has become a cautionary tale that Vafrino intends to heed. Indeed, right before this encounter with Erminia, Vafrino comes across Armida among the Egyptian army. When he sees her, she is dressed suggestively in a material veil, "ove mal cauto apria / fra due mamme un bel vel secreta via" (19.69). It is no surprise, then, that Vafrino associates Erminia's potential for deception with Armida's, as he has just been reminded of the power of a woman's "bel vel," the apparent symbol of female falsehood.

But Vafrino's bias is unfounded from our perspective as readers by the way Tasso has developed the story. We empathize with Erminia because Tasso has already given us insight into her sincerity as a character. Vafrino's skeptical judgment of her comes across as excessive and a gross generalization when applied to the apparently universal "Femina." His mistake is that he, like the poem's other reductive readers of Sofronia, Armida, and Clorinda, reduces Erminia to her gender, a quality like the veil which they come to believe signals deception. As external readers, we may know Erminia is sincere, but only because we are able to interpret her without depending on the veils she does or does not wear. In fact, we are able to interpret her, as she interprets herself in Canto 6, *in spite* of her material veils. There she is presented as a person constricted by her material veil, but not defined by it and certainly not reduced to it. Instead, Vafrino cannot dissociate Armida from her "bel vel" in the same way that he cannot dissociate "fallace" from "femina." However, an interpretation of Erminia that tries to unveil her superficially will only result in the

¹⁵⁵ When she steals Clorinda's armor in a ploy to reach Tancredi, whom she loves, her physical disguise presents this very test. In fact, when he sees the identifying insignia on the armor, Tancredi mistakes Erminia for Clorinda. The one time he correctly reads the armor, it is still a misrecognition of the woman inside.

perpetual suspicion that she is hiding something deeper that he and other suspicious readers cannot find. Such a reading will never reveal anything profound about her.

And there is much that is profound about Erminia. In concluding her narrative at the end of Canto 19, Tasso depicts her, like Clorinda and Armida, as the *tested* and not just the interpretive “test” for others. Journeying toward the Christian army, Erminia and Vafrino happen upon the fallen bodies of Argantes and Tancredi. There Erminia weeps for her beloved whom she believes to be dead, her tears recalling Clorinda’s conversion in Canto 12, or, as Franco Tomasi refers to it, an *inversion*, where Erminia’s tears seek to bring Tancredi’s body back to life, as the baptismal waters gave Clorinda’s soul “una nuova vita” in the afterlife.¹⁵⁶ As scholars often note, there are allusions to Erminia’s own religious conversion in this encounter.¹⁵⁷ As she cries, she tells the lifeless Tancredi, “Raccogli tu l’anima mia seguace, / drizzala tu dove la tua se ’n gio” (19.109), suggesting a request for spiritual conversion. Yet, as many of these scholars also note, Erminia’s conversion is not absolute, Tasso himself writing to his *revisori* about his uncertain plans to end her story.¹⁵⁸

But whether or not Erminia undergoes a full conversion to Christianity like Clorinda, she still experiences a personal transformation. Tancredi rouses from near death, and Erminia proceeds to cure him. All she has to bind his wounds is her veil and her hair: “ch’un velo onde gli fasce / le sue ferite, in sì solinghe parti” (19.112). But her efforts take effect almost immediately: “Già il mortifero sonno ei da sé scote, / già può le luci alzar mobili e vaghe. / Vede il suo servo, e la pietosa donna / sopra si mira in peregrina gonna” (19.113). Remarkably, both the *velo* and the *gonna*, the two pieces of clothing from Canto 6 which Erminia desired to discard because of how they constricted her personal identity, return in this scene with renewed healing powers. They become symbols both of love and, with the baptismal allusions immediately preceding, of Christian religion. The veil no longer symbolizes “femina... garrula e fallace” nor the mere external surface that hides Erminia’s deeper qualities. The material veil here signals the successful testing of Erminia’s own faith in herself to push beyond the constraints of the physical clothing that demarcates her as a woman and thus only deceptive. And as this developed character, she does much that is worth celebrating. By using the veil to cure Tancredi, she also brings unity to her narrative¹⁵⁹ by finally realizing her initial goal to tend Tancredi’s wounds,¹⁶⁰ while reinforcing the importance of the Christian marvelous that causes Tancredi’s miraculous recovery.

But this celebratory reading of Erminia’s character and growth at the end of Canto 19 resists not only the model of suspicious interpretation followed by some of the other readers within the

¹⁵⁶ Franco Tomasi in Tasso, *Gerusalemme liberata*, 1198, notes to stanza XIX.109. For more on the sacrament of tears and their role in “the early modern Catholic *imaginaire* of conversion,” see Leone, “Converting Knights,” 98, 104.

¹⁵⁷ See Gough, “Tasso’s Enchantress”; Kristen Olson Murtaugh, “Erminia Delivered: Notes on Tasso and Romance,” *Quaderni d’Italianistica* 31 (1982): 12-25; Jane Tylus, “Imagining Narrative in Tasso: Revisiting Erminia,” *MLN* 127 (2012): 45-64; Walter Stephens, “Trickster, Textor, Architect, Thief: Craft and Comedy in *Gerusalemme Liberata*,” in *Renaissance Transaction: Ariosto and Tasso*. Ed. Valeria Finucci (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1999), 146-177; Sáez, *Theodicy in Baroque Literature*.

¹⁵⁸ See Tasso, *Lettere poetiche* (to Gonzaga, 1576), 424. Tylus, “Imagining Narrative,” argues that Erminia’s “rebirth” is only suggested but not confirmed (57), and that in the end she remains unconverted (58). Stephens, “Trickster, Textor,” points out how Erminia’s narrative poses a challenge for the poet, which is evident in his refusal to end her story (174).

¹⁵⁹ Murtaugh, “Erminia Delivered,” also makes the point that Tasso achieves unity of epic and romance in how Erminia’s “disclosure of the pagans’ plans in Egypt give the Christians the final advantage they need to at least win Jerusalem, and her succor to the wounded Tancredi gives him the strength to enter the Holy City. Thus Tasso resolves the tension between romantic discursiveness and epic unity by making the former finally serve the latter” (23).

¹⁶⁰ Tylus, “Imagining Narrative,” 56.

poem, but also the model of interpretation inherent in Tasso's own theory of poetry and allegory. *Favola* is a veil, Tasso insists in the *Giudicio*, that needs explanation or unveiling through allegory.¹⁶¹ Allegory then is the solution to that which is "false":

l'allegoria, co' sensi occulti de le cose significate, può difendere il poeta da la vanità e da la falsità similmente... sí come nel mondo e ne la natura de le cose non si lascia alcun luogo al vacuo, così nel poema non si lascia parte alcuna a la vanità, riempiendo ciascuna d'esse, e le piccolissime ancora e meno apparenti, de' sensi occulti e misteriosi.¹⁶²

Moreover, the "fine de l'allegorie" is the ongoing unveiling of fiction: "disvelandosi ne l'eterna luce dal velo de l'ombre e de le figure, deono tutte cessare ed illustrarsi perpetuamente."¹⁶³ But this is precisely the problem with Tasso's theory of allegory. Allegory is not just what lies beneath the veil of *favola*. Allegory itself *is* a hermeneutic veil that perpetually suggests that the poem's surface level hides a deeper meaning, a truer signification. And Tasso's specific anxiety about the imitation of poetry, which drives him to allegorize (to unveil), is the same anxiety that drives the poem's internal readers of these women to see them as false and thus needing to be unveiled in the first place. But the women are not just veils, as they are not just allegories of some deeper meaning. If Tasso's theory of allegory constitutes a paradigm of faith mirrored in the image of the veil that presents unveiling as the only model of reading and interpretation, it is an inadequate model for understanding the poem's women and thus an inadequate model of faith because it sacrifices faith for the sake of suspicion, forcing unveilings at the expense of any true revelation.¹⁶⁴

When it comes to these women, the poem's male readers (Aladino, Goffredo, Ubaldo, among others) follow the paradigm of allegory: they prefer to read superficially, wanting only to unveil. From their perspective, Sofronia, Armida, Clorinda, and Erminia are suspicious women whose veils make it hard to know their hidden intentions. But it is clear from an examination of how these four women evolve over the course of the poem that this is not how Tasso the poet himself interprets their characters. He develops them; he lets them grow; he gives us insight into their fears and desires. From the way he depicts them, Sofronia is the strident defender of Christianity, Armida has the capacity to fall deeply in love, Clorinda is able to recognize, accept, and find peace in new faith, and Erminia can bring a man back to life. They also happen to wear veils sometimes.

These female characters provide useful examples of the pitfalls of allegorical reading specifically because Tasso can capitalize on the traditional, suspicious association between women, veils, and deception, only to undermine that superficial model of allegorical reading as

¹⁶¹ Tasso, *Giudicio*, 47.

¹⁶² Tasso, *Giudicio*, 18-19.

¹⁶³ Tasso, *Giudicio*, 91.

¹⁶⁴ Modern scholars who follow a theory of allegory in their interpretation of these characters also run the risk of reading reductively. In her article, "Tasso's Enchantress, Tasso's Captive Women," Gough, for example, reads Erminia's final scene as "a metaphor for allegoresis," where the cropping of Erminia's hair in her cure of Tancredi is "a way to 'convert' pagan literature and rhetoric for Christian ends rather than censoring or abandoning it" (526). While this aspect of Erminia's narrative resolution is certainly compelling and may figure into the overall goals of the poem as a whole, I push back against the argument that the entire point of her storyline is an allegory of pagan submission to Christianity. Instead, I see Erminia's experience between faith and in love as genuine and deserving of evaluation in its own right and not just as an allegorical veil. When Zatti asserts in his book, *The Quest for Epic*, that his argument about Tasso's poem is that "an entire system of dissimulation underlies the conception and the very structure of the *Gerusalemme Liberata*" (197), I do not disagree with him. And yet, I argue that this system is flawed as a model of interpretation both for the characters and for modern Tasso scholars. In his treatment of the tests of faith of his characters, I argue, Tasso gives us an alternate model of reading and interpretation that is not based on deception but rather on faith.

insufficient to represent their stories. What's more, Tasso connects the act of reading these women not just to their character development but more importantly to religious faith, by presenting their veils as, in one way or another, tests of that faith for the Christian readers within the poem. Tasso makes clear that just as allegory is not a sufficient model for reading people, so too does it fail to inspire Christian faith because, if the symbol of the veil were truly capable of deceiving true Christian faith, that faith would not be a true at all, but rather weak, fragile, insufficient, to say the least. Indeed, as we shall see shortly, Rinaldo learns this very lesson when he proves his true faith by rejecting the allegorical model of reading and embracing a restorative, faithful one instead.

ii. Toward a Hermeneutics of Faith

Good interpretation in the *Gerusalemme liberata* is, I argue, not just about seeing these women as fully developed characters; Jerusalem's liberation actually hinges on the moment when Rinaldo learns to see Armida as more than just the veil that initially defines her. When we last discussed the young soldier he was returning to the battlefield from Armida's island, having pledged himself to her not as a lover but as a Christian knight. In response, Armida promised revenge against him, which she only half-heartedly attempts to orchestrate among the Egyptians before they meet again in Canto 20. But in the meantime, Rinaldo must return to prove his faith as a Christian, and the culmination of this test is the enchanted forest. As the hermit warns him in Canto 18, he shall overcome the "fantasmi ingannevoli e bugiardi" of the forest unless some other "folle error" (18.10) holds him back, a pointed allusion to the "error" of romance which distracted him for half the poem.¹⁶⁵

The forest, filled with pagan magic and supernatural forces, is the accumulation of the many pagan spells cast by Ismeno and the infernal spirits up until now, which Tasso interestingly often associates with the imagery of veils. In Canto 9, for example, the narrator describes their evil effect on the land:

Ma già distendon l'ombre orrido velo
che di rossi vapor si sparge e tigne;
la terra in vece del notturno gelo
bagnan rugiade tepide e sanguigne;
s'empie di mostri e di prodigi il cielo,
s'odon fremendo errar larve maligne:
votò Pluton gli abissi, e la sua notte
tutta versò de le tartaree grotte. (19.15).

The spirits are a veil of bloody mist in the air; now a veil of dark shadows in the night sky. And the association with natural veils and pagan forces in this canto is strengthened by the revelation that the "mille nuvole" (9.53) that the pagans create actually gives strength to the enemy ("dan forza a i pagani," 9.53). Elsewhere, as in Canto 10, the pagans Solimano and Ismeno fly to Jerusalem in a cloud, what Tasso calls "il velo / de la nube" (10.49). The veil imagery used to describe the natural atmosphere and landscape throughout the poem is not strictly pagan; and yet in enough moments Tasso makes a strong association between the "velo" and pagan evils for it to

¹⁶⁵ As Pierantozzi in "La *Gerusalemme liberata*" notes, the forest represents the "condanna morale e religiosa" (41).

be significant.¹⁶⁶

Indeed, in Canto 18, the enchanted forest is filled with the same such pagan veils, the most important of which is the simulation of Armida among its trees. Rinaldo sees her: “donna mostrò ch’assomigliava a pieno / nel falso aspetto angelica beltade. / Rinaldo guata, e di veder gli è avviso / le sembianze d’Armida e il dolce viso” (18.30). The image tests him, inviting him to enjoy her “bei pietosi giri,” “dolcissimi sopiri,” and “suovi singulti” (18.33). The stakes of Rinaldo’s ability to resist Armida’s simulation in the forest are heightened by Tancredi’s failed attempt to pass a similar test earlier in Canto 13. There, the knight encountered Clorinda’s image in the enchanted forest, and it terrified him: “tanto gli porge / spavento la sembianza orrida e fera, / tal il timido amante a pien non crede / a i falsi inganni, e pur ne teme e cede” (13.44). Tancredi’s failure to overcome the enchantment is caused by his typical bad reading. He should see Clorinda’s simulation in the tree as just that, a “sembianza,” a “falso inganno,” but he misrecognizes her once again, this time believing her to be real. Faced with almost the exact same test in Canto 18, Rinaldo must therefore not only resist the false Armida’s enticements in order to prove his faith to God; he must also resist her in order to prove his capacity as a good reader.

He succeeds in this reading and resistance and slays the tree that projects Armida’s simulation. As he does so, the enchantment disappears completely; the sky becomes once again “sereno”; the forest returns to its natural state (18.38). Rinaldo recognizes the entire experience as nothing but “vane sembianze” (18.38), which goes for Armida’s image too. But his recognition of the image as an image is not the reflexive “unveiling” of Armida sought by Carlo, Ubaldino, and the others earlier in the poem. It is not the “unveiling hag topos” missing from Canto 16. Instead, here, Rinaldo’s ability to see the simulation as a simulation allows him to dissociate it from the real person Armida, to whom he will return in the final canto. In understanding that the image is just an image, he distinguishes between the false projection of Armida and the human person, thus achieving what none of the other knights have so far been able to achieve, both in terms of dismantling the forest and in terms of seeing Armida. The test of the enchanted forest is both a test of Christian faith and a test of interpretation, and he must necessarily pass the latter in order to prove the former, for Rinaldo’s Christian duty must come from his own will and faith as a Christian and not from his disillusionment of Armida as some other “more powerful” force.¹⁶⁷ Just as Rinaldo unveils himself in Canto 16 rather than “unveiling” Armida, here too he realizes that the projection of her simulation in the forest is not her illusory veil but his own.¹⁶⁸ Corrigan’s summary cited above is helpful and relevant here as well: “for Ruggiero it is Alcina who is changed from an object of desire to one of loathing. But though Armida remains as beautiful and desirable as ever in Rinaldo’s eyes, he himself, under the operation of Grace, has become a new person, a mature and steadfast Christian hero instead of an impetuous undisciplined youth.”¹⁶⁹

When Rinaldo and Armida finally meet in person again in Canto 20, they have both changed.

¹⁶⁶ In his article, “Epic in the Age of Dissimulation,” Zatti examines the image of the veil in landscape more extensively than most other scholars who notice the poem’s veils; he notes its use to reflect the natural world both as simply natural and as evil: “In cantos 6.103 and 10.78, the nocturnal veil is pure and joyful transparency, the carrier of a sleep that will be just compensation for the labors of living. But in the two other cases sleep is full of disquiet and torments of desire (5.60) or anguished by the nightmares of a night coming from the realm of Satan (9.15). All four passages contain the ‘textual’ metaphor *velo* and *manto*” (141).

¹⁶⁷ In the *Allegoria* Rinaldo is supposed to represent the learning and regaining of reason (611). For more on Rinaldo’s journey through romance to become “a fitter Christian warrior,” see Javitch, “Tasso’s Critique,” 515.

¹⁶⁸ In a related way, Sáez reads this episode in terms of how the magic reflects the inner states of the Christians: “Armida, the enemy, the enchanted forest, etc., are to some extent external manifestations of something within the heroes” (*Theodicy in Baroque Literature*, 55).

¹⁶⁹ Corrigan, “The Opposing Mirrors,” 175.

Rinaldo has a stronger relationship to his Christian faith, and he also sees Armida differently because he has banished her false image from his own eyes. Armida too has fallen deeper in love, despite her pretenses on the battlefield; as she fights, she realizes that her desires for revenge have merely disguised her love all along. She flees to the woods, and Rinaldo, remembering his pledge to her, follows, finding her just in time to save her from suicide. There the knight renews his pledge to be “nemico no, ma tuo campione e servo” (20.134), emphasizing the offer with an assertion of its sincerity: “Mira ne gli occhi miei, s’al dir non vuoi / fede prestar, de la mia fede il zelo” (20.135). Rinaldo’s “fede” is the combination of his loyalty as her knight, his duty as a Christian soldier, and his faith in Armida as a fully developed person.

What’s more, in the climactic moment of Armida’s narrative, Rinaldo extends this faith by praying for her: “oh piacesse al Cielo / ch’a la tua mente alcun de’ raggi suoi/ del paganesmo dissolvesse il velo” (20.135). The meaning of the pagan “velo” and its ambiguous dissolution at this moment constitute an interpretive crux in the poem. Scholars point to how Rinaldo’s prayers become “lagrime rare” (20.136) and thus evidence of Armida’s conversion to Christianity, the tears recalling once again baptismal waters.¹⁷⁰ Indeed, the poet writes, “così l’ira che ’n lei pareva sì salda / solvesi e restan sol gli altri desiri” (20.137), the lines suggesting for some an emotional transformation and for others the future marriage between Armida and Rinaldo.¹⁷¹ Others are less convinced by the idea that there is any kind of marital union between them after this episode,¹⁷² or, for that matter, by the suddenness of Armida’s apparent change of heart,¹⁷³ Rhu reading this end as a way for Tasso to resolve the allegorical problems he finds in the poem.¹⁷⁴ Tasso himself expressed doubts about the reconciliation between Rinaldo and Armida, writing to Gonzaga in 1575 that he might want to “finire questa materia nella fuga di Armida.”¹⁷⁵ In a subsequent letter also to Gonzaga he worries that he is dedicating too much space in the poem to a non-principal character. But then he defends the move by invoking verisimilitude and arguing that these characters cannot simply be abandoned.¹⁷⁶

Whether he likes it or not, the poet realizes that Armida is an important character in the *Liberata*, one who deserves a resolution, at the very least for the sake of the “soddissfattione de’ lettori.”¹⁷⁷ But the resolution Tasso gives, as others have also noted,¹⁷⁸ is still ambiguous. The dissolution of Armida’s pagan “velo” certainly suggests a conversion to Christianity, but it does not confirm it. Instead, I read this moment as an invitation to Christianity on Rinaldo’s part, but not a demand. A forced conversion, in any case, would be inappropriate, since, as Leone notes, “the equilibrium between individual will and divine intervention” is important in spiritual conversion in the poem,¹⁷⁹ neither of which are evident enough in this scene. What I believe Tasso does, as he has Rinaldo hope for the removal of Armida’s pagan veil, is offer her the choice and

¹⁷⁰ On these waters as restorative for Armida, see Tylus, “Imagining Narrative,” 56.

¹⁷¹ Valeria Finucci, “Introduction: Ariosto, Tasso, and Storytelling,” in *Renaissance Transaction: Ariosto and Tasso*. Ed. Valeria Finucci (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1999), 6, about Jo Ann Cavallo, “Tasso’s Armida and the Victory of Romance,” in *Renaissance Transactions: Ariosto and Tasso*. Ed. Valeria Finucci (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1999).

¹⁷² Gough, “Tasso’s Enchantress,” 546.

¹⁷³ Lawrence F. Rhu, *The Genesis of Tasso’s Narrative Theory: English Translations of the Early Poetics and a Comparative Study of Their Significance* (Detroit: Wayne University Press, 1993), 23-24.

¹⁷⁴ Rhu, “From Aristotle to Allegory,” 128.

¹⁷⁵ Tasso, *Lettere poetiche* (to Gonzaga, 1575), 169-70.

¹⁷⁶ Tasso, *Lettere poetiche* (to Gonzaga, 1575), 176.

¹⁷⁷ Tasso, *Lettere poetiche* (to Gonzaga, 1575), 176.

¹⁷⁸ Migiel, “Secrets,” 162.

¹⁷⁹ Leone, “Converting Knights,” 116.

open up another way of life for Armida in this final canto. The removal of the pagan veil, which the poet associates with *ira*, is meaningful not because it signifies a necessary conversion but because it signifies the potential for a conversion.

Moreover, within the context of veiling as we have discussed it thus far, the fact that Armida's veil is *dissolved* at all is also significant. If nothing else, the superficial layer, which only the poem's allegorical interpreters saw as her defining feature, no longer constrains her to one identity. And then, too, the dissolution of the veil occurs through the combination of Armida's will to release her anger and Rinaldo's prayer on her behalf, as he recognizes how she too has been tried and tested as a person, that very recognition demonstrating his own growth in the poem. The resolution might not end in certain conversion, but it does redeem the two characters: with the veil gone, Armida is no longer defined by either her past or potential deceptions; at the same time, Rinaldo is forgiven his initial failure both to stay true to God and to recognize Armida as worthy of faith and the complex character that she reveals herself to be.

What I am most interested in these episodes is the way that the conclusion to Armida's narrative—the dissolution of her metaphorical pagan veil—results from Rinaldo's refusal to define Armida by that veil or by any other superficial cover like the simulation in the woods. Rinaldo's rejection of this type of suspicious allegorical reading in the enchanted forest and elsewhere allows him to prove his faith to God by liberating Jerusalem, while at the same time acknowledging that Armida too is capable of (though not bound to) that same faith. On the level of his poem's plot, Tasso thus makes a direct connection between the rejection of allegory as an interpretive model and the fulfillment of true Christian faith.

IV. Goffredo's Mortal Veil: Reading God and Poetry

So, what of Goffredo back in Canto 18, when the archangel descends in the midst of battle to unveil Goffredo's eyes, letting him witness the celestial army? In my initial reading, the obvious answer was that Goffredo's election simply grants him privileges, including the benefits of timely *soluzioni per machina* and other divine insights. But in light of my examination of the other veil moments throughout the poem, Goffredo's experience in Canto 18 is significantly anomalous. Elsewhere and consistently the image of the veil signals moments that test the characters' faith whether in relation to God or each other. As we have seen, many of the poem's main characters confront these tests through journeys that are often long, hard, and internally transformative. Most importantly, those characters who are successful in their faith do so by moving beyond the conception of the veil as just a superficial cover. Clorinda reading Sofronia, Rinaldo reading Armida, the women reading themselves all reject the simplistic model of the veil of allegory conceptualized by Tasso in his poetic theory, which sees the veil image only as literal, hiding something deeper underneath. These characters resist the material and metaphorical veils as the crux on which all interpretations hinge and instead see beyond the veil by learning to effectively not see it at all. In doing so, they are able to move beyond the superficial unveiling of a body to the more meaningful revelation of the deeper qualities and experiences that make them the poem's protagonists. Christian faith, Tasso shows, is necessarily not dependent on suspicion.

But Goffredo's experience at the climactic moment of Canto 18 seems to reflect neither the superficial model of unveiling nor the more arduous model of revelation. He neither fails nor passes the test of reading and spiritual faith simply because there is no test. At the appearance of the veil over his eyes, he is automatically given the answers with its removal. This moment is

curious, because, on the one hand, the divine intervention that unveils him suggests that this particular veil does not signify anything more than a superficial cover, if only because its removal is superficial, easy; a test seems unnecessary with God's aid at hand. And yet, at the same time, there *should* be nothing superficial about the profound experience of seeing God's army fight on the Christians' behalf.

But this is not the only moment in the *Liberata* when divine interventions (often involving similar unveilings or revelations) seem to replace the tests of faith in Goffredo's narrative. In Canto 8, for example, the pagan Agastore incites Aletto to spread discord among the Christians. When a group of Christian soldiers returns, bringing with them doubts about Rinaldo's death and details of his armor and decapitated body, Aletto takes advantage of the Christians' already provoked suspicions. He enters into the knight Argillan's dream as a "false" Rinaldo and convinces him of Goffredo's secret plan to privilege the Frankish army over others. An untrained reader of false semblances, Argillan falls for the trap and the next day accuses Goffredo. But not truly fraudulent, Goffredo must find a way to renew his soldiers' faith in him. He sends a prayer to God in which he asks that their "velo" of blindness be removed:

'Signor, tu che sai ben con quanto zelo
la destra mia del civil sangue aborre,
tu squarcia a questi de la mente il velo,
e reprimi il furor che sì trascorre;
e l'innocenzia mia, che costà sopra
è nota, al mondo cieco anco si scopra.' (8.76).

Here too the veil signals a test of both religious and interpretive faith: to believe in Goffredo's benevolence is to believe in God's. In response to Goffredo's prayer, just like in Canto 18, God immediately provides Goffredo with a solution, a sort of counter-veil to overcome the first one: Goffredo finds himself dressed suddenly in "nobil veste / riccamente l'adorna oltra 'l costume" (8.78). He gets wrapped in "un novo lume" (8.78), his entire body physically infused with divine authority, a phenomenon similar to that at his election in Canto 1. The spectacle is successful, Argillan's insubordination changing to fear at the sight of Goffredo's incredible shining face.

Elsewhere we see a similar pattern, the veil image signifying a test or challenge to Goffredo's faith that gets resolved by divine intervention. As referenced briefly above, the "orrido velo" of infernal spirits in Canto 9 spreads across the sky. But shortly thereafter, God intervenes on behalf of his "fedel diletta greggia" (9.58), sending the angel Michael to tell the spirits to go back to Hell. In a symbolic unveiling, Michael's divine light shines through them like the sun's rays through the clouds after a storm:

Venia scotendo con l'eterne piume
la caligine dense e i cupi orrori;
s'indorava la notte al divin lume
che spargea scintillando il volto fuori.
Tale il sol ne le nubi ha per costume
spiegar dopo la pioggia i bei colori. (9.62).

The earth itself responds anthropomorphically, freeing its own "negra / faccia" (9.66) from the evil veil the pagans had created.

Likewise, in Canto 13, the full effects of the drought created by the pagans are felt among the Christian camp, and night descends like a “velo” interwoven with “travi di foco e di comete / e d’altri fregi ardenti” (13.57). The Christians’ faith begins to wane. In their wild thirst, they see the drought as “l’ira del Cielo” (13.65). By the evidence of “mille novi prodigi e mille mostri” (13.65), the soldiers think that God is against them; they accuse Goffredo of blindness caused by “follia” (13.68). But their doubt in God and in Goffredo is caused once again by their own veil of blindness, not his. With faith that “faria stare i fiumi e gir i monti” (13.69), Goffredo asks, “devotamente,” for aid from God; and not one stanza later, God answers with rain. But God also responds in the next canto, under “vel” of night (14.5), by meeting Goffredo in a dream vision, one in which “gli rivelsse alto decreto” (14.2). In the “vision nel sonno” (14.4), the elected captain is permitted not only to see the secrets of heaven and the stars, but also to learn that the Christian army will be, in the end, “de’ trionfanti” (14.4). If the veil of thirst constitutes a test of Christian faith indirectly created by the pagans, the soldiers cannot be said to pass this test, blinded as they become against both Goffredo and God. Instead, for Goffredo this particular test, like many of the others, gets entirely alleviated by God’s intervention. The question, then, is why the poem seems to leave no space for Goffredo’s faith to be tested, to grow, to be proven, as it does for so many of the poem’s other characters.

Scholars have dedicated a significant amount of work to the role of God in the *Liberata*, to his interactions with Goffredo, and to the strategy of divine interventions in Renaissance epic more generally. In scholarship that looks at Tasso’s use of *soluzioni per machina*, there are three major elements usually considered. The first is imitation of the classics, with scholars pointing to Tasso’s use of divine *machina* as a means of asserting poetic authority through that imitation.¹⁸⁰ The second is the Christianization of the classical epic, which explores how Tasso reforms the epic genre to fit the theology of the Counter-Reformation and to assert his hero as not just poetically ordained by classical imitation but spiritually authorized by the Christian God.¹⁸¹ The last is one that we have already discussed in this chapter, as it is the most relevant to my analysis and relates anyway to imitation and the epic’s Christianization: that is, the role of divine intervention as verisimilitude.¹⁸² As Bernard Weinberg would have us remember, divine interventions for Tasso constitute a means of verisimilitude that turn the marvelous into credible Catholic events, which in turn provide both “utility” and “delight” to his readers.¹⁸³

This is how Tasso saw the issue too. In a letter to Luca Scalabrino in 1576, the poet describes divine intervention on Goffredo’s behalf as the perfect resolution to the battle and the poem: “introducendo Goffredo o piamente a riconoscere tutte le vittorie dall’aiuto divino et a magnificar la provvidenza di Dio e talor modestamente tacer di se stesso e lodare i compagni.”¹⁸⁴ In the *Conquistata* he even amplifies the divine interventions, writing in the *Giudicio* about the

¹⁸⁰ See Sarah Van der Laan, “Tasso’s Homeric Counterfactuals,” *MLN* 127 1 (2012): 23-44; Thomas Greene, *The Descent from Heaven: A Study in Epic Continuity* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1963); Mario D’Alessandro, “Type, Antitype, Figure, and *Exemplum*: Dream and Vision in Tasso’s Epic Poetry,” *Quaderni D’Italianistica* 24 1 (2003): 61-76; Gregory, “Tasso’s God.”

¹⁸¹ See Gregory, “Tasso’s God”; Van der Laan, “Tasso’s Homeric Counterfactuals”; Fichter, “Tasso’s Epic”; Benfell, “Tasso’s God”; Judith A. Kates, “The Revaluation of the Classical Heroic in Tasso and Milton,” *Comparative Literature* 26 4 (1974): 299-317; Greene, *The Descent from Heaven*; Briggs, “Tasso’s Theory of Epic Poetry”; Dennis Looney, *Compromising the Classics: Romance Epic Narrative in the Italian Renaissance* (Detroit, MI: Wayne State University Press, 1996); Giovanni Da Pozzo, “Last Assaults and Delayed Victory in Tasso’s *Liberata*,” *Italica* 74 3 (1997): 319-338; Getto, *Nel Mondo della Gerusalemme*; Zatti, *The Quest for Epic*.

¹⁸² See Gregory, “Tasso’s God”; Greene, *The Descent from Heaven*; Briggs, “Tasso’s Theory of Epic Poetry.”

¹⁸³ Weinberg, *A History of Literary Criticism*, 196.

¹⁸⁴ Tasso, *Lettere poetiche* (to Scalabrino, 1576), 403.

Conquistata's final canto, "Qui Goffredo vede molte cose non solo appertinenti al futuro regno, ma a la futura beatitudine: e, fatto certo de la sua gloriosa vittoria e de la predestinazione, con maravigliosa ed insolita grazia ode l'armonia degli angeli che lodano Iddio."¹⁸⁵ As we have seen, divine interventions were supported by the Inquisition during the Counter-Reformation because they helped distinguish the "good supernatural" from the evil, where the good "miraculi" were held to be "a gift from the Holy Ghost."¹⁸⁶ As a traditional element of classical epic poetry, moreover, divine interventions during this period were allowable as a "core strategy in poetic writing," so long as, in the imitation of the classical technique, "the Catholic faith was not interfered with."¹⁸⁷

Divine interventions thus became part of the fabric of poetry for Tasso, the means by which imitation became verisimilar, the technique heralded as a signal of both poetic and religious authority. And verisimilitude, furthermore, went hand in hand with allegory. As Claudio Gigante notes in his commentary on the *Giudicio*, "L'allegoria non è uno strumento per conferire alibi a rappresentazioni prive di dignità, ma il modo che consente al poeta, come al teologo (un binomio che spiega tante scelte poetiche dell'ultimo Tasso), di esprimere i misteri ineffabili della divinità."¹⁸⁸ In this way, Tasso reasoned in the *Allegoria*, Goffredo as the captain of the army signified "l'intelletto," and, then, because of his divine election, he became the intellect of God himself.¹⁸⁹

And yet, of course, we have already encountered the problems that arise from reading Tasso's *Allegoria*—or any of his prose writings about allegory for that matter—as the decisive key to understanding the *Liberata*. Indeed, Walter Stephens asserts that Tasso's poem was not even allegorical from the beginning, but rather that he "gradually convinced himself that it was both possible and expedient to produce a Platonic *allegoresis* of a poem that had never yet conceptualized as allegorical *poiesis*."¹⁹⁰ Rhu too points to Tasso's letters in which the poet describes how he cannot be sure whether he did or did not plan for the poem to be allegorical when he started it. Rhu muses on this fact: "Perhaps it is appropriate that a literary mode which may serve both to cover and disclose the esoteric essence of a text should reveal itself almost mystically, even to its own author."¹⁹¹ Moreover, Rhu makes the point, to which my examinations in this chapter testify, that applying strict allegorization to the poem does not work;¹⁹² and, considering Tasso's obsession with his own personal faith, Stephens makes the argument that the *Liberata* can be considered "a kind of talisman, an artifact through which Tasso attempted to concretize and organize a faith that he was finding increasingly elusive."¹⁹³ For Tasso in the later years of his life, Giulio points out, "la religione non può risolvere il mistero di Dio e ha bisogno di una forza che la sovrasti e la guidi, incarnata dalla supreme autorità della Chiesa di Roma con i suoi dogmi intangibili e definiti nel Concilio di Trento."¹⁹⁴ And yet, this very authority and the "guide" of poetic and religious allegory, proved to be for Tasso more difficult to follow than Giulio's statement implies. Indeed, the paradox of early modern Catholicism, as Shagan articulates it, which required

¹⁸⁵ Tasso, *Giudicio*, 149.

¹⁸⁶ Helm, *Poetry and Censorship*, 69.

¹⁸⁷ Helm, *Poetry and Censorship*, 94.

¹⁸⁸ Gigante, "Introduzione," xxxvi.

¹⁸⁹ Tasso, *Allegoria*, 606.

¹⁹⁰ Stephens, "Metaphor, Sacrament," 241.

¹⁹¹ Rhu, "From Aristotle to Allegory," 120.

¹⁹² Rhu, "From Aristotle to Allegory," 120.

¹⁹³ Stephens, "Tasso and the Witches," 184.

¹⁹⁴ Giulio, *Tempo dell'inquisizione*, 89.

strict obedience to the authority of the Church, helps to highlight the difficulty Tasso experienced not only in writing a Catholic poem but in trying to adhere to the rules of poetic and religious allegory, though he found them problematic. Tasso exemplifies the problem of Catholic belief that Shagan identifies, where believers attempted to “reconcile their own unauthorized religion with their belief in the Church.”¹⁹⁵

Tasso’s attention and response to this difficulty, I argue, are evident in the *Liberata*, which reflects on the ways that allegory, though it should in theory both provide poetic meaning and also lead to religious faith, ultimately falls short in his characters’ interpretive practice. In his poetic theories, Tasso proposes allegory, verisimilitude, and divine interventions as the bridge from poetic action and imitation to religious faith. The marvelous becomes credible, he insists, only when represented with verisimilitude. Poetry has meaning, he argues, only when understood through the sense of allegory. And yet this model of interpretation is the same one that confronts the readers of the *Liberata*. It is a model that reduces poetry and the marvelous to nothing but a veil hiding truth, which must be removed or else remain meaningless. It is a model that assumes “faith” can be found through mere unveiling. And it is a model that, Tasso realizes, seeks faith, unhelpfully, only through suspicion, despite the fact that, as Weinberg points out, faith alone “transforms a supernatural into a natural cause.”¹⁹⁶ The disconnect occurs when Tasso’s theory of the “veil of allegory” makes it seem as though faith were lurking somewhere beneath the veil, if only it could be removed, when in fact such an approach to the very idea of reading demonstrates no faith at all, but suspicion, doubt, and skepticism.¹⁹⁷ We might recall that Tasso’s own theory defines verisimilitude as the “sembianza della verità” that seeks to “ingannare i lettori.” By that definition, poetry relies upon deception as its very fabric, which makes it inherently antithetical to faith.

In spite of this tension, the poet offers his characters a way to reach faith, not by the model of reading or by the paradigm of faith articulated in his poetic theories, but by the one he embeds in the *Liberata*. It is not enough to merely remove the veil of poetry in the hopes of finding its allegorical sense underneath, as Rinaldo, Armida, and the others learn in the *Liberata*. Tasso’s characters reject the paradigm of faith that considers the veil merely a deceptive surface beneath which lurks a deeper, irretrievable meaning, because they come to understand in their own ways that simply suspecting the veil never actually leads to poetic or religious faith, or to divine revelation. To find faith in God and in each other, they must instead recognize the veil, embrace it, and seek to understand it.

On the one hand, Tasso’s rejection of allegory as both a poetic and a religious device of interpretation betrays his hesitancy, perhaps subconscious, to wholly commit to obedience to the authority of the Church as his own model of faith. At a minimum, the contradiction in his theoretical application of allegory and his practical rejection of it points to the crisis of Christianity that the poet of the *Liberata* confronts, and it shows his own preoccupation with both poetic and religious uncertainty during this period. The poet discovers that, though he wants to believe, allegory cannot guarantee the “veridicità e rilevanza conoscitiva e morale alla scrittura poetica.”¹⁹⁸

¹⁹⁵ Shagan, *The Birth of Modern Belief*, 154.

¹⁹⁶ Weinberg, *A History of Literary Criticism*, 650.

¹⁹⁷ I am indebted to Albert Ascoli as the inspiration for this particular idea, as he pointed out to me at during the writing of this project that the veil is a necessary aspect in faith, for without the veil, what is there to believe in? For a reading of the relationship between readerly and writerly faith in Tasso and other early modern authors, see Albert Russell Ascoli, “Worthy of Faith? Authors and Readers in Early Modernity,” in *The Renaissance World* (Ed. John J. Martin. NY: Routledge, 2007), 435-451.

¹⁹⁸ Erminia Ardisino, “Il pensiero e la cultura religiosa di Torquato Tasso. Rassegna e discussione su un quinquennio di studi (1998-2002),” *Lettere italiane* 55 4 (2003): 596.

But Tasso does not necessarily resolve for his readers, for his fellow Catholic believers, or perhaps even for himself the crisis of faith that allegory provoked during his time. Indeed, as Quint shows, only by the end of the Renaissance does the shift from allegory truly occur, “both reflecting and contributing to a general secularization of culture.”¹⁹⁹ Nevertheless, Tasso does begin to offer a way to reconcile faith and poetry in his own critical moment. By the very fact that he attends to the question of allegory in the *Liberata* in the ways that he does, poetry becomes a locus for thinking about theology, about faith. He makes faith a poetic question, asking, as others have continued to do since his poem was published, what the role of poetry is in relation to language, rhetoric, teaching, religion.²⁰⁰ By using his poem to meditate on and wrestles with these issues, Tasso illustrates that poetry *is* in fact more than just words, more than just letter; that instead of reflecting mere lies, poetry does have the capacity to contain true meaning. As the poet presents two opposing models of reading and demonstrates in that presentation that poetic truth and religious faith are accessed not through suspicious but rather faithful interpretation, he makes his role as poet, to cite Weinberg’s articulation, more than “the mere providing of examples or the demonstrating of actions”; Tasso becomes “like the theologian... a maker of images presented for the contemplation of men.”²⁰¹

To return, at last, to where we started, Tasso’s model against allegorical reading would have us interpret Goffredo’s veil in Canto 18 as a mere cover that blinds his vision of the divine army. His unveiling, then, literally reflects God’s aid of the Crusaders and allegorically signifies the Christian God’s divine grace more generally. But, through the alternate model of faithful reading expressed in the *Liberata*, I propose another way of understanding this moment. If the episode does not appear to constitute a test of faith for Goffredo, that is because it is not a test of faith for Goffredo. Whether Goffredo doubts or believes in God’s aid is not a matter to be tested in the poem, for his faith is evident at his election and during his continued leadership, proven over and again through his ability to be that leader, to trust in God, and to succeed in liberating Jerusalem. Instead, the test of faith signified by the veil that Michael removes from Goffredo’s eyes is every Christian’s, to believe that God is behind Goffredo, that God’s will is aiding him, that the angel’s descent and unveiling of Goffredo’s eyes is not merely the poetic strategy of *soluzione per machina*, but faith itself. The removal of the veil is the poetic manifestation of the hero’s faith that exists not through unveiling but irrespective of it. The “nuvol denso” of Canto 18 signals our own test of faith to interpret the veil not as a superficial cover but as real divine revelation brought about through Goffredo’s already proven faith. In this light, the veil is a metaphor for that faith itself, fully revealed only through our own individual ability to believe that there is truth in poetry.

¹⁹⁹ Quint, *Origin and Originality*, 22.

²⁰⁰ Teskey, “Allegory,” 231.

²⁰¹ Weinberg, *A History of Literary Criticism*, 340.

CHAPTER 3

Veils of Innocence, Ignorance, and Shame: Reasoning Hermeneutics in John Milton's *Paradise Lost* and *Samson Agonistes*

This third and final chapter examines two of Milton's mature poetic works against the backdrop of the Protestant Reformation in seventeenth-century England. I argue that *Paradise Lost* (1667) and *Samson Agonistes* (1671) constitute Milton's poetic response to the spiritual crisis of this period, as the poet explores the religious issues of what it means to interpret and why interpretation is so central to the Protestant experience. More specifically, Milton builds upon the conception of Reformed religious experience as a literary one,¹ grappling with such questions in his poetic works as: to what extent is *sola scriptura* the means to faith? From whom or what does scriptural authority derive in one's interpretive process? On what fundamental doctrinal truths might an interpreter rely? To what extent are Protestant believers independently responsible for their own understanding of Scripture and thus God? And, what is the English Protestant relationship to faith and doubt, to certainty and uncertainty?

My examinations in this chapter explore how Milton uses the image of the veil—at once a textual object to be interpreted and a symbol for the practice of interpretation itself—in the poems' central interpretive moments in order to meditate on these questions. The poet engages both interpretive approaches of the hermeneutic paradigm, the suspicious and the faithful, in his representation and reading of the veil image to show that the veil always symbolizes two possibilities: it is a mere cover hiding true meaning; it contains its own meaning. My exploration follows how Milton applies this hermeneutic paradox in his poems to dramatize the process of interpreting the event of the Fall and then to understand the experience of uncertainty that the Fall provokes for postlapsarian believers.

More specifically, Milton uses the veil image in *Paradise Lost* to establish an interpretive practiced that involves *reasoning* the fundamental doctrinal principles of the poem's theology: Eve is innocent before the Fall; Adam is free to eat; the Son of God will redeem the first parents' original sin. With a rightly reasoned understanding of those principles, Milton's circular interpretation finds those principles to be true. And yet, as Milton uses (and interprets) the veil image to represent Adam and Eve's own interpretive practices before and after the Fall, he demonstrates that a reasoned understanding of doctrinal principles (God's commandment, for example) does not produce but rather relies on faith in them. What's more, as the "veil of innocence" before the Fall is replaced by the "robe of shame," Adam and Eve realize the difference between faith and reason and become aware of the hermeneutic veil's double potential. The Fall, then, is for them a confrontation with the proliferation of interpretive meaning.²

In *Samson Agonistes*, Milton takes this confrontation to its hermeneutic end, showing, through his treatment of the poem's textual veils and the hermeneutic uncertainty they symbolize, that spiritual reasoning based on fundamental doctrinal truths does not always lead to faith. Dalila's physical veil becomes a symbol for interpretive uncertainty that provokes a model of suspicious

¹ Georgia B. Christopher, *Milton and the Science of the Saints* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1982), 7.

² Phillip J. Donnelly, *Milton's Scriptural Reasoning: Narrative and Protestant Toleration* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), argues that Milton's engagement with biblical intertexts in *Paradise Lost*, *Paradise Regained*, and *Samson Agonistes*, makes up his "scriptural reasoning," provoking re-readings among his seventeenth-century Protestant readers in a way that opens up "interpretive possibilities, even aporias, that might otherwise remain unnoticed" (1).

reading which Samson cannot escape. Intentionally suspending any resolution to the drama's interpretive questions, Milton aggravates the poem's practice of interpretation as one that confronts, without relief, the proliferation of interpretive meaning realized at the Fall.

Milton's point, I argue, is to present the paradigm of the hermeneutic veil as a tension between faith and doubt in order to show that the irresolvability of proliferated meaning—uncertainty, doubt, suspicion, and the veil's perpetual, empty *unveiling*—is only one signification of the veil image. The veil, and thus interpretation, also has the capacity to reveal. Milton asks his Protestant readers to acknowledge these two sides of the hermeneutic veil by experiencing the interpretive process of his two poems, not to instruct their faith directly, but to emphasize the central importance of interpretation in achieving faith at all. The lesson of Milton's Protestant hermeneutics is that while faith is not guaranteed and doubt is always possible, interpretation is nevertheless essential to any faith one might hope for. Most important is to understand that the hermeneutic veil represents both doubt and faith, loss and salvation, which, though paradoxical, are two central, mutually inclusive aspects of the seventeenth-century Protestant experience.³

I. English Protestant Hermeneutics

We may begin with a discussion of the historical context and theological questions I pose above, in order to better situate Milton's poetic works in the political-religious climate of mid-seventeenth-century England. Milton's later poetical works, as extensive scholarship has shown, came out of the period of political turmoil of revolutionary and then Restoration England from the 1640s to 1660s.⁴ The English Revolution, termed by some historians as the "Puritan Revolution,"⁵

³ Relevant to my study here is Peter C. Herman, *Destabilizing Milton: Paradise Lost and the Poetics of Incertitude* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), whose treatment of the interpretive uncertainties in Milton's major poems provides an excellent overview for considering the struggle of seventeenth-century Protestant hermeneutics as Milton understood it; and Dayton Haskin, *Milton's Burden of Interpretation* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1994), whose conceptualizes the obligation of interpretation during this period as the "burden of interpretation." The essays collected in *Milton's Rival Hermeneutics: "Reason Is But Choosing."* Ed. Richard J. DuRocher and Margaret Olofson Thickett (Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania: Duquesne University Press, 2012), also offer helpful insight through their collective approach to Milton's works by considering the proliferation of interpretive meaning found in the poetry as a "rival hermeneutics."

⁴ Charles Martindale, "Writing Epic: Paradise Lost," in *The Oxford Handbook of Milton*. Eds. Nicholas McDowell and Nigel Smith (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), who dates the beginning of the composition of *Paradise Lost* to 1658, the year of Cromwell's death, though arguing that it was mainly written during the Restoration, from 1660 onwards (443). See also Christopher Hill, *Milton and the English Revolution* (New York: The Viking Press, 1977), who sees the English Revolution as a heavy influence on Milton's radical Puritan ideas (4). David Loewenstein, *Treacherous Faith: The Specter of Heresy in Early Modern English Literature and Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), points out that, according to Milton's early biographers, *Paradise Lost* was mostly composed between 1658 and 1663, so the poem straddles the Interregnum period of the Revolution and the Restoration, and "belongs to both periods of intersecting religious and political conflict" (299).

⁵ S. K. Baskerville, "Puritans, Revisionists, and the English Revolution," *Huntington Library Quarterly* 61 2 (1998): 151-171. Baskerville challenges a particular "revisionist" position among historians by assigning "a central role to radical religion" and arguing that Puritanism was not simply a "dissenting religious movement" that spilled over into the political conflict, but actually a "true revolutionary political ideology" ("Puritans, Revisionists," 154). Scholarly work on the history of the English Revolution is complex, and an extensive engagement with the distinct positions is not within the bounds of this study. For a general overview of the approaches to the historical study of the English Revolution, see Paul Christianson, "The Causes of the English Revolution: A Reappraisal," *Journal of British Studies* 15 2 (1976): 40-75; Joseph M. Levine, "Matter of Fact in the English Revolution," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 64 2 (2003): 317-335. For a Marxist reading of the Revolution, see Hill, *Milton and the English Revolution*. For a

saw the confrontation between the monarchy and Puritan parliamentarians, who sought to revolutionize the relationship between state and Church, by means of, for example, magisterial Reformation, that would help to “put the individual believer above the claims of state religious compulsion.”⁶ Having inherited the Protestant Reformation from Luther more than one hundred years earlier, Puritans, who were being prosecuted for nonconformity, fought to promote further reformation in both religious worship and constitutional liberty.⁷

Central to the Puritan agenda was the role of Scripture and doctrinal authority. The orthodox Puritan party insisted that faith alone could settle the problem of Biblical interpretation and Christian truth.⁸ They disavowed the clerical and papal authorities, as well as doctrinal positions like predestination that precluded Christian “liberty of conscience.” The claim to freedom articulated by the concept of liberty of conscience argued that Protestant believers should be “free to submit to the governance of God rather than to any other authority.”⁹ This meant both religious authorities (like popes or priests) and civil authorities (like government). As Nigel Smith notes, religious “liberty went hand in hand with an ordering structure which made that liberty possible (such as law and personal discipline).”¹⁰

For Milton, like Puritans,¹¹ this freedom could be approached from the other side as well. Not only should religious coercion by government, Church, or anyone else for that matter, be rejected, but there should also be toleration for religious diversity among Protestants—a diversity which manifested in the many sects that proliferated during the period.¹² In his famous tract, *Areopagitica*

discussion of the “Whig” approach to understanding the Revolution as part of a long-term process of national identity-building and myth-making, see Quentin Skinner, “History and Ideology in the English Revolution,” *The Historical Journal* 8 2 (1965): 151-178. For further reading on the Revolution as centrally motivated by religion, see J.C. Davis, “Religion and the Struggle for Freedom in the English Revolution,” *The Historical Journal* 35 3 (1992): 507-530; John Coffey, “Religion,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Literature and the English Revolution*. Ed. Laura Lunger Knoppers (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 98-113. Furthermore, Nigel Smith, *Literature and Revolution in England, 1640-1660* (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 1994), places literature and both religious and lay writing at the center of the English Revolution.

⁶ Smith, *Literature and Revolution*, 123. See also Coffey, “Religion,” who argues that the Revolution’s major players were Puritans, by some during the time period considered “militant Reformed Protestants (100), who made up the core of the Parliamentary party (99). Anti-Puritanism, Coffey writes, became essential to Royalist propaganda (102). Baskerville, “Puritans, Revisionists,” sees the goal of reform or reformation in the context of the English revolution as not merely religious, but secular and political too, involving, for “Puritan radicalism” (154), the “frenetic effort on the part of all persons to remodel social institutions from the lowest to the highest” (166).

⁷ Coffey, “Religion,” 101. Coffey terms the English Revolution a “post-Reformation crisis” (99). See also Loewenstein, *Treacherous Faith*, 292.

⁸ Levine, “Matter of Fact in the English Revolution,” 319. As Baskerville notes, justification by faith, an important theme in Puritan preaching, was “the old Protestant battle cry” (“Puritans, Revisionists,” 159).

⁹ Davis, “Religion and the Struggle,” 515.

¹⁰ Smith, *Literature and Revolution*, 125.

¹¹ Milton’s Puritanism, both political and theological, is debated by scholars, and argued to varying extents based on his writings about religion and about church government. See Elmer Edgar Stoll, “Milton, Puritan of the Seventeenth Century,” in *Poets and Playwrights* (Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 1930), 221-271. For a discussion of Milton’s writings in favor of “a moderate form of Puritan church government” (156), see Nigel Smith, “The Anti-Episcopal Tracts: Republican Puritanism and the Truth in Poetry,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Milton*. Eds. Nicholas McDowell and Nigel Smith (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 155-173. For more on Milton’s Puritanism before and after the Revolution, see Hill, *Milton and the English Revolution*.

¹² By 1646, already sixteen sects had been catalogued in Thomas Edwards’ *Gangraena* (Levine, “Matter of Fact in the English Revolution,” 319). Of course, religious toleration for Milton explicitly excluded Catholicism. As he writes in *A Treatise of Civil Power*, “poperie and idolatrie” are less a religion than a “Roman principalitie rather, endeavouring to keep up her old universal dominion under a new name and meer shaddow of a catholic religion; being indeed more rightly nam’d a catholic heresie against the scripture; supported mainly by a civil, and, except in *Rome*, by a foreign

(1644), in which he promotes free expression and freedom of the press, Milton writes, about religious toleration, that God himself “trusts” us with “the gift of reason to be his own chooser,” arguing that “there were but little work left for preaching, if law and compulsion should grow so fast upon those things which hertofore were govern’d only by exhortation.”¹³ Moreover, in *A Treatise of Civil Power* (1659), Milton makes the point that religious coercion counters the Protestant doctrine of *sola scriptura*: “No protestant therfore of what sect soever following scripture only, which is the common sect wherin they all agree, and the granted rule of everie mans conscience to himself, ought, by the common doctrine of protestants, to be forc’d or molested for religion.”¹⁴ Coercion by civil power violates “the fundamental privilege of the gospel, the new-birthright of everie true beleever, Christian libertie.”¹⁵

Milton thus saw religious coercion as revealing not only a false intellectual belief, but “an idolatrous trust in brute force.”¹⁶ As David Loewenstein writes, the real battle for Milton was between Protestant and Papist, not Protestant conformist and nonconformist.¹⁷ This tension is crucial: from Milton’s perspective, not only did religious coercion seek violently either to authorize or to prohibit practices of faith in ways incompatible with the Protestant message of the Bible, but in doing so, coercion actually hindered “true religion.” As Milton writes in *Of True Religion* (1673):

True religion is the true Worship and Service of God, learnt and believed from the Word of God only. No man or Angel can know how God would be worshipt and serv’d unless God reveal it: He hath Reveal’d and taught it us in the holy Scriptures by inspir’d Ministers, and in the Gospel by his own Son and his Apostles, with strictest command to reject all other traditions or additions whatsoever.¹⁸

Fundamentally, Milton’s toleration of Protestant schism and sectaries derived from his strong belief that, as long as the believer was Protestant, their will, combined with the Spirit, would guide their interpretation of Scripture, which was the means to that true religion.¹⁹ Moreover, God “compells” Christians to him, Milton writes in *Civil Power*, “by the inward perswasive motions of his spirit and by his ministers; not by the outward compulsions of a magistrate or his officers.”²⁰

His position on the importance of religious toleration led Milton to his notorious advocacy of heresy, which scholars often note in discussing Milton’s views on liberty. As Milton writes in

power: justly therfore to be suspected, not tolerated by the magisrate of another countrey.” See John Milton, *The Works of John Milton*. 18 vols. Ed. Frank Allen Patterson (New York: Columbia University Press, 1931-38), vi:19.

¹³ Milton, *The Works of John Milton*, iv:310. For more on the interpretation of *Areopagitica* as a “manifesto of individual liberty” (190), see Stephen B. Dobranski, “Principle and Politics in Milton’s *Areopagitica*,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Literature and the English Revolution*. Ed. Laura Lunger Knoppers (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 190-202; Benjamin Myers, “‘Following the Way Which Is Called Heresy’: Milton and the Heretical Imperative,” *Journal of the History of Ideas* 69 3 (2008): 375-393; Nigel Smith, “Milton and the Index,” in *Of Paradise and Light: Essays on Henry Vaughan and John Milton in Honor of Alan Rudrum*. Eds. Donald R. Dickson and Holly Faith Nelson (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2004), 101-122.

¹⁴ Milton, *The Works of John Milton*, vi:19.

¹⁵ Milton, *The Works of John Milton*, vi:28.

¹⁶ Donnelly, *Milton’s Scriptural Reasoning*, 37.

¹⁷ Loewenstein, *Treacherous Faith*, 290. Loewenstein also discusses the other side of the argument, who argued that religious toleration used “a rhetoric of religious deception and seduction,” producing a “Monster of Toleration” (221).

¹⁸ Milton, *The Works of John Milton*, vi:165-66.

¹⁹ Milton, *The Works of John Milton*, vi:21.

²⁰ Milton, *The Works of John Milton*, vi:27. See Filippo Falcone, *Milton’s Inward Liberty: A Reading of Christian Liberty from the Prose to Paradise Lost* (Cambridge, UK: James Clarke Company, 2014).

Areopagitica and echoes in the later tracts also, the real heretic is the one who “beleeve things only because his Pastor sayes so, or the Assembly so determines, without knowing other reason, though his belief be true, yet the very truth he holds, becomes his heresie.”²¹ In this conception, moreover, “true knowledge” may be arrived at through challenges to faith—(such as the Protestant diversities prompted by so-called “heresies”)—in order to keep that faith active, rather than implicit.²² To avoid hypocrisy, it is important to “patiently hear” and “seriously read” “all opinions at least founded on Scripture”²³—even if that means tolerating schism, sects, and nonconformity:

If he who thinks himself in the truth professes to have learnt it, not by implicit faith, but by attentive study of the Scriptures & full perswasion of heart, with what equity can he refuse to hear or read him, who demonstrates to have gained his knowledge by the same way? is it a fair course to assert truth by arrogating to himself the only freedom of speech, and stopping the mouths of others equally gifted?²⁴

Controversies can be profitable, Milton insists, and awaken the senses, sharpen the judgment, and thus more firmly establish the believer’s truth.²⁵ The risk of rejecting controversy entirely, he adds in *Areopagitica*, is to fall into “a grosse conforming stupidity,”²⁶ since the only true heresy is “doctrin maintained against the light, which we now only have, of the scripture.”²⁷ In *Civil Power*, Milton concludes that Protestants who “beleeve the scripture not for the churches saying, but for its own as the word of God” and who then freely and lawfully “debate at all times by writing, conference or disputation of what opinion soever, disputable by scripture,” are “not heretics, but the best protestants,” because they hold Scripture as their “common rule and touchstone” and rely only on their “own conscience” and the guidance of the Holy Spirit.²⁸

Out of its direct connection to the political turmoil of the period, we begin to see how Milton’s theology of reading is formulated in these prose works. As Smith puts it, “Milton’s central component for being a Protestant is quite simply the freedom to read the Bible. No form of church government can interrupt this freedom without it becoming a tyranny.”²⁹ But more than that, as a free and personal practice, Milton’s *sola scriptura* was, like Luther’s, a “poetic activity”³⁰ that

²¹ Milton, *The Works of John Milton*, iv:333. For further discussion of Milton’s arguments around heresy, see Tobias Gregory, “How Milton Defined Heresy and Why,” *Religion & Literature* 45 1 (2013): 148-160. Myers, “Following the Way,” radically reads Milton’s treatment of heresy in terms of individual choice as ultimately a wholly positive position, what Myers terms the “social glue” or “grammar” of authentic faith (376). See also Loewenstein, *Treacherous Faith*, whose book moreover examines Milton’s revisions of the orthodox constructions of “heresy” and “heretic” as part of his broader views on “the Reformation’s advancement” during the 1640s (276). For more on *Areopagitica*’s “methodology for Reformation” and Milton’s presentation of truth as “gathered” (118), see Nigel Smith, “*Areopagitica*: Voicing Contexts, 1643-5,” in *Politics, Poetics, and Hermeneutics in Milton’s Prose*. Eds. David Loewenstein and James Grantham Turner (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 103-122.

²² Milton, *The Works of John Milton*, iv:336.

²³ Milton, *The Works of John Milton*, vi:177.

²⁴ Milton, *The Works of John Milton*, vi:177.

²⁵ Milton, *The Works of John Milton*, vi:178.

²⁶ Milton, *The Works of John Milton*, iv:349. Loewenstein interprets the tenor of *Areopagitica* within the context of Milton’s reforming agenda as promoting free press and freedom of religious expression as “a kind of dynamic coexistence that can re-energize a nation in its ongoing process of reformation and re-forging itself” (*Treacherous Faith*, 282).

²⁷ Milton, *The Works of John Milton*, vi:12.

²⁸ Milton, *The Works of John Milton*, vi:13-14.

²⁹ Smith, “The Anti-Episcopal Tracts,” 171.

³⁰ Christopher, *Milton and the Science*, 7.

came out of the “shift of the sacramental medium from things to words” (Catholicism to Protestantism), and relied upon a combination of interpretation of Scripture and divine illumination.³¹ As Milton writes in *Civil Power*, Scripture is the only “divine rule or autoritie” that exists *outside* the believer; the “illumination of the Holy Spirit” is the only authority *within*.³²

Stanley Fish provides a helpful summary of these interrelationships between interpretation and illumination, between the internal and external authorities:

while public verification of the congruence of an interpretation with faith is unavailable, the faithfulness of an interpretation can be verified by the faith that resides within the interpreter. Again, this is circular, but it is a circularity Milton embraces and even formalizes (if that word can be used in such a context) in what he calls the doctrine of the ‘double scripture.’ There is, he says, ‘the external scripture of the written word and the internal scripture of the Holy Spirit, which he, according to God’s promise, has engraved upon the hearts of believers.’³³

The doctrine of “double scripture” is based on the distinction, articulated furthermore in *Civil Power*, between reason and revelation as two elements of Milton’s definition of religion:

such things as belong chiefly to the knowledge and service of God: and are either above the reach and light of nature without revelation from above, and therefore liable to be variously understood by humane reason, or such things as are enjoined or forbidden by divine precept, which els by the light of reason would seem indifferent to be don or not don; and so likewise must needs appeer to everie man as the precept is understood.³⁴

The “light of reason” can guide interpretation only until a certain point when the knowledge under interpretation exceeds human reasoning capacity, at which point the revelation of the Spirit is required. Furthermore, the Spirit is found in the Word of Scripture, rendering reading and interpretation essential. Indeed, Milton’s conception of heresy also reflects the pitfall in scriptural interpretation of basing one’s “opinions in religion” too much either on tradition or on “his own inventions and not from Scripture but rather against it.”³⁵ In *De Doctrina Christiana* (c. 1650s),³⁶ he makes the point outright: “No one, however, can have right thoughts of God, with nature or

³¹ Christopher, *Milton and the Science*, traces Milton’s inheritance of Luther’s “analogy of the word,” (the Lutheran transformation from the “analogy of faith” of the Church, and what would become for Milton the “analogy of Evangelick doctrine”), an analogy of the verbal promise of redemption (4), describing Milton’s shared belief with Luther and Calvin in the “verbal” Spirit (13) and the idea that clarity in *sola scriptura* relied upon “an epiphany of the Holy Spirit” (6).

³² Milton, *The Works of John Milton*, vi:6.

³³ Stanley Fish, “To The Pure All Things Are Pure: Law, Faith, and Interpretation in the Prose and Poetry of John Milton,” *Law and Literature* 21 1 (2009): 80-1.

³⁴ Milton, *The Works of John Milton*, vi:5.

³⁵ Milton, *The Works of John Milton*, vi:16.

³⁶ On the controversies around the discovery and dating of the manuscript, see Jason A. Kerr, “*De Doctrina Christiana* and Milton’s Theology of Liberation,” *Studies in Philology* 111 2 (2014): 346-74; Martin Dzelzainis, “The Politics of *Paradise Lost*,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Milton*. Ed. Nicholas McDowell and Nigel Smith (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 551; Regina M. Schwartz, “Citation, Authority, and *De Doctrina Christiana*,” in *Politics, Poetics, and Hermeneutics in Milton’s Prose*. Eds. David Loewenstein and James Grantham Turner (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 227-240; John K. Hale, *Milton’s Scriptural Theology: Confronting De Doctrina Christiana* (Amsterdam, Netherlands: Arc Humanities Press, 2019).

reason alone as his guide, independent of the word.”³⁷ Interpretation is a coming together of both reason and illumination (or revelation or faith), wherein “no one should accept the opinions of others; rather he should wait ‘until the evidence of the Bible convinces him [*vicerit*] and induces his reason to assent and to believe.”³⁸

The *interrelatedness* of interpreter and human reason, Scripture, and Spirit was thus central to Milton’s process of divine interpretation. On the one hand, he acknowledged that the Bible itself was written by human “penmen” who had “a limited knowledge of the divine Author’s larger design,” and thus he did not place the Letter of Scripture above the faculty of human reason.³⁹ Yet, in that circular way, reason for Milton still did not operate nor did interpretation occur independently from Scripture.⁴⁰ Regina Schwartz provides a helpful formulation for thinking about this central interrelationship between interpreter (and reason), Scripture, and the Spirit in terms of a process of authorization:

In Milton’s formulation, the scripture and the Spirit are not synonymous, and authority will be distributed among all three: interpreter, scripture, and Spirit. The scripture will not be sufficient alone, for it is corruptible, the Spirit will be dependent on the authority of the scripture, and each man, the final arbitrator, will authorize both scripture and Spirit even as he is authorized by them.⁴¹

It is in this combined way—what Georgia Christopher refers to as the “Reformers’ hermeneutic,” that, for Milton, “interpretation is validated.”⁴²

And yet this relationship between human and divine Spirit in Protestant hermeneutic practices was not without its challenges. As we have said, the paradigm meant that “Neither private spirit nor reason could determine all its content, if only because much of it was simply historical (like particular events and persons), or above reason (like the Trinity).”⁴³ What’s more, how this doctrine of interpretation aligned with the practice of Protestant devotion was not always clear. As Alec Ryrie notes in his book, *Being Protestant*, which explores the practical aspects of the lived experience of Protestant faith in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Britain, Protestants received much less guidance as to how to practice their faith than, for example, Catholics, whose faith had always provided resources and instruction on how to spend their time.⁴⁴ While prayers, feasts,

³⁷ Milton, *The Works of John Milton*, xiv:31. See also Donnelly, *Milton’s Scriptural Reasoning*.

³⁸ Schwartz, “Citation, Authority, and *De Doctrina Christiana*,” 230.

³⁹ Haskin, *Milton’s Burden of Interpretation*, 182.

⁴⁰ Haskin, *Milton’s Burden of Interpretation*, 182. As Donnelly notes, moreover, Milton describes Scripture as the “sole interpreter of itself to the conscience” not to claim that Christians can have unmediated access to truth, but rather to emphasize Scripture as “intrinsically mediational,” where the human conscience—still central to the process—is informed by illumination (Donnelly, *Milton’s Scriptural Reasoning*, 67).

⁴¹ Schwartz, “Citation, Authority, and *De Doctrina Christiana*,” 233. Schwartz pushes this argument even further to show the difference between “internal” and “external” not only in Milton’s theology of interpretation as he formulates it in *De Doctrina Christiana*, but in the textual formalization of that process on the material page: Milton’s citations from Scripture, which he includes in the treatise, make up the “external” or the Letter; Milton’s own commentary is the “internal,” his own “divinely illuminated words” based on the Spirit (237). In this way, Schwartz argues, Milton authorizes himself (with the “external”) as he authorizes the Scripture (with his “internal”). See also Donald R. Dickson, and Holly Faith Nelson, “Introduction,” in *Of Paradise and Light: Essays on Henry Vaughan and John Milton in Honor of Alan Rudrum*. Eds. Donald R. Dickson and Holly Faith Nelson (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2004), 11-24.

⁴² Christopher, *Milton and the Science*, 5.

⁴³ Levine, “Matter of Fact in the English Revolution,” 324.

⁴⁴ Alec Ryrie, *Being Protestant in Reformation Britain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).

fasts, pilgrimages, and other daily activities were “part of the work of salvation” for Catholics, Protestants dismissed these practices as idolatrous or, at best, futile.⁴⁵ The “inner experience” of religious interpretation and faith was thus primary for Protestants, and yet as a practice it was “deceptively simple.”⁴⁶

Protestants responded differently to the challenge of *how* to practice the “inner experience” of religious interpretation—hence the sectaries and the schism in early modern Britain whose conceptualizations of divine interpretation diverged to varying extents from Milton’s. For example, certain English sectaries, such as Quakers, Ranters, Muggletonians, and others, subscribed to less literary practices of “interpretation,” claiming “individual prophecy,” that was “characterized by enthusiasm, antinomian practices, millenarian fervor, and civil anarchy.”⁴⁷ Among others, Socinians cast doubt on Scriptural testimony in the name of reason.⁴⁸ And Quakers believed their spiritual feelings were “an *independent* source of authority” that did not require the same textual attention to Scripture as the Puritan process did. They attacked Scripture as unreliable and denounced Biblical Protestants’ sublime faith in the literal meaning of the text, arguing that whereas Scripture was unstable, the Christian conscience was “eternally true.”⁴⁹ Many Puritans countered this position by arguing that to make a “rule” out of the “inner light” was just as dangerous because human consciousness was much too variable.⁵⁰ Puritans believed in a process of *sola scriptura* that used “a careful reading of their feelings” to “judge how the universal revelation of Scripture applied to them personally,” for “Christians who were inattentive to their own feelings were willfully deaf to the voice of God.”⁵¹

The complexity of these positions returns us once again to the paradoxical balance we see in Milton’s interpretive process between reason and the *experience* of faith that comes from divine illumination. As Dayton Haskin summarizes, Protestant reading involved a “significant non-rational component. Bible-readers often spoke of ‘feeling faith’ or of the ‘experimental’ knowledge they got from the Book.”⁵² Moreover, this balance required

testing of one’s own spiritual experience against normative biblical patterns, to find a proper fit between the two. The general assumption was that readers would find precedents that confirmed their faith. This inward-looking reading was understood to be the principal locus of the operation of the Holy Spirit, whose special work was to enlighten the believer in the task of applying the Word of God to the heart.⁵³

Milton responds to this hermeneutic challenge to find the balance between reason and the experience of faith by establishing a set of interpretive principles to use in the practice of

⁴⁵ Ryrie, *Being Protestant*, 2.

⁴⁶ Ryrie, *Being Protestant*, 2.

⁴⁷ Lewalski, “Interpreting God’s Word,” 79.

⁴⁸ Levine, “Matter of Fact in the English Revolution,” 318-19.

⁴⁹ Levine, “Matter of Fact in the English Revolution,” 320.

⁵⁰ Levine, “Matter of Fact in the English Revolution,” 320. For more on Milton’s rationalism and his rejection of the model that relied purely on the “inward light,” see Haskin, *Milton’s Burden of Interpretation*, 182; Martin A. Larson, “Milton and Servetus: A Study in the Sources of Milton’s Theology,” *PMLA* 41 4 (1926): 892; Ryan Netzley, “How Reading Works: Hermeneutics and Reading Practice in *Paradise Regained*,” *Milton Studies* 49 (2008): 146-166.

⁵¹ Ryrie, *Being Protestant*, 41. On sight like hearing as central to faith, Christopher writes “‘seeing’ is verbal understanding, a grasping and taking to heart of a divine locution. Indeed, ‘seeing’ is believing some very definite divine words, for Luther maintained that in doctrine we see the face of God” (*Milton and the Science*, 9).

⁵² Haskin, *Milton’s Burden of Interpretation*, 15.

⁵³ Haskin, *Milton’s Burden of Interpretation*, ix.

interpretation. In *A Treatise of Civil Power*, he begins: “What I argue, shall be drawn from the scripture only; and therein from true fundamental principles of the gospel; to all knowing Christians undeniable.”⁵⁴ Barbara Lewalski gives an insightful overview of some of these principles, which include common human experience as an indication of “what serves human good and what accords with human nature.”⁵⁵ Likewise, while reason is part of the interpretive method, it also functions as a principle of that method, since Milton adheres to the belief that “nothing in God’s revelation will flatly contradict reason and... in moral and political matters reason, the law of nature, and revelation will agree.”⁵⁶ In this way, Lewalski argues, Milton does not expect the “internal prophetic Spirit to manifest itself in enthusiastic testimony, but rather in reasoned argument that might carry conviction to others.”⁵⁷ While Scripture, Spirit, and interpretive reason all come together to authorize each other and produce the experience of faith, faith might also be experienced, this relationship suggests, *as* reason. In Milton’s own words, one follows the Spirit both because “his word every where bids us,” and because “the very dictate of reason tells us.”⁵⁸ Of course, for Milton in *Paradise Lost*, that reason, as I shall show, must be right reason caused *by* faith itself, and not the other way around.

At the same time, Milton’s interpretive process also relied on certain doctrinal principles.⁵⁹ For one, Milton believed “profoundly and centrally in the reality of the Fall” and in redemption accomplished by the “full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice of the Son,” conceiving of the Fall as “the beginning of human time and of more and less flawed conceptions of time, as the beginning of the ‘wandering steps’ toward redemption, and as the beginning of human mischoice and misorientation in favor of power over love—love being the reflection of grace.”⁶⁰ Similarly, Milton denounces any interpretation that entailed salvation by works or denied the authority of Scripture.⁶¹ He rejected the doctrine of predestination in favor of free will, because it directly contradicted his conception of liberty of conscience and Christian freedom and made God appear an authoritative tyrant, from whose divine will could be attributed the “entrance of evil into human history.”⁶²

⁵⁴ Milton, *The Works of John Milton*, vi:4.

⁵⁵ Barbara K. Lewalski, “Interpreting God’s Word—and Words—in *Paradise Lost*,” in *Milton’s Rival Hermeneutics: “Reason Is But Choosing.”* Ed. Richard J. DuRocher and Margaret Olofson Thickstun (Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania: Duquesne University Press, 2012), 85; 79. In *Milton’s Burden of Interpretation*, Haskin elaborates on this “principle,” discussing Milton’s experience in encountering the Bible’s seemingly contradictory assertions about divorce (58). Mindele Treip also discusses how Milton interprets Scripture according to “a stringiest set of scholarly and editorial principles which dictate that never shall a single verse be read out of context, or without being tested against all the other verses on the same matter elsewhere in Scripture, or other than according to the overall coherence and consistency of doctrine throughout the Bible.” See Mindele Anne Treip, *Allegorical Poetics and the Epic* (Kentucky: The University Press of Kentucky, 1994), 184.

⁵⁶ Lewalski, “Interpreting God’s Word,” 81. Lewalski points out that Milton relies on a principle of contradiction at the same time, whereby doctrines appearing contradictory may be those beyond human reason (82).

⁵⁷ Lewalski, “Interpreting God’s Word,” 81.

⁵⁸ Milton, *The Works of John Milton*, vi:5.

⁵⁹ For a discussion of the possible origins of Milton’s theological ideas, see Larson, “Milton and Servetus.”

⁶⁰ Gale H. Carrithers, and James D. Hardy, Jr., *Milton and the Hermeneutic Journey* (Baton Rouge; London: Louisiana State University Press, 1994), 7.

⁶¹ Donnelly, *Milton’s Scriptural Reasoning*, 18.

⁶² Donnelly, *Milton’s Scriptural Reasoning*, 16-17, 84. In a paraphrase of Dennis Danielson, Donnelly points out the challenge of interpreting the Fall in light of the doctrine of free will: “there can never be a complete explanation of the human fall ‘in terms of sufficient causation’—to do so would eliminate free choice. If it were possible to demonstrate, on the basis of sufficient causation, why the Fall happened, then it would have been caused inexorably and would not have been freely chosen—thus making God the sufficient cause of evil” (122). For more on Milton’s rejection of predestination, see Milton, *The Works of John Milton*, xiv:71, xiv:137-39; Haskin, *Milton’s Burden of Interpretation*, 9; Carrithers and Hardy, *Milton and the Hermeneutic Journey*, 148;

Against Milton's belief, English Calvinists, instead, held that predestination was itself a principle to be used in their own interpretive practices.⁶³ As Haskin notes, predestination became for many Protestants a guide for what to look for in the Bible, as a way to understand salvation and the doctrine of grace.⁶⁴ But the uncertainty inherent in predestination—the inability for anyone to conclude with certainty that they had been damned or chosen⁶⁵—led to feelings both of assurance, on the one hand, and of anxiety, insecurity, and despair, on the other.⁶⁶ Moreover, assurance was never felt in a moment of euphoric recognition; it was, at best, “achieved only in a continuing struggle which could know no permanent resting place on this side of death.”⁶⁷ Not only that, but feelings of assurance or relief that came from belief in one's own predestination could always be undermined by the uncertainty: the “saving” faith of feeling chosen might be only a “historical” or “temporary” faith.⁶⁸

Yet curiously, as Ryrie notes, British Protestants also emphasized emotions because they “expected to meet God in them. Emotion was a form of revelation.”⁶⁹ As Protestants sought meaning in the Scripture, in their own reason, and in their own feelings influenced by the Spirit, Ryrie argues, they “understood their lives as a progressive series of spiritual crises,” moments of “unanswered, redoubled prayer.”⁷⁰ In the face of suffering and insecurity, then, “faithful persistence” “gave their suffering meaning, and—potentially—brought them comfort in its midst.”⁷¹ As Fish notes, for the seventeenth-century Puritan reader, discomfort could be a “source of comfort and... unpleasantness a source of pleasure.”⁷²

What is interesting about the paradox of the doctrine of predestination as a guiding principle of interpretation and yet one that, as a principle, cannot lead to true certainty, is that it exemplifies the Protestant hermeneutic practice as this series of interpretative crises. As we have seen, uncertainty in faith is central to the experience of early modern Protestantism. Milton's own practice, that does not subscribe to the doctrine of predestination, begins with the doctrinal and methodological principles identified above and then relies on the reason-Spirit combination manifested in the practice of reading. And yet how exactly the divine illumination of the Spirit is brought about is not exactly explained in Milton's works. (How could it be, when such a definition would *literalize* the Spirit, thus not truly representing the faith experienced during divine illumination.) In examining the way Milton resists “absolute interpretive certainty,”⁷³ Joseph

⁶³ See Ryrie, *Being Protestant*. For more on predestination as not just a theological dogma but as an ideological and political doctrine, see Baskerville, “Puritans, Revisionists,” 157.

⁶⁴ Haskin, *Milton's Burden of Interpretation*, 8.

⁶⁵ Ryrie, *Being Protestant*, 28.

⁶⁶ Ryrie, *Being Protestant*, 44.

⁶⁷ Haskin, *Milton's Burden of Interpretation*, 10.

⁶⁸ Haskin, *Milton's Burden of Interpretation*, 11. Haskin shows, moreover, that certain interpretive practices associated a readers' feelings of despair or guilt in the search for their own predestination with illiteracy, teaching that a “deficiency of scriptural knowledge is a sign of reprobation” (27). Haskin's book also provides a helpful and thorough history of the ideology of salvation and the principles of “saving” or “temporary” understood in the doctrine.

⁶⁹ Ryrie, *Being Protestant*, 40.

⁷⁰ Ryrie, *Being Protestant*, 248.

⁷¹ Ryrie, *Being Protestant*, 248. In Ryrie's characterization, “Protestantism was born in crisis and in conflict, and it was through those experiences that Protestants found their identity and met their God” (417). Yet, he distinguishes the Catholic-leaning “self-imposed suffering,” of which Protestants were wary (241), from the fear that too great stability would “foster formalism and complacency” (419), a fear which Milton's own tracts acknowledge.

⁷² Stanley Fish, *Surprised by Sin: The Reader in Paradise Lost* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997, originally published 1967), 44.

⁷³ Joseph Wittreich, “Sites of Contention in *Paradise Lost*: Scenes of Instruction, Lessons of Interpretation,” in *Milton's Rival Hermeneutics: “Reason Is But Choosing.”* Ed. Richard J. DuRocher and Margaret Olofson Thickett.

Wittreich refers to Milton's "commitment to ongoing revelation" as one that, on the rational side of interpretation, "makes space for mutating thought and evolving explanations—for the correction of error, incrementally, through the refinement of observation."⁷⁴ Furthermore, when it comes to faith, salvation for Milton is not assured as certain based on the principle of predestination, but as "a persuasion that *if* one persists in faith and charity, one will undoubtedly attain eternal life."⁷⁵

Persistence in interpretation for Milton's Protestant interpreter means understanding that uncertainty, doubt, despair, and a sense of ongoing crisis, may be part of the Protestant experience—an experience which is by definition hermeneutical. Yet, persistence also means believing in the centrality of hermeneutics to Protestant faith and thus prioritizing interpretation as the *only* means of faith and divine revelation.⁷⁶ As Victoria Kahn notes in her essay, "Milton and the Problem of Belief," Milton "suggests—no doubt scandalizing some of his readers—that faith itself entails work, specifically, the work of interpretation."⁷⁷

In the readings that follow, I argue that Milton dramatizes in his poetic works the paradox of Protestant hermeneutics, as an act that relies on reason based on faith but that results in an experience between faith and doubt caused by interpretive uncertainty.⁷⁸ In using his poetic works to interpret the process of interpretation itself, specifically through the image of the veil, Milton exemplifies the interpretive strategies that his Protestant readers might model⁷⁹ and responds to the hermeneutic crisis of his time, addressing the paradoxical experience that defines early modern Protestantism of necessarily *persisting* through uncertainty for the sake of interpretation and therefore, hopefully, for faith.

II. The Veils of the Fall in *Paradise Lost*

i. Innocence

Milton's introduction to Eve in *Paradise Lost* presents the hermeneutic veil as a symbol of the two ways Eve's own textual veil can be read. Yet, the veil image opens the interpretive possibilities—to read Eve suspiciously or faithfully—only to resolve them by returning to the fundamental doctrinal principle of Eve's innocence before the Fall. Eve's introduction in Book 4:

She as a veil down to the slender waist

(Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania: Duquesne University Press, 2012), 107.

⁷⁴ Wittreich, "Sites of Contention," 115.

⁷⁵ Haskin, *Milton's Burden of Interpretation*, 94.

⁷⁶ Haskin points out that in Milton's conception, persistence, "while it was a gift from God, was the responsibility of believers themselves" (*Milton's Burden of Interpretation*, 94).

⁷⁷ Victoria Ann Kahn, *The Trouble with Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020), 69.

⁷⁸ As Lewalski writes, "Not only does Milton as bard take on fraught hermeneutic issues in writing his poems, he also devises scenes and situations in which the central characters have to make choices grounded upon better or worse interpretations of God's pronouncements, of divine revelation" ("Interpreting God's Word," 77).

⁷⁹ As Susanne Woods argues, Milton uses a poetics of violence to "push his reader out of complacency and toward more complex interpretations of the classical and biblical materials from which he draws. By demanding interpretation, I would argue, Milton is demanding that the reader see and make choices, a process at the heart of Milton's many depictions of liberty." See Susanne Woods, "Inviting Rival Hermeneutics: Milton's Language of Violence and the Invitation to Freedom," in *Milton's Rival Hermeneutics: "Reason Is But Choosing."* Ed. Richard J. DuRocher and Margaret Olofson Thickstun (Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania: Duquesne University Press, 2012), 3-16. Smith argues also that Milton uses poetics to "do the work of theological argument" ("The Anti-Episcopal Tracts," 172).

Her unadornèd golden tresses wore
 Dishevelled but in wanton ringlets waved
 As the vine curls her tendrils, which implied
 Subjection, but required with gentle sway
 And by her yielded, by him best received,
 Yielded with coy submission, modest pride,
 And sweet reluctant amorous delay. (4.304-311).⁸⁰

Readers of this introductory description have interpreted Eve's connection to the image of the veil and the figurative language of "wanton" ringlets and vine-like curls as a preemptive suggestion of her future fall. Susan Wiseman considers the way that words like "coy" and "wanton" function as "fallen" language that "frames" Eve and invites the reader to look ahead to the impending transition from innocence to experience and sin.⁸¹ Arguing that Eve is a "catalyst" for the Fall and a "vessel" with little agency, Beverly McCabe points out the incompatibility of this introduction with paradise, remarking that "Various critics have explicated this passage and have shown that Eve's physical beauty and charm portray a body language and promiscuity incompatible with the prelapsarian world."⁸² Moreover, she reads the veil as "obscuring" or "hiding" Eve and connects the images of the veil and the vine⁸³ at once to modesty ("modest pride") and to guile and disguise.⁸⁴

Yet, the veil in this description is merely a simile for Eve's "golden tresses," which are, in turn, described as "unadornèd." The veil-like hair is thus explicitly not covered by any *literal* veil. This uncovered aspect of Eve's existence is important to Milton's introduction of both first parents. When we meet them as a pair a few lines earlier, Adam and Eve are "Godlike erect with native honor clad / In naked majesty" (4.289-90). They are paradoxically dressed in their nakedness in the same way that Eve is "veiled" by her explicit lack of a veil. As Milton emphasizes further:

Nor those mysterious parts were then concealed:
 Then was not guilty shame, dishonest shame
 Of nature's works, honor dishonorable,
 Sin-bred. (4.312-15).

Veils, clothes, and covers are unnecessary for the guiltless and the honorable, where *innocent* and

⁸⁰ All citations from *Paradise Lost* are taken from John Milton, *Paradise Lost*. Ed. Gordon Teskey (New York; London: W.W. Norton & Company, 2005).

⁸¹ Susan Wiseman, "Eve, *Paradise Lost*, and Female Interpretation," in *The Oxford Handbook of Milton*. Eds. Nicholas McDowell and Nigel Smith (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 541.

⁸² Beverly A. McCabe, "Eve: Victim, Villain, or Vehicle? The Forewarnings and Prefiguration of the Fall in *Paradise Lost*," *CLA Journal* 43 1 (1999): 80.

⁸³ From an entirely different approach, Mandy Green explores Milton's identification of Eve with the vine image in *Paradise Lost* as symbolizing simultaneously both her dependence on Adam and her vulnerability without him, and her independence from him symbolized by her own beauty and fruitfulness. See Mandy Green, "'The Vine and Her Elm': Milton's Eve and the Transformation of an Ovidian Motif," *The Modern Language Review* 91 2 (1996): 301-316. See also Mary Ruth Brown, "*Paradise Lost* and John 15: Eve, the Branch and the Church," *Milton Quarterly* 20 4 (1986): 127-31, who explores the vine image through the lens of Milton's Puritan view that "a woman's hair... is a sign of her divinely decreed subjection to her husband," where the vine provides a means for characterizing the "union" of Adam and Eve as not unlike the union of Christ and the Church (127).

⁸⁴ McCabe, "Eve: Victim, Villian," 81. See also King-Kok Cheung, "Beauty and the Beast: A Sinuous Reflection of Milton's Eve," *Milton Studies* 23 (1988), whom McCabe cites in her discussion of the figurative veil and vine.

honest “shame” in this context indicates only *that* Adam and Eve are naked, the nakedness itself a sign which, in a circular way, reinforces their innocence and honesty. The image of the veil is particularly important because, as female clothing, it implies Eve’s “coy submission, modest pride, / And sweet reluctant amorous delay.” Yet, within the context of Eden and innocence, the figure of the veil is used to describe Eve’s body only to show that Eve’s body needs no veils to indicate those qualities at all. Thus, the veil image here points beyond itself to the way that Eve literally *embodies* innocence. As Nigel Smith writes in a reading that challenges the preemptive application of postlapsarian meaning to this passage, “Eve’s cloth-like tresses figure the veil worn by primitive Christian and later godly women in church services. All hint of lewdness is supposed to be absent because we are in a prelapsarian world.”⁸⁵

But the veil image, a marker of hermeneutic uncertainty, is already associated in *Paradise Lost* with suspicion through the opposition implied by the veiled Eve. The poet exploits this hermeneutic relationship:

How have ye troubled all mankind
With shows instead—mere shows of seeming pure!—
And banished from Man’s life his happiest life:
Simplicity and spotless innocence. (4.315-18).

Eve, or her body, or the image of the veil, or her “shame”—(the effect is the same regardless of what we attribute to the referent “ye”⁸⁶)—have “troubled” mankind with “mere shows of seeming pure.” Although at its introduction the veil simile indicates the necessary absence of all physical veils, the narrator reinterprets that relationship in this exclamation by implying that Eve’s “non-veil,” her unadorned hair, perhaps even the association itself of nakedness to innocence, was really masking evil all along, the future end to the “simplicity and spotless innocence” of “Man’s life.” In the narrator’s suspicious reinterpretation, the lack of a veil is exposed as itself the “show” and deception, suspecting not only Eve’s innocence before the Fall but also the reliability of language to signify. To put that another way, while Milton’s apostrophe to “ye” does not outright charge Eve with deception, it does open Eve’s innocence up to interpretation. Though the veil is at first just an object that signifies her innocence, it soon becomes a hermeneutic sign representing Eve’s double potential as either innocent or deceptive. What’s more, as metaphor, the veil image becomes itself the object of interpretation, as Milton questions the extent to which we can trust its association with innocence or deception at all, especially when the metaphor of the veil signifies its literal absence.

As a hermeneutic sign that represents these two approaches of suspicion and faith in interpretation and thus aggravates the uncertainty inherent in that interpretation, the veil image urges resolution one way or the other. As I mention above, this tension has led scholars to conclude suspiciously and to preemptively blame Eve for the Fall.⁸⁷ Wiseman explains the interpretive

⁸⁵ Nigel Smith, “*Paradise Lost* and Heresy,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Milton*. Eds. Nicholas McDowell and Nigel Smith (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 518.

⁸⁶ For more on “ye” as “shame,” see Teskey’s commentary on the lines 4.315-18 in Milton, *Paradise Lost*. See also John Hollander, “Honor Dishonorable: Shameful Shame,” *Social Research* 70 4 (2003): 1061-1074, whose work involves a sociolinguistic discussion of the terms “shame” and “honor.” He briefly references Adam and Eve from the Bible, as he moves through a range of literary instances of shame and honor. For a theological analysis of shame in the biblical account of Adam and Eve, see Graham Ward, “Adam and Eve’s Shame (and Ours),” *Literature and Theology* 26 3 (2012): 305-322.

⁸⁷ For further arguments for Eve’s prelapsarian culpability, see Northrop Frye, “The Revelation to Eve,” in *Paradise*

difficulty of reading prelapsarian Eve: “Milton’s poem subtly but continually reminds readers that Eve was the agent of the Fall, and so raises questions about how blameworthy she was before the Fall actually happened.”⁸⁸ The paradox of the Fall, Wiseman goes on, is that “Adam and Eve’s story is both retrospective and unfolding in a poetic present. Within this framework, Eve’s fall exists in more than one time and, as we have seen, the poem constantly plays on that doubleness.”⁸⁹ The consequence is that suspicious language “presses in upon Eve before the event,” so that her fall “proves the pattern of expectation set up by the poem.”⁹⁰ In a similar way, Patricia Parker observes the influence of readerly expectations over judgments: “The mind constantly tips the balance, weighing down innocent etymologies with their burdened, postlapsarian meaning.”⁹¹

Milton too plays on this tension between pre- and postlapsarian meaning. In Book 5, Adam and Eve prepare to greet and host Raphael in Eden; the narrator describes:

So to the sylvan lodge
They came that like Pomona’s arbor smiled
With flow’rets decked, and fragrant smells. But Eve
(Undecked save with herself, more lovely fair
Than wood-nymph or the fairest goddess feigned
Of three that in Mount Ida naked strove)
Stood to entertain her guest from Heav’n. No veil
She needed, virtue-proof, no thought infirm
Altered her cheek. (5.377-85).

The paradox of Eve’s innocence is that she needs no veil to signify it. Though Milton compares her to Pomona, the lovely goddess of fruit trees, it is of course a false comparison. Whereas Pomona is “decked” in flowers and fragrance, Eve remains “Undecked save with herself,” for “No veil / She needed,” the nakedness a sign of her innocence, the veil metaphors a sign of their own literal absence. Of course, the pre- and postlapsarian confusion is also evident in Milton’s use of another woman in the comparison with Eve: however similarly pastoral, there is no one yet in existence (let alone a pagan) to whom Eve could be likened.

But elsewhere the poet makes similar connections between Eve and pagan women figures with darker, more suspicious undertones. As Adam and Eve prepare for bed in Book 4, the narrator

Lost, A Tercentenary Tribute. Ed. Balachandra Rajan (Ontario: University of West Ontario, 1969, 18-47); Deborah A. Interdonato, “‘Render Me More Equal’: Gender Inequality and the Fall in *Paradise Lost*, 9,” *Milton Quarterly* 29 4 (1995): 95-106. Conversely, other scholars expose the prejudices against prelapsarian Eve to promote a “redemptive” agenda, see Deirdre Keenan McChrystal, “Redeeming Eve,” *English Literary Renaissance* 23 3 (1993): 490-408; Wiseman, “Eve, *Paradise Lost*”; Catherine Gimelli Martin, “Introduction: Milton’s Gendered Subjects,” in *Milton and Gender*. Ed. Catherine Gimelli Martin (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004, 1-15); Jesse G. Swan, “Author-Functions and the Interpretations of Eve in *Paradise Lost*,” *Milton Quarterly* 26 3 (1992): 59-69; Anne-Marie Korte, “*Paradise Lost*, Growth Gained: Eve’s Story Revisited—Genesis 2-4 in a Feminist Theological Perspective,” in *Out of Paradise: Adam and Eve and Their Interpreters*. Ed. Bob Becking and Susanne Hennecke (Sheffield, UK: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2011, 140-156); William Shullenberger, “Wrestling with the Angel: *Paradise Lost* and Feminist Criticism,” *Milton Quarterly* 20 3 (1986): 69-85; Alex Garganigo, *Samson’s Cords: Imposing Oaths in Milton, Marvell, and Butler* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2018), esp. Ch. 6; Diane Kelsey McColley, *Milton’s Eve* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1983).

⁸⁸ Wiseman, “Eve, *Paradise Lost*,” 541.

⁸⁹ Wiseman, “Eve, *Paradise Lost*,” 544.

⁹⁰ Wiseman, “Eve, *Paradise Lost*,” 545.

⁹¹ Patricia Parker, “Eve, Evening, and the Labor of Reading in *Paradise Lost*,” *English Literary Renaissance* 9 2 (1979): 335.

writes:

With flowers, garlands and sweet-smelling herbs
Espoused Eve decked first her nuptial bed
And Heav'nly choirs the hymenæan sung,
What day the genial angel to our sire
Brought her in naked beauty more adorned,
More lovely than Pandora whom the gods
Endowed with all their gifts—and O! too like
In sad event when th' unwiser son
Of Japhet, brought by Hermes, she ensnared
Mankind with her fair looks to be avenged
on him who had stole Jove's authentic fire. (4.709-19).

The emphasis is once again on Eve's nakedness, which in its lack of any adornments paradoxically makes her "more adorned, / More lovely than Pandora." Putting aside the same problematic comparison between Eve and another woman, the greater issue here is that the language of similitude, "too like," once again falsely implicates Eve. Just as Pandora's "fair looks," endowments, and adornments "ensnared / Mankind," so too, Milton suggests, will Eve's "naked beauty" result in such a deception. The hermeneutic anxiety in this treatment arises from the suggestion that both the veils of Pandora and the absent veils of Eve, while seeming lovely and innocent, have the capacity to deceive.

In her "regenerative" reading of this passage,⁹² Diane McColley provides a solution to the hermeneutic anxiety it generates by arguing that the false comparison "invites us to distinguish between the traces of truth and the parodies of truth in the myth. The truth is that the first woman was gifted by God. The parody is the notion that Jove sent Pandora for revenge."⁹³ McColley takes this distinction to a conclusion that resolves the hermeneutic uncertainty entirely: "If we were to read the passage as a straightforward, rather than a parodic, prolepsis of the Fall, we would have to conclude that Eve was made by a capriciously malicious God both to cause the Fall and punish Adam for falling. In other words, Milton elicits from us here any lurking suspicion we may have that God is the source of sin."⁹⁴ Of course, the latter is not what Milton intends, for God is loving, good; his grace is infinite.⁹⁵

We may therefore read Milton's treatment of Eve in the prelapsarian books in light of the fundamental doctrinal principles that he holds to be true, as McColley does in her book *Milton's Eve*. These are what McColley calls "principles of integration and regeneration inherent in the poem's substance," which depend on "certain habits of mind and articles of faith expressed alike in Milton's theology and in Renaissance poetics": God creates nothing that is not good; every rational creature is free; everything lost at the Fall will be restored and regained through Christ.⁹⁶ It follows that of course Eve is innocent before the Fall; of course any comparison with Pandora could only ever be parodic.

Indeed, just as he appears to encourage suspicion of Eve as a legitimate method of

⁹² Diane McColley, "Shapes of Things Divine: Eve and Myth in *Paradise Lost*," *The Sixteenth Century Journal* 9 4 (1978): 48.

⁹³ McColley, "Shapes of Things," 51.

⁹⁴ McColley, "Shapes of Things," 51.

⁹⁵ Milton, *The Works of John Milton*, xiv:137-39.

⁹⁶ McColley, *Milton's Eve*, 16.

interpretation, the poet undermines that method and reminds us directly of these very principles. In an invective against those who might associate prelapsarian sex with lust or evil, he writes:

Whatever hypocrites austere talk
Of purity and place and innocence,
Defaming as impure what God declares
Pure and commands to some, leaves free to all. (4.744-47).

The same hypocrisy applies to suspicious readers of Eve and her veils, whose innocence Milton continues to reinforce in Book 5, when he characterizes Eve's nakedness with the exclamation "O innocence / Deserving Paradise!" (5.444-446). As Milton has told us many times by now, Adam and Eve are explicitly free of the "troublesome disguises" (that are worn in the postlapsarian world outside the poem) (4.740-41); their prelapsarian sex too is fundamentally pure and innocent. Thus, to understand Eve's nakedness as anything less than purity and innocence, or to suspect the metaphor of the veil that points to that nakedness as itself deceptive, is to tragically misunderstand the fundamental principle of Eve's prelapsarian existence. In Milton's extended introduction of Eve through the image of the veil, we see that the attempt to *unveil* Eve reveals that there is nothing beneath her veil of innocence to suspiciously expose.

This very formulation reinterprets the hermeneutic veil as not just a symbol of suspicion and uncertainty, but, in this instance, as rather *evidence* for Eve's innocence. Milton uses the image of the veil in his representation and then interpretation of Eve to demonstrate an interpretive process that, even as it aggravates hermeneutic tensions in the poem, ultimately presents the only reasonable meaning of Eve's nakedness and non-veils by basing that meaning (however circularly) on the fundamental belief in God's goodness and therefore in her innocence. In doing this, Milton draws our attention to the image of the veil as not just a physical object, but as also a hermeneutic veil representing a paradigm of reading that is marked by the uncertainty inherent in interpretation (and here, in the challenge of interpreting Genesis, no less). By identifying the two methods of interpretation symbolized by the hermeneutic veil and, moreover, *practicing* them on Eve, Milton exemplifies a particular type of reading that relies both on reason and on faith in the principles of God's goodness and prelapsarian innocence.⁹⁷ It is in this way that Milton directs his reader toward the larger hermeneutic stakes of the poem—that is, how to understand the Fall—by rejecting outright the notion that interpreting the paradox of the Fall could ever be as easy as just blaming Eve from the beginning.

ii. Ignorance

The concept of free will, as we have seen, is central to Milton's theology and poetry, for, he writes in *De Doctrina Christiana*, "God of his wisdom determined to create men and angels reasonable

⁹⁷ In *Surprised by Sin*, Stanley Fish makes a similar argument about the role of the reader in the poem and the way in which Milton constantly "corrects" their methods of interpretation and reading (x). The reader learns, Fish writes, "that the only defence against verbal manipulation (or appearances) is a commitment that stands above the evidence of things that are seen, and the method of both poems is to lead us beyond our perspective by making us feel its inadequacies and the necessity of accepting something which baldly contradicts it. The result is instruction, and instruction is possibly only because the reader is asked to observe, analyse, and *place* his experience, that is, to think about it" (21). More specific to interpretations of Eve, Fish writes that Eve's will is sufficient, as is the reader's, whose task is "to keep in mind, always, her sufficiency" (236).

beings, and therefore free agents; foreseeing at the same time which way the bias of their will would incline, in the exercise of their own uncontrolled liberty.”⁹⁸ And yet this very principle, as scholars have noted, makes the Fall paradoxically difficult to understand. As Fish writes, “The implication that the Fall must have antecedents is a denial of the freedom of the will,”⁹⁹ and therefore the Fall must remain an “incomprehensible phenomenon; otherwise we comprehend it, and by comprehending it, deny it.”¹⁰⁰

For interpreters of the Fall, including Milton’s readers, but also including Adam and Eve, it is necessary to understand the relationship between reason and faith in free will. As Milton writes in *Areopagitica*, “many there be that complain of divin Providence for suffering *Adam* to transgresse, foolish tongues! when God gave him reason, he gave him freedom to choose, for reason is but choosing; he had bin else a meer artificiall *Adam*, such an *Adam* as he is in the motions.”¹⁰¹ Yet, as Lewalski points out, there is a difference between “positive law and the law of reason,”¹⁰² where reason is the law *except* where the commandment not to eat the fruit is concerned.¹⁰³ To choose not to eat instead requires faith. I argue that Milton uses the relationship between faith and suspicion inherent in the hermeneutic veil to explain Eve’s ignorance of the difference between faith and reason. This ignorance is then represented by the metaphor of the veil, which, combined with Satan’s “veils” of deception, explains her choice to eat.

When Eve proposes gardening alone during the much-examined separation scene, Adam responds with an argument about the value of suspicion:

‘But other doubt possesses me lest harm
 Befall thee severed from me for thou know’st
 What hath been warned us, what malicious foe,
 Envyng our happiness and his own
 Despairing, seeks to work us woe and shame
 By sly assault and somewhere nigh at hand
 Watches no doubt with greedy hope to find
 His wish and best advantage.’ (9.251-58).

As Raphael has taught him to be in Book 5, Adam is rightly suspicious of the “malicious foe” who might exploit their separation with “sly assault.” He begs Eve not to leave his side unprotected (9.266). But Eve’s retort takes Adam’s words as not merely a warning about the enemy threat, but as rather his doubt of her ability to withstand such a threat, making a discussion of whether to work separately, Mary Beth Long notes, “one about Eve’s resistance to temptation”:¹⁰⁴

‘That such an enemy we have who seeks
 Our ruin both by thee informed I learn
 And from the parting angel overheard
 As in a shady nook I stood behind

⁹⁸ Milton, *The Works of John Milton*, xiv:83.

⁹⁹ Fish, *Surprised by Sin*, 231.

¹⁰⁰ Fish, *Surprised by Sin*, 228.

¹⁰¹ Milton, *The Works of John Milton*, iv:319.

¹⁰² Lewalski, “Interpreting God’s Word,” 93.

¹⁰³ Lewalski, “Interpreting God’s Word,” 254.

¹⁰⁴ Mary Beth Long, “Contextualizing Eve’s and Milton’s Solitudes in Book 9 of *Paradise Lost*,” *Milton Quarterly* 37 2 (2003): 106.

Just then returned at shut of evening flow'rs.
 But that thou shouldst my firmness therefore doubt
 To God or thee because we have a foe
 May tempt it I expected not to hear.' (9.274-81).

On this passage, Peter Herman points out that, despite the expectations of her obedience, Eve learns about Satan's threat only by overhearing Raphael's warning to Adam from the "shady nook": "God, it should be noted, never speaks Eve's name, and He excludes Eve from His instructions to Raphael."¹⁰⁵ Herman argues, moreover, that "Much of what subsequently happens seems designed to exacerbate Eve's nascent sense of inferiority."¹⁰⁶ Certainly Eve feels attacked by Adam, experiencing his vigilance against Satan as direct suspicion of her ability to withstand; she cries, "'His fraud is then thy fear, which plain infers / Thy equal fear that my firm faith and love / Can by his fraud be shaken or seduced!'" (9.285-87). In reply, Adam tries to explain the difference between suspicion and faith. Faith, he says, is "not proof / Against temptation" (9.298-99). He implies that just because Eve has faith in herself and in her "firmness" does not mean that she cannot be tempted. Though counterintuitive to Eve, faith can be corrupted, just as suspicion can raise the necessary awareness to resist that corruption.

But Eve is troubled by suspicion on a fundamental level. She sees it as antithetical to Eden, reasoning:

'If this be our condition thus to dwell
 In narrow circuit straitened by a foe
 Subtle or violent, we not endued
 Single with like defense wherever met,
 How are we happy, still in fear of harm?' (9.322-26).

To be forced to live in fear, constantly suspicious of attack, is no freedom, no happiness. "Let us not then suspect our happy state" (9.337), she says to Adam. To suspect at all, Eve reasons, is to believe that Paradise is "imperfect" (9.338) and "frail" (9.340), for "Eden were no Eden thus exposed!" (9.341). In effect, Eve's rejection of suspicion is based on a circular conception of faith in God as based on faith in faith, and she believes that suspicion and happiness are mutually exclusive. Yet she is misguided in her belief that her present happy state precludes all feelings of suspicion. As Lewalski notes, "She is right to insist that in their 'happy State' of innocence each of them is able to resist temptation alone. But she is quite wrong to infer from this...that reasonable precautions in the presence of danger violate Edenic happiness."¹⁰⁷

Eve's reasoning against suspicion reveals that she still believes, despite Adam's argument, that her faith in the perfection of Eden and in her own happiness is "proof" against temptation:

'But harm precedes not sin: only our foe

¹⁰⁵ Herman, *Destabilizing Milton*, 138.

¹⁰⁶ Herman, *Destabilizing Milton*, 138. Others who discuss the separation scene in terms of Eve's sense of inferiority and inequality include Interdonato, "'Render Me More Equal'"; Barbara Lewalski, "Milton on Women—Yet Once More," *Milton Studies* 6 (1974): 3-20; Elaine B. Safer, "'Sufficient to Have Stood': Eve's Responsibility in Book IX," *Milton Quarterly* 6 3 (1972): 10-14; McChrystal, "Redeeming Eve"; Shullenberger, "Wrestling with the Angel"; Garganigo, *Samson's Cords*.

¹⁰⁷ Barbara Kiefer Lewalski, *Paradise Lost and the Rhetoric of Literary Forms* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2014), 234.

Tempting affronts us with his foul esteem
 Of our integrity. His foul esteem
 Sticks no dishonor on our front but turns
 Foul on himself! Then wherefore shunned or feared
 By is who rather double honor gain
 From his surmise proved false, find peace within,
 Favor from Heav'n, our witness, from th' event?" (9.327-334).

It is true that Satan's presentation of temptation does not necessarily mean that Adam and Eve will surrender to it. But Eve assumes they necessarily won't. As Smith writes, "Eve explains her faith in God's support, that he would surely not have subjected them to temptation without some kind of guard, that our attention should be triggered."¹⁰⁸ What Eve is unable to acknowledge in her reasoning is that her own suspicion might be that very trigger. Instead, her rejection of suspicion constitutes a blind faith in herself and exposes her apparent misunderstanding that sufficiency to stand does not mean she no longer has to choose to stand.¹⁰⁹

As Adam attempts to explain this paradox further, his definition of free will relies on the necessary combination of faith with suspicion. While God created "Nothing imperfect or deficient" (9.345), Adam begins, and what he created is "Secure from outward force" (9.348), the "danger" (9.349) lies in the will:

'But God left free the will, for what obeys
 Reason is free, and reason he made right
 But bid her well beware and still erect
 Lest by some fair appearing good surprised
 She dictate false and misinform the will
 To do what God expressly hath forbid.
 Not then mistrust but tender love enjoins
 That I should mind thee oft—and mind thou me!
 Firm we subsist, yet possible to swerve
 Since reason not impossibly may meet
 Some specious object by the foe suborned

¹⁰⁸ Smith, "Paradise Lost and Heresy," 522.

¹⁰⁹ Eve's sufficiency to stand alone does not mean that being alone is her best resistance, as noted by Donnelly, *Milton's Scriptural Reasoning*, 153-54, and Lewalski, *Paradise Lost and the Rhetoric*, 234. Moreover, as scholars have also pointed out, Eve appears in these lines to echo Milton's statement in *Areopagitica* that educative reading occurs through "triall" "by what is contrary": "I cannot praise a fugitive and cloister'd vertue, unexercis'd & unbreath'd, that never sallies out and sees her adversary, but slinks out of the race, where that immortall garland is to be run for, not without dust and heat. Assuredly we bring not innocence into the world, we bring impurity much rather: that which purifies us is triall, and triall is by what is contrary" (*The Works of John Milton*, iv:319). Yet in *Paradise Lost*, Eve's conception of "double honor" successful tried by the foe's temptation too naively subscribes to Milton's formulation that true knowledge occurs through encountering falsehood, or that true faith is the choice against evil. It may be, but Eve does not truly understand the risk to her "happy state." As Milton also shows in *Areopagitica*, true faith means truly withstanding temptation, which means truly comprehending temptation by experience: "the knowledge of good is so involv'd and interwoven with the knowledge of evill, and in so many cunning resemblances hardly to be discern'd, that those confused seeds which were impos'd on *Psyche* as an incessant labour to cull out, and sort asunder, were not more intermixt. It was from out the rinde of one apple tasted, that the knowledge of good and evill as two twins cleaving together leapt forth into the World. And perhaps this is that doom which *Adam* fell into of knowing good and evill, that is to say of knowing good by evill" (iv:310-11).

And fall into deception unaware,
Not keeping strictest watch as she was warned.' (9.351-63).

The threat comes from reason's capacity to be deceived, to be "misinformed" by the will by "some fair appearing good," however "unaware" of the deception one's reason might be. To keep "strictest watch" is then to temper faith with suspicion so that faith does not become blind and therefore vulnerable to deception. Adam does not suspect or "mistrust" Eve, he goes on, but understands the danger of *obscured* deception and the corruptibility—however involuntary—of one's reason. Therefore, while they should continue to believe in their happy state that is perfect and secure, they should also understand that suspicion of their own reason may sometimes be warranted.

What Eve fails to comprehend from Adam's explanation is that self-suspicion is simply the acknowledgement of free will. As she departs from Adam, assured by his "reasoning words" (9.379) though not truly understanding them, she is vulnerable. She has reasoned, out of her fundamental belief in Eden's perfection, that suspicion would contradict that happy state, and yet fails to truly understand her own freedom. We might sympathize with Eve at this point, since the concept of free will and choice in Eden are so paradoxical. As Louis Martz notes, choice is essential to Milton's conception of "man's perfection and man's happiness, whether fallen or unfallen."¹¹⁰ Our task as readers is to understand the paradox of how Eve's freedom to sin could ever be an essential part of her perfection. But this task is also Eve's task, as Phillip Donnelly explains: "Obviously God already knows who will freely choose to be faithful and who will not, but, having made creatures who can experience the discovery of self-knowledge, he is committed to allowing them the opportunity to declare and manifest their allegiance in accord with their creaturely capacities."¹¹¹ Since choice is part of Eve's perfection, Martz writes, "she must learn by experience."¹¹²

Eve's encounter with Satan and her experience of "self-discovery" are therefore as much a test of her faith in and obedience to God, as they are a test of her interpretation of free will and reason. What we find in that encounter is that the blind, suspicionless faith that Eve maintains is the very vulnerability Satan exploits:¹¹³ "Eve separate he spies / Veiled in a cloud of fragrance, where she stood" (9.424-25). The veil of fragrance at once recalls Eve's veil of innocence as we understand it in Book 4. But she is not just innocent here; in her gentle gardening, she is also "mindless" (9.431). This veil metaphor thus signifies Eve's *ignorance*, heightening the dramatic irony between Adam's warning and the choice we know Eve will make on account of her blind faith in her own reason. As Satan approaches, she fails to identify his deception "appearing good," interpreting the "rustling leaves" (9.519) of his movements as perfectly *usual*. Even as he speaks, her surprise is not suspicion but "wonder" (9.566) at the "miracle" (9.562) of the snake's human language. What's more, far from inciting her suspicion or suggesting deception, Satan appears to Eve "so friendly grown above the rest" (9.564), and when he explains his faculty of speech, she is "Yet more amazed unwary" (9.614).

The dramatic irony of this encounter is further emphasized by Satan's entrance into the garden,

¹¹⁰ Louis L. Martz, *Milton: Poet of Exile* (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 1986), 127.

¹¹¹ Donnelly, *Milton's Scriptural Reasoning*, 133.

¹¹² Martz, *Milton: Poet of Exile*, 140.

¹¹³ McColley's evaluation of Eve's dream points to this same vulnerability caused by Eve's innocence: "The dream, far from being a proof of Eve's weakness or a step in her corruption, shows that Eve is uncloistered, not only in the sense of being a free agent in a world where evil too roams free, but even in the sense that neither God, nor Adam, nor her own innocence protects her from the intrusion of evil into her mind and imagination" (*Milton's Eve*, 90).

when “Night’s hemisphere had veiled th’ horizon round” (9.52). Upon entering he involves himself “in rising mist” (9.75), the cover that hides him. Moreover, his choice of serpent as “Fit vessel, fittest imp of fraud” (9.89) is made explicitly on account of the serpent’s own “sleights” (9.92) and “wiles” (9.91), which Satan trusts will mask his own.¹¹⁴ His entry into the serpent’s mouth is later described with much the same disguises: he is “wrapped in mist” (9.158), “Of midnight vapor... obscure” (9.159), then creeps “Like a black mist” (9.181), into the serpent’s mouth, becoming thus “enclosed / In serpent, inmate bad” (9.494-95). The point of all these covers: to become “Pleasing... / And lovely, never since of serpent kind / Lovelier” (9.503-5). The emphasis on Satan’s varied disguises which *veil* him recalls Adam’s warning of deception: the veils make Satan’s deception lovely, “appearing good,” wonderful to Eve, even miraculous. These veils thus “dictate false” to Eve’s will, whose “unawareness” is symbolized in the scene by Eve’s own metaphorical veil of ignorance. Milton uses the veil imagery here to enact the interpretive methods contained in the hermeneutic veil, which presents Eve with the opposing choices of believing Satan’s outward appearance or suspecting it as a veil that obscures some hidden truth. Eve makes the wrong choice, as Martz asserts, though only the consequences will reveal that fact.¹¹⁵

When Eve, “our credulous mother” (9.644), has followed the serpent and seen the Tree, she finally expresses concern, though her concern is still not suspicion:

‘Serpent, we might have spared our coming hither,
Fruitless to me though fruit be here t’ excess,
The credit of whose virtue rest with thee,
Wondrous indeed if cause of such effects.
But of this tree we may not taste nor touch:
God so commanded and left that command
Sole daughter of His voice. The rest we live
Law to ourselves: our reason is our law.’ (9.646-54).

As Lewalski aptly articulates, Eve’s “exposition of this crucial text indicates that she understands its literal meaning perfectly, and also understands it to be a direct command of God, distinct from the law of reason that governs all other prelapsarian behavior.”¹¹⁶ While Eve understands that God’s commandment is different from the “law” of reason, she seems to not fully grasp the practical implications of that distinction, whereby, as different from the law of reason, God’s commandment is a matter of faith. Had faith guided her encounter with Satan, she would not have even tried to reason at all, as she does, that Satan is living proof of the story he has told her: he has eaten of the tree, she thinks, but “envies not but brings with joy / The good befall’n him, author unsuspect, / Friendly to man, far from deceit and guile” (9.769-771). She is, of course, wrong in her unsuspecting interpretation of Satan, but that is not even the problem. The problem is that instead of approaching the encounter from a position of faith in God and thus *keeping* faith in God’s commandment, Eve approaches the encounter from a position of faith in her own ability to reason. And that faith is a blind faith not because it fails to suspect Satan, but because it fails to suspect itself.

¹¹⁴ For more on Satan’s use of the serpent, see Sarah R. Morrison, “The Accommodating Serpent and God’s Grace in *Paradise Lost*,” *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900* 49 1 (2009): 173-195; Russell M. Hillier, “‘By force or fraud / Weening to prosper’: Milton’s Satanic and Messianic Modes of Heroism,” *Milton Quarterly* 43 1 (2009): 17-38.

¹¹⁵ Martz, *Milton: Poet of Exile*, 135.

¹¹⁶ Lewalski, “Interpreting God’s Word,” 92-93.

As Fish convincingly points out, the “deficiency” in Eve’s argumentative skills against Satan is “beside the point, for what is being tested here is not Eve’s agility in philosophical reasoning but the firmness of her knowledge that philosophy and reason are irrelevant to any decision to eat or refrain from eating the apple.”¹¹⁷ When it comes to “obedience to God’s word and faith in his loving benevolence,” Fish goes on, reason has no place because obedience and faith “occupy the field.”¹¹⁸ Fish’s point is precisely what Eve herself fails to understand. Her choice to eat occurs from a failure of both faith and reason insofar as she misdirects her faith from God and applies it to her reason, blindly unsuspecting her own ability to withstand temptation (circularly) by *means* of reason, and thus believing, again in a circular way, that because she believes in God’s goodness and perfection to make *her* good and perfect, that belief precludes the failure of her reason which she does know would lead to the failure of her faith. In other words, it takes the experience of choosing reason over faith for Eve to comprehend the fact that she is indeed free to choose not to maintain her faith in God.

Choosing faith in her own reason rather than in God’s commandment is Eve’s failure;¹¹⁹ and this is the only cause of the Fall. Satan deceives Eve, but only because he presents her with the opportunity to make this choice.¹²⁰ Eve’s vulnerability is that she does not fully understand the difference between reason and faith, a misunderstanding which Satan exploits.¹²¹ While reason (and suspicion) and faith may come together in the moment of interpretation, as Adam’s explication and Milton’s own writings suggest they do, the difference between them is that right reason results from faith; faith does not result from reason. It is tempting to overlook Eve’s role in this misunderstanding, as Martz seems to when he attempts to excuse Eve’s act on the grounds that, since angels like Uriel could not penetrate Satan’s disguise, how could Eve?¹²² But while of course Satan’s disguise is a part of his exploitation, Eve’s faith is not dependent on her ability to suspect; rather her ability to suspect is dependent on her faith, a point that Eve misunderstands to tragic end.

Of course, as Jeanie Grant Moore points out, the paradox of the Fall is that if Eve had known the difference between good and evil she would have been able to shun the evil of the serpent’s temptation to eat the fruit.¹²³ Indeed, Eve concludes before she eats, “What fear I then, rather what know to fear / Under this ignorance of good and evil...?” (9.772-73). Scholars have tried to understand just why Eve is so vulnerable at this moment: she feels inferior to Adam and desires the knowledge Satan promises;¹²⁴ she wants greater self-knowledge, having had denied to her the “unmediated access to spiritual realities” granted Adam;¹²⁵ she is unable to “manage” the gift of

¹¹⁷ Stanley Fish, “Milton and Interpretation,” *Milton Studies* 56 (2015): 6.

¹¹⁸ Fish, “Milton and Interpretation,” 6.

¹¹⁹ Carrithers and Hardy note that Milton like Augustine believed that it was the will that was fatally damaged at the Fall, not reason, “though reason was left subject to limit and distraction” (*Milton and the Hermeneutic Journey*, 149).

¹²⁰ For more on the tactics Satan employs—the exercise of his own free will—to set up this opportunity, see Donnelly, *Milton’s Scriptural Reasoning*, 141; Fish, *Surprised by Sin*, esp. Ch. 6; Fish, “Milton and Interpretation.”

¹²¹ Of course, as Virginia Mollenkott notes, Milton is “careful to stress that evil originated in the mind of Satan,” not Eve. See Virginia R. Mollenkott, “Milton and Women’s Liberation: A Note on Teaching Method,” *Milton Quarterly* 7 4 (1973): 101. In an alternative reading, Loewenstein argues that Satan’s role in this encounter is as a political “heretic,” whose dissimulation before Eve attempts to sow “religious dissent of the kind associated with Restoration nonconformity” (*Treacherous Faith*, 313).

¹²² Marts, *Milton: Poet of Exile*, 104-5.

¹²³ Jeanie Grant Moore, “The Two Faces of Eve: Temptation Scenes in *Comus* and *Paradise Lost*,” *Milton Quarterly* 36 1 (2002): 10.

¹²⁴ Herman, *Destabilizing Milton*, 151.

¹²⁵ Elisabeth Liebert, “Rendering ‘More Equal’: Eve’s Changing Discourse in *Paradise Lost*,” *Milton Quarterly* 37 3

freedom,¹²⁶ allowing Satan's own narrative to supplant her own.¹²⁷ Ultimately, however, Eve's only true vulnerability is her innocence, which is also her ignorance. She does not understand what free will means in *practice*; she does not know the difference between good and evil; she does not truly see that faith guides right reason and not the other way around. Had she known, of course she would have known *better*. But she couldn't know until she knew, at which point she was fallen.

It's worth pointing out that Adam's choice too occurs by a similar ignorance. While his understanding of interpretation is more nuanced than Eve's, in that intellectually he recognizes suspicion and faith, and reason and faith as not mutually exclusive methods of interpretation, nevertheless in practice he makes the same mistake that she does, attempting to reason his way to faith, rather than find right reason through faith instead. Not unlike Satan,¹²⁸ Eve presents Adam with the opportunity to choose, but, once again, that presentation does not force the choice one way or the other. Adam, Milton tells us, is explicitly "not deceived" (9.998). Rather, his choice results from his own poor reasoning, where he resolves his doubts about what to do not through faith in God but through the opposite, "after thoughts disturbed / Submitting to what seemed remediless" (9.918-19). At this moment, Adam does not believe that he is choiceless, but rather misinterprets his free will in terms of a false choice. He believes that he must choose between obedience to God and love for Eve, his "link" and "bond of nature" (9.914; 9.954), rather than between obedience to God and disobedience to God.¹²⁹ Sadly, as Fish notes, "A leap of faith is always a refusal to accede to what, at the moment, seems remediless."¹³⁰ And this is the connection Adam misses. He chooses to eat because he chooses Eve, and he chooses Eve at least in part because he relies on reason first, instead of using his faith in God to guide the reasoning of his interpretive choices.

iii. *Shame*

It should be clear, as numerous scholars assert, that interpretation is a central element to pre- and postlapsarian experience alike. Reading exists both after and before the Fall, Haskin writes, such that Milton asks his readers—themselves confronting the "burden of interpretation"—to "imagine that before the Fall Adam and Eve were already faced with the burden of interpreting a partially tangled text."¹³¹ Emphasizing the dual role of faith and reason in the act of interpretation, Lewalski makes the point that even in their state of innocence, Adam and Eve are "expected to work out their relationship to God and to each other,"¹³² that they are challenged by interpretation both before and after the Fall in ways that require more than "simple, unthinking obedience grounded upon literal interpretations of divine pronouncements," but rather engagement with and probing of "the essential meaning of God's words and ways."¹³³

(2003): 162; Interdonato, "Render Me More Equal," 102.

¹²⁶ Martz, *Milton: Poet of Exile*, 128. See also, Safer, "Sufficient to Have Stood," 11.

¹²⁷ Lewalski, "Interpreting God's Word," 95.

¹²⁸ Though, of course, not *like* Satan. See Fish, *Surprised by Sin*, 274, on Eve's sincere appeal to Adam after the Fall.

¹²⁹ Eve certainly thinks this, as she sees "divine displeasure" (9.993) as a "trial" of Adam's love of her (9.975).

¹³⁰ Fish, *Surprised by Sin*, 270. See Julia M. Walker, "For each seem'd either: Free Will and Predestination in *Paradise Lost*," *Milton Quarterly* 20 1 (1986): 15, who argues that this line demonstrates Adam's lack of free will. For a direct response against Walker's argument, see Stephen M. Fallon, "The Uses of 'Seems' and the Spectre of Predestination," *Milton Quarterly* 21 3 (1987): 99-101. See also Treip, *Allegorical Poetics and the Epic*, 241.

¹³¹ Haskin, *Milton's Burden of Interpretation*, 216, 188.

¹³² Lewalski, "Interpreting God's Word," 97-8.

¹³³ Lewalski, "Interpreting God's Word," 98. For further discussion of interpretation in the prelapsarian world, see

In dramatizing Eve's experience of interpretation before and then at the Fall, Milton dramatizes the practice of trying to interpret a matter as complicated as faith by means of reason alone. As we see, this practice results in failure. However, in the immediate aftermath of eating the fruit, Eve is not fully aware that she has interpreted poorly. Moreover, while it is clear that before the Fall Adam and Eve understand the concept of interpretation, they do not understand its consequences—that is, the consequences of proliferated meaning and uncertainty that arise from interpretation. I argue that this awareness for the first parents comes in the poem at precisely the moment when the poet replaces the metaphorical “veil” of innocence with the “robe” of shame. As Adam and Eve recognize their own transformation from innocent to shameful, they are confronted with the fact that words (or metaphors, like “veil”) can contain multiple significations.

When Eve declares her new knowledge—“Experience next, to thee I owe, / Best guide. Not foll'wing thee, I had remained / In ignorance” (9.810-12)—she is not yet truly *out* of ignorance, for she does not yet recognize that Satan has deceived her. More importantly, Eve does not yet understand the choice she has made to reason over faith. Instead, encouraged by and believing Satan's lies, Eve begins to suspect God, “Our great Forbidder” and “His spies” (9.818) as having deceived her about the Tree all along; in turn, she considers deceiving Adam by keeping from him news of her act, but ultimately decides out of love to share the fruit with him. Not quite innocence and not quite guilt, Eve's ignorance is the intermediary in her transformation wrought by the Fall.

Meanwhile, back at the house, Adam has been weaving Eve a garland:

Adam the while
Waiting desirous her return had wove
Of choicest flow'rs a garland to adorn
Her tresses and her rural labors crown
As reapers oft are wont their harvest queen. (9.838-42).

When Milton introduces Eve's “tresses” in Book 4, one might recall, he describes them by means of the veil simile: she wears her golden tresses like a veil down to her waist. By this simile, I argued, Milton means to show that Eve needs no literal veil because her naked body itself symbolizes the innocence that the clothing would imply. Since Milton has continually reminded us that Eve requires no adornments, the irony of Adam's garland is twofold: first, in light of Eve's transgression, the sincerity of his gesture seems tragically naive; second, we are reminded by the physical garland that Eve no longer embodies innocence as she did in Book 4. Indeed, when Adam hears Eve's news—“opener mine eyes / Dim erst, dilated spirits, ampler heart” (9.875-76)—he is at first “amazed, / Astonished” (9.889-90), then, “From his slack hand the garland wreathed for Eve / Down dropped and all the faded roses shed” (9.892-93). The fall of the garland from Adam's hand mirrors the spiritual fall of the “fatal trespass done by Eve” (9.889). It is no longer suitable, for his “queen” is no longer deserving of it, neither as a physical crown, nor even as a figurative emblem of innocence.

The emphasis on such adornments at this moment and the dramatic irony they create foreshadow the completion of Adam and Eve's transformation from innocent to shamefully knowledgeable. After indulging both their digestive and sexual appetites a few lines later, Milton writes, Adam and Eve

Robert Wiznura, “Eve's Dream, Interpretation, and Shifting Paradigms: Books Four and Five of *Paradise Lost*,” *Milton Studies* 29 (2008): 108-123; Victoria Kahn, “Allegory and the Sublime in *Paradise Lost*,” in *John Milton*. Ed. Annabel M. Patterson (London: Routledge, 1992), 185-201.

rose

As from unrest and each the other viewing
 Soon found their eyes how opened and their minds
 How darkened. Innocence that as a veil
 Had shadowed them from knowing ill was gone,
 Just Confidence and Native Righteousness
 And Honor from about them, naked left
 To guilty Shame: he covered but his robe
 Uncovered more. (9.1051-59).

The figurative language used in this passage establishes a series of paradoxical oppositions. First, Adam and Eve's eyes are "opened," causing their minds to be counterintuitively "darkened." Next, the veil image, which, just like in Book 4, symbolizes innocence by pointing to the metaphorical veil's physical absence, now also functions as a metaphorical shield, in that it had "shadowed" their minds from the knowledge of evil. Of course, while the language of illumination suggests that at the veil's removal Adam and Eve pass from shadowed to opened yet still darkened, it is the moral quality in the light-dark opposition that matters. Indeed, as the innocence, the shield, the veil is removed at the moment of Adam and Eve's awareness of their sin, the moral unveiling reveals to them their "guilty Shame." Of course, the unveiling does not remove innocence to expose shame as having lurked somewhere beneath all along (we know that prelapsarian innocence should not be suspected).¹³⁴ Instead, the removal of the veil of innocence occurs simultaneously with its replacement by the "robe" of shame, so that, as Adam and Eve's internal moral states transform from faithful to sinful, so too do the metaphors that describe them. By the end of this passage, the concept of shame becomes a metaphorical veil to indicate itself in the same way that the concept of innocence did before its removal.

The interpretive difficulty of this moment lies in understanding the Fall, therefore, not as a simple unveiling, which it is not, but rather in terms of these metaphorical oppositions, where shadows and darkness can signify both innocence and knowledge, and where the veil metaphor can symbolize both naked innocence and naked shame alike. And it is not only Milton narrator, but also Adam who grapples with these changing metaphors and their contradictory oppositions. As the pair confront how they have become "destitute and bare / Of all their virtue" (9.1062-63), Adam laments the loss of the veil of innocence:

'Bad fruit of knowledge if this be to know
 Which leaves us naked thus, of honor void,
 Of innocence, of faith, of purity,
 Our wonted ornaments now soiled and stained
 And in our faces evident the signs
 Of foul concupiscence, whence evil store,
 Ev'n shame the last of evils—of the first

¹³⁴ Hollander makes a similar point about the representation of Adam and Eve in the Bible: "It may be noted that their shame was emphatically not a sense that their act of disobedience that initiated the fall had been—as we might colloquially say—a shameful one; it is rather with some sense of dramatic irony that Biblical English might say that their act 'brought shame upon them,' or Psalm 25:36, clothed with shame..." (Hollander, "Honor Dishonorable," 1066). See also Ward, "Adam and Eve's Shame."

Be sure then!’ (9.1073-79).

Like the narrator, Adam characterizes the moral transformation he and Eve have undergone in terms of a physical transformation: the “wonted ornaments” of their innocence are now “soiled and stained”; their nakedness, “of honor void,” appears also to bear the signs of their sins. And yet, like the narrator’s, Adam’s physical descriptions are purely metaphorical, for the *extent* of his and Eve’s physical nakedness is as it always has been, and the “veil” of innocence never physically existed in the first place. Thus, by using metaphors of physical experience to represent moral experience, Milton presents Adam and Eve’s understanding of their Fall as a confrontation not with the literal or external, but with the metaphorical and internal. As they come to terms with their moral transformation specifically through metaphors of physicality and externality, they are confronted with the fact that a single image can indicate two opposing states, that language can proliferate meaning in ways paradoxical and contradictory. Knowledge, then, is the realization of an inner and an outer, of the fact, moreover, that inner and outer might not always correspond. It is the sudden awareness that covers exist to begin with, and that, as a cover, the word “veil” might really be a hermeneutic veil, hiding something by potentially signifying more than one thing at the same time. Knowledge is therefore the recognition that metaphors and language are also covers whose meaning is not always obvious.¹³⁵

By means of its textual veils, *Paradise Lost* dramatizes the Fall as Adam and Eve’s encounter with the hermeneutic veil, that is, with the possibilities of interpretive meaning, with the stakes of interpretation, and with its consequences. While neither interpretation nor suspicion nor doubt are absent from Paradise before the Fall, Adam and Eve have never before been asked both to practice interpretation by means of the available methods (suspicion and trust, reason and faith in God) and *also* to confront the consequences of their interpretations. It is the retrospection that gives meaning to the choice, because, as we see above, only the act of choosing reveals its true stakes. Before the Fall, Eve does not have to confront the proliferation of meaning caused by interpretation—and if she does, she is not aware of that confrontation, for it produces no anxiety or uncertainty in her.¹³⁶ It is only after the fact that Eve is confronted with this knowledge and its implications that the talking snake becomes a hermeneutic veil deceptively hiding evil.

In the aftermath of their realization, both Adam and Eve are tempted to retroactively interpret their actions. Arguing through their “high passions—anger, hate, / Mistrust, suspicion, discord” (9.1123-24), they accuse each other of having interpreted wrongly. Eve blames Adam for not suspecting to a greater extent her decision to work separately (*pace* Adam). She admonishes him for not commanding her to stay (9.1155-57). In turn, Adam berates Eve’s confidence to go on “secure / Either to meet no danger or to find / Matter of glorious trial” (9.1175-1177). But Adam also falls victim to the temptation to retroactively reread the signs he took to mean one thing before the Fall, in light of the new knowledge they now have about interpretation. ““And perhaps / I also erred,”” he says, ““in overmuch admiring / What seem’d in thee so perfect that I thought / No evil durst attempt thee”” (9.1177-80). From Adam’s perspective, Eve’s own prelapsarian goodness is now open to doubt, and he transforms it into a hermeneutic veil warranting suspicion. But, on this

¹³⁵ In a related but broader way that situates Milton’s poem within the context of seventeenth-century conceptions of Babel, Robert Entzminger argues that Adam’s fall is also the fall of language, where that “verbal fall” leads to ambiguity and deception. See Robert L. Entzminger, *Divine Word: Milton and the Redemption of Language* (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1985), 1, 20.

¹³⁶ According to Haskin’s formulation, “The Fall of Adam and Eve is shown to have greatly intensified an interpretive burden that was already there” (*Milton’s Burden of Interpretation*, 226). I argue that, to use Haskin’s terms, this intensification occurs by making Adam and Eve aware of interpretation *as* a burden.

very point, the Son reminds Adam of the fundamental principles available in interpretation, just as Milton narrator does for those readers who try to preemptively suspect Eve's goodness. However Adam might interpret Eve's "adorned" loveliness (10.145-46), he must not forget the fundamental truths that Eve was innocent before the Fall; and that he himself was free from "subjection" to her (10.146).¹³⁷ Adam's urge to blame Eve is understandable to an extent, since, as Parker writes, it reflects his desire to get out of "the tension of uncertain meaning."¹³⁸ And yet, of course, to do so would erase the entire meaning of the Fall, free will, of the meaning of God itself.

Milton represents the Fall as the realization that free will is the choice to interpret one thing in multiple ways. Adam and Eve have been interpreting all along, but only after they have transgressed, do they become aware of the methods, stakes, and consequences of interpretation. As a confrontation with the possibilities of language and thus with the need to interpret and thus with the anxieties and uncertainties inherent in the practice of interpreting, Adam and Eve's extended origin story is also, in a sense, the origin story of Protestant hermeneutics.¹³⁹ Uncertainty, self-doubt, anxiety—these are both the definition and the consequences of free will, for "Man can never feel certain as to which might be the better course to follow, which the safer path at the crossroads."¹⁴⁰ But in dramatizing the Fall as the encounter with proliferated meaning, Milton educates his Protestant readers, just as he stages Adam and Eve's education, about the task of interpretation, about how faith and reason come together in that task, and about why it all makes us free.

III. Postlapsarian Hermeneutics in *Samson Agonistes*

The message of the Fall is altogether less than reassuring. Interpretation and, perhaps more importantly, the knowledge that interpretation can go wrong, become the "new normal" for Adam and Eve and thus for all postlapsarian believers. Like those echoed in Milton's prose works, the interpretive tools and best reading practices which the poet presents through the mouths of the first parents—(remember the fundamental principles of God's goodness, but don't over-emphasize reason in matters of faith)—do little to actually resolve hermeneutic endeavors when put into practice.

In the unquestionably postlapsarian world of *Samson Agonistes*, Milton dramatizes the interpretive process of trying to understand not just how to interpret God, but also how to interpret one's interpretation of God. The poem poses questions of interest to Milton's Protestant peers: at what point in interpretation does the Spirit join with human reason to produce spiritual meaning? When we *think* we are experiencing divine illumination from the Spirit, how can we trust that we really are? I argue that Milton responds to these questions in the poem by turning Dalila's physical veil into a hermeneutic veil, an emblem, both within the poem's narrative and in Milton's broader hermeneutic theory, for the irresolution of reading. By suspending resolution in the poem, Milton

¹³⁷ McChrystal makes the point that Adam's (and readers') retroactive blame of Eve constitutes a kind of victim-blaming that reads her virtues—beauty, receptiveness, imagination—as "liabilities" ("Redeeming Eve," 496).

¹³⁸ Parker, "Eve, Evening, and the Labor of Reading," 336.

¹³⁹ Or, as Kahn calls it, a "metanarrative" ("Allegory and the Sublime," 194). In a related way, Wittreich points to how Milton's poems "problematize both Scripture and its interpretive traditions, as well as Milton's poem," reminding us that his poem is "the product of fallen, though not necessarily false consciousness" (Wittreich, "Sites of Contention," 103).

¹⁴⁰ Mindele Anne Treip, "'Reason Is Also Choice': The Emblematism of Free Will in *Paradise Lost*," *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900* 31 1 (1991): 162.

forces his readers to confront the fact that doubt/suspicion and faith are both inherent to the practice of interpretation—they are the two inseparable possibilities of the veil image, which both obscures true meaning and is true meaning. Milton’s objective, I believe, is to produce a poem that intentionally avoids resolving this tension. Instead, he holds us in the uncertainty to reenact the mental experience of comprehending the paradox of interpretation, of comprehending the consequence of the Fall itself.

When Dalila enters *Samson Agonistes*, the issue of interpretation presents itself immediately, as the Chorus, narrating to Samson, attempts to identify and then read her by her clothing and physical appearance:

‘Yet on she moves, now stands and eyes thee fixed,
About t’ have spoke, but now, with head declined
Like a fair flower surcharged with dew, she weeps
And words addressed seem into tears dissolved,
Wetting the borders of her silken veil:
But now again she makes address to speak.’ (726-31).¹⁴¹

There are obvious pastoral evocations in the figure of the “fair flower surcharged with dew.” Likewise, the image of the “silken veil” suggests the innocence and modesty we have perhaps come to associate with veils as female clothing in *Paradise Lost* and early modern poetics. Though the tone of *Samson Agonistes* is darker and the context different, the language of Dalila’s description begs the question of whether or not her veil and external appearance can be interpreted in the ways we interpret Eve’s, as a sign of innocence, in Book 4 of *Paradise Lost*. The answer is no, but not because Dalila is certainly guilty, but because there are no fundamental principles, like those pertaining to Eve, with which we might reason anything certain about Dalila at all. Dalila’s veil becomes not just a physical veil, therefore, but a hermeneutic veil that indicates its own multiple possible significations.

Presented with the task of reading the hermeneutic veil, Samson interprets Dalila through a hermeneutics of suspicion:

‘Out, out hyena; these are thy wonted arts,
And arts of every woman false like thee,
To break all faith, vows, deceive, betray,
Then as repentant to submit, beseech,
And reconciliation move with feigned remorse,
Confess, and promise wonders in her change,
Not truly penitent, but chief to try
Her husband, how far urged his patience bears,
His virtue or weakness which way to assail.’ (748-56).

From the previous passage, Dalila’s weeping and dissolving tears, the decline of her head that appears like a fair flower, the words she speaks, the silken veil itself—these are all to Samson “wonted arts,” the signs of “feigned remorse,” the deception of a “woman false.” Loyally taking the side of Samson, the Chorus too reads Dalila in this suspicious way, seeking to expose her veil

¹⁴¹ All citations from *Samson Agonistes* are taken from John Milton, *The Complete Poems*. Ed. John Leonard (New York: Penguin Books, 1998).

as hiding evil. Dalila is “Seeming at first all Heavenly under virgin veil / Soft, modest, meek, demure,” (1035-36) even to “wisest men and best” (1034). However, having lured in men like Samson, “the contrary she proves, a thorn / Intestine... / A cleaving mischief” (1037-39). By these deceptive veils or “charms” (1040), moreover, she “Draws him awry enslaved / With dotage, and his sense depraved / To folly and shameful deeds which ruin ends” (1041-43). What’s more, Dalila is in the Chorus’ opinion, “a manifest serpent by her sting / Discovered in the end, till now concealed” (997-98), whose “outward ornament” (1025) does not accurately reflect her “inward gifts... / unfinished” (1026-27).¹⁴² This is how the Chorus interprets Samson’s enslavement, as the consequence of his misreading of Dalila’s physical veil, not suspiciously enough and to his own detriment.¹⁴³

But scholars have challenged this reading of Dalila for its outright misogyny. Among them, Herman criticizes Samson’s misogynistic reaction to her, writing, “while nobody has more right to hate Dalila than he, his misogyny and that of the Chorus significantly reduces his moral capital.”¹⁴⁴ The reason for this, Herman argues, is that Samson’s words recall Adam’s retroactive blaming of Eve after the Fall. In effect, like Samson, Adam does read Eve in Book 10 as a sort of deceptive veil: “‘Out of my sight, thou serpent! That name best / Befits thee with him leagued, thyself as false / And hateful!’” (10.867-69); in Adam’s reading, moreover, Eve’s external “shape” (10.869) becomes a sign of her “inward fraud” (10.871). Herman’s point is that Milton “thoroughly destroys Adam’s credibility” (because Eve’s prelapsarian innocence shall not be suspected), so that “by having Samson echo Adam, Milton undermines Samson’s credibility as well. Samson draws, in other words, from a tainted well.”¹⁴⁵

While I agree that the echoes between Adam and Samson against Eve and Dalila reveal their postlapsarian misogynistic attitudes toward women,¹⁴⁶ when it comes to the question of interpreting the hermeneutic veil, Samson and Adam exist, in a sense, on different planes. Milton convincingly destroys Adam’s credibility specifically because there is a “right” interpretation of Eve: she was innocent and then she was guilty; innocent veil replaced by shameful veil. Instead, as readers, we do not know if Dalila is innocent or guilty, and in this postlapsarian space, neither physical veils nor metaphorical veils do the work of externally indicating exactly what they are internally supposed to represent. This is the consequence of the Fall, where the image of the veil

¹⁴² Scholars have pointed to the ways that these accusations by the Chorus recall both Satan’s deception in *Paradise Lost* and Eve’s supposed (though unjustly argued) evil at the Fall. For more on this presentation of Dalila, see Karen Edwards, “Milton’s Reformed Animals: An Early Modern Bestiary: S,” *Milton Quarterly* 43 2 (2009): 89-151; Jackson Campbell Boswell, “Samson’s Bosom Snake,” *Milton Quarterly* 8 3 (1974): 77-80; John Carey, “Sea, Snake, Flower, and Flame in ‘Samson Agonistes,’” *The Modern Language Review* 62 3 (1967): 395-399; Lee Sheridan Cox, “Natural Science and Figurative Design in *Samson Agonistes*,” *ELH* 35 1 (1968): 51-74; Catherine Gimelli Martin, “Dalila, Misogyny, and Milton’s Christian Liberty of Divorce,” in *Milton and Gender*. Ed. Catherine Gimelli Martin (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004, 53-74). For Dalila’s similarities with Sin in *Paradise Lost*, see Catherine Gimelli Martin, *Milton’s Italy: Anglo-Italian Literature, Travel, and Religion in Seventeenth-Century England* (New York, NY: Rutledge, 2017); Irene Samuel, “The Valley of Serpents: *Inferno* XXIV-XXV and *Paradise Lost* X. 504-577,” *PMLA* 78 4 (1963): 449-451; Alexander A. Myers, “‘Forces Forcible and Foul’: Viewing Milton’s Sin as a Rape Victim,” *Milton Quarterly* 28 1 (1994): 11-16.

¹⁴³ For more on the Chorus’ encouragement of Samson’s suspicion, see John Huntley, “A Revaluation of the Chorus’ Role in Milton’s *Samson Agonistes*,” *Modern Philology* 64 2 (1966): 132-45.

¹⁴⁴ Herman, *Destabilizing Milton*, 170.

¹⁴⁵ Herman, *Destabilizing Milton*, 169.

¹⁴⁶ See also Martin, “Dalila, Misogyny.” For an ultimately redemptive reading of Dalila through Dalila’s self-sacrifices and her “pious fraud,” see Elizabeth Sauer, “Pious Fraud: Extralegal Heroism in *Samson Agonistes*,” *Studies in English Literature* 53 1 (2013): 179-196. Dalila herself attempts to make the case against this misogyny as purely ideological: “In argument with men a woman ever / Goes by the worse, whatever be her cause” (903-904).

becomes a hermeneutic veil, a symbol of the process of interpretation. By its very definition, the hermeneutic veil necessarily resists resolution, since it always presents two possibilities: that it obscures truth or that it is truth; that Dalila is guilty or that she is innocent. The point is that just because Dalila wears a veil does not mean she is inherently suspicious, but nor does it mean that she inherently isn't. Quite simply, there is no way of knowing.¹⁴⁷

But Dalila's hermeneutic veil becomes the center of Samson's interpretive process as the poem goes on. He scorns the ways that Dalila used her "flattering prayers and sighs" (392), her "amorous reproaches" (393) to try to trick him. The first three times she tried, Samson recounts, he was able to "perceive" the deception (397) and thus "delude" her (396). However, in the fourth and final attempt, Samson explains, Dalila used "all her wiles, / With blandished parlays, feminine assaults, / Tongue-batteries" (402-4), causing him to fall "into the snare... / Of fair fallacious looks" (532-33). While Dalila's deceptive intention is presented as a given, Samson nevertheless acknowledges his own interpretive failure to discern that deception: had he perceived better, had he suspected more, he would have been able to expose Dalila, instead of foolishly believing her.

Suspicion, then, is presented as the answer to the uncertainty of interpretation. That is, of course, until it isn't, as Eve Sedgwick explains:

Whatever account it may give of its own motivation, paranoia is characterized by placing, in practice, an extraordinary stress on the efficacy of knowledge per se—knowledge in the form of exposure. Maybe that's why paranoid knowing is so inescapably narrative... paranoia for all its vaunted suspicion acts as though its work would be accomplished if only it could finally, this time, somehow get its story truly known.¹⁴⁸

Samson's desire to reach interpretive certainty by means of perpetual suspicion leads him to try to expose everything—not just Dalila, but also the belief itself that Dalila is *certainly* deceptive. What if this was all "divine prediction" "fulfilled but through mine own default"? (44-5), he wonders. In Samson's perpetual urge to expose the "truth," suspicion of Dalila's deceptive veils, her "importunity and tears" (50), gets redirected towards his own potential self-deception. And similar redirections continue, as suspicion becomes Samson's only method of interpretation, constantly seeking out new targets to expose, yet never resolving the experience of suspecting, never resolving the feeling of not knowing. Samson's suspicion turns even to God: "God sent her to debase me, / And aggravate my folly who committed / To such a viper his most sacred trust / Of secrecy, my safety, and my life" (999-1002). In other moments, Samson likewise claims that God

¹⁴⁷ John Shawcross too argues that the figure of Dalila presents a problem of reading intentionally set up by Milton in the oppositions he creates: "as ship of Tarsus or a fair flower; as deceitful still or sincere; the ornate, gay, bedecked may hide the real Dalila beneath, or the 'head declin'd' and the words dissolved into tears may all just be an act." See John T. Shawcross, *The Uncertain World of Samson Agonistes* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2001), 123. Among those scholars who condemn Dalila are Margaret Olofson Thickstun, "Fame, Shame, and the Importance of Community in *Samson Agonistes*," in *Milton's Rival Hermeneutics: "Reason Is But Choosing."* Ed. Richard J. DuRocher and Margaret Olofson Thickstun (Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania: Duquesne University Press, 2012), 183-203; Achsah Guibbory, "'The Jewish Question' and 'The Woman Question' in *Samson Agonistes*: Gender, Religion, and Nation," in *Milton and Gender*. Ed. Catherine Gimelli Martin (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 184-203. Instead, Donnelly's condemning reading of Dalila relies less on isolated signs like her veil and more on the broader evidence of her intentions, "which would have, as Samson says, 'brought forth other deeds'" (*Milton's Scriptural Reasoning*, 875).

¹⁴⁸ Eve K. Sedgwick, "Paranoid Reading and Reparative Reading, or, You're So Paranoid, You Probably Think This Essay is about You," in *Touching Feeling: Affect, Pedagogy, Performativity* (Durham; London: Duke University Press, 2003), 138.

has abandoned him, “Left me helpless and with th’ irraparable loss / Of sight” (644-45), only to reinterpret God yet again as having “inflicted on me / Justly” (1170-71) his fate. None of Samson’s suspicious claims actually results in resolution or interpretive certainty, forcing him to oscillate without relief between different potential interpretations of what might have caused his experience.

Samson’s problem is that, presented with the hermeneutic veil, he insists on only a suspicious method of interpretation, even when Dalila urges him to read her using a restorative or faithful approach. ““And what if love,” she asks, ““which thou interpret’st hate, / The jealousy of love, powerful of sway / In human hearts, nor less in mine towards thee, / Caused what I did?”” (790-93). The reading Dalila proposes, though it may not change our opinion of her or even provide a way to interpret her with any certainty, nevertheless proves that there are other ways to read her besides those based on suspicion. As Herman writes, “Milton de-privileges Samson’s narrative by demonstrating, through Dalila, that Samson’s story is but one version of events, not the objective truth.”¹⁴⁹ In this way, “the reader must admit at least the existence, perhaps even the legitimacy, of an alternative point of view.”¹⁵⁰

But Samson immediately rejects this method of interpretation, suspiciously reading Dalila’s suggestion itself as a veil hiding some other agenda: “How cunningly the sorceress displays / Her own transgressions, to upbraid me mine! / That malice not repentance brought thee hither / By this appears” (819-22). Dalila’s confession of betrayal as one based on her love of Samson appears to him as feigned, as yet another “display” to hide her deceptive motives. What’s more, in language clearly echoing the shameful awakening of Adam and Eve in Book 9 of *Paradise Lost*, Samson tells Dalila, “In vain thou striv’st to cover shame with shame, / Or by evasions thy crime uncover’st more” (841-42). As Samson reads it, everything Dalila says is a lie, each lie a cover for previous lies, and with each lie attempting to cover previous lies, her shame is all the more evident. In this way, everything Samson encounters takes on the interpretive menace of a hermeneutic veil, which, when read suspiciously, will necessarily always signify something hidden, unknown, and elusive.

In fact, as Samson’s suspicions target everything—Dalila, himself, God—as needing to be exposed, it becomes clear that the problem of interpretation is not really Dalila or her physical veil. Rather, the problem is Samson’s own relationship to the process of interpreting:

‘Thoughts my tormentors armed with deadly stings
Mangle my apprehensive tenderest parts,
Exasperate, exulcerate, and raise
Dire inflammation which no cooling herb
Or med’cinal liquor can assuage.’ (623-27).

In the same way that John Shawcross reads Dalila’s fraud as only background to Samson’s story in the poem,¹⁵¹ I argue that the act of interpreting Dalila becomes background to the poem’s metacommentary on the interpretation of interpretation, her physical veil superseded by the hermeneutic veil, which symbolizes its own inherent possible significations based on different methods of interpretation. The “sting” of Dalila’s hidden deception early on in the poem becomes a symbol for the general anxiety of the irresolution of suspicious reading that Samson experiences. Suspicion becomes an inescapable pattern that never reaches certainty, though it continues to aggressively seek certainty through yet more suspicion. And this is the hermeneutic circle that

¹⁴⁹ Herman, *Destabilizing Milton*, 167.

¹⁵⁰ Herman, *Destabilizing Milton*, 167.

¹⁵¹ Shawcross, *The Uncertain World*, 6.

traps Samson. The point is not that suspicion has no place in the search for truth—Adam and Eve have demonstrated the value of suspicion, as a means not to reach true faith in God, but to temper blind faith in human reason. But Samson becomes suspicious not just of Dalila’s physical veil but of the very process of interpretation itself. As Samson is asked to make meaning out of events whose meaning can never be known for certain, *Samson Agonistes* dramatizes his confrontation with interpretation. And the poem takes suspicion to its inevitably dark and empty end—the perpetually unresolved search for certain truth—in order to make the point that interpretation and certainty are mutually exclusive. That’s what the Fall was all about. That’s the paradox of free will (a paradox that becomes clear to Adam and Eve only at the Fall). That’s what it means to engage with postlapsarian hermeneutics.

So, what, then, is one to do? How does a reader like Samson confront the hermeneutic circle of suspicion, acknowledging that suspicion does not lead to resolution, only to learn that interpretation, no matter the method, yields a proliferation of meaning and by definition precludes certainty? For one, Samson can try to conclude that it is simply not possible to know: “But peace, I must not quarrel with the will / Of highest dispensation, which herein / Haply ends above my reach to know” (60-2). But this particular expression of peace occurs at the beginning of the poem only to be undermined by all the other expressions of doubt and suspicion that come later. Alternatively, Samson can try to find faith in God’s grace: “yet despair not of his final pardon / Whose ear is ever open; and his eye / Gracious to re-admit the suppliant” (1171-73). Remembering this fact is like recalling one of those fundamental principles Milton tells his Protestant readers to use in hermeneutics: God is good; man is free; Christ will redeem us all. The only thing Samson can really do in his interpretive struggle is to remember these truths and wait for divine illumination.

But this is easier said than done. As Fish points out, it is not hard to confuse the “letter of the law” and the “claim of divine inspiration,”¹⁵² a tension which *Samson Agonistes* dramatizes undeniably by staging Samson’s final act from afar, out of sight, and buried behind the testimonies of potentially biased witnesses. If Milton makes the point throughout *Samson Agonistes* that interpretation based exclusively on suspicion is problematic, he also shows in *Paradise Lost* that interpretation based exclusively on faith can be too, where Eve’s total lack of suspicion leads her to believe so blindly in her own capacity for faith that she confuses the “law” of reason with true faith in God. The question of how to understand Samson’s destruction of the Philistine temple at the end of the poem is therefore twofold: does Samson accurately interpret the difference between human reason and divine illumination; and, distanced as we are from Samson’s inner experience, can we know if he does?

In his last speech before departing the prison for the theater, Samson suggests to the Chorus that divine illumination might very well be on its way: “Be of good courage, I begin to feel / Some rousing motions in me which dispose / To something extraordinary my thoughts” (1381-83). “Happen what may,” he adds, “of me expect to hear / Nothing dishonourable, impure, unworthy / Our God, our Law, my nation, or myself” (1423-25). In these, the final words directly from Samson’s mouth, he encourages the Chorus to read whatever may come as divinely inspired. And when the Chorus hears the messenger’s description of Samson’s final act, which echoes Samson’s own language of potential divine illumination—“with head a while inclined, / And eyes fast fixed he stood, as one who prayer, / Or some great matter in his mind revolved” (1636-68)—they do just that, both Chorus and Semichorus interpreting Samson’s “revolving” as divine inspiration: “O dearly-bought revenge, yet glorious!” the Chorus cheers, “Living or dying thou hast fulfilled / The

¹⁵² Fish, “To The Pure All Things Are Pure,” 89.

work for which thou wast foretold" (1660-62). The Semichorus: "he though blind of sight, / Despised and thought extinguished quite, / With inward eyes illuminated, / His fiery virtue roused" (1687-90).

The Chorus' final speech attempts to provide an explanation for their faith in Samson's divine illumination:

'All is best, though we oft doubt,
What th' unsearchable dispose
Of highest wisdom brings about,
And ever best found in the close.
Oft he seems to hide his face,
But unexpectedly returns
And to his faithful champion hath in place
Bore witness gloriously.' (1745-52).

The "deadly strings" which tormented Samson throughout the play, leading him at times to suspect God's goodness, are written off by the Chorus as nothing more than common "doubt," which is soon forgotten with God's supposed return, to the "peace" and "consolation" (1757) of all (those faithful) concerned. But it is only some thousand lines earlier that the Chorus was condemning God as "various" and "contrarious" (668-69) for causing Samson's "grief and anxious thought" (659). Distanced as we readers are from the temple and more importantly from Samson's inner commentary when his act takes place, we are forced by Milton to read Samson's actions not only through potentially biased secondhand reports but also through the Chorus' likely biased interpretations of those reports. As Daniel Lochman notes, "We hear many voices, discordant and chaotic, in the dramatic poem's final moments, and each lacks the crucial ring of authority."¹⁵³ Moreover, Jane Collins writes, "This conspicuous authorial absence suggests which aspect of drama best informs the reader about the poem: Milton presents an interplay of human voices vying to be the ultimate interpreters of events not seen but discussed."¹⁵⁴ The Chorus' "changeability, ignorance, self-serving, and male-orientation"¹⁵⁵ invite us to question their reliability, which is thrown into question by the fact that, as part of "Samson's tribe," they have an inherent self-interest in analyzing Samson's acts: "their interpretation of his acts as divine providence consoles them and assures them that God favors the Danites."¹⁵⁶ The Chorus may believe in God's return and Samson's illumination, but as readers we are positioned to read their reading skeptically at the very least.¹⁵⁷

¹⁵³ Daniel T. Lochman, "Conflicts of Authority: Interpretation of Events in *Paradise Regained* and *Samson Agonistes*," in *Spokesperson Milton: Voices in Contemporary Criticism*. Ed. Charles W. Durham and Kristin Pruitt McColgan (Cranbury, NJ: Associated University Presses, 1994), 166.

¹⁵⁴ Jane Collins, "Authorial Providence and the Dramatic Form of *Samson Agonistes*," in *Spokesperson Milton: Voices in Contemporary Criticism*. Ed. Charles W. Durham and Kristin Pruitt McColgan (Cranbury, NJ: Associated University Presses, 1994), 180.

¹⁵⁵ Shawcross, *The Uncertain World*, 35.

¹⁵⁶ Collins, "Authorial Providence," 184. For more on the Chorus' problematic interpretations and the messenger's problematic testimony, see Huntley, "A Revaluation of the Chorus"; Balachandra Rajan, "'Samson Hath Quit Himself / Like Samson,'" *Milton Quarterly* 41 1 (2007): 1-11.

¹⁵⁷ Indeed, if the Chorus' faith is to be believed, this means, as Herman puts it, that Samson's world is "a mortally intolerable place, whose God has either retreated or approves of mass, indiscriminate slaughter" (*Destabilizing Milton*, 176). On the other hand, Collins views the neat and not totally believable conclusion of the Chorus as Milton's implicit warning to the reader against "an easy, convenient reading of the text" ("Authorial Providence," 188).

Scholars, in their own interpretations, are divided on the issue. Herman reads God's stark absence from the poem and the phrase "of my own accord" in Samson's speech to the Philistines as evidence that "Samson is acting without divine authority, aid, or compulsion."¹⁵⁸ Michael Bryson too reads God's remarkable absence as Milton's "critique of those whose religious certitude enables them to engage in and/or excuse violence of the most brutal and horrific nature. Milton creates a portrait of what results from acting with the appearance of certainty, but without its actual presence or substance."¹⁵⁹ On the other hand, Donnelly argues that "Samson's willingness to die as a consequence of obedience shows that his repentance, at least, is not feigned. Moreover, the miraculous strength which makes possible Samson's final action suggests that the source of the prompting is supernatural."¹⁶⁰ Shawcross makes a similar but more explicit point, arguing that "The act implies God's miraculous presence; it employs the great gift of strength allotted to Samson; and it culminates with Samson's overcoming of *tristitia*, with his development of patience, and with his returned faith in God."¹⁶¹ John Ulreich too insists on Samson's faith, to the extent that "*Samson Agonistes* represents, not the triumph of Samson over his enemies, nor the triumph of God over Dagon, but the triumph of Samson over himself, the triumph of the divine spirit within man over the vain idols of his imagination."¹⁶²

But if Samson's act is to be interpreted as an act of faith, we must acknowledge that the interpretation is built upon a series of mediations, that require believing the controversial Chorus, who interprets the messenger's account of the act, who bases his account on what facial expressions he thinks he reads in Samson, whose face bears the signs either of the letter of the law or of divine inspiration—and which one it is, is simply impossible, maybe even for Samson himself, to say. Milton distances his readers as far as possible from whatever faith and certainty Samson may have found, leaving open the possibility that he has found none at all. In response to those scholars who in their own analyses resist the question, deferring interpretation to the individual reader, who must "make its own judgments, fill in the gaps of information, see the examples provided by the play, weight them, and reconstitute the body of meaning,"¹⁶³ I argue that Milton positions his reader in *Samson Agonistes* to fail at this task. When Susanne Woods writes that "The play both illustrates and requires the thoughtful choices that make up the ethical task of the postlapsarian world,"¹⁶⁴ I agree. And yet, Milton's point, in my opinion, is not to lead the reader to an answer, but rather to hold the reader in the process of the interpretive task itself, experiencing what Herman terms the "deconstruction of certainty."¹⁶⁵ The Chorus claims that by the end of the poem, we experience a "calm of mind" with "all passion spent" (1758), however, there is no catharsis, at least not for the reader held in this uncertainty. Instead, the poet proliferates the possibilities of meaning to such an extent that neither suspicious nor faithful methods of interpretation adequately reach conclusions about the poem's ending, and we are consequently suspended in the poem's irresolution. The poem itself becomes a hermeneutic veil that deflects

¹⁵⁸ Herman, *Destabilizing Milton*, 172, 174.

¹⁵⁹ Michael Bryson, "A Poem to the Unknown God: *Samson Agonistes* and Negative Theology," *Milton Quarterly* 42 1 (2008): 22.

¹⁶⁰ Donnelly, *Milton's Scriptural Reasoning*, 211-12.

¹⁶¹ Shawcross, *The Uncertain World*, 103.

¹⁶² John C. Ulreich, Jr., "'This Great Deliverer': *Samson Agonistes* as Parable," *Milton Quarterly* 13 3 (1979): 83. See also Lynn Veach Sadler, "The Problem of the Ending of *Samson Agonistes*: Aristotle Plus Reorientation," *Neophilologische Mitteilungen* 76 4 (1975): 650.

¹⁶³ Woods, "Inviting Rival Hermeneutics," 11. For others who describe the reader's interpretive options when it comes to the poem's ending, see Fish, "To The Pure All Things Are Pure," 88; Shawcross, *The Uncertain World*, 55.

¹⁶⁴ Woods, "Inviting Rival Hermeneutics," 11.

¹⁶⁵ Herman, *Destabilizing Milton*, 117.

certainly one way or the other.

By confronting his readers with uncertainty as part of the postlapsarian reality, Milton informs his readers that uncertainty must be not only tolerated but embraced. The denial of certainty becomes, in its paradoxical way, a kind of resolution, for it is only through the emphasis on uncertainty that Milton can truly illustrate the role that divine illumination plays in the Christian experience. Even as we are excluded from Samson's divine illumination, and even as we are forced to confront the possibility that there may be no divine illumination at all, we are also asked at the same time to recognize the equally possible fact that Samson's divine illumination is real after all. (These are the two sides of the hermeneutic veil, in a sense, the Schrödinger's cat of hermeneutical concepts.) Milton cannot represent Samson's divine illumination because to represent it would be to literalize the Spirit rendering it no longer Spirit, and so Milton's Protestant readers, of both his poem and of Scripture, are asked to believe in a process that cannot be seen or described on paper. If the task of the Protestant hermeneut, therefore, is to sit in the uncertainty, doubt, and anxiety caused by interpretation, what sustains him is the belief that divine illumination, however unknown and elusive, is the only force that puts an end to uncertainty, true faith in God the only cure for the irresolution of interpretation, the meaning it proliferates, and the anxiety it causes. That belief is not itself divine illumination, but rather the hope that allows a reader to persist, to continue interpreting, and to wait for the Spirit.

Even as he fails to understand its deeper meaning, Manoa articulates a formula for Christian faith that expresses this very relationship between interpretation, doubt, and divine illumination. As Manoa and the Chorus attempt to interpret the "universal groan" (1511) they hear coming from somewhere off in the distance, the Chorus proposes an interpretation: perhaps Samson's eyesight has been "by miracle restored" (1528), and he is now "dealing dole among his foes" (1529). Manoa is immediately doubtful: "That were a joy presumptuous to be thought" (1531). But the Chorus pushes back, pointing out that God has "wrought things as incredible" (1532) to others in the past, so why should it not be the case now. Manoa's reply illustrates the tension he feels between doubt and faith: "He can I know, but doubt to think he will; / Yet hope would fain subscribe, and tempts belief" (1535-36). Throughout *Samson Agonistes*, Manoa's faith in God is certainly flawed. He too experiences suspicion of God who "tempt[s] / Our earnest prayers" (356-57) by giving him a son, only to undo the gift by leaving his son blind and imprisoned, Manoa himself feeling stung as if by "a scorpion's tail behind" (360). But what Manoa articulates in this conversation with the Chorus, even if he is not fully aware of its greater significance,¹⁶⁶ is an understanding of Protestant hermeneutics: in postlapsarian experience, doubt pervades until hope tempts belief. In the absence of a representation of divine illumination itself, Milton offers a similar formula to his readers: accept doubt and uncertainty by continuing to hope until that hope turns into faith received from the Spirit.

IV. The Veil's Double Function

The hermeneutic veil symbolizes two methods of interpretation, one that seeks truth by exposing the veil as a veil, and the other that seeks truth in the veil itself. By these two methods of interpretation, the veil comes to signify at the same time both truth and the absence of truth. This

¹⁶⁶ As Haskin points out, Manoa's interpretation of Samson's final act is not about "the sort of eternal salvation or damnation that preoccupied" Protestants, but rather about "worldly honor" and the reputation of his "house" (*Milton's Burden of Interpretation*, 142).

is the point that Milton's emphasis on the image of the veil, on the processes of interpretation, and on uncertainty in his poetic works serves to illustrate. A combination of reason and hope in the faith of the Spirit, a hope that the truth contained within the veil will be divinely revealed, allows one to persevere through the doubt, the suspicion, and the fear of potentially unveiling the absent truth instead. Interpretation is essential to Christian faith, even if it is an anxious task.

The patterns of interpretation in *Samson Agonistes* take that interpretive anxiety to an extreme because it is important for Milton to illustrate the paradox of interpretation. But he also has an answer for those who ask, that hope that Manoa alludes to, where does that come from? What Milton shows Adam and Eve and thus all postlapsarian believers in *Paradise Lost* is that the paradox of interpretation as both anxiety-provoking and yet essential to Christian faith is not that hard to comprehend when we remember that the paradoxical duality symbolized by the hermeneutic veil—doubt and faith, truth and the lack of truth—is also inherent in the figure of Christ, who symbolizes both the fact of the Fall and thus humankind's loss, as well as the promise of redemption and thus our hope. In this way, the stakes of interpretation become both the consequence of and the comforting solution to sin.

In *Paradise Lost*, Milton's description of God in Book 3 uses a poetics of veiling that directly illustrates the veil's conceptual double function:

Thee, Father, first they sung omnipotent,
Immutable, immortal, infinite,
Eternal king. Thee Author of all being,
Fountain of light, Thyself invisible
Admidst the glorious brightness where Thou sitt'st
Throned inaccessible. But then Thou shad'st
The full blaze of thy beams and through a cloud
Drawn round about Thee like a radiant shrine,
Dark with excessive bright thy skirts appear
Yet dazzle Heav'n that brightest seraphim
Approach not but with both wings veil their eyes! (3.372-82).

God's immutability, his immortality, his infinity, in other words, his existence above human comprehension, is depicted by the poet as a "Fountain of light" and thus invisible. "Accessing" God therefore requires divine revelation. This we may have already presumed, but in this passage Milton literalizes the act: God "shad'st" the blaze of his light, draws a "cloud" around him, appearing thus "dark with excessive bright." In short, God veils himself with veil-like images—the shade, the cloud, the dark—in order to *reveal* himself to the angels. In turn, the seraphim who are given this access to God "veil their eyes" in order to see him. Where elsewhere in the poem (Satan's veils of deception, for example), the image of the veil signifies concealment, here it explicitly signifies the opposite: the veil is also revelatory.

On a larger, structural level, Milton applies this concept of the double veil to Adam and Eve's post-Fall revelation of the future in the last two books of *Paradise Lost*. In Book 11, the poet invokes the veil as both concealing cover and revelatory cover to describe in two different ways the same vision experienced by the first parents. On the one hand, Michael "from Adam's eyes the film removed / Which that false fruit that promised clearer sight / Had bred" (11.412-14). Through this process of unveiling the "film," Adam becomes "entranced" (11.420) and thus capable of witnessing the future Michael will show him. Adam's commentary emphasizes the vision of the

experience: “‘O sent from Heav’n, / Enlight’ner of my darkness, gracious things / Thou hast revealed... Now first I find / Mine eyes true op’ning and my heart much eased, / Erewhile perplexed... / ... but now I see’” (12.270-76). At the same time, Michael puts Eve to sleep, telling Adam, “Let Eve (for I have drenched her eyes) / Here sleep below while thou to foresight wak’st, / As once thou slept’st while she to life was formed” (11.367-68). The “drenching” does not blind Eve but, on the contrary, reveals to her the same future Adam sees. Indeed, when she wakes in Book 12, she tells Adam, “‘Whence thou return’st and wither went’st I know, / For God is also in sleep and dreams advise / Which he hath sent propitious, some great good / Presaging’” (12.609-12). In this way, the veil image has an illuminating, revelatory power, regardless of whether it is placed over or removed from the eyes.

But what is important is not just the process by which Adam and Eve receive divine revelation, with the placing or removal of one veil image or another, but also the message contained in their visions. That message is the promise of Christ’s redemption, that “all this good of evil shall produce / And evil turn to good more wonderful / Than that which by creation first brought forth / Light out of darkness” (12.470-73). It is the knowledge, moreover, that Christ, “the Comforter” (12.486), represents “The promise of his Father, who shall dwell / His Spirit within them and the Law of Faith, / Working through love, upon their hearts shall write / To guide them in all truth and also arm / With spiritual armor able to resist / Satan’s assaults and quench his fiery darts” (12.487-492). The image of the veil thus becomes part of the poetics Milton uses to tell the entire story of Genesis, from innocence to shame to the promise of redemption, veils invoked at every stage. As Adam and Eve learn about their own redemption through the sacrifice of the Son, Milton’s hermeneutic veil also gets its redemption: it is not just a symbol of obscured or hidden meaning, but also one of faith. The promise of redemption offered in Book 12 thus provides Adam and Eve a means to persevere despite the anxiety and uncertainty caused by the proliferation of meaning they are confronted with at the Fall, the anxiety provoked by the awareness that the metaphorical veil can signify both innocence and shame; now it also signifies redemption. And that is reason for hope, sad though they may be for “evils past” (12.604), “yet much more cheered / With meditation on the happy end” (12.604-5).

“Prophecy does not transform the tragedy of the Fall into comedy or tragicomedy,” Lewalski writes, “but rather helps to produce the catharsis of Christian tragedy, whereby our terror and pity are ‘tempered and reduced’ through comprehension of the divine plan and an earnest of future joys.”¹⁶⁷ It is in this way that the last books of *Paradise Lost* illustrate the goals of postlapsarian experience. As Donnelly explains: “the ultimate purpose of the revelation is to strengthen Adam’s faith (trust) in God’s continued love (charity) toward him and his progeny.”¹⁶⁸ Or, as Milton himself puts it in *De Doctrina Christiana*, “Saving faith is a full persuasion operated in us through the gift of God, whereby we believe, on the sole authority of the promise itself, that whatsoever things he has promised in Christ are ours, and especially the grace of eternal life.”¹⁶⁹ The revelation of *Paradise Lost* illustrates to Adam and Eve and likewise to Samson and all Protestant readers, that redemption is possible and therefore that faith is possible, even when uncertainty and doubt seem to prevail over all else. This lesson explains the hermeneutic veil, whose two potential significations are the same ones already symbolized by the figure of Christ himself: the lost faith at the Fall renewed by the hope in the promise of redemption.

It seems important, then, that the hope of *Paradise Lost* precedes the despair of *Samson*

¹⁶⁷ Lewalski, *Paradise Lost and the Rhetoric*, 268-69.

¹⁶⁸ Donnelly, *Milton’s Scriptural Reasoning*, 179.

¹⁶⁹ Milton, *The Works of John Milton*, xv:393.

Agonistes both in order of publication and historically in time.¹⁷⁰ The point is not that the promise of redemption and the divine revelation of *Paradise Lost* alleviate all of the doubt and uncertainty realized at the Fall. Rather they provide a message of hope for postlapsarian readers, to remember when persevering through the doubt and uncertainty, which nevertheless remain central aspects of hermeneutics and of the Christian experience. *Samson Agonistes* offers an equally important, no less compassionate message to the hope of *Paradise Lost*, which is quite simply that even hopeful interpretation is difficult. As Collins writes, “we are meant to labor and seek its truth rather than passively accept its conclusions,”¹⁷¹ a statement which applies to Samson, to readers of *Samson Agonistes*, and to Protestant interpreters of Scripture alike.

In a similar way, the point might also be made about *Paradise Regained*, the first printed alongside *Samson Agonistes* in a single volume published in 1671. The Son’s journey throughout the brief epic is one of interpretation, the Son reading and thinking and waiting patiently for the divine revelation which will tell him who he is, what purpose he shall pursue. As a child, he reads “The Law of God” (1.207)¹⁷² in order to “learn and know, and thence to do / What might be public good” (1.203-4), to discover, moreover, “What might improve [his] knowledge” (1.213). In his search for his own self-meaning, the Son relies both on this reading and on moments of divine insight, when, for example, he exits the waters of his own baptism: “as I rose out of the laving stream / Heaven opened her eternal doors, from whence / The Spirit descended on me like a dove” (1.280-82). His Father’s voice manifests at this moment, “Audibly heard from Heav’n” (1.283), and delivers the Son knowledge of his identity—“beloved Son” (1.284)—that he has been waiting for. From this revelation the Son knows that he “no more should live obscure” (1.287), a feeling which is followed by “some strong motion” (1.290) that leads him into the wilderness, where he trusts and expects God to further reveal the knowledge he needs.

The narrative of *Paradise Regained* shares some similarities with that of *Samson Agonistes*, with the waiting and interpreting followed by the guiding “motion” that moves the action. But of course, one crucial difference—and there are others—is that the Son approaches the task of interpretation through faith rather than suspicion like Samson. The Son maintains his faith in God during this interpretive period despite the lack of clarity and certainty, telling Satan that he trusts even in “things adverse / By tribulations, injuries, insults” (3.189-90), which might for others be cause for “distrust or doubt” (3.193). He understands his faith, moreover, in terms of divine illumination: “he who receives / Light from above, from the fountain of light, / No other doctrine needs, though granted true” (4.288-90). And, as the Son and Satan discuss the temptation of classical learning, the Son elucidates a method of reading (books, specifically) that values not the knowledge contained in books but the interpretation they demand: “Who therefore seeks in these / True wisdom, finds her not, or by delusion / Far worse, her false resemblance only meets, / An empty cloud” (4.318-21). Instead, readers should bring to interpretation both the “spirit and judgement” (4.324) which “enable proper interpretation and understanding,”¹⁷³ having already found that spirit and judgment by other means: “(And what he brings, what needs he elsewhere seek)” (4.325).

Scholars, like Herman, have noted the ways that, as a pair, *Paradise Regained* and *Samson Agonistes* present a “summa” of the poet’s work and thought on the issues of interpretation and

¹⁷⁰ Of course, historically, Samson’s Old Testament story prefigures the coming of Christ, but between the fictional worlds of *Paradise Lost* and *Samson Agonistes*, Adam and Eve’s prelapsarian experience, the Fall, and the revelation of Christ’s future sacrifice all take place *historically* before Samson’s story.

¹⁷¹ Collins, “Authorial Providence,” 180.

¹⁷² All citations from *Paradise Regained* are taken from Milton, *The Complete Poems*.

¹⁷³ Netzley, “How Reading Works,” 146-66.

certainty.¹⁷⁴ Herman makes the case that whereas *Paradise Regained*, the first of the two, relies on a poetics of certitude, doubts arising “only to be dispelled” by the Son’s faith, this certitude is undermined by the subsequent incertitude that dominates in *Samson Agonistes*,¹⁷⁵ a progression that leads Herman to label Milton “a poet of deep incertitude.”¹⁷⁶ I would argue, however, that the ultimate certainty and enduring faith which define the Son’s experience in *Paradise Regained* serve to illustrate how interpretation *can* lead to divine illumination and faith, not to do away with interpretation (and thus its inherent uncertainties) entirely. What is important in *Paradise Regained* is the interpretive model Milton builds, where the primary value of reading (books or Scripture) is not the knowledge it enables, but rather “the habits that it produces.”¹⁷⁷ Ryan Netzley argues, moreover, that throughout the poem and especially during the final temptation on the pinnacle, the poem “demands a reading practice that would develop—not necessarily teach—a superior internal disposition,”¹⁷⁸ an exercise which becomes indicative of Milton’s larger message about the point of interpretation for its own sake as the only (though not guaranteed) means to faith.¹⁷⁹

But if we are to read the two opposing models of interpretation presented in *Samson Agonistes* and *Paradise Regained* as, to use Haskin’s definition, “contests of interpretation in which an urge for closure is pitted against a disciplined, responsible patience that delights in continuing interpretive activity,”¹⁸⁰ we must also recognize the most significant difference between the two poems: that Christ and Samson are not comparable. Samson might feel self-conscious that, unlike the Son, he does not have a calling,¹⁸¹ but the Son, while humanized in *Paradise Regained*, is not truly human, but rather the literalized representation of divine illumination itself. As we are told in Book 1, “God hath now sent his living Oracle / Into the world, to teach his final will” (1.460-62). The Son is not merely a mortal interpreter waiting to experience divine illumination from the descending Spirit; he *is* the Spirit, here embodied, the “inward oracle” (1.465) sent to earth to (eventually) “dwell / In pious hearts” (1.463-64). The message of *Paradise Regained* for readers like Samson is not the certainty of faith, but rather the promise of redemption, which is the hope that motivates a continued practice of reading as the way to the Spirit.

¹⁷⁴ Herman, *Destabilizing Milton*, 155; esp. Ch. 7. For others who address the pairing of *Paradise Regained* and *Samson Agonistes*, see Donnelly, *Milton’s Scriptural Reasoning*, 170, who reads the poems in terms of typological interpretation; Anne K. Krook, “The Hermeneutics of Opposition in *Paradise Regained* and *Samson Agonistes*,” *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900* 36 1 (1996): 140; Fish, “Milton and Interpretation”; Haskin, *Milton’s Burden of Interpretation*, 122. See also Marshall Grossman, “Poetry and Belief in *Paradise Regained*, to which is added, *Samson Agonistes*,” *Studies in Philology* 110 2 (2013): 382-401, who argues that the two poems were always intended to be read together.

¹⁷⁵ Herman, *Destabilizing Milton*, 155-6, 164.

¹⁷⁶ Herman, *Destabilizing Milton*, 21.

¹⁷⁷ Netzley, “How Reading Works,” 146-66.

¹⁷⁸ Netzley, “How Reading Works,” 146-66.

¹⁷⁹ For more on this connection, including how the model of reading developed in *Paradise Regained* points back to its own biblical intertextuality and the call of the poet for readers to also continually return to Scripture as they read his poetry, see Donnelly, *Milton’s Scriptural Reasoning*, 1, 23-4. See also Richard J. DuRocher, “Hermes’s Blessed Retreat: Rival Views of Learning in *Paradise Regained*,” in *Milton’s Rival Hermeneutics: “Reason Is But Choosing.”* Ed. Richard J. DuRocher and Margaret Olofson Thickstun (Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania: Duquesne University Press, 2012), 227-29. In his article, “Milton and Interpretation,” Fish presents a slightly different argument, considering how part of Satan’s temptation of the Son is to open up a series of question to interpretation, which the Son rejects because he already knows the answers (10).

¹⁸⁰ Haskin, *Milton’s Burden of Interpretation*, 119.

¹⁸¹ Haskin, *Milton’s Burden of Interpretation*, 122.

V. Coda: Poetry and Blindness

As *Paradise Lost*, *Paradise Regained*, and *Samson Agonistes* all provide space for the poet, man, and Protestant interpreter Milton to consider the fallen condition of humankind, the paradox of salvation, and the challenge of seeking, doubting, hoping for faith, here in these poems Milton also encounters himself, his own uncertainties, his own blindness. To Light he writes in Book 3 of *Paradise Lost*,

thou, celestial Light,
Shine inward and the mind through all her powers
Irradiate. *There* plant eyes. All mist from thence
Purge and disperse, that I may see and tell
Of things invisible to mortal sight! (3.51-5).

A passage made urgent by Milton's biographical blindness, the request resonates at once physically, poetically, and spiritually. Here is evidence of what Amrita Dhar calls the "darkening journey" of Milton's blindness.¹⁸² Here Lewalski finds resemblances with the pilgrim-poet Dante, where Milton's heroic poetic journey is seen in his personal blindness, the loss of which "replicates, foreshadows, and derives from that of his protagonists, Adam and Eve."¹⁸³ Whether physical, poetic, or spiritual, blindness brings anxiety, confusion, and doubt. In the cultural imaginary of Milton's period, there is an "alliance," Dhar notes, between faith and sight,¹⁸⁴ which makes the desire to see, on any level, also a desire to know, to understand, and to believe. Milton's request for vision is an appeal for spiritual and poetic insight, as the poet recognizes that "physical light, with both its literal and its metaphorical applications, has been withdrawn from him permanently."¹⁸⁵ Knowledge and belief are sought, then, not in the physical but in the poetic, the space available for imagining the unimaginable,¹⁸⁶ the "invisible to mortal sight"—a space that ultimately does not depend on physical vision.

In Milton's invocation, physical vision is nevertheless the dominant metaphor by which the poet describes his lacking illumination: "Seasons return but not to me returns / Day or the sweet approach of ev'n or morn / Or sight of vernal bloom or summer's rose / Or flocks or herds or human face divine" (3.41-4). Instead, he encounters "cloud and ever-during dark" (3.45); in place of the "book of knowledge fair," he sees only a "universal blank" (3.47-8); images of "nature's works" are violently "expunged and razed" (3.49). The poet's emphasis on external vision throws into sharp relief the request to Light that comes immediately after. The call "Shine inward" seeks aid in two ways beyond the physical: first, from the poetic muse, as Milton the poet learns how to be a poet without physical vision, a process that results in what Dhar calls Milton's "blind language," the "poetic language created during Milton's approaching and final visual loss," a

¹⁸² Amrita Dhar, "Toward Blind Language: John Milton Writing, 1648-1656," *Milton Studies* 60 1-2 (2018): 86. For a discussion of this invocation against Milton's blindness, his knowledge of seventeenth-century optical science, and his use of Neoplatonic theory, see Erin Webster, "'Presented with a Universal blanc': The Physics of Vision in Milton's Invocation to Light," *Milton Studies* 56 (2015): 233-271.

¹⁸³ Lewalski, *Paradise Lost and the Rhetoric*, 32. See also Stephen M. Fallon, "Is Milton a Religious Writer?" *Religion & Literature* 45 1 (2013): 207; Treip, *Allegorical Poetics and the Epic*, 17.

¹⁸⁴ Dhar, "Toward Blind Language," 85.

¹⁸⁵ Webster, "The Physics of Vision," 255.

¹⁸⁶ Lewalski, *Paradise Lost and the Rhetoric*, ix.

language which “owes its existence to a lack, a want, an absence, a memory, and a longing.”¹⁸⁷ At the same time, the request for illumination seeks from God the necessary aid that Milton needs to be a Protestant interpreter, returning hopeful to the interpretive task of Christianity because he believes in those things invisible.¹⁸⁸

In this way, there is a bond between poetry and faith, where “the imitation of never seen truths,” whether physical or spiritual, is “truth in the form of fiction.”¹⁸⁹ Milton’s poetic and spiritual invocation implies this connection, the words of his request not perforce *manifesting* truth in the poem or divine illumination for the poet, but suggesting that poetry has the potential to be more than just letter. Indeed, as Lana Cable writes, Milton’s iconoclastic objective in *Paradise Lost* is to understand the relationship between language and truth, a search for truth that is dependent “for human realization on those affective and sensory aspects of language—imagery, symbol, metaphor.”¹⁹⁰ In fact, as Milton expresses his desire for that truth in the invocation, his lament of Light’s absence relies on precisely the same language, down to the image, that we have seen him use across his poetic works in his attempt to comprehend the spiritual task of interpretation, of Protestant faith. His eyes “roll in vain” (3.23), he writes, to find the “piercing ray,” yet finding none, “So think a drop serene hath quenched their orbs / Or dim suffusion veiled” (3.25-6). In the context of the invocation, the veil image, a single word in fact, signifies simultaneously the physical, the poetic, and the spiritual. And contained in that multi-signifying image is the profound implication that if one metaphor can connect blindness with “spiritual depravity”¹⁹¹ and, inversely, vision with divine illumination, poetry, as the vehicle of meaning, has the capacity “to bear the weight” of that relationship.¹⁹² Poetry, in other words, has the capacity both to be letter and to enable the work of Spirit.

A hermeneutic veil in its own right, poetry is then at once a cover lacking truth, empty words, mere letter. In this way, Milton’s poetry can be interpreted as just art, perhaps nothing more than a secular meditation on the human questions of history, love, error and resilience, aesthetics, and authority. And yet, when interpreted through faith, poetry is also spiritual truth itself. For the reader who believes it does, Milton’s poetry symbolizes the act of Christian interpretation just as it seeks to describe that act; his poetry thus also symbolizes the manifestation of (potential) divine illumination. By both forcing and enabling the proliferation of meaning, poetry becomes a Protestant figure for the possibility of faith contained in Christ’s promise of redemption.

¹⁸⁷ Dhar, “Toward Blind Language,” 75.

¹⁸⁸ Martindale, “Writing Epic,” 446; Lewalski, *Paradise Lost and the Rhetoric*, 27-8; Malcolm Guite, *Faith, Hope and Poetry: Theology and the Poetic Imagination* (Surrey, UK: Ashgate, 2010), 141, esp. Ch. 5; Fallon, “Is Milton a Religious Writer?” 207.

¹⁸⁹ Grossman, “Poetry and Belief in *Paradise Regained*,” 386.

¹⁹⁰ Lana Cable, “Milton’s Iconoclastic Truth,” in *Politics, Poetics, and Hermeneutics in Milton’s Prose*. Eds. David Loewenstein and James Grantham Turner (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 136-7.

¹⁹¹ Dhar, “Toward Blind Language,” 83.

¹⁹² Dhar, “Toward Blind Language,” 76. See also Kahn, *The Trouble with Literature*, 93, for Milton’s position on the relationship between art and belief.

EPILOGUE

The Veil of Poetry

That poetry functions as a locus for thinking about religion may be obvious given the fact that Colonna, Tasso, and Milton use it to do just that. And yet, given poetry's complex and controversial history before the Reformation, no less during, the way that these three authors use poetry as part of a practice of Christian hermeneutics warrants some further consideration. In the preceding chapters, I have shown how these three poets use literature to answer questions about religious hermeneutics in their responses to the spiritual crises they faced in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. I argue, moreover, that each poet in his or her own way finds in the form, in the language, and certainly in the figuration of poetry the means by which to interpret how to engage with Christian hermeneutics as a central and ongoing practice in their respective religious experiences. The question now would seem to be: what does it mean, in the grand scheme of things, that these early modern authors use poetry to do this theological work?

As this project has evolved from one about veils to one about reading and the relationship between poetry and faith, I have found, much to my delight, almost an endless list of answers given by theologians, poets, and scholars throughout history for why, especially in a time like the early modern period, poetry comes to play this role. Organizing the many justifications for the relationship between poetry and faith are two main reasons: poetry provides a space and poetry provides a language. With its myriad codified, evolving, and creative genres, the space of poetry is one in which tradition, authority, and imitation intersect—sometimes intermingling; sometimes colliding—with discovery, innovation, and imagination. And in that space, poetry “opens up a world of affective possibilities” for the dynamic interaction “between the self and God, the self and itself, and between the self and other selves in society.”¹ Poetry, as multiple scholars have shown, maps the imagination onto a psychological landscape contained in the poetic.² In that space, poetry converts the memories of times and places into images and words that can be retrieved in the imagination.³ And by means of the imagination, poetry produces a sensory experience, the senses transformed into “a key agent of mediation between human and divine consciousness,” manifesting, inside the literary, “evocations of the invisible and the immanent in the material world.”⁴

At the same time, poetry is a site in which authority can be inscribed in “the prophetic voice of the *vates* inspired by God”;⁵ where the poet can insist that “true poetry is driven by direct divine

¹ Subha Mukherji, “Crossroads of Knowledge: Literature and Theology,” in *Literature, Belief and Knowledge in Early Modern England: Knowing Faith*. Eds. Subha Mukherji, and Tim Stuart-Buttle (Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan; Springer International Publishing, 2018), 21.

² Elio Gianturco, “The Double Gift: Inner Vision and Pictorial Sense in Petrarch,” *Renaissance and Reformation / Renaissance et Réforme* 8 3 (1972): 107; John Freccero, “The Fig Tree and the Laurel: Petrarch's Poetics,” *Diacritics* 5 1 (1975): 34.

³ Albert Russell Ascoli, “Petrarch's Middle Age: Memory, Imagination, History, and the ‘Ascent of Mount Ventoux,’” in *A Local Habitation and a Name: Imagining Histories in the Italian Renaissance* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2011, originally published 1990), 32.

⁴ Mukherji, “Crossroads of Knowledge,” 16-17.

⁵ Charles Martindale, “Writing Epic: *Paradise Lost*,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Milton*. Eds. Nicholas McDowell and Nigel Smith (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 441.

inspiration.”⁶ Poetry is, moreover, a space of teaching⁷ that provides the genres and rhetoric with which to engage an audience⁸ as part of moral or religious persuasion.⁹ Or else it reproduces, in its fictional spaces, tangible and well-known public spaces, thus transporting its readers by means of their own cultural imaginary,¹⁰ as it seeks to be more than just content or style,¹¹ as its creators aspire to write more than just literature, but also to engage with “sacred Truths,”¹² and to convince us to believe in “the products of our own imagination.”¹³ The space of poetry works to create those “convincing enactments of experience,”¹⁴ in order to allow truth to exist within representation.

And poetry provides a language for this work. While of course there is a gap between human capacity for language and the meaning it can never quite contain,¹⁵ language is also paradoxically what closes that gap, as the “resources of poetry” allow the paradoxes of the divine to become comprehensible.¹⁶ And scholars give reasons for why this is—because, for one, poetry exceeds “the capabilities of other kinds of language.”¹⁷ Poetry has at once the ability to create verbal pictures, exemplifying Horace’s dictum *ut pictura poesis*,¹⁸ while also bypassing images entirely and so “enables the reader actually to see through such surfaces to the ‘inward’ truth.”¹⁹ Poetry, moreover, speaks to us, Brian Cummings shows, in his study of how Erasmus conceives of poetry’s ability to persuade: “it leaves a lasting sting in the minds of its hearers, it grips, it transforms, and sends away a far different listener than it received.”²⁰ And even the act of writing itself constitutes not just the vehicle for representing truth, but the process by which one attempts to “‘body forth’ the divine in material form.”²¹

But as a genre, poetry is, for scholars, poets, and theologians, not *just* poetry; it is, many have argued, inherently theological. As John Freccero notes, “Without the letter, the spirit is the eternal

⁶ Nigel Smith, “The Anti-Episcopal Tracts: Republican Puritanism and the Truth in Poetry,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Milton*. Eds. Nicholas McDowell and Nigel Smith (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 164.

⁷ Mindele Anne Treip, *Allegorical Poetics and the Epic* (Kentucky: The University Press of Kentucky, 1994), 139.

⁸ Barbara Kiefer Lewalski, *Paradise Lost and the Rhetoric of Literary Forms* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2014), 7.

⁹ Victoria Ann Kahn, *The Trouble with Literature*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020), 63.

¹⁰ Mukherji, “Crossroads of Knowledge,” 15.

¹¹ Phillip J. Donnelly, *Milton’s Scriptural Reasoning: Narrative and Protestant Toleration* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 81.

¹² Kahn, *The Trouble with Literature*, 91.

¹³ Ethan H. Shagan, *The Birth of Modern Belief: Faith and Judgment from the Middle Ages to the Enlightenment* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2018), 250.

¹⁴ Michael Edwards, “Believing in Poetry,” *Literature and Theology* 25 1 (2011): 18.

¹⁵ Mukherji, “Crossroads of Knowledge,” 10; Massimo Lollini, *Il vuoto della forma: scrittura, testimonianza e verità* (Genova: Marietti, 2001).

¹⁶ Elizabeth L. Swann, “*Nosce Teipsum*: The Senses of Self-Knowledge in Early Modern England,” in *Literature, Belief and Knowledge in Early Modern England: Knowing Faith*. Eds. Subha Mukherji, and Tim Stuart-Buttle (Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan; Springer International Publishing, 2018), 208.

¹⁷ Jane Partner, “Seeing and Believing: Thomas Traherne’s Poetic Language and the Reading Eye,” in *Literature, Belief and Knowledge in Early Modern England: Knowing Faith*. Eds. Subha Mukherji, and Tim Stuart-Buttle (Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan; Springer International Publishing, 2018), 86.

¹⁸ Paul Friedrich, “Lyric Epiphany,” *Language in Society* 30 2 (2001): 218.

¹⁹ Partner, “Seeing and Believing,” 94.

²⁰ Brian Cummings, “Erasmus on Literature and Knowledge,” in *Literature, Belief and Knowledge in Early Modern England: Knowing Faith*. Eds. Subha Mukherji, and Tim Stuart-Buttle (Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan; Springer International Publishing, 2018), 45, 49.

²¹ Suzy Anger, “Carlyle: Between Biblical Exegesis and Romantic Hermeneutics,” *Texas Studies in Literature and Language* 40 1 (1998): 83.

Logos, with no point of tangency to history.”²² Of course poetry and theology relate, Augustine similarly explained, because language is the only vehicle we have; there is no other way to communicate truth.²³ In his *Familiars*, Petrarch also connected theology and poetry by their inherently shared literary form and figurative language, specifically metaphor.²⁴ Freccero makes this connection even stronger, writing about lyric poetry that

the end term of both language and desire are one and the same, and so it is, inevitably, in a theology of the Word. The ultimate end of desire is God, in Whom the soul finds its satisfaction. The ultimate end of signification is a principle of intelligibility whereby all things may be understood. God the Word is at once the end of all desire and the interpretant of all discourse.²⁵

And, just as Malcolm Guite acknowledges the cultural shift that would occur during the Enlightenment, “which ushered in a mistrust and marginalisation of imaginative and poetic vision and a particular suspicion of the ambivalent or multivalent language of poetry,”²⁶ he seeks to both vindicate and celebrate poetry as truth bearing and thus a form of theology.²⁷

As I reflect on the relationship between truth and religious faith in the poetry by Colonna, Tasso, and Milton, this history, these positions, and the condemnations as well as celebrations of poetry inspire my final conclusions. It seems clear to me that the hermeneutics of the veil developed in different ways in the poetic works of these three authors does not just point to the practice of Christian hermeneutics in the early modern period; it also seeks to enact it. As they reflect on how the image of the veil, as a hermeneutic symbol, signals the two interpretive possibilities that the poets, their characters, and their readers consistently confront in their own hermeneutic practices, Colonna, Tasso, and Milton also transform their own poetry into that very hermeneutic. Readers, both contemporaneous and posthumous, are invited by the hermeneutics of the veil to read their poetry and the theological claims it makes as itself also a hermeneutic veil. We are asked not just to believe in their poetry, but to consider the extent to which we are able to believe that poetry expresses truth at all, and if so, what that truth looks like, how it functions, what further meaning it holds, both in theory and in practice. Of course, the question is unanswerable except to a given individual reader.²⁸ Rather it is the fact that the question can be asked at all that makes these poetic works sites of hermeneutics and thus also sites of theology. What’s more, as Colonna, Tasso, and Milton all stage reading as a core element of their poetic projects, they make their works as much about poetry as about Christian religion. In the words of Subha Mukherji:

²² John Freccero, “Medusa: The Letter and the Spirit,” in *Dante: The Poetics of Conversion* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1986), 134.

²³ Jean Grondin, *Introduction to Philosophical Hermeneutics*. Trans. Joel Weinsheimer (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994), 33.

²⁴ Concetta Carestia Greenfield, “The Poetics of Francis Petrarch,” in *Francis Petrarch, Six Centuries Later: A Symposium*. Ed. Aldo Scaglione (North Carolina: University of North Carolina Press, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill for its Department of Romance Studies, 1975), 218.

²⁵ Freccero, “The Fig Tree and the Laurel,” 35.

²⁶ Malcolm Guite, *Faith, Hope and Poetry: Theology and the Poetic Imagination* (Surrey, UK: Ashgate, 2010), 2. See also David Quint, *Origin and Originality in Renaissance Literature: Versions of the Source* (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 1983), xi.

²⁷ Guite, *Faith, Hope and Poetry*, 243.

²⁸ Kahn, *The Trouble with Literature*, 94.

Imaginative writing—which roughly corresponds to our sense of ‘literature’—taps into the space between faith and knowledge, putting pressure on both terms. Its relative freedom from specialised disciplinary investments allows a literary lens to bring into focus the relatively elusive strands of thinking about belief, knowledge and salvation, probing the particulars of affect implicit in the generalities of doctrine.²⁹

Of all the many reasons I have listed above for why literary hermeneutics and religious hermeneutics come together in early modern poetry, and why poetry and faith come together in general, the poetic works of Colonna, Tasso, and Milton may not reflect all of these reasons at once; for an individual reader, they may never reflect any of them at all. Yet still we must remember: if indeed poetry is a veil, it is the veil that makes possible revelation.

²⁹ Mukherji, “Crossroads of Knowledge,” 6.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Primary Sources

- Benedetto da Mantova. *Il Beneficio di Cristo con le versioni del secolo XVI: Documenti e testimonianze*. Ed. Salvatore Caponetto. Florence, Italy; Chicago, IL: Sansoni; The Newberry Library, 1972.
- . “‘God’s gift to us is Christ on the cross,’ from Benedetto da Mantova, *The Benefit for All Christians of Jesus Christ Crucified* (1543),” in *Reformation Thought: An Anthology of Sources*. Ed. King Margaret L. Indianapolis; Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company, 2016, 19-22.
- Calvin, John. *Institutes of the Christian Religion*. 2 vols. Trans. John Allen. Philadelphia: Presbyterian Board of Publication, 1813.
- Colonna, Vittoria. *Carteggio*. Ed. Ermanno Ferrero and Giuseppe Müller. Turin: Loescher, 1892.
- . *Rime*. Ed. Alan Bullock. Rome: Laterza, 1982.
- . *Sonnets for Michelangelo: A Bilingual Edition*. Ed. Abigail Brundin. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005.
- Dante Alighieri. *The Divine Comedy of Dante Alighieri. Volume 3: Paradiso*. Ed. and trans. Robert M. Durling. Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2011.
- Luther, Martin. *Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*. Trans. J. Theodore Mueller. Michigan: Kregel Publications, 1982 (originally published 1976).
- . *On the Freedom of a Christian with related texts*. Ed. and trans. Tryntje Helfferich. Indianapolis; Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company, 2013.
- . “Preface to the Epistle of St. Paul to the Romans (1522, Revised 1546),” in Timothy F. Lull, and William R. Russell, *Martin Luther’s Basic Theological Writings*. Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress Publishers, 2012, 76-85.
- . “Preface to the Letter of Saint Paul to the Romans (1522),” in *Reformation Thought: An Anthology of Sources*. Ed. King Margaret L. Indianapolis; Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company, 2016, 53-57.
- Michelangelo di Lodovico Buonarroti Simoni. *The Poetry of Michelangelo: An Annotated Translation*. Ed. James M. Saslow. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991.
- Milton, John. *The Complete Poems*. Ed. John Leonard. New York: Penguin Books, 1998.

- . *Paradise Lost*. Ed. Gordon Teskey. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2005.
- . *The Works of John Milton*. 18 vols. Ed. Frank Allen Patterson. New York: Columbia University Press, 1931-38.
- Petrarca, Francesco. *Canzoniere*. Ed. Sabrina Stroppa. Torino: Einaudi, 2011.
- Tasso, Torquato. *Discorsi dell'arte poetica e del poema eroico*. Ed. Luigi Poma. Bari: Laterza, 1964.
- . *Gerusalemme Liberata*. Ed. Franco Tomasi. Milano: BUR Classici, 2015.
- . *Giudicio sovra la Gerusalemme riformata*. Ed. Claudio Gigante. Rome: Salerno, 2000.
- . *Lettere poetiche*. Ed. Carla Molinari. Parma: Fondazione Pietro Bembo; Guanda, 1995.
- . *Opere*. 3 vols. Milan: Dalla Società Tipografica de' Classici Italiani, 1824.
- . *Opere*. 5 vols. Ed. Bruno Maier. Milan, Rizzoli, 1965.
- Valdés, Juan de. *Alfabeto cristiano. Domande e risposte della predestinazione catechismo*. Ed. Massimo Firpo. Turin, Italy: Einaudi, 1994.
- . *Il Dialogo della dottrina cristiana*. Ed. Teodoro Fanlo y Cortés. Turin: Claudiana, 1991.

Secondary Sources

- Abulafia, Anna. "Bodies in the Jewish-Christian Debate," in *Framing Medieval Bodies*. Ed. Sarah Kay and Miri Rubin. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1994, 123-137.
- Adelman, Rachel E. *The Female Ruse: Women's Deception and Divine Sanction in the Hebrew Bible*. Sheffield, UK: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2015.
- Adinolfi, Marco. "Il velo della donna e la rilettura poalina di *I Cor.* 11, 2-16," *Rivista Biblica* 23 2 (1975): 147-173.
- Adler, Sara M. "Strong Mothers, Strong Daughters: The Representation of Female Identity in Vittoria Colonna's *Rime* and *Carteggio*," *Italica* 77 3 (2000): 311-330.
- . "Vittoria Colonna: Michelangelo's Perfect Muse," *Italica* 92 1 (2015): 5-32.
- Agoston, Laura Camille. "Male/Female, Italy/Flanders, Michelangelo/Vittoria Colonna," *Renaissance Quarterly* 58 4 (2005): 1175-1219.
- Ainsworth, David. "Rapturous Milton and the Communal Harmony of Faith," *Milton Quarterly*

47 3 (2013): 149-162.

- Ajmar, Marta. "Exemplary Women in Renaissance Italy: Ambivalent Models of Behavior?" in *Women in Italian Renaissance Culture and Society*. Ed. Letizia Panizza. Oxford, UK: Legenda, European Humanities Research Center, University of Oxford, 2000, 244-264.
- Akbari, Suzanne Conklin. *Seeing through the Veil: Optical Theory and Medieval Allegory*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004.
- Albanelli, Nunzio. *Vittoria Colonna e il suo mistero*. Naples: Valentino, 2003.
- Anger, Suzy. "Carlyle: Between Biblical Exegesis and Romantic Hermeneutics," *Texas Studies in Literature and Language* 40 1 (1998): 78-96.
- Arcangeli, Letizia, and Susanna Peyronel. "Premessa," in *Donne di potere nel Rinascimento*. Eds. Letizia Arcangeli, and Susanna Peyronel. Rome: Viella, 2008, 9-20.
- Ardissino, Erminia. "Il pensiero e la cultura religiosa di Torquato Tasso. Rassegna e discussione su un quinquennio di studi (1998-2002)," *Lettere italiane* 55 4 (2003): 591-614.
- Ascoli, Albert Russell. *Ariosto's Bitter Harmony: Crisis and Evasion in the Italian Renaissance*. New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1987.
- . *Dante and the Making of a Modern Author*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008.
- . "Faith as a Cover-up: Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso*, Canto 21, and Machiavellian Ethics," *I Tatti Studies: Essays in the Renaissance* 8 (1999): 135-170.
- . "Introduction," in *The Quest for Epic: From Ariosto to Tasso*. Trans. Sally Hill and Dennis Looney. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2006, 1-12.
- . "Liberating the Tomb: Difference and Death in *Gerusalemme Liberata*," *Annali d'italianistica* 12 (1994): 159-180.
- . "Liberating the Tomb: Difference and Death in *Gerusalemme Liberata*," in *A Local Habitation and a Name: Imagining Histories in the Italian Renaissance*. New York: Fordham University Press, 2011.
- . "Mirror and Veil: *Così è (se vi pare)* and the Drama of Interpretation," *Stanford Italian Review* 7 1-2 (1987): 29-46.
- . "Petrarch's Middle Age: Memory, Imagination, History, and the 'Ascent of Mount Ventoux,'" in *A Local Habitation and a Name: Imagining Histories in the Italian Renaissance*. New York: Fordham University Press, 2011 (originally published 1990), 21-58.

- . “Worthy of Faith? Authors and Readers in Early Modernity,” in *The Renaissance World*. Ed. John J. Martin. NY: Routledge, 2007, 435-451.
- Bainton, Rolan H. *Women of the Reformation in Germany and Italy*. Minneapolis, Minnesota: Augsburg Publishing House, 1971.
- Barnes, Bernadine. “The Understanding of Woman: Vittoria Colonna and Michelangelo’s ‘Christ and the Samaritan Woman,’” *Renaissance Studies* 27 5 (2013): 633-653.
- Baskerville, S. K. “Puritans, Revisionists, and the English Revolution,” *Huntington Library Quarterly* 61 2 (1998): 151-171.
- Bassanese, Fiora A. “Vittoria Colonna’s Man/God,” *Annali d’Italianistica* 25 (2007): 263-274.
- Bauckham, Richard. *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses: The Gospels as Eyewitness Testimony*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2017 (originally published 2006).
- Beliles, David Buck. *Theoretically-Informed Criticism of Donne’s Love Poetry: Towards a Pluralist Hermeneutics of Faith*. New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 1999.
- Benedict, Philip. “Religion and Politics in the European Struggle for Stability, 1500-1700,” in *Early Modern Europe from Crisis to Stability*. Eds. Philip Benedict and Myron P. Gutmann. Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2005, 120-138.
- Benfell, V. Stanley. “Tasso’s God: Narrative Authority in the *Gerusalemme Liberata*,” *Modern Philology* 97 2 (1999): 173-194.
- . “Translating Petrarchan Desire in Vittoria Colonna and Gaspara Stampa,” in *Translating Desire in Medieval and Early Modern Literature*. Ed. Craig A. Berry and Heather Richardson Hayton. Tempe, AR: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2005, 109-131.
- Benson, Pamela Joseph. “An Unrecognized Defender of Women in the *Orlando Furioso*,” *Italica* 57 4 (1980): 268-270.
- Bernardy, A. Amy. *La vita e l’opera di Vittoria Colonna*. Firenze: Felice le Monnier, 1927.
- Biondi, Albano. “La giustificazione della simulazione nel Cinquecento,” in *Eresia e Riforma nell’Italia del Cinquecento: Miscellanea I*. Eds. Luigi Firpo, Giorgio Spini, Antonio Rotondò, and John A. Tedeschi. Chicago; Florence: Sansoni, 1974, 5-68.
- Birbari, Elizabeth. *Dress in Italian Painting, 1460-1500*. Chatham, UK: John Murray Publishers, 1975.
- Bireley, Robert. “Early-Modern Catholicism as a Response to the Changing World of the Long

- Sixteenth Century,” *The Catholic Historical Review* 95 2 (2009): 219-39.
- Boesky, Amy. “Samson and Surrogacy,” in *Milton and Gender*. Ed. Catherine Gimelli Martin. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004, 153-166.
- Boswell, Jackson Campbell. “Samson’s Bosom Snake,” *Milton Quarterly* 8 3 (1974): 77-80.
- Bowd, Stephen. “Prudential Friendship and Religious Reform: Vittoria Colonna and Gasparo Contarini,” in *A Companion to Vittoria Colonna*. Eds. Abigail Brundin, Tatiana Crivelli, and Maria Serena Sapegno. Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2016, 349-370.
- Bowers, Susan R. “Medusa and the Female Gaze,” *The Johns Hopkins University Press* 2 2 (1990): 217-235.
- Bozza, Tommaso. *Calvino in Italia*. Rome: Arti Grafiche Italiane, 1966.
- . *La riforma cattolica: Il Beneficio di Cristo*. Rome: Libreria Tombolini, 1972.
- Brand, C. P. *Torquato Tasso: A Study of the Poet and of his Contribution to English Literature*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1965.
- Briggs, Helen M. “Tasso’s Theory of Epic Poetry,” *The Modern Language Review* 25 4 (1930): 457-473.
- Brose, Margaret. “Fetishizing the Veil: Petrarch’s Poetics of Rematerialization,” in *The Body in Early Modern Italy*. Ed. Julia L. Hairston and Walter Stephens. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2010, 3-23.
- Brown, Mary Ruth. “*Paradise Lost* and John 15: Eve, the Branch and the Church,” *Milton Quarterly* 20 4 (1986): 127-31.
- Brown, Peter. *The Body and Society: Men, Women and Sexual Renunciation in Early Christianity*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2008 (originally published 1988).
- Bruce, Gordon. *John Calvin’s Institutes of the Christian Religion: A Biography*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University, 2016.
- Brundin, Abigail. “Poesia come devozione: leggere le rime di Vittoria Colonna,” in *Al crocevia della storia: poesia, religione e politica in Vittoria Colonna*. Ed. Maria Serena Sapegno. Rome: Viella, 2016, 161-175.
- . *Vittoria Colonna and the Spiritual Poetics of the Italian Reformation*. Cambridge, UK: Ashgate Publishing, 2008.
- . “Vittoria Colonna and the Virgin Mary,” *The Modern Language Review* 96 1 (2001): 61-81.

- . “Vittoria Colonna in Manuscript,” in *A Companion to Vittoria Colonna*. Eds. Abigail Brundin, Tatiana Crivelli, and Maria Serena Sapegno. Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2016, 39-68.
- . “Volume Editor’s Introduction,” in Vittoria Colonna, *Sonnets for Michelangelo: A Bilingual Edition*. Ed. Abigail Brundin. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005, 1-55.
- Bruns, Gerald L. *Hermeneutics Ancient and Modern*. New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 1992.
- Bryan, Christopher. “The Hermeneutic of Suspicion,” in Christopher Bryan and David Landon, *Listening to the Bible: The Art of Faithful Biblical Interpretation*. Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2013, 23-39.
- Bryson, Michael. “A Poem to the Unknown God: *Samson Agonistes* and Negative Theology,” *Milton Quarterly* 42 1 (2008): 22-43.
- Budde, Michael L., and Karen Scott (Ed.). *Witness of the Body: The Past, Present, and Future of Christian Martyrdom*. Grand Rapids, Michigan; Cambridge, UK: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2011.
- Bullock, Alan. “Nota sul Testo,” in Vittoria Colonna. *Rime*. Ed. Alan Bullock. Rome: Laterza, 1982, 223-229.
- Busto, Andrea (ed.). *Il Velo: tra misterioso, seduzione, misticismo, sensualità, potere e religione*. Milano: Silvana Editoriale, 2008.
- Cabibbo, Sara. “Percorsi del potere femminile fra Italia e Spagna: il caso di Vittoria Colonna Enriquez (1558-1633),” in *Donne di potere nel Rinascimento*. Eds. Letizia Arcangeli, and Susanna Peyronel. Rome: Viella, 2008, 417-443.
- Cable, Lana. “Milton’s Iconoclastic Truth,” in *Politics, Poetics, and Hermeneutics in Milton’s Prose*. Eds. David Loewenstein and James Grantham Turner. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1990, 135-151.
- Camille, Michael. “The Image and the Self: Writing Late Medieval Bodies,” in *Framing Medieval Bodies*. Ed. Sarah Kay and Miri Rubin. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1994, 62-99.
- Campbell, Gordon. “The Mortalist Heresy in *Paradise Lost*,” *Milton Quarterly* 13 2 (1979): 33-36.
- Campbell, Mary B. *The Witness and the Other World: Exotic European Travel Writing, 400-1600*. Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1988.
- Campbell, Stephen J. and Sandra Seekins. *The Body UnVeiled: Boundaries of the Figure in Early Modern Europe*. Michigan: The Early Modern Museum of Art, 1997.

- Campi, Emidio. "Giovanni Calvino: Problemi e prospettive degli studi odierni," in *Giovanni Calvino e la riforma in Italia: Influenze e conflitti*. Ed. Susanna Peyronel Rambaldi. Turin: Claudiana, 2011, 9-28.
- . "Vittoria Colonna and Bernardino Ochino," in *A Companion to Vittoria Colonna*. Eds. Abigail Brundin, Tatiana Crivelli, and Maria Serena Sapegno. Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2016, 371-398.
- Cantù, Cesare. *Gli eretici d'Italia: Discorsi storici*. 3 vols. Turin: Società l'Unione Tipografico, 1866.
- Caponetto, Salvatore. "Lutero nella letteratura italiana della prima metà del '500: Francesco Berni," in *Lutero in Italia: Studi storici nel V centenario della nascita*. Ed. Lorenzo Perrone. Piedmont, Italy: Marietti, 1983, 47-63.
- . *The Protestant Reformation in Sixteenth-Century Italy*. Trans. Anne C. Tedeschi and John Tedeschi. Truman State University, MO: Thomas Jefferson University Press, 1999.
- Caravale, Giorgio. "Private and Public Devotion in Late Renaissance Italy: The Role of Church Censorship," in *Domestic Devotions in Early Modern Italy*. Ed. Maya Corry, Marco Faini, and Alessia Meneghin. Leiden: Brill, 2019, 389-407.
- Carey, John. "Sea, Snake, Flower, and Flame in 'Samson Agonistes,'" *The Modern Language Review* 62 3 (1967): 395-399.
- Carrithers, Gale H., and James D. Hardy, Jr. *Milton and the Hermeneutic Journey*. Baton Rouge; London: Louisiana State University Press, 1994.
- Cassese, Michele. "Giovanna e Maria d'Aragona: due sorelle napoletane 'doppio pregio ad una etade' e il rapporto con il potere nel '500," in *Donne di potere nel Rinascimento*. Eds. Letizia Arcangeli, and Susanna Peyronel. Rome: Viella, 2008, 669-707.
- Cassirer, Ernst. *The Individual and the Cosmos in Renaissance Philosophy*. Trans. Mario Domandi. New York, NY: Harper & Row, 1963.
- Cavallini, Concetta. "Vittoria Colonna, femme-poète 'spirituale' et les *Rime spirituali di sette poeti illustri* de Scipione Ammirato (1569)," in *Les Muses Sacrées: Poésie et Théâtre de la Réforme entre France et Italie*. Ed. Véronique Ferrer and Rosanna Gorris Camos. Geneva: Librairie Droz, 2016, 183-202.
- Cavazza, Silvano. "'Luthero fidelissimo inimico de messer Jesu Christo': La polemica contro Lutero nella letteratura religiosa in volgare della prima metà del Cinquecento," in *Lutero in Italia: Studi storici nel V centenario della nascita*. Ed. Lorenzo Perrone. Piedmont, Italy: Marietti, 1983, 65-94.

- Cave, Terence C. "Ronsard as Apollo: Myth, Poetry and Experience in a Renaissance Sonnet-Cycle," *Yale French Studies* 47 (1972): 76-89.
- Chavarria, Elisa Novi. "Reti di potere e spazi di corte femminili nella Napoli del Cinquecento," in *Donne di potere nel Rinascimento*. Eds. Letizia Arcangeli, and Susanna Peyronel. Rome: Viella, 2008, 361-374.
- Chavasse, Ruth. "The Virgin Mary: Consoler, Protector and Social Worker in Quattrocento Miracle Tales," in *Women in Italian Renaissance Culture and Society*. Ed. Letizia Panizza. Oxford, UK: Legenda, European Humanities Research Center, University of Oxford, 2000, 138-164.
- Chemello, Adriana. "'Il più bel lume di questo mondo': Vittoria Colonna e il suo tempo," in *Al crocevia della storia: poesia, religione e politica in Vittoria Colonna*. Ed. Maria Serena Sapegno. Rome: Viella, 2016, 57-83.
- Chiarenza, Marguerite Mills. "The Imageless Vision and Dante's *Paradiso*," *Dante Studies, with the Annual Report of the Dante Society* 90 (1972): 77-91.
- Chilsholm, A. R. "The Prototype of Dante's Geryon. (*Inferno*, XVI and XVII)," *The Modern Language Review* 24 4 (1929): 451-454.
- Chines, Loredana. *I veli del poeta: un percorso tra Petrarca e Tasso*. Rome: Carocci, 2000.
- Christianson, Paul. "The Causes of the English Revolution: A Reappraisal," *Journal of British Studies* 15 2 (1976): 40-75.
- Christopher, Georgia B. *Milton and the Science of the Saints*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1982.
- Chronis, Harry L. "The Torn Veil: Cultus and Christology in Mark 15:37-39," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 101 1 (1982): 97-114.
- Cixous, Hélène. *Le Rire de la Méduse et autres ironies*. Paris: Éditions Galilée, 2010 (originally published 1975).
- Clark, Ira. "Christ on the Tower in *Paradise Regained*," *Milton Quarterly* 8 4 (1974): 104-7.
- Classen, Albrecht. *The Power of a Woman's Voice in Medieval and Early Modern Literature: New Approaches to German and European Women Writers and to Violence Against Women in Premodern Times*. New York; Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2007.
- Coffey, John. "Religion," in *The Oxford Handbook of Literature and the English Revolution*. Ed. Laura Lunger Knoppers. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012, 98-113.
- Cogan, Susan M. "Practicing Faith in Early Modern Britain," *Huntington Library Quarterly* 77 3 (2014): 357-360.

- Cohick, Lynn H. "Virginity Unveiled: Tertullian's *Veiling of Virgins* and Historical Women in the First Three Centuries A.D.," *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 45 1 (2007): 19-34.
- Collins, Jane. "Authorial Providence and the Dramatic Form of *Samson Agonistes*," in *Spokesperson Milton: Voices in Contemporary Criticism*, ed. Charles W. Durham and Kristin Pruitt McColgan. Cranbury, NJ: Associated University Presses, 1994, 179-189.
- Corrigan, Beatrice. "The Opposing Mirrors," *Italica* 33 3 (1956): 165-179.
- Corsaro, Antonio. "Manuscript Collections of Spiritual Poetry in Renaissance Italy, 1490-1540," in *Forms of Faith in Sixteenth-Century Italy*. Ed. Abigail Brundin and Matthew Treherne. Hampshire, UK; Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2009, 33-56.
- . *Percorsi dell'incredulità: Religione, amore, natura nel primo Tasso*. Rome: Salerno, 2003.
- Corum, Richard. "In White Ink: *Paradise Lost* and Milton's Ideas of Women," in *Milton and the Idea of Woman*. Ed. Julia M. Walker. Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1988, 120-147.
- Cotter-Lynch, Margaret. *Saint Perpetua Across the Middle Ages: Mother, Gladiator, Saint*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016.
- Cottrell, Robert D. *The Grammar of Silence: A Reading of Marguerite de Navarre's Poetry*. Washington D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1986.
- Covington, Sarah. "Revolutionary England, 1642-1702," in *Oxford Bibliographies*. Last modified, May 2010. Retrieved April 2020.
- Cox, Lee Sheridan. "The 'Ev'ning Dragon' in *Samson Agonistes*: A Reappraisal," *Modern Language Notes* 76 7 (1961): 577-584.
- . "Natural Science and Figurative Design in *Samson Agonistes*," *ELH* 35 1 (1968): 51-74.
- Cox, Virginia. "The Exemplary Vittoria Colonna," in *A Companion to Vittoria Colonna*. Eds. Abigail Brundin, Tatiana Crivelli, and Maria Serena Sapegno. Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2016, 467-501.
- . *Lyric Poetry by Women of the Italian Renaissance*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2013.
- . *The Prodigious Muse: Women's Writing in Counter-Reformation Italy*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2011.
- . "Seen but not Heard: The Role of Women Speakers in Cinquecento Literary Dialogue," in *Women in Italian Renaissance Culture and Society*. Ed. Letizia Panizza. Oxford, UK: Legenda, European Humanities Research Center, University of Oxford, 2000, 385-400.

- . “Vittoria Colonna e l’esemplarità,” in *Al crocevia della storia: poesia, religione e politica in Vittoria Colonna*. Ed. Maria Serena Sapegno. Rome: Viella, 2016, 17-53.
- . *Women’s Writing in Italy: 1400-1650*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008.
- . “Women Writers and the Canon in Sixteenth-Century Italy: The Case of Vittoria Colonna,” in *Strong Voices, Weak History: Early Women Writers & Canons in England, France, & Italy*. Eds. Pamela Joseph Benson and Victoria Kirkham. Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2005, 14-31.
- Cozzarelli, Julia M. “Torquato Tasso and the *Furore* of Love, War and Madness,” *Italica* 84 2/3 (2007): 173-186.
- Crepaz, Elena. “Le Celebrazioni Farraresi di Torquato Tasso,” *Lettere Italiane* 6 4 (1954): 386-93.
- Crews, Daniel. “Juan de Valdés,” in *Oxford Bibliographies*. Last modified April 17, 2017. Retrieved December 2019.
- Crivelli, Tatiana. “Godere di cattiva stampa: spunti per una rilettura della tradizione editoriale delle rime di Vittoria Colonna,” in *Al crocevia della storia: poesia, religione e politica in Vittoria Colonna*. Ed. Maria Serena Sapegno. Rome: Viella, 2016, 137-157.
- Culler, Jonathan. *Theory of the Lyric*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2015.
- Cummings, Brian. “Erasmus on Literature and Knowledge,” in *Literature, Belief and Knowledge in Early Modern England: Knowing Faith*. Eds. Subha Mukherji, and Tim Stuart-Buttle. Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan; Springer International Publishing, 2018, 39-62.
- . *The Literary Culture of the Reformation: Grammar and Grace*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002.
- Curran, Stuart. “God,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Milton*. Eds. Nicholas McDowell and Nigel Smith. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011, 525-533.
- Dailey, Alice. *The English Martyr: From Reformation to Revolution*. Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 2012.
- D’Alessandro, Mario. “Type, Antitype, Figure, and *Exemplum*: Dream and Vision in Tasso’s Epic Poetry,” *Quaderni D’Italianistica* 24 1 (2003): 61-76.
- Dall’Aglio, Stefano, and Massimo Rospocher. “Introduction,” in *Voices and Texts in Early Modern Italian Society*. Eds. Stefano Dall’Aglio, Brian Richardson, and Massimo Rospocher. London; New York: Routledge, 2016, 1-19.

- Dall'Olio, Guido. "Il controllo dell'eresia tra zelo religioso e ragion di Stato (1530-1570)," in *Storia di Ferrara*. 6 vols. Ed. Adriano Prosperi. Ferrara: Corbo, 1987-2004, 6:215-230.
- D'Amelia, Marina. "L'orgoglio delle origini: prestigio e interessi familiari in Vittoria Colonna," in *Al crocevia della storia: poesia, religione e politica in Vittoria Colonna*. Ed. Maria Serena Sapegno. Rome: Viella, 2016, 85-116.
- D'Angelo, Mary Rose. "Veils, Virgins, and the Tongues of Men and Angels: Women's Heads in Early Christianity," in *Off with Her Head!: The Denial of Women's Identity in Myth, Religion, and Culture*. Ed. Howard Eilberg-Schwartz and Wendy Doniger. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995, 131-164.
- Daniel-Hughes, Carly. *The Salvation of the Flesh in Tertullian of Carthage: Dressing for the Resurrection*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011.
- Da Pozzo, Giovanni. "Last Assaults and Delayed Victory in Tasso's *Liberata*," *Italica* 74 3 (1997): 319-338.
- Davis, J.C. "Religion and the Struggle for Freedom in the English Revolution," *The Historical Journal* 35 3 (1992): 507-530.
- Davis, Stephen J. "Fashioning a Divine Body: Coptic Christology and Ritualized Dress," *Harvard Theological Review* 98 3 (2005): 335-362.
- Davies, Stevie. *The Idea of Woman in Renaissance Literature: The Feminine Reclaimed*. Sussex, UK: The Harvester Press, 1986.
- Deane, John F. "'Too Christian for his own good': Reflections on a Faith in Poetry: Risking a Vantage Point," *Irish Pages* 9 1 (2015): 125-42.
- De Jonge, M. "Matthew 27:51 in Early Christian Exegesis," *The Harvard Theological Review* 79 1/3 (1986): 67-79.
- De Koven, Anna. *Women in Cycles of Culture*. Freeport, New York: Books for Libraries Press, 1972 (originally published 1941).
- Del Giudice, Luisa. "Armida: *Virgo Fingens* (The Broken Mirror)," in *Western Gerusalem University of California Studies on Tasso*. Ed. Luisa Del Giudice. London: Out of London Press, 1984, 27-53.
- D'Elia, Una Roman. "Drawing Christ's Blood: Michelangelo, Vittoria Colonna, and the Aesthetics of Reform," *Renaissance Quarterly* 59 1 (2006): 90-129.
- Dhar, Amrita. "Toward Blind Language: John Milton Writing, 1648-1656," *Milton Studies* 60 1-2 (2018): 75-107.

- Dialetti, Androniki. "The Publisher Gabriel Giolito de' Ferrari, Female Readers, and the Debate about Women in Sixteenth-Century Italy," *Renaissance and Reformation / Renaissance et Réforme* 28 4 (2004): 5-32.
- Dickens, A. G. *The Counter Reformation*. Norwich, UK: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1969.
- Dickson, Donald R., and Holly Faith Nelson. "Introduction," in *Of Paradise and Light: Essays on Henry Vaughan and John Milton in Honor of Alan Rudrum*. Eds. Donald R. Dickson and Holly Faith Nelson. Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2004, 11-24.
- Dietrich, B. C. *Death, Fate and the Gods: The Development of a Religious Idea in Greek Popular Belief and in Homer*. London: The Athlone Press, 1965.
- Dionisotti, Carlo. *Geografia e storia della letteratura italiana*. Turin: Einaudi, 1999 (originally published 1967).
- . *Scritti di storia della letteratura italiana*. 3 vols. Ed. Tania Basile, Vincenzo Fera, and Susanna Villari. Rome: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 2008.
- Dobranski, Stephen B. "Principle and Politics in Milton's *Areopagitica*," in *The Oxford Handbook of Literature and the English Revolution*. Ed. Laura Lunger Knoppers. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018, 190-202.
- Donnelly, Phillip J. *Milton's Scriptural Reasoning: Narrative and Protestant Toleration*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009.
- Dove, Mary. "'Merely a Love Poem?' Common Sense, Suspicion, and the Song of Songs," in *Feminist Poetics of the Sacred: Creative Suspicions*. Ed. Frances Devlin-Glass and Lyn McCredden. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001, 151-164.
- Dubarle, André-Marie. "Paul et l'antiféminisme," *Revue des Sciences Philosophiques et Théologiques* 60 2 (1976): 261-280.
- Dunn, Geoffrey D. "Rhetoric and Tertullian's *De virginibus velandis*," *Virgilianae Christianiae* 59 1 (2005): 1-30.
- Durling, Robert M. "Additional Note 13: 'The Body Analogy, 2: The Metaphorics of Fraud,'" in Dante Alighieri, *The Divine Comedy of Dante Alighieri: Inferno*. Ed. and trans. Robert M. Durling and Ronald L. Martinez. New York: Oxford University Press, 1996, 576-577.
- . *The Figure of the Poet in Renaissance Epic*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1965.
- DuRocher, Richard J. "Hermes's Blessed Retreat: Rival Views of Learning in *Paradise Regained*," in *Milton's Rival Hermeneutics: "Reason Is But Choosing"*. Ed. Richard J. DuRocher and Margaret Olofson Thickstun. Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania: Duquesne University Press, 2012,

225-237.

DuRocher, Richard J., and Margaret Olofson Thickstun. "Introduction," in *Milton's Rival Hermeneutics: "Reason Is But Choosing."* Ed. Richard J. DuRocher and Margaret Olofson Thickstun. Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania: Duquesne University Press, 2012, xv-xxv.

Dutschke, Dennis J. "Il discorso tassiano 'de la virtù femminile e donnesca,'" *Studi tassiani* 32 (1984): 5-28.

Dzelzainis, Martin. "The Politics of *Paradise Lost*," in *The Oxford Handbook of Milton*. Ed. Nicholas McDowell and Nigel Smith. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011, 547-568.

Edwards, Karen. "Milton's Reformed Animals: An Early Modern Bestiary," *Milton Quarterly* 39 4 (2005): 183-292.

———. "Milton's Reformed Animals: An Early Modern Bestiary: D-F," *Milton Quarterly* 40 2 (2006): 99-187.

———. "Milton's Reformed Animals: An Early Modern Bestiary: L," *Milton Quarterly* 41 4 (2007): 223-256.

———. "Milton's Reformed Animals: An Early Modern Bestiary: P-R," *Milton Quarterly* 42 4 (2008): 253-308.

———. "Milton's Reformed Animals: An Early Modern Bestiary: S," *Milton Quarterly* 43 2 (2009): 89-151.

———. "Milton's Reformed Animals: An Early Modern Bestiary: T-Z," *Milton Quarterly* 43 4 (2009): 241-308.

Edwards, Michael. "Believing in Poetry," *Literature and Theology* 25 1 (2011): 10-19.

Eilberg-Schwartz, Howard. "The Nakedness of a Woman's Voice, the Pleasure of a Man's Mouth: An Oral History of Ancient Judaism," in *Off with Her Head!: The Denial of Women's Identity in Myth, Religion, and Culture*. Ed. Howard Eilberg-Schwartz and Wendy Doniger. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995, 165-184.

Eire, Carlos M.N. *War Against the Idols: The Reformation of Worship from Erasmus to Calvin*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986.

El-Hoss, Tamara. "Veiling/Unveiling in Tahar Ben Jelloun's *The Sacred Sand Child*: Disguise and Deception of the Female Protagonist," in *Disguise, Deception, Trompe-l'oeil: Interdisciplinary Perspectives*. Ed. Leslie Boldt-Irons, Corrado Federici, and Ernesto Virgulti. New York: Peter Lang, 2009, 149-160.

Elton, G. R. *Reformation Europe: 1517-1559*. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 1999

(originally published 1963).

- Entzminger, Robert L. *Divine Word: Milton and the Redemption of Language*. Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1985.
- Erspamer, Francesco. "Il 'pensiero debole' di Torquato Tasso," in *La menzogna*. Ed. Franco Cardini. Florence: Ponte alla Grazie, 1989, 120-36.
- Faini, Marco. "Vernacular Books and Domestic Devotion in Cinquecento Italy," *Journal of Early Modern Christianity* 6 2 (2019): 299-318.
- Falcone, Filippo. *Milton's Inward Liberty: A Reading of Christian Liberty from the Prose to Paradise Lost*. Cambridge, UK: James Clarke Company, 2014.
- Falkeid, Unn, and Aileen A. Feng. "Introduction: Rethinking Gaspara Stampa in the Canon of Renaissance Poetry," in *Rethinking Gaspara Stampa in the Canon of Renaissance Poetry*. Ed. Unn Falkeid and Aileen A. Feng. Surrey, UK; Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2015, 1-12.
- Fallon, Stephen M. "Is Milton a Religious Writer?" *Religion & Literature* 45 1 (2013): 207-208.
- . "The Uses of 'Seems' and the Spectre of Predestination," *Milton Quarterly* 21 3 (1987): 99-101.
- Fedi, Roberto. "'L'immagine vera': Vittoria Colonna, Michelangelo, e un'idea di canzoniere," *MLN* 107 1 (1992): 46-73.
- Feeney, D. C. *The Gods in Epic: Poets and Critics of the Classical Tradition*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991.
- Feldhay, Rivka. "Authority, Political Theology, and the Politics of Knowledge in the Transition from Medieval to Early Modern Catholicism," *Social Research* 73 4 (2006): 1065-92.
- Felici, Lucia. *Profezie di riforma e idee di concordia religiosa: Visioni e speranze dell'esule piemontese Giovanni Leonardo Sartori*. Firenze: Olschki, 2009.
- Felski, Rita. "Critique and the Hermeneutics of Suspicion," *M/C Journal* 15 1 (2012).
- Feng, Aileen A. *Writing Beloveds: Humanist Petrarchism and the Politics of Gender*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2017.
- Ferguson, Margaret. *Trials of Desire: Renaissance Defenses of Poetry*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983.
- Ferraris, Maurizio. "Invecchiamento della 'scuola del sospetto,'" in *Il pensiero debole*. Ed. Gianni Vattimo and Pier Aldo Rovatti. Milan: Feltrinelli, 1995 (originally published 1983), 120-36.

- Ferretto, Silvia. "Inquisitori, censori, filosofi sullo scenario della controriforma," *Studi Storici* 51 1 (2010): 261-72.
- Fichter, Andrew. "Tasso's Epic of Deliverance," *PMLA* 93 2 (1978): 265-274.
- Finotti, Fabio. "Women Writers in Renaissance Italy: Courtly Origins of New Literary Canons," in *Strong Voices, Weak History: Early Women Writers & Canons in England, France, & Italy*. Eds. Pamela Joseph Benson and Victoria Kirkham. Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2005, 121-145.
- Finucci, Valeria. "Introduction: Ariosto, Tasso, and Storytelling," in *Renaissance Transaction: Ariosto and Tasso*. Ed. Valeria Finucci. Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1999, 1-13.
- Fiore, Kristina Herrmann. "Disegni di Michelangelo in omaggio a Vittoria Colonna e tracce del poema di Dante," in *Michelangelo e Dante*. Ed. Corrado Gizzi. Milan: Electa, 1995, 95-112.
- Firpo, Massimo. "Introduzione," in Juan de Valdés, *Alfabeto cristiano. Domande e risposte della predestinazione catechismo*. Ed. Massimo Firpo. Turin, Italy: Einaudi, 1994, vii-cl.
- . *Juan de Valdés and the Italian Reformation*. Trans. Richard Bates. London; New York: Routledge, 2015.
- . *Valdesiani e spirituali: Studi sul Cinquecento religioso italiano*. Rome: Edizioni di Storia e letteratura, 2013.
- Fish, Stanley. *How Milton Works*. Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2001.
- . "Milton and Interpretation," *Milton Studies* 56 (2015): 3-16.
- . *Surprised by Sin: The Reader in Paradise Lost*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997 (originally published 1967).
- . "To The Pure All Things Are Pure: Law, Faith, and Interpretation in the Prose and Poetry of John Milton," *Law and Literature* 21 1 (2009): 78-92.
- . "Wanting a Supplement: The Question of Interpretation in Milton's Early Prose," in *Politics, Poetics, and Hermeneutics in Milton's Prose*. Eds. David Loewenstein and James Grantham Turner. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1990, 41-68.
- Fisher, Linda. "Hermeneutics of Suspicion and Postmodern Paranoia Psychologies of Interpretation," *Philosophy and Literature* 16 1 (1992): 106-114.
- Fleming, James Dougal. "Meanwhile, Medusa in *Paradise Lost*," *EHL* 69 4 (2002): 1009-1028.

- Flesch, William. "Narrative, Judgment, and Justice in *Paradise Lost*," in *Milton's Rival Hermeneutics: "Reason Is But Choosing."* Ed. Richard J. DuRocher and Margaret Olofson Thickstun. Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania: Duquesne University Press, 2012, 135-155.
- Flinker, Noam. "Courting Urania: The Narrator of *Paradise Lost* Invokes His Muse," in *Milton and the Idea of Woman*. Ed. Julia M. Walker. Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1988, 86-99.
- Forcellino, Maria. *Michelangelo, Vittoria Colonna e gli spirituali: Religiosità e vita artistica a Roma negli anni Quaranta*. Rome: Viella, 2009.
- Forni, Giorgio. "Vittoria Colonna, la 'Canzone alla Vergine' e la poesia spirituale," in *Rime Sacre dal Petrarca al Tasso*. Ed. Maria Luisa Doglio and Carlo Delcorno. Bologna: Il Mulino, 2005, 63-94.
- Fragnito, Gigliola. "The Central and Peripheral Organization of Censorship," in *Church, Censorship, and Culture in Early Modern Italy*. Ed. Gigliola Fragnito. Trans. Adrian Belton. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001, 13-49.
- . *In museo e in villa: Saggi sul rinascimento perduto*. Venice: Arsenale, 1988.
- . "Introduction," in *Church, Censorship, and Culture in Early Modern Italy*. Ed. Gigliola Fragnito. Trans. Adrian Belton. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001, 1-12.
- . "'Per lungo e dubbioso sentero': l'itinerario spirituale di Vittoria Colonna," in *Al crocevia della storia: poesia, religione e politica in Vittoria Colonna*. Ed. Maria Serena Sapegno. Rome: Viella, 2016, 177-213.
- Frajese, Vittorio. "Riforma e antiriforma nella storia dei volgarizzamenti biblici," *Studi Storici* 39 1 (1998): 23-40.
- Franceschini, Chiara. "Calvino in Italia. Tra Bèze e muratori," in *Giovanni Calvino e la riforma in Italia: Influenze e conflitti*. Ed. Susanna Peyronel Rambaldi. Turin: Claudiana, 2011, 49-94.
- . "La corte di Renata di Francia (1528-1560)," in *Storia di Ferrara*. 6 vols. Ed. Adriano Prosperi. Ferrara: Corbo, 1987-2004, 6:185-214.
- Frank, Joseph. "The Unharmonious Vision: Milton as a Baroque Artist," *Comparative Literature Studies* 3 2 (1966): 95-108.
- Freccero, John. "The Fig Tree and the Laurel: Petrarch's Poetics," *Diacritics* 5 1 (1975): 34-40.
- . "Medusa: The Letter and the Spirit," in *Dante: The Poetics of Conversion*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1986, 119-135.
- Freud, Sigmund. "Medusa's Head," in *The Medusa Reader*. Trans. James Strachey. Ed. Marjorie

- Garber and Nancy J. Vickers. New York; London: Routledge, 2003, 84-85.
- Friederich, W. P. "Late Renaissance, Baroque or Counter-Reformation?" *The Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 46 2 (1947): 132-143.
- Friedman, John Block. "Antichrist and the Iconography of Dante's Geryon," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 35 (1972): 108-122.
- . "Eurydice, Heurodis, and the Noon-Day Demon," *Speculum* 41 1 (1966): 22-29.
- Friedrich, Paul. "Lyric Epiphany," *Language in Society* 30 2 (2001): 217-47.
- Frisch, Andrea. *The Invention of the Eyewitness: Witnessing and Testimony in Early Modern France*. Chapel Hill: Department of Romance Languages, The University of North Carolina, 2004.
- Frye, Northrop. "The Revelation to Eve," in *Paradise Lost, A Tercentenary Tribute*. Ed. Balachandra Rajan. Ontario: University of West Ontario, 1969, 18-47.
- Frymer-Kensky, Tikva. *Studies in Bible and Feminist Criticism*. Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 2006.
- Furman, Wendy. "Samson Agonistes as Christian Tragedy: A Corrective View," *Philological Quarterly* 60 2 (1981): 169-181.
- Gadamer, Hans-Georg. "The Hermeneutics of Suspicion," *Man and World* 17 (1984): 313-323.
- Garganigo, Alex. *Samson's Cords: Imposing Oaths in Milton, Marvell, and Butler*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2018.
- Galassi, Augusto. *Michelangelo e Vittoria Colonna: Un amore nella Roma rinascimentale*. Rome: Edizioni Universitarie Romane, 2011.
- Getto, Giovanni. *Nel mondo della Gerusalemme*. Florence: Vallecchi, 1968.
- Giampieri, Giampiero. *Il battesimo di Clorinda: Eros e religiosità in Torquato Tasso*. Tuscany: Edizioni dell'Erba, 1995.
- Gianturco, Elio. "The Double Gift: Inner Vision and Pictorial Sense in Petrarch," *Renaissance and Reformation / Renaissance et Réforme* 8 3 (1972): 100-11.
- Gibaldi, Joseph. "Vittoria Colonna: Child, Woman, Poet," in *Women Writers of the Renaissance and Reformation*. Ed. Katharina M. Wilson. Athens; London: The University of Georgia Press, 1987, 22-46.
- Gigante, Claudio. "Introduzione," *Giudicio sopra la Gerusalemme riformata di Torquato Tasso*.

- Ed. Claudio Gigante. Rome: Salerno, 2000, xi-xlix.
- Gilbert, Sandra M., and Susan Gubar. *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1980 (originally published 1979).
- Gilchrist, Roberta. "Medieval Bodies in the Material World: Gender, Stigma and the Body," in *Framing Medieval Bodies*. Ed. Sarah Kay and Miri Rubin. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1994, 43-61.
- Gill, Meredith J. *Angels and the Order of Heaven in Medieval and Renaissance Italy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014.
- Gilson, Etienne. *History of Christian Philosophy in the Middle Ages*. New York: Random House, 1955.
- Ginzburg, Carlo. "Dante's Blind Spot (*Inferno* XVI-XVII)," in *Dante's Plurilingualism: Authority, Knowledge, Subjectivity*. Ed. Sara Fortuna, Manuele Gragnolati and Jürgen Trabant. Leeds, UK: Legenda, 2010, 150-163.
- . *Il nicodemismo: Simulazione e dissimulazione religiosa nell'Europa del '500*. Turin: Einaudi, 1970.
- Ginzburg, Carlo, and Adriano Prosperi. *Giochi di pazienza: Un seminario sul Beneficio di Cristo*. Turin: Einaudi, 1975.
- . "Le due redazioni del *Beneficio di Cristo*," in *Eresia e Riforma nell'Italia del Cinquecento: Miscellanea I*. Eds. Luigi Firpo, Giorgio Spini, Antonio Rotondò, and John A. Tedeschi. Chicago; Florence: Sansoni, 1974, 135-204.
- Giorgetti, A. "Vittoria Colonna e la sua fede: Osservazioni del Sig. Professor Benrath e replica del Barone A. Reumont," *Archivio Storico Italiano* 10 131 (1882): 242-247.
- Giulio, Rosa. *Tempo dell'inquisizione tempo dell'ascesi: Spiritualità religiosa e forme letterarie dal Tasso al Settecento*. Salerno: Edisud, 2004.
- Glenn, Cheryl. *Rhetoric Retold: Regendering the Tradition from Antiquity through the Renaissance*. Carbondale; Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press, 1997.
- Gough, Melinda J. "Tasso's Enchantress, Tasso's Captive Women," *Renaissance Quarterly* 54 2 (2001): 523-552.
- Graham, Elspeth, "'Vain desire,' 'perverseness' and 'love's proper hue': Gender, Sexuality and Feminist Interest in *Paradise Lost*," *Critical Survey* 4 2 (1992): 133-139.
- Green, Mandy. "'The Vine and Her Elm': Milton's Eve and the Transformation of an Ovidian

- Motif," *The Modern Language Review* 91 2 (1996): 301-316.
- Green, Richard Firth. *A Crisis of Truth: Literature and Law in Ricardian England*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999.
- Greene, Roland Arthur. *Post-Petrarchism: Origins and Innovations of the Western Lyric Sequence*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014.
- Greene, Thomas. *The Descent from Heaven: A Study in Epic Continuity*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1963.
- Greenfield, Concetta Carestia. "The Poetics of Francis Petrarch," in *Francis Petrarch, Six Centuries Later: A Symposium*. Ed. Aldo Scaglione. North Carolina: University of North Carolina Press, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill for its Department of Romance Studies, 1975, 213-22.
- Gregory, Tobias. *From Many Gods to One: Divine Action in Renaissance Epic*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006.
- . "How Milton Defined Heresy and Why," *Religion & Literature* 45 1 (2013): 148-160.
- . "Tasso's God: Divine Action in *Gerusalemme Liberata*," *Renaissance Quarterly* 55 2 (2002): 559-595.
- Grendler, Paul F. *The Roman Inquisition and the Venetian Press, 1540-1605*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1977.
- Groeber, Valentin. *Who Are You? Identification, Deception, and Surveillance in Early Modern Europe*. New York: Zone Books, 2007.
- Grondin, Jean. *Introduction to Philosophical Hermeneutics*. Trans. Joel Weinsheimer. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994.
- Grossman, Marshall. "The Genders of God and the Redemption of the Flesh in *Paradise Lost*," in *Milton and Gender*. Ed. Catherine Gimelli Martin. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004, 95-114.
- . "Poetry and Belief in *Paradise Regained*, to which is added, *Samson Agonistes*," *Studies in Philology* 110 2 (2013): 382-401.
- . "Servile / Sterile / Style: Milton and the Question of Women," in *Milton and the Idea of Woman*. Ed. Julia M. Walker. Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1988, 148-168.
- Guibbory, Achsah. "'The Jewish Question' and 'The Woman Question' in *Samson Agonistes*: Gender, Religion, and Nation," in *Milton and Gender*. Ed. Catherine Gimelli Martin. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004, 184-203.

- Guite, Malcolm. *Faith, Hope and Poetry: Theology and the Poetic Imagination*. Surrey, UK: Ashgate, 2010.
- Günsberg, Maggie. "Commodification of the Female Body in Italian Renaissance Comedy," *Romance Studies* 24 (1994): 41-57.
- . "Donna Liberata? The Portrayal of Women in the Italian Renaissance Epic," in *Women and Italy: Essays on Gender, Culture, and History*. Ed. Zygmunt G. Baranski and Shirley W. Vinall. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1991, 173-208.
- . "Gender Deceptions: Cross-Dressing in Italian Renaissance Comedy," in *Women in Italian Renaissance Culture and Society*. Ed. Letizia Panizza. Oxford, UK: Legenda, European Humanities Research Center, University of Oxford, 2000, 334-349.
- Gurtner, Daniel M. *The Torn Veil: Matthew's Exposition of the Death of Jesus*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2007.
- Hageman, Elizabeth H. "Images of Women in Renaissance Literature: A Selected Bibliography of Scholarship," *Women's Studies Newsletter* 5 1/2 (1977): 15-17.
- Hairston, Julia L. "'Di sangue illustre & pellegrino': The Eclipse of the Body in the Lyric of Tullia d'Aragona," in *The Body in Early Modern Italy*. Ed. Julia L. Hairston and Walter Stephens. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2010, 158-175.
- Hale, John K. *Milton's Scriptural Theology: Confronting De Doctrina Christiana*. Amsterdam, Netherlands: Arc Humanities Press, 2019.
- Hamessley, Lydia. "Lost Honor and Torn Veils: A Virgin's Rape in Music," in *Menacing Virgins: Representing Virginity in the Middle Ages and Renaissance*. Ed. Kathleen Coyne Kelly and Marina Leslie. Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1999, 165-178.
- Hampton, Bryan Adams. *Fleshly Tabernacles: Milton and the Incarnational Poetics of Revolutionary England*. Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 2012.
- King, John N. *Milton and Religious Controversy: Satire and Polemic in Paradise Lost*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000.
- Hampton, Timothy. *Fictions of Embassy: Literature and Diplomacy in Early Modern Europe*. Ithaca; London: Cornell University Press, 2009.
- . *Writing from History: The Rhetoric of Exemplarity in Renaissance Literature*. Ithaca; London: Cornell University Press, 1990.
- Hanlon, Gregory. *Early Modern Italy, 1550-1800: Three Seasons in European History*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000.

- Hannay, Margaret Patterson. "Introduction," in *Silent But for the Word: Tudor Women as Patrons, Translators, and Writers of Religious Works*. Ed. Margaret Patterson Hannay. Ohio: The Kent State University Press, 1985, 1-14.
- Hanson, Ellis. "The Future's Eve: Reparative Reading after Sedgwick," *The South Atlantic Quarterly* 110 1 (2011): 101-119.
- Haran, Menaham. "The Shining of Moses' Face: A Case Study in Biblical and Near Eastern Iconography," in *In the Shelter of Elyon: Essays on Ancient Palestinian Life and Literature in Honor of G.W. Ahlström*. Ed. W. Boyd Barrick and John R. Spencer. Sheffield, UK: Sheffield Academic Press, 1984, 159-173.
- Harding, Pitt. "Milton's Serpent and the Birth of Pagan Error," *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900* 47 1 (2007): 161-177.
- Harrison, Peter. "Miracles, Early Modern Science, and Rational Religion," *Church History* 75 3 (2006): 493-510.
- Haskin, Dayton. *Milton's Burden of Interpretation*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1994.
- Haskins, Susan. "Volume Editor's Introduction," in *Vittoria Colonna, Chiara Matraini, and Lucrezia Marinella: Who is Mary? Three Early Modern Women on the Idea of the Virgin Mary*. Ed. and trans. Susan Haskins. Chicago; London: The University of Chicago Press, 2008, 1-46.
- Hathaway, Baxter. *The Age of Criticism: The Late Renaissance in Italy*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1962.
- Hecht, Anthony. "The Sonnet: Ruminations on Form, Sex, and History," *The Antioch Review* 55 2 (1997): 134-47.
- Helffferich, Tryntje. "General Introduction," in Martin Luther, *On the Freedom of a Christian with related texts*. Ed. and trans. Tryntje Helffferich. Indianapolis; Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company, 2013, vii-xxvii.
- Helm, Jennifer. *Poetry and Censorship in Counter-Reformation Italy*. Leiden: Brill, 2015.
- Herman, Peter C. *Destabilizing Milton: Paradise Lost and the Poetics of Incertitude*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005.
- . "Paradise Lost, the Miltonic 'Or,' and the Poetics of Incertitude," *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900* 43 1 (2003): 181-211.
- Hertz, Neil. "Medusa's Head: Male Hysteria under Political Pressure," *Representations* 4 (1983):

Hill, Christopher. *Milton and the English Revolution*. New York: The Viking Press, 1977.

Hillerbrand, Hans, and Wladyslaw Roczniak. "Martin Luther," in *Oxford Bibliographies*. Last modified May 10, 2010. Retrieved December 2019.

Hillier, Russel M. "'Betwixt Astrea and the Scorpion Signe': The Conjunction of Astrology and Apocalyptic in Milton's 'Psychostasis,'" *The Cambridge Quarterly* 37 3 (2008): 305-323.

———. "'By force or fraud / Weening to prosper': Milton's Satanic and Messianic Modes of Heroism," *Milton Quarterly* 43 1 (2009): 17-38.

Hollander, Anne. *Seeing through Clothes*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993.

Hollander, John. "Honor Dishonorable: Shameful Shame," *Social Research* 70 4 (2003): 1061-1074.

Holton, Amanda. "An Obscured Tradition: The Sonnet and its Fourteen-Line Predecessors," *The Review of English Studies* 62 255 (2011): 373-92.

Hooker, M.D. "Authority on her Head: An Examination of 1 Cor. xi. 10," *New Testament Studies* 10 3 (1964): 410-416.

Horton, Michael S. "Theologies of Scripture in the Reformation and Counter-Reformation: An Introduction," in *Christian Theologies of Salvation: A Comparative Introduction*. Ed. Justin S. Holcomb. New York: New York University Press, 2006, 83-93.

Hudgins, Andrew. "Some Paradoxes of Religious Poetry," *Religion & Literature* 42 3 (2010): 155-61.

Huelin, Scott. "Peregrination, Hermeneutics, Hospitality: On the Way to a Theologically Informed General Hermeneutics," *Literature and Theology* 22 2 (2008): 223-236.

Huntley, John. "A Revaluation of the Chorus' Role in Milton's *Samson Agonistes*," *Modern Philology* 64 2 (1966): 132-145.

Hutson, Lorna. *The Invention of Suspicion: Law and Mimesis in Shakespeare and Renaissance Drama*. Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2007.

Inguanti, Maria. *Le donne della riforma in Italia*. Rome: Battista, 1968.

Interdonato, Deborah A. "'Render Me More Equal': Gender Inequality and the Fall in *Paradise Lost*, 9," *Milton Quarterly* 29 4 (1995): 95-106.

Jackson, Howard M. "The Death of Jesus in Mark and the Miracle from the Cross," *New Testament*

- Studies* 33 1 (1987): 16-37.
- Jacobs, Maretha M. "Eve: Influential Glimpses from Her Story," *Scriptura* 90 (2005): 765-778.
- Jaubert, Annie. "Le voiles des femmes (I Cor. XI. 2-16)," *New Testament Studies* 18 (1972): 419-430.
- Javitch, Daniel. "Tasso's Critique and Incorporation of Chivalric Romance: His Transformation of Achilles in the *Gerusalemme Liberata*," *International Journal of the Classical Tradition* 13 4 (2007): 515-527.
- Jeanrond, Werner G. "Hermeneutics and Christian Praxis: Some Reflections on the History of Hermeneutics," *Literature and Theology* 2 2 (1988): 174-88.
- Jensen, Alexander S. *John's Gospel as Witness: The Development of the Early Christian Language of Faith*. Hampshire: England: Ashgate, 2004.
- Jerrold, Maud F. *Vittoria Colonna with Some Account of her Friends and her Times*. Freeport, NY: Books for Libraries Press, 1969 (originally published 1906).
- Johnson-Haddad, Miranda. "'Like the moon it renews itself': The Female Body as Text in Dante, Ariosto, and Tasso," *Stanford Italian Review* 11 1-2 (1992): 203-215.
- Jones, Ann Rosalind. *The Currency of Eros: Women's Love Lyric in Europe, 1540-1620*. Bloomington; Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1990.
- . "Female Petrarchists," in *The Cambridge Companion to Petrarch*. Ed. Albert Russell Ascoli and Unn Falkeid. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2015, 201-209.
- Jones, Pamela. "The Age of Caravaggio: Early Modern Catholicism," *An Irish Quarterly Review* 86 341 (1997): 33-42.
- Jordan, Constance. *Renaissance Feminism: Literary Texts and Political Models*. Ithaca; London: Cornell University Press, 1990.
- Josselson, Ruthellen. "The Hermeneutics of Faith and the Hermeneutics of Suspicion," *Narrative Inquiry* 14 1 (2004): 1-28.
- Kahn, Victoria Ann. "Allegory and the Sublime in *Paradise Lost*," in *John Milton*. Ed. Annabel M. Patterson. London: Routledge, 1992, 185-201.
- . *The Trouble with Literature*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020.
- Kahn, Victoria and Lorna Hutson (Ed.). *Rhetoric and Law in Early Modern Europe*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001.

- Karant-Nunn, Susan C. "The Reformation of Women," in *Becoming Visible: Women in European History*. Ed. Renate Bridenthal, Susan Mosher Stuard, and Merry E. Wiesner. Boston; New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1998, 175-202.
- Kates, Judith A. "The Revaluation of the Classical Heroic in Tasso and Milton," *Comparative Literature* 26 4 (1974): 299-317.
- Kaufmann, R. J. "Bruising the Serpent: Milton as a Tragic Poet," *The Centennial Review* 11 3 (1967): 371-386.
- Kay, Sarah, and Miri Rubin. "Introduction," in *Framing Medieval Bodies*. Ed. Sarah Kay and Miri Rubin. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1994, 1-9.
- Kearney, Richard. *The God Who May Be*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001.
- Kelly, Kathleen Coyne and Marina Leslie. "Introduction: The Epistemology of Virginity," in *Menacing Virgins: Representing Virginity in the Middle Ages and Renaissance*. Ed. Kathleen Coyne Kelly and Marina Leslie. Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1999, 15-25.
- Kennedy, William J. *The Site of Petrarchism: Early Modern National Sentiment in Italy, France, and England*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003.
- Kerr, Jason A. "De Doctrina Christiana and Milton's Theology of Liberation," *Studies in Philology* 111 2 (2014): 346-74.
- Killeen, Kevin. *The Political Bible in Early Modern England*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016.
- King, Margaret L. "Introduction," in *Reformation Thought: An Anthology of Sources*. Ed. King Margaret L. Indianapolis; Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company, 2016, xi-xvi.
- . *Women of the Renaissance*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1991.
- Klein, Ted. "The Idea of a Hermeneutical Ethics," in *The Philosophy of Paul Ricoeur*. Ed. Lewis Edwin Hahn. Chicago: Open Court, 1995, 349-366.
- Kleinhenz, Christopher. "Petrarch and the Art of the Sonnet," in *Francis Petrarch, Six Centuries Later: A Symposium*. Ed. Aldo Scaglione. North Carolina: University of North Carolina Press, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill for its Department of Romance Studies, 1975, 177-91.
- Klopp, Charles. "'Peregrino' and 'Errante' in the Gerusalemme Liberata," *MLN* 94 1 (1979): 61-76.
- Knoppers, Laura Lunger. "Introduction: Critical Framework and Issues," in *The Oxford Handbook of Literature and the English Revolution*. Ed. Laura Lunger Knoppers. Oxford: Oxford

University Press, 2012, 1-18.

Kodera, Sergius. "Nymphomaniac Matter: The Prostitute as Metaphor for the Body in Italian Renaissance Philosophy," in *The Body in Early Modern Italy*. Ed. Julia L. Hairston and Walter Stephens. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2010, 109-120.

Kofman, Sarah. *L'Énigme de la femme: la femme dans les textes de Freud*. Paris: Éditions Galilée, 1980.

Kohl, Jeanette. "Icons of Chastity, *Objets d'Amour*: Female Renaissance Portrait Busts as Ambivalent Bodies," in *The Body in Early Modern Italy*. Ed. Julia L. Hairston and Walter Stephens. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2010, 123-141.

Korte, Anne-Marie. "Paradise Lost, Growth Gained: Eve's Story Revisited—Genesis 2-4 in a Feminist Theological Perspective," in *Out of Paradise: Adam and Eve and Their Interpreters*. Ed. Bob Becking and Susanne Hennecke. Sheffield, UK: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2011, 140-156.

Krieg, Robert A. *Romano Guardini: A Precursor of Vatican II*. Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1997.

Kroll, Richard. "Renovating Restoration Hermeneutics," *The Eighteenth Century* 31 2 (1990): 169-172.

Krook, Anne K. "The Hermeneutics of Opposition in *Paradise Regained* and *Samson Agonistes*," *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900* 36 1 (1996): 129-147.

Kuhns, Oscar. *Dante and the English Poets from Chaucer to Tennyson*. New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1904.

Lambin, Rosine. "Paul et le voile des femmes," *Clio. Femmes, Genre, Histoire* 2 (1995): 1-15.

Larson, Martin A. "Milton and Servetus: A Study in the Sources of Milton's Theology," *PMLA* 41 4 (1926): 891-934.

Lehner, Ulrich L., Richard A. Muller, and A. G. Roeber. "Introduction," in *The Oxford Handbook of Early Modern Theology, 1600-1800*. Eds. Ulrich L. Lehner, Richard A. Muller, and A. G. Roeber. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016, 1-7.

Leinsle, Ulrich G. "Sources, Methods, and Forms of Early Modern Theology," in *The Oxford Handbook of Early Modern Theology, 1600-1800*. Eds. Ulrich L. Lehner, Richard A. Muller, and A. G. Roeber. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016, 25-42.

Leone, Massimo. "Converting Knights: A Semiotic Reading of Spiritual Change in Four Italian Chivalric Poems," *Signs and Society* 2 1 (2014): 84-126.

- Lerner, Ross. "Allegories of Fanaticism," in *Literature, Belief and Knowledge in Early Modern England: Knowing Faith*. Eds. Subha Mukherji, and Tim Stuart-Buttle. Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan; Springer International Publishing, 2018, 153-72.
- Levin, Carole, "Women in the Renaissance," in *Becoming Visible: Women in European History*. Ed. Renate Bridenthal, Susan Mosher Stuard, and Merry E. Wiesner. Boston; New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1998, 153-174.
- Levin, Carole, and Debra Barrett-Graves, Jo Eldridge Carney, W. M. Spellman, Gwynne Kennedy, Stephanie Witham. *Extraordinary Women of the Medieval and Renaissance World: A Biographical Dictionary*. Westport, Connecticut; London: Greenwood Press, 2000.
- Levine, Joseph M. "Matter of Fact in the English Revolution," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 64 2 (2003): 317-335.
- Lewalski, Barbara K. "Interpreting God's Word—and Words—in *Paradise Lost*," in *Milton's Rival Hermeneutics: "Reason Is But Choosing."* Ed. Richard J. DuRocher and Margaret Olofson Thickett. Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania: Duquesne University Press, 2012, 77-99.
- . *Paradise Lost and the Rhetoric of Literary Forms*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2014.
- . *Protestant Poetics and the Seventeenth-Century Religious Lyric*. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1979.
- . "Writing Women and Reading the Renaissance," *Renaissance Quarterly* 44 4 (1991): 792-821.
- Liebert, Elisabeth. "Rendering 'More Equal': Eve's Changing Discourse in *Paradise Lost*," *Milton Quarterly* 37 3 (2003): 152-165.
- Lindberg, Carter (Ed.). *The Reformation Theologians: An Introduction to Theology in the Early Modern Period*. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers Ltd, 2002.
- Livanos, Christopher. "Dante's Monsters: Nature and Evil in the *Commedia*," *Dante Studies, with the Annual Report of the Dante Society* 127 (2009): 81-92.
- Lochman, Daniel T. "Conflicts of Authority: Interpretation of Events in *Paradise Regained* and *Samson Agonistes*," in *Spokesperson Milton: Voices in Contemporary Criticism*, ed. Charles W. Durham and Kristin Pruitt McColgan. Cranbury, NJ: Associated University Presses, 1994, 165-178.
- Loewenstein, David. *Treacherous Faith: The Specter of Heresy in Early Modern English Literature and Culture*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013.
- Loewenstein, David, and James Grantham Turner. "Introduction: 'Labouring in the Word,'" in

- Politics, Poetics, and Hermeneutics in Milton's Prose*. Eds. David Loewenstein and James Grantham Turner. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1990, 1-7.
- Long, Mary Beth. "Contextualizing Eve's and Milton's Solitudes in Book 9 of *Paradise Lost*," *Milton Quarterly* 37 2 (2003): 100-115.
- Looney, Dennis. *Compromising the Classics: Romance Epic Narrative in the Italian Renaissance*. Detroit, MI: Wayne State University Press, 1996.
- Love, Heather. "Truth and Consequences: On Paranoid Reading and Reparative Reading," *Criticism* 52 2 (2010): 235-241.
- Lowe, Kate. "History Writing from within the Convent in Cinquecento Italy: The Nuns' Version," in *Women in Italian Renaissance Culture and Society*. Ed. Letizia Panizza. Oxford, UK: Legenda, European Humanities Research Center, University of Oxford, 2000, 105-121.
- MacCulloch, Diarmaid. *Silence: A Christian History*. London: Allen Lane, 2013.
- Maggi, Armando. "The Place of Female Mysticism in the Italian Literary Canon," in *Strong Voices, Weak History: Early Women Writers & Canons in England, France, & Italy*. Eds. Pamela Joseph Benson and Victoria Kirkham. Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2005, 199-215.
- Malan, Gert Jacobus. "Ricoeur on Myth and Demythologising," *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies* 72 4 (2016): 1-7.
- Marcozzi, Luca. "The Metaphor of the *Corpus Carcer* in Petrarch's *Canzoniere* and in the Lyrical Tradition," in *The Body in Early Modern Italy*. Ed. Julia L. Hairston and Walter Stephens. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2010, 24-41.
- Martin, Catherine Gimelli. "Dalila, Misogyny, and Milton's Christian Liberty of Divorce," in *Milton and Gender*. Ed. Catherine Gimelli Martin. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004, 53-74.
- . "Introduction: Milton's Gendered Subjects," in *Milton and Gender*. Ed. Catherine Gimelli Martin. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004, 1-15.
- . *Milton's Italy: Anglo-Italian Literature, Travel, and Religion in Seventeenth-Century England*. New York, NY: Rutledge, 2017.
- Martindale, Charles. "Writing Epic: *Paradise Lost*," in *The Oxford Handbook of Milton*. Eds. Nicholas McDowell and Nigel Smith. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011, 439-461.
- Martinez, Ronald L. "Mourning Laura in the *Canzoniere*: Lessons from Lamentations," *MLN* 118 1 Italian Issue (2003): 1-45.

- Martz, Louis L. *Milton: Poet of Exile*. New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 1986.
- Mattucci, Emilio. "Vittoria Colonna, Pietro Carafa e Michelangelo nella stagione della 'Riforma,'" in *Michelangelo e Dante*. Ed. Corrado Gizzi. Milan: Electa, 1995, 113-114.
- Maus, Katharine Eisaman, and Elizabeth D. Harvey. "Introduction," in *Soliciting Interpretation: Literary Theory and Seventeenth-Century English Poetry*. Ed. Elizabeth D. Harvey and Katharine Eisaman Maus. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1990.
- McAuliffe, Dennis J. "Neoplatonism in Vittoria Colonna's Poetry: From the Secular to the Divine," in *Ficino and Renaissance Neoplatonism*. Eds. Konrad Eisenbichler and Olga Zorzi Pugliese. University of Toronto Italian Studies: Dovehouse Editions Canada, 1986, 101-112.
- . "Vittoria Colonna and Renaissance Poetics, Convention and Society," in *Il Rinascimento: aspetti e problemi attuali*. Ed. Vittore Branca, Claudio Griggio, Marco Pecoraro, Elisanna Pecoraro, Gilberto Pizzamiglio, and Eros Sequi. Florence: Olschki, 1982, 531-541.
- McCabe, Beverly A. "Eve: Victim, Villain, or Vehicle? The Forewarnings and Prefiguration of the Fall in *Paradise Lost*," *CLA Journal* 43 1 (1999): 73-88.
- McChrystal, Deirdre Keenan. "Redeeming Eve," *English Literary Renaissance* 23 3 (1993): 490-408.
- McClure, George W. "Women and the Politics of Play in Sixteenth-Century Italy: Torquato Tasso's Theory of Games," *Renaissance Quarterly* 61 3 (2008): 750-91.
- McColley, Diane. "Eve and the Arts of Eden," in *Milton and the Idea of Woman*. Ed. Julia M. Walker. Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1988, 100-119.
- . *Milton's Eve*. Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1983.
- . "Shapes of Things Divine: Eve and Myth in *Paradise Lost*," *The Sixteenth Century Journal* 9 4 (1978): 46-55.
- McGrath, Alister E. *Iustitia Dei: A History of the Christian Doctrine of Justification*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005 (originally published 1986).
- McInerney, Maud Burnett. "Rhetoric, Power, and Integrity in the Passion of the Virgin Martyr," in *Menacing Virgins: Representing Virginity in the Middle Ages and Renaissance*. Ed. Kathleen Coyne Kelly and Marina Leslie. Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1999, 50-70.
- McIver, Katherine A. "Introduction," in *Wives, Widows, Mistresses, and Nuns in Early Modern Italy: Making the Invisible Visible through Art and Patronage*. Ed. Katherine A. McIver. Farnham: Ashgate, 2012, 1-9.
- McLean, B. H. *Biblical Interpretation and Philosophical Hermeneutics*. Cambridge: Cambridge

University Press, 2012.

- Medioli, Francesca. "To Take or not to Take the Veil: Selected Italian Case Histories, the Renaissance and After," in *Women in Italian Renaissance Culture and Society*. Ed. Letizia Panizza. Oxford, UK: Legenda, European Humanities Research Center, University of Oxford, 2000, 122-137.
- Menchi, Silvana Seidel. "Alcuni atteggiamenti della cultura italiana di fronte a Erasmo," in *Eresia e Riforma nell'Italia del Cinquecento: Miscellanea I*. Eds. Luigi Firpo, Giorgio Spini, Antonio Rotondò, and John A. Tedeschi. Chicago; Florence: Sansoni, 1974, 69-133.
- Miccoli, Giovanni. "'L'avarizia e l'orgoglio di un frate laido...': Problemi e aspetti dell'interpretazione cattolica di Lutero," in *Lutero in Italia: Studi storici nel V centenario della nascita*. Ed. Lorenzo Perrone. Piedmont, Italy: Marietti, 1983, viix-xxiii.
- Migiel, Marilyn. "Secrets of a Sorceress: Tasso's Armida," *Quaderni d'Italianistica* 8 2 (1987): 149-166.
- Migiel, Marilyn, and Juliana Schiesari. "Introduction," in *Refiguring Women: Perspectives on Gender and the Italian Renaissance*. Ed. Marilyn Migiel, and Juliana Schiesari. Ithaca; London: Cornell University Press, 1991, 1-15.
- Miles, Margaret R. "The Virgin's One Bare Breast: Nudity, Gender, and Religious Meaning in Tuscan Early Renaissance Culture," in *The Expanding Discourse: Feminism and Art History*. Ed. Norma Broude and Mary D. Garrard. New York: Icon Editions, 1992, 27-37.
- Mirabella, Bella. "Introduction," in *Ornamentalism: The Art of Renaissance Accessories*. Ed. Bella Mirabella. Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2011, 1-10.
- Mirollo, James V. *Mannerism and Renaissance Poetry: Concept, Mode, Inner Design*. New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 1984.
- Molinari, Carla. "Introduzione," in *Lettere poetiche di Torquato Tasso*. Ed. Carla Molinari. Parma: Fondazione Pietro Bembo; Guanda, 1995, ix-xliv; xlv-lxxxvii.
- Mollenkott, Virginia R. "Milton and Women's Liberation: A Note on Teaching Method," *Milton Quarterly* 7 4 (1973): 99-103.
- Monta, Susannah Brietz. *Martyrdom and Literature in Early Modern England*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005.
- Montgomery, Jr., Robert L. "Allegory and the Incredible Fable: The Italian View from Dante to Tasso," *PMLA* 81 1 (1966): 45-55.
- Moore, Jeanie Grant. "The Two Faces of Eve: Temptation Scenes in *Comus* and *Paradise Lost*," *Milton Quarterly* 36 1 (2002): 1-19.

- Moore, Mary B. *Desiring Voices: Women Sonneteers and Petrarchism*. Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 2000.
- Morgenstern, Julian. "Moses with the Shining Face," *Hebrew Union College Annual* 2 (1925): 1-27.
- Moriarty, Michael. *Early Modern French Thought: The Age of Suspicion*. Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2003.
- Moroncini, Ambra. *Michelangelo's Poetry and Iconography in the Heart of the Reformation*. London; New York: Routledge, 2017.
- Moroni, Ornella. "Il velo: un *excursus* nella letteratura italiana," in *Abito e identità: ricerche di storia letteraria e culturale*. Ed. Cristina Giorcelli. Palermo; Roma: Mazzone, 2009, 69-94.
- Morris, Marla. "Touching Feeling: Affect, Pedagogy, Performativity (review)," *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 13 2 (2004): 263-266.
- Morrison, Sarah R. "The Accommodating Serpent and God's Grace in *Paradise Lost*," *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900* 49 1 (2009): 173-195.
- Most, Glenn W. *Doubting Thomas*. Cambridge, MA; London, England: Harvard University Press, 2005.
- Mudge, Lewis. S. "Paul Ricoeur on Biblical Interpretation," in Paul Ricoeur, *Essays on Biblical Interpretation*. Ed. Lewis S. Mudge. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1980, 1-40.
- Mukherji, Subha. "Crossroads of Knowledge: Literature and Theology," in *Literature, Belief and Knowledge in Early Modern England: Knowing Faith*. Eds. Subha Mukherji, and Tim Stuart-Buttle. Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan; Springer International Publishing, 2018, 3-36.
- Müller, Giuseppe, and Ermanno Ferraro. *Vittoria Colonna, Marchesa di Pescara: Vita, fede e poesia nel secolo decimosesto per Alfredo Reumont*. Turin: Loescher, 1892.
- Muller, Richard A. "Reformed Theology Between 1600 and 1800," in *The Oxford Handbook of Early Modern Theology, 1600-1800*. Eds. Ulrich L. Lehner, Richard A. Muller, and A. G. Roeber. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016, 167-178.
- Murrin, Michael. *The Allegorical Epic: Essay in its Rise and Decline*. Chicago; London: The University of Chicago Press, 1980.
- . *The Veil of Allegory: Some Notes toward a Theory of Allegorical Rhetoric in the English Renaissance*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1969.

- Murtaugh, Kristen Olson. "Erminia Delivered: Notes on Tasso and Romance," *Quaderni d'Italianistica* 3 1 (1982): 12-25.
- Myers, Alexander A. "'Forces Forcible and Foul': Viewing Milton's Sin as a Rape Victim," *Milton Quarterly* 28 1 (1994): 11-16.
- Myers, Benjamin. "'Following the Way Which Is Called Heresy': Milton and the Heretical Imperative," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 69 3 (2008): 375-393.
- Myers, Williams. *Milton and Free Will: An Essay in Criticism and Philosophy*. London; New York: Routledge, 2019 (originally published by Croom Helm, 1987).
- Nagel, Alexander. *The Controversy of Renaissance Art*. Chicago; London: University of Chicago Press, 2011.
- . "Gifts for Michelangelo and Vittoria Colonna," *Art Bulletin* 79 4 (1997): 647-668.
- . *Michelangelo and the Reform of Art*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000.
- Neely, Carol Thomas. "The Structure of English Renaissance Sonnet Sequences," *ELH* 45 3 (1978): 359-89.
- Netzley, Ryan. "How Reading Works: Hermeneutics and Reading Practice in *Paradise Regained*," *Milton Studies* 49 (2008): 146-166.
- Niccoli, Ottavia. "Il mostro di Sassonia: Conoscenza e non conoscenza di Lutero in Italia nel Cinquecento," in *Lutero in Italia: Studi storici nel V centenario della nascita*. Ed. Lorenzo Perrone. Piedmont, Italy: Marietti, 1983, 3-25.
- Nieto, Jose C. *Juan de Valdes and the Origins of the Spanish and Italian Reformation*. Geneva: Librairie Droz, 1970.
- Nobbio, Raffaella Mollaretti. *Vittoria Colonna e Michelangelo*. Firenze: Firenze Libri, 1990.
- Norhnberg, James C. "The Descent of Geryon: The Moral System of Inferno XVI-XXXI," *Dante Studies, with the Annual Report of the Dante Society* 114 (1996): 129-187.
- . "The Religion of Adam and Eve in *Paradise Lost*," *Religion & Literature* 45 1 (2013): 160-179.
- Och, Marjorie. "Vittoria Colonna in Giorgio Vasari's 'Life of Properzia de' Rossi,'" in *Wives, Widows, Mistresses, and Nuns in Early Modern Italy: Making the Invisible Visible through Art and Patronage*. Ed. Katherine A. McIver. Farnham: Ashgate, 2012, 119-137.
- Oden, Amy. "Vittoria Colonna, Poetry (early 1500s)," in *In Her Words: Women's Writings in the History of Christian Thought*. Ed. Amy Oden. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1994, 219-222.

- O'Keefe, Timothy J. "An Analogue to Milton's 'Sin' and More on the Tradition," *Milton Quarterly* 5 4 (1971): 74-77.
- O'Malley, John W. *Trent and All That: Renaming Catholicism in the Early Modern Era*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000.
- . *Trent: What Happened at the Council*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2013.
- Oppenheimer, Paul. "The Origin of the Sonnet," *Comparative Literature* 34 4 (1982): 289-304.
- Ossola, Carlo. "Tradizione e traduzione dell'*Evangelio di San Matteo* di Juan de Valdés," in *Eresia e Riforma nell'Italia del Cinquecento: Miscellanea I*. Eds. Luigi Firpo, Giorgio Spini, Antonio Rotondò, and John A. Tedeschi. Chicago; Florence: Sansoni, 1974, 239-268.
- Oventile, Robert Savino. "Milton's *Paradise Lost*: Sin's Ambition, Eve's Flight," in *Satan's Secret Daughters: The Muse as Daemon*. Aurora, CO: The Davies Group Publishers, 2014, 179-244.
- Overell, Anne. *Italian Reform and English Reformations, c.1535-c.1585*. Hampshire, UK; Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2008.
- Pagano, Sergio M. "Vittoria Colonna e l'Inquisizione," in *Nuovi documenti su Vittoria Colonna e Reginald Pole*. Ed. Sergio M. Pagano and Concetta Ranieri. Vatican: Collectanea Archivi Vaticani, 1989, 21-62.
- Panizza, Letizia. "Torquato Tasso's *Il mondo creato* and Boethius, A Neglected Model," *Renaissance Studies* 5 3 (1991): 301-314.
- Parker, Patricia. "Eve, Evening, and the Labor of Reading in *Paradise Lost*," *English Literary Renaissance* 9 2 (1979): 319-342.
- Partner, Jane. "Seeing and Believing: Thomas Traherne's Poetic Language and the Reading Eye," in *Literature, Belief and Knowledge in Early Modern England: Knowing Faith*. Eds. Subha Mukherji, and Tim Stuart-Buttle. Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan; Springer International Publishing, 2018, 85-108.
- Patterson, Annabel M. "Tasso and Neoplatonism: The Growth of his Epic Theory," *Studies in the Renaissance* 18 (1971): 105-133.
- Paulicelli, Eugenia. "From the Sacred to the Secular: The Gendered Geography of Veils in Italian Cinquecento Fashion," in *Ornamentalism: The Art of Renaissance Accessories*. Ed. Bella Mirabella. Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2011, 40-58.
- . *Writing Fashion in Early Modern Italy: From Sprezzatura to Satire*. Surrey: England: Ashgate, 2014.

- Payton, Jr., James R. *Getting the Reformation Wrong: Correcting Some Misunderstandings*. Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 2010.
- Pecora, Vincent P. "Suspicion...Hermeneutics...Religion?" *Religion & Literature* 48 2 (2016): 183-89.
- Peterson, Boyd Jay. "'Redeemed from the Curse Placed upon Her': Dialogic Discourse on Eve in the Woman's Exponent," *Journal of Mormon History* 40 1 (2014): 135-174.
- Petty, Jane M. "The Voice at Eve's Ear in *Paradise Lost*," *Milton Quarterly* 19 2 (1985): 42-47.
- Peyronel, Susanna. "I Carteggi di Giulia Gonzaga," in *Donne di potere nel Rinascimento*. Eds. Letizia Arcangeli, and Susanna Peyronel. Rome: Viella, 2008, 709-742.
- . "Premessa," in *Giovanni Calvino e la riforma in Italia: Influenze e conflitti*. Ed. Susanna Peyronel Rambaldi. Turin: Claudiana, 2011, 5-28.
- Picchione, John. "Baroque Poetry in Italy: Deception, Illusion, and Epistemological Shifts," in *Disguise, Deception, Trompe-l'oeil: Interdisciplinary Perspectives*. Ed. Leslie Boldt-Irons, Corrado Federici, & Ernesto Virgulti. New York: Peter Lang, 2009, 61-70.
- Pierantozzi, Decio. "La Gerusalemme liberata come poema religioso," *Studi tassiani* 32 (1984): 29-42.
- Pierno, Franco. *La parola in fuga: Lingua italian ed esilio religioso nel Cinquecento*. Rome: Edizioni di Storia e letteratura, 2018.
- Pirillo, Diego. "The Italian Reformation," in *Oxford Bibliographies*. Last modified January 15, 2015. Retrieved December 2019.
- . *The Refugee-Diplomat: Venice, England, and the Reformation*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2018.
- Plett, Heinrich F. *Enargeia in Classical Antiquity and the Early Modern Age: The Aesthetics of Evidence*. Leiden: Brill, 2012.
- Pomeroy, Sarah B. *Goddesses, Whores, Wives, and Slaves: Women in Classical Antiquity*. New York: Schocken Books, 1995 (originally published 1975).
- Pomplun, Trent. "Catholic Sacramental Theology in the Baroque Age," in *The Oxford Handbook of Early Modern Theology, 1600-1800*. Eds. Ulrich L. Lehner, Richard A. Muller, and A. G. Roeber. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016, 135-149.
- Porter, Stanley E., and Beth M. Stovel. "Introduction: Trajectories in Biblical Hermeneutics," in *Biblical Hermeneutics: Five Views*. Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 2012, 9-24.

- Poss, Richard L. "The Veil in *Rime* 52: Petrarch's Secular Butterfly," *Italian Culture* 7 (1986-1989): 7-16.
- Prodan, Sarah Rolfe. *Michelangelo's Christian Mysticism: Spirituality, Poetry, and Art in Sixteenth-Century Italy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014.
- Prosperi, Adriano. "Censurare le favole. Il protoromanzo e l'Europa cattolica," in *Il romanzo*. Ed. Franco Moretti. Turin: Einaudi, 2001, 71-106.
- . *L'eresia del Libro Grande: Storia di Giorgio Siculo e della sua setta*. Milan: Feltrinelli, 2000.
- . "Lutero al Concilio di Trento," in *Lutero in Italia: Studi storici nel V centenario della nascita*. Ed. Lorenzo Perrone. Piedmont, Italy: Marietti, 1983, 95-114.
- Prudlo, Donald S. "The Catholic Reform," in *Christian Theologies of Salvation: A Comparative Introduction*. Ed. Justin S. Holcomb. New York: New York University Press, 2006, 225-247.
- . "Scripture and Theology in Early Modern Catholicism," in *Christian Theologies of Salvation: A Comparative Introduction*. Ed. Justin S. Holcomb. New York: New York University Press, 2006, 134-153.
- Quantin, Jean-Louis. "Catholic Moral Theology, 1550-1800," in *The Oxford Handbook of Early Modern Theology, 1600-1800*. Eds. Ulrich L. Lehner, Richard A. Muller, and A. G. Roeber. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016, 119-134.
- Quint, David. *Origin and Originality in Renaissance Literature: Versions of the Source*. New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 1983.
- Rabitti, Giovanna. "Vittoria Colonna as Role Model for Cinquecento Women Poets," in *Women in Italian Renaissance Culture and Society*. Ed. Letizia Panizza. Oxford, UK: Legenda, European Humanities Research Center, University of Oxford, 2000, 478-497.
- Rajan, Balachandra. "'Samson Hath Quit Himself / Like Samson,'" *Milton Quarterly* 41 1 (2007): 1-11.
- Ramachandran, Ayesha. "Tasso's Petrarch: The Lyric Means to Epic Ends," *MLN* 122 1 (2007): 186-208.
- Ranieri, Concetta, and Sergio M. Pagano. *Nuovi documenti su Vittoria Colonna e Reginald Pole*. Ed. Sergio M. Pagano and Concetta Ranieri. Vatican: Collectanea Archivi Vaticani, 1989.
- Raymond, Joad. *Milton's Angels: The Early-Modern Imaginary*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010.

- Refini, Eugenio, "Giuditta, Armida e il velo della seduzione," *Italian Studies* 68 1 (2013): 78-98.
- Residori, Matteo. "Introduction," in *Michelangelo's Poetry and Iconography in the Heart of the Reformation*. London; New York: Routledge, 2017, 1-6.
- Rhu, Lawrence F. "From Aristotle to Allegory: Young Tasso's Evolving Vision of the *Gerusalemme Liberata*," *Italica* 65 2 (1988): 111-130.
- . *The Genesis of Tasso's Narrative Theory: English Translations of the Early Poetics and a Comparative Study of Their Significance*. Detroit: Wayne University Press, 1993.
- Ricci, Giovanni. *Ossessione turca: In una retrovia cristiana dell'Europa moderna*. Bologna: Il Mulino, 2002.
- Richardson, Brian. *Manuscript Culture in Renaissance Italy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009.
- . *Printing, Writers and Readers in Renaissance Italy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999.
- . "Sixteenth-Century Italian Petrarchists and Musical Settings of their Verse," in *Voices and Texts in Early Modern Italian Society*. Eds. Stefano Dall'Aglia, Brian Richardson, and Massimo Rospocher. London; New York: Routledge, 2016, 124-138.
- Ricoeur, Paul. *Essays on Biblical Interpretation*. Ed. Lewis S. Mudge. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1980 (essays originally published between 1974-1979).
- . *Freud and Philosophy: An Essay on Interpretation*. Trans. Denis Savage. New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 1970.
- . *Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences: Essays on Language, Action and Interpretation*. Ed. and trans. John B. Thompson. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016 (originally published 1981).
- . "The Metaphorical Process as Cognition, Imagination, and Feeling," *Critical Inquiry* 5 1 (1978): 143-159.
- . "Reply to David Stewart," in *The Philosophy of Paul Ricoeur*. Ed. Lewis Edwin Hahn. Chicago: Open Court, 1995, 443-449.
- . "Reply to John E. Smith," in *The Philosophy of Paul Ricoeur*. Ed. Lewis Edwin Hahn. Chicago: Open Court, 1995, 165-168.
- . "Reply to Lewis S. Mudge," in Paul Ricoeur, *Essays on Biblical Interpretation*. Ed. Lewis S. Mudge. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1980, 41-45.

- Rigolot, François. "Qu'est-ce qu'un sonnet? Perspectives sur les origines d'une forme poétique," *Revue d'Histoire littéraire de la France* 84 1 (1984): 3-18.
- Roberts, Sasha. "Reading in Early Modern England: Contexts and Problems," *Critical Survey* 12 2 (2000): 1-16.
- Robin, Diana. *Publishing Women: Salons, the Presses, and the Counter-Reformation in Sixteenth-Century Italy*. Chicago; London: The University of Chicago Press, 2007.
- Robinson, G. D. "Paul Ricoeur and the Hermeneutics of Suspicion: A Brief Overview and Critique," *Premise* 2 8 (1995).
- Rogers, John. "Transported Touch: The Fruit of Marriage in *Paradise Lost*," in *Milton and Gender*. Ed. Catherine Gimelli Martin. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004, 115-132.
- Ronsse, Erin. "Rhetoric of Martyrs: Listening to Saints Perpetua and Felicitas," *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 14 3 (2006): 283-327.
- Rozzo, Ugo. "Italian Literature on the Index," in *Church, Censorship, and Culture in Early Modern Italy*. Ed. Gigliola Fragnito. Trans. Adrian Belton. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001, 194-222.
- Rublack, Ulinka. *Reformation Europe*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2017 (originally published 2005).
- Russell, Camilla. *Giulia Conzaga and the Religious Controversies of Sixteenth-Century Italy*. Belgium: Brepols, 2006.
- Russell, Rinaldina. "Vittoria Colonna's Sonnets on the Virgin Mary," in *Maria Vergine nella Letteratura Italiana*. Ed. Florinda M. Iannace. Stony Brook, NY: Forum Italicum Publishing, 2000, 125-137.
- Russell, William R. "Introduction," in Timothy F. Lull, and William R. Russell, *Martin Luther's Basic Theological Writings*. Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress Publishers, 2012, xix-xxiv.
- Rutledge, Douglas. "The Politics of Disguise: Drama and Political Theory in the Early Seventeenth Century," in *The Witness of Times: Manifestations of Ideology in Seventeenth Century England*. Ed. Katherine Z. Keller and Gerald J. Schiffhorst. Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, 1993, 90-120.
- Ryrie, Alec. *Being Protestant in Reformation Britain*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013.
- Sadler, Lynn Veach. "The Problem of the Ending of *Samson Agonistes*: Aristotle Plus Reorientation," *Neuphilologische Mitteilungen* 76 4 (1975): 642-650.
- . "Typological Imagery in *Samson Agonistes*: Noon and the Dragon," *EHL* 37 2 (1970): 195-

Sáez, Richard. *Theodicy in Baroque Literature*. New York; London: Garland Publishing, 1985.

Safer, Elaine B. “‘Sufficient to Have Stood’: Eve’s Responsibility in Book IX,” *Milton Quarterly* 6 3 (1972): 10-14.

Samuel, Irene. “The Valley of Serpents: *Inferno* XXIV-XXV and *Paradise Lost* X. 504-577,” *PMLA* 78 4 (1963): 449-451.

Sanson, Helena. “Vittoria Colonna and Language,” in *A Companion to Vittoria Colonna*. Eds. Abigail Brundin, Tatiana Crivelli, and Maria Serena Sapegno. Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2016, 195-233.

Sapegno, Maria Serena. “Introduzione,” in *Al crocevia della storia: poesia, religione e politica in Vittoria Colonna*. Ed. Maria Serena Sapegno. Rome: Viella, 2016, 7-13.

———. “‘Poco giova aver candide e grosse perle senza saperle infilar di modo che l’una favorisca l’altra,’” in *Al crocevia della storia: poesia, religione e politica in Vittoria Colonna*. Ed. Maria Serena Sapegno. Rome: Viella, 2016, 119-135.

———. “The *Rime*: A Textual Conundrum?” in *A Companion to Vittoria Colonna*. Eds. Abigail Brundin, Tatiana Crivelli, and Maria Serena Sapegno. Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2016, 140-194.

Sauer, Elizabeth. “Pious Fraud: Extralegal Heroism in *Samson Agonistes*,” *Studies in English Literature* 53 1 (2013): 179-196.

Scarpati, Claudio. “Le rime spirituali di Vittoria Colonna nel codice Vaticano donato a Michelangelo,” *Aevum* 78 3 (2004): 693-717.

Schmidt, Thomas E. “The Penetration of Barriers and the Revelation of Christ in the Gospels,” *Novum Testamentum* 34 3 (1992): 229-246.

Schneider, Ulrike. “Playing (with) *Personae*: Gaspara Stampa’s *Rime* as an Implicit Reflection on the Fictional Status of Poetry,” in *Rethinking Gaspara Stampa in the Canon of Renaissance Poetry*. Ed. Unn Falkeid and Aileen A. Feng. Surrey, UK; Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2015, 157-170.

Schnepper, Rachel N. “Religion in the British Civil Wars,” in *Oxford Bibliographies*. Last modified, February 2013. Retrieved April 2020.

Schwartz, Louis. “The Wide Wound and the Veil: Sonnet 23 and the ‘Birth’ of Eve in *Paradise Lost*,” in *Milton and Maternal Morality*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2009, 155-210.

Schwartz, Regina M. “Citation, Authority, and *De Doctrina Christiana*,” in *Politics, Poetics, and*

- Hermeneutics in Milton's Prose*. Eds. David Loewenstein and James Grantham Turner. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1990, 227-240.
- . "Knowing and Forgiving," in *Literature, Belief and Knowledge in Early Modern England: Knowing Faith*. Eds. Subha Mukherji, and Tim Stuart-Buttle. Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan; Springer International Publishing, 2018, 217-238.
- Schwartz, Sanford. "Hermeneutics and the Productive Imagination: Paul Ricoeur in the 1970s," *The Journal of Religion* 63 3 (1983): 290-300.
- Scott-Baumann, Alison. *Ricoeur and the Hermeneutics of Suspicion*. New York; London: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2009.
- Scott-Warren, Jason. *Sir John Harrington and the Book as Gift*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001.
- Sedgwick, Eve K. *Touching Feeling: Affect, Pedagogy, Performativity*. Durham; London: Duke University Press, 2003.
- Seem, Lauren Scancarelli. "The Limits of Chivalry: Tasso and the End of the *Aeneid*," *Comparative Literature* 42 2 (1990): 116-125.
- Serjeantson, Deirdre. "Milton and the Tradition of Protestant Petrarchism," *The Review of English Studies* 65 272 (2014): 831-52.
- Shagan, Ethan H. *The Birth of Modern Belief: Faith and Judgment from the Middle Ages to the Enlightenment*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2018.
- . "How to Do Things with Belief," in *Literature, Belief and Knowledge in Early Modern England: Knowing Faith*. Eds. Subha Mukherji, and Tim Stuart-Buttle. Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan; Springer International Publishing, 2018, 239-258.
- Shawcross, John T. *The Uncertain World of Samson Agonistes*. Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2001.
- Sherberg, Michael. "Aspects of Rinaldo's Conquest of Evil in the *Gerusalemme Liberata*," in *Western Gerusalem University of California Studies on Tasso*. Ed. Luisa Del Giudice. London: Out of London Press, 1984, 95-111.
- Sherwood, John C. "Dryden and the Critical Theories of Tasso," *Comparative Literature* 18 4 (1966): 351-359.
- Shullenberger, William. "Wrestling with the Angel: *Paradise Lost* and Feminist Criticism," *Milton Quarterly* 20 3 (1986): 69-85.
- Simoncelli, Paolo. *Evangelismo italiano del Cinquecento: Questione religiosa e nicodemismo politico*. Rome: Istituto Storico Italiano per l'Età Moderna e Contemporanea, 1979.

- Simons, Patricia. "Women in Frames: The Gaze, the Eye, the Profile in Renaissance Portraiture," in *The Expanding Discourse: Feminism and Art History*. Ed. Norma Broude and Mary D. Garrard. New York: Icon Editions, 1992, 39-57.
- Simons, Walter. "Reading a Saint's Body: Rapture and Bodily Movement in the *Vitae* of Thirteenth-Century Beguines," in *Framing Medieval Bodies*. Ed. Sarah Kay and Miri Rubin. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1994, 10-23.
- Skinner, Quentin. "History and Ideology in the English Revolution," *The Historical Journal* 8 2 (1965): 151-178.
- Sloan, Grietje. "The Transformation of Religious Conversion from the Renaissance to the Counter-Reformation: Petrarch and Caravaggio," *Historical Reflections / Réflexions Historiques* 15 1 (1988): 131-49.
- Smith, John E. "Freud, Philosophy, and Interpretation," in *The Philosophy of Paul Ricoeur*. Ed. Lewis Edwin Hahn. Chicago: Open Court, 1995, 147-164.
- Smith, Nigel. "*Areopagitica*: Voicing Contexts, 1643-5," in *Politics, Poetics, and Hermeneutics in Milton's Prose*. Eds. David Loewenstein and James Grantham Turner. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1990, 103-122.
- . "The Anti-Episcopal Tracts: Republican Puritanism and the Truth in Poetry," in *The Oxford Handbook of Milton*. Eds. Nicholas McDowell and Nigel Smith. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011, 155- 173.
- . *Literature and Revolution in England, 1640-1660*. New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 1994.
- . "Milton and the Index," in *Of Paradise and Light: Essays on Henry Vaughan and John Milton in Honor of Alan Rudrum*. Eds. Donald R. Dickson and Holly Faith Nelson. Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2004, 101-122.
- . "*Paradise Lost* and Heresy," in *The Oxford Handbook of Milton*. Eds. Nicholas McDowell and Nigel Smith. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011, 510-524.
- Snow, Edward. "Theorizing the Male Gaze: Some Problems," *Representations* 25 (1989): 30-41.
- Sommers, Paula. "The *Mirror* and its Reflections: Marguerite de Navarre's Biblical Feminism," *Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature* 5 1 (1986): 29-39.
- Sozzi, Bortolo Tommaso. "Introduzione," in *Opere di Torquato Tasso*. 2 vols. Ed. Bortolo Tommaso Sozzi. Turin: Tipografia Capretto, 1968 (originally published 1955), 7-25.
- . "Nota Introduttiva al *Discorsi dell'arte poetica*," in *Opere di Torquato Tasso*. 2 vols. Ed.

- Bortolo Tommaso Sozzi. Turin: Tipografia Capretto, 1968 (originally published 1955), 653-655.
- . “Nota Introduttiva al *Discorsi del poema eroico*,” in *Opere di Torquato Tasso*. 2 vols. Ed. Bortolo Tommaso Sozzi. Turin: Tipografia Capretto, 1969 (originally published 1955), 693-694.
- Stageberg, Norman C. “The Aesthetics of the Petrarchan Sonnet,” *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 7 2 (1948): 132-37.
- Stallybrass, Peter, and Ann Rosalind Jones. “Fetishizing the Glove in Renaissance Europe,” *Critical Inquiry* 28 1 (2001): 114-132.
- Steadman, John M. “Felicity and End in Renaissance Epic and Ethics,” *Journal of the History of Ideas* 23 1 (1962): 117-132.
- . “Milton and St. Basil: The Genesis of Sin and Death,” *Modern Language Notes* 73 2 (1958): 83-4.
- . *Milton's Biblical and Classical Imagery*. Pittsburgh, PA: Duquesne University Press, 1984.
- . “‘Sin’ and the Serpent of Genesis 3 *Paradise Lost*, II, 650-53,” *Modern Philology* 54 4 (1957): 217-220.
- Stephens, Walter. “Metaphor, Sacrament, and the Problem of Allegory in *Gerusalemme Liberata*,” *I Tatti Studies in the Italian Renaissance* 4 (1991): 217-247.
- . “Tasso and the Witches,” *Annali d’Italianistica* 12 (1994): 181-202.
- . “Trickster, Textor, Architect, Thief: Craft and Comedy in *Gerusalemme liberata*,” in *Renaissance Transaction: Ariosto and Tasso*. Ed. Valeria Finucci. Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1999, 146-177.
- Stewart, David. “The Hermeneutics of Suspicion,” *Literature and Theology* 3 3 (1989): 296-307.
- . “Ricoeur on Religious Language,” in *The Philosophy of Paul Ricoeur*. Ed. Lewis Edwin Hahn. Chicago: Open Court, 1995, 423-442.
- Stockhausen, Carol Kern. *Moses’ Veil and the Glory of the New Covenant: The Exegetical Substructure of II Cor. 3,1-4,6*. Rome: Pontificio Istituto Biblico, 1989.
- Stoll, Elmer Edgar. “Milton, Puritan of the Seventeenth Century,” in *Poets and Playwrights*. Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 1930, 221-271.
- . “Was Paradise Well Lost?” in *Poets and Playwrights*. Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 1930, 187-192.

- Stone, James W. “‘Man’s effeminate s(lack)ness’: Androgyny and the Divided Unity of Adam and Eve,” *Milton Quarterly* 31 2 (1997): 33-42.
- Streete, Gail P.C. *Redeemed Bodies: Women Martyrs in Early Christianity*. Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 2009.
- Sunshine, Glenn S. *A Brief Introduction to the Reformation*. Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 2017.
- Swan, Jesse G. “Author-Functions and the Interpretations of Eve in *Paradise Lost*,” *Milton Quarterly* 26 3 (1992): 59-69.
- Swann, Elizabeth L. “*Nosce Teipsum*: The Senses of Self-Knowledge in Early Modern England,” in *Literature, Belief and Knowledge in Early Modern England: Knowing Faith*. Eds. Subha Mukherji, and Tim Stuart-Buttle. Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan; Springer International Publishing, 2018, 195-214.
- Szondi, Peter, and Timothy Bahti, “Introduction to Literary Hermeneutics,” *New Literary History* 10 1 (1978): 17-29.
- Targoff, Ramie. *Renaissance Woman: The Life of Vittoria Colonna*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2018.
- . “La volontà segreta di Vittoria Colonna: una lettera smarrita a Clemente VII,” in *Al crocevia della storia: poesia, religione e politica in Vittoria Colonna*. Ed. Maria Serena Sapegno. Rome: Viella, 2016, 217-224.
- Tarrant, Neil. “The Ambiguities of Censorship in Post-Tridentine Italy: The Case of Physiognomy,” *Preternature: Critical and Historical Studies on the Preternatural* 8 2 (2019): 171-201.
- Taylor, Edward W. “Milton’s Firedrake,” *Milton Quarterly* 6 3 (1972): 7-10.
- Taylor, Jamie K. *Fictions of Evidence: Witnessing, Literature, and Community in the Late Middle Ages*. Columbus: The Ohio State University Press, 2013.
- Teskey, Gordon. “Allegory and Renaissance Critical Theory,” in *Spenserian Moments*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2019, 228-240.
- . *Delirious Milton: The Fate of the Poet in Modernity*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006.
- Thickstun, Margaret Olofson. “Fame, Shame, and the Importance of Community in *Samson Agonistes*,” in *Milton’s Rival Hermeneutics: “Reason Is But Choosing.”* Ed. Richard J. DuRocher and Margaret Olofson Thickstun. Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania: Duquesne University

- Press, 2012, 183-203.
- Thomas, Susanne Sara. "Petrarch, Tournier, Photography, and Fetishism: The Veil in the *Rime Sparse*," *Romance Quarterly* 43 3 (1996): 131-141.
- Thornton, Bruce. "The False Goddess and Her Lost Paradise," *Arion: A Journal of Humanities and the Classics* 7 1 (1999): 72-97.
- Tigerstedt, E. N. "The Poet as Creator: Origins of a Metaphor," *Comparative Literature Studies* 5 4 (1968): 455-488.
- Treip, Mindele Anne. *Allegorical Poetics and the Epic*. Kentucky: The University Press of Kentucky, 1994.
- . "'Reason Is Also Choice': The Emblematics of Free Will in *Paradise Lost*," *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900* 31 1 (1991): 147-177.
- Trible, Phyllis. "Depatriarchalizing in Biblical Interpretation," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 41 (1973): 30-48.
- Trinkaus, Charles. "The Problem of Free Will in the Renaissance and the Reformation," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 10 1 (1949): 51-62.
- Trubowitz, Rachel. "'I was his nursling once': Nation, Lactation, and the Hebraic in *Samson Agonistes*," in *Milton and Gender*. Ed. Catherine Gimelli Martin. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004, 167-183.
- Tucker, Cynthia Grant. "Meredith's Broken Laurel: *Modern Love* and the Renaissance Sonnet Tradition," *Victorian Poetry* 10 4 (1972): 351-65.
- Tutino, Stefania. "Ecclesiology/Church-State Relationship in Early Modern Catholicism," in *The Oxford Handbook of Early Modern Theology, 1600-1800*. Eds. Ulrich L. Lehner, Richard A. Muller, and A. G. Roeber. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016, 150-164.
- Tylus, Jane. "Imagining Narrative in Tasso: Revisiting Erminia," *MLN* 127 1 (2012): 45-64.
- Ulansey, David. "The Heavenly Veil Torn: Mark's Cosmic Inclusion," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 110 1 (1991): 123-125.
- Ulreich, Jr., John C. "'This Great Deliverer': *Samson Agonistes* as Parable," *Milton Quarterly* 13 3 (1979): 79-84.
- Urban, David V. "John Milton, Paradox, and the Atonement: Heresy, Orthodoxy, and the Son's Whole-Life Obedience," *Studies in Philology* 112 4 (2015): 817-836.
- Vailati, Maria. *Il tormento artistico del Tasso dalla Liberata alla Conquistata*. Milan: Marzorati,

1950.

- Valente, Michaela. "Per l'immagine di Calvino nella controversistica cattolica: primi appunti," in *Giovanni Calvino e la riforma in Italia: Influenze e conflitti*. Ed. Susanna Peyronel Rambaldi. Turin: Claudiana, 2011, 29-47.
- Van der Laan, Sarah. "Tasso's Homeric Counterfactuals," *MLN* 127 1 (2012): 23-44.
- Viladesau, Richard. *The Triumph of the Cross: The Passion of Christ in Theology and the Arts, from the Renaissance to Counter-Reformation*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008.
- Viljoen, Anneke. "The Structuring Considerations of a Ricoeurian Hermeneutic Employed in a Reading of Proverbs 14:2," *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies* 71 3 (2015): 1-7.
- Wadoski, Andrew. "Spenser, Tasso, and the Ethics of Allegory," *Modern Philology* 111 3 (2014): 365-383.
- Walker, Julia M. "'For each seem'd either': Free Will and Predestination in *Paradise Lost*," *Milton Quarterly* 20 1 (1986): 13-16.
- . "The Idea of Milton and the Idea of Woman," in *Milton and the Idea of Woman*. Ed. Julia M. Walker. Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1988, 1-14.
- . *Medusa's Mirrors: Spenser, Shakespeare, Milton, and the Metamorphosis of the Female Self*. Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1998.
- Wallace, Mark I. "From Phenomenology to Scripture? Paul Ricoeur's Hermeneutical Philosophy of Religion," *Modern Theology* 16 3 (2000): 301-313.
- Waller, Giles. "'*Qui enim securus est, minime securus est*': The Paradox of *Securitas* in Luther and Beyond," in *Literature, Belief and Knowledge in Early Modern England: Knowing Faith*. Eds. Subha Mukherji, and Tim Stuart-Buttle. Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan; Springer International Publishing, 2018, 133-152.
- Ward, Graham. "Adam and Eve's Shame (and Ours)," *Literature and Theology* 26 3 (2012): 305-322.
- Warkentin, Germaine. "'Love's sweetest part, variety': Petrarch and the Curious Frame of the Renaissance Sonnet Sequence," *Renaissance and Reformation / Renaissance et Réforme* 11 1 (1975): 14-23.
- Waters, Lindsay. "'L'altre stelle': The Arguments of Tasso's *Discorsi del poema eroico*," *Italica* 55 3 (1978): 303-320.
- Webster, Erin. "'Presented with a Universal blanc': The Physics of Vision in Milton's Invocation to Light," *Milton Studies* 56 (2015): 233-271.

- Weinberg, Bernard. *A History of Literary Criticism in the Italian Renaissance*. 2 vols. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1961.
- White, Jr., Robert B. "Milton's Allegory of Sin and Death: A Comment on Backgrounds," *Modern Philology* 70 4 (1973): 337-341.
- Williamson, George. "Milton and the Mortalist Heresy," *Studies in Philology* 32 4 (1935): 553-579.
- Wilson, Emily. "*Quantum Mutatus ab Illo*: Moments of Change and Recognition in Tasso and Milton," in *Epic Interactions: Perspectives on Homer, Virgil, and the Epic Tradition*. Ed. M. J. Clarke, B. G. F. Currie, and R. O. A. M. Lyne. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006.
- Wilson, Katharina M. "Introduction," in *Women Writers of the Renaissance and Reformation*. Ed. Katharina M. Wilson. Athens; London: The University of Georgia Press, 1987, ix-xl.
- Winship, Michael P. *Hot Protestants: A History of Puritanism in England and America*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2018.
- Wiseman, Sarah. "Eve, *Paradise Lost*, and Female Interpretation," in *The Oxford Handbook of Milton*. Ed. Nicholas McDowell and Nigel Smith. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011, 534-546.
- Wittreich, Joseph. "An Alternative Perspective on Milton and Women," in *Feminist Milton*. Ithaca; London: Cornell University Press, 1987, 83-118.
- . "Critiquing the Feminist Critique," in *Feminist Milton*. Ithaca; London: Cornell University Press, 1987, 1-15.
- . "Sites of Contention in *Paradise Lost*: Scenes of Instruction, Lessons of Interpretation," in *Milton's Rival Hermeneutics: "Reason Is But Choosing"*. Ed. Richard J. DuRocher and Margaret Olofson Thickstun. Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania: Duquesne University Press, 2012, 101-133.
- Wiznura, Robert. "Eve's Dream, Interpretation, and Shifting Paradigms: Books Four and Five of *Paradise Lost*," *Milton Studies* 29 (2008): 108-123.
- Wogan-Browne, Jocelyn. "Chaste Bodies: Frames and Experiences," in *Framing Medieval Bodies*. Ed. Sarah Kay and Miri Rubin. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1994, 24-42.
- Wood, Jeryldene M. "Vittoria Colonna's *Mary Magdalen*," in *Visions of Holiness: Art and Devotion in Renaissance Italy*. Ed. Andrew Ladis and Shelley E. Zuraw. Georgia: Georgia Museum of Art, University of Georgia, 2001, 195-212.
- Woods, Susanne. "How Free Are Milton's Women?" in *Milton and the Idea of Woman*. Ed. Julia

- M. Walker. Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1988, 15-31.
- . “Inviting Rival Hermeneutics: Milton’s Language of Violence and the Invitation to Freedom,” in *Milton’s Rival Hermeneutics: “Reason Is But Choosing.”* Ed. Richard J. DuRocher and Margaret Olofson Thickstun. Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania: Duquesne University Press, 2012, 3-16.
- Zagorin, Perez. *Ways of Lying: Dissimulation, Persecution, and Conformity in Early Modern Europe*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1990.
- Zarri, Gabriella. “Christian Good Manners: Spiritual and Monastic Rules in the Quattro- and Cinquecento,” in *Women in Italian Renaissance Culture and Society*. Ed. Letizia Panizza. Oxford, UK: Legenda, European Humanities Research Center, University of Oxford, 2000, 76-91.
- Zatti, Sergio. “Epic in the Age of Dissimulation: Tasso’s *Gerusalemme liberata*,” in *Renaissance Transaction: Ariosto and Tasso*. Ed. Valeria Finucci. Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1999, 115-145.
- . *The Quest for Epic: From Ariosto to Tasso*. Trans. Sally Hill and Dennis Looney. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2006.
- Zemon Davis, Natalie. “Beyond the Market: Books as Gifts in Sixteenth-Century France,” in *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 33 5 (1983): 69-88.
- . *The Gift in Sixteenth-Century France*. Wisconsin: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2000.
- Ziolkowski, Theodore. “The Veil as Metaphor and as Myth,” *Religion & Literature* 40 2 (2008): 61-81.