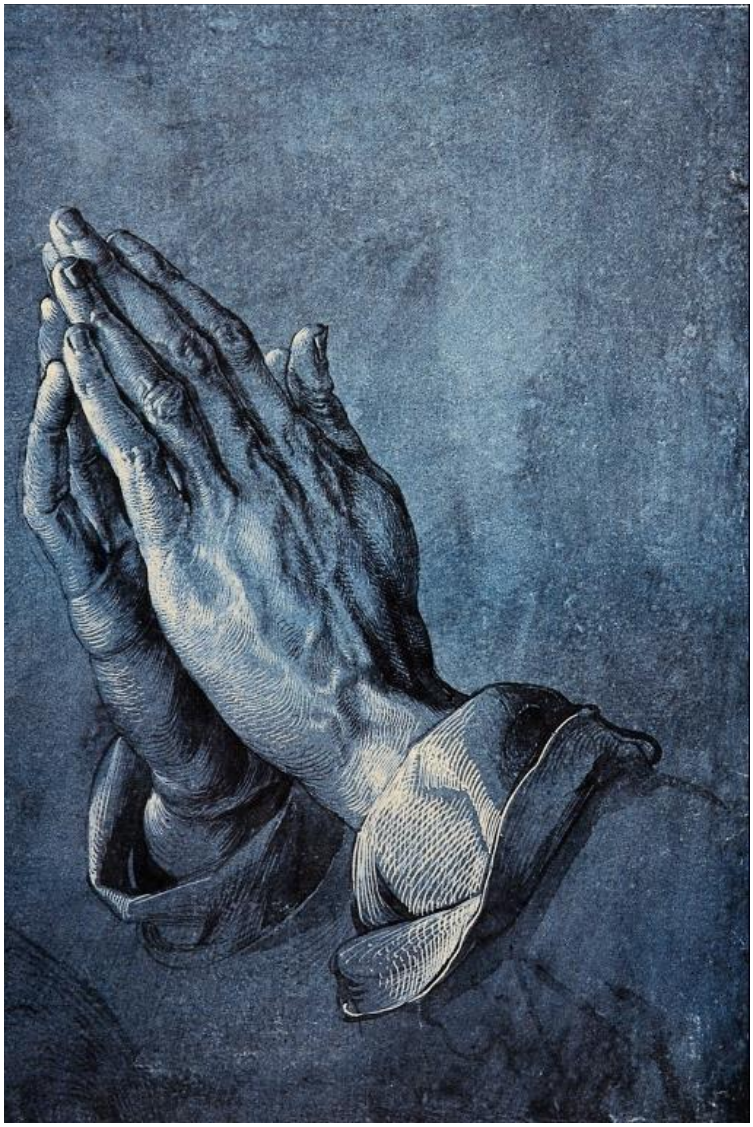
SUING FOR GRACE: THE EARLY MODERN RHETORIC OF PETITION



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INTRODUCTION

> Doe as a wise Counsellor at Law, and as a Master of Requests, who must heare many Clients, and receive and speed many Petitions. Consider whose turne it is, and what is the most important sute, and dispatch them first. Let thoughts of worldly busines be shut out, and made stand at doore, till their turne be to be thought upon, and till the more excellent, and more needfull be dispatched.[1]

Henry Scudder's conceit for how a Christian should choose the right subject for prayer relies on the fact that early modern petition was both a secular and spiritual mode. It was a distinct epistolary form, and a type of prayer. Both secular and spiritual petition share the same function: a request. This dual meaning did not escape early modern writers, like Scudder, who frequently exploited it for rhetorical effect. Scudder transforms the Christian petitioner's brain into the secular 'Master of Requests' - a position designed to filter the numerous petitions to the Crown —who listens to 'many Petitions', and judges whose is 'the most important sute'.[2] Likewise, the Christian petitioner must select only their most 'excellent' and 'needfull' petitions to send on to God. This project focuses on the creative and political potential of such petitionary metaphor. Whether secular or spiritual, petitions negotiate with power – thus enabling direct critical engagement with questions of hierarchy, access, submission, and negotiation. As Scudder's secular vehicle

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[1] Henry Scudder, *The Christians daily walke in holy securitie and peace*, London: Printed by I. B[eale] for Henry Overton, 1631: p.43.

[2] On the role of the Master of Requests in the Jacobean period see R.W. Hoyle, 'The Masters of Requests and the Small Change of Jacobean Patronage', *The English Historical Review*, Vol. 126, No. 520, (2011), pp. 544-581. On the Masters of Request in the Elizabethan period, see K.J. Kesselring, *Mercy and Authority in the Tudor State,* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003: 124. The post 'emerged in 1538-39' and the Masters of Request 'were first called by that name in 1541'. From 1562 there were four Masters of Request: Hoyle (2011): pp.547-48. In reality, the Masters of Request had the assistance of a panel of privy councillors to help them decide on 'the most important sute[s]'. Hoyle (2011): 562.

highlights, some petitioners are heard and some are 'shut out, and made stand at the door'.

Frank Whigham tantalizingly uses a Reformation metaphor in his influential study of patronage, to explain why more attention should be paid to early modern intercessors:

> In too many discussions the institution of patronage is made to resemble the protestant theological universe: the near-divine patron seems equidistant from all suitors and is their sole point of reference. In fact, of course, access to the queen was limited, and much of her largesse was distributed by courtiers and functionaries, who formed a many-layered matrix of mediation and themselves demanded wooing, from below as well as above.[3]

Linda Levy Peck similarly notes of the Jacobean Court:

> The favorite served as a mediator between subjects and king, a theological vision of brokerage implied by the contemporary advice to William Trumball to direct himself to the "right saint". "The whole Kingdom hath cast their eye upon you as the new rising Star, and no man thinks his business can prosper at Court unless he hath you for his good Angel".[4]

Helen Hackett and Julie Crawford have also both identified the courtly metaphor of saintly intercession: Hackett has observed that Elizabethan courtiers appealed to Elizabeth and her ministers as 'saint-like intercessors', and Crawford's *Mediatrix* examines the role and representation of Protestant female patrons as mediators.[5] I wish to further explore how early modern writers elaborated on this well-entrenched courtly metaphor, and to what ends, by specifically focusing on petition.

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[3] Frank Whigham, *Ambition and Privilege: The Social Tropes of Elizabethan Courtesy Theory* Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1984: 12.
[4] Linda Levy Peck, *Court Patronage and Corruption in Early Stuart England,* Boston: Unwin Hyman, 1990: 50.
[5] Helen Hackett, *Virgin Mother, Maiden Queen: Elizabeth I and the Cult of the Virgin Mary*, London: Macmillan, 1995: 128; Julie Crawford, *Mediatrix: Women, Politics and Literary Production in Early Modern England*, Oxford: OUP, 2014. On the Jacobean metaphor of saintly intercession, see Crawford (2014): pp.1-2.

This study takes its approach from literary critical responses to the late twentieth-century revisionist history of the English Reformation as a period of 'reluctance and resistance': particularly Gillian Woods's *Shakespeare's Unreformed Fictions,* which analyses the effect of Catholic reference and allusion in Shakespeare, without diagnosing his denomination.[6] I likewise approach religious rhetoric as a pragmatic tool, rather than assuming it is a confessional expression of identity.

Petition was an ancient component of the Christian theology of prayer. In his *Pattern of Catechistical Doctrine at Large*, Lancelot Andrewes summarised the division of prayer first formulated by Origen in the third century in *De Oratione.*[7] Prayer was divided into 'Petition' and 'Thanksgiving'. A petition is either 'deprecation… for the removal of some evil', or 'precation, for the obtaining of some good'.[8] Direct petitions are 'prayers for ourselves'; indirect petitions, or intercessions, are 'prayers for others'.[9] In Catholicism the saints, above all the *mediatrix* the Virgin Mary, could intercede for Christians; Protestants could petition God for each other, but the only heavenly intercessor was Christ.

Secular petition was a recognised epistolary mode featured in epistolary treatises from Erasmus to Angel Day.[10] In *De conscribendis epistolis* Erasmus classified

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[6] Eamon Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars: Traditional Religion in England 1400-1580,* 2nd edition, New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005: p.xxxiii. Gillian Woods, *Shakespeare's Unreformed Fictions,* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013.

[7] Lancelot Andrewes, *The Pattern of Catechistical Doctrine at Large: or A Learned and Pious Exposition of the Ten Commandments*, in *Lancelot Andrewes: Selected Sermons and Lectures*, Peter McCullough ed, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005: 11. Unless otherwise stated, hereafter *The Pattern of Catechistical Doctrine.*

[8] Andrewes, *The Pattern of Catechistical Doctrine*: 11. For the early modern division of prayer, see also Alec Ryrie, *Being Protestant in Reformation Britain*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013: 108.

[9] Andrewes, *The Pattern of Catechistical Doctrine*: 11.

[10] See James Daybell, *Women Letter-Writers in Tudor England,* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006: p.232; p.240. Frank Whigham, 'The Rhetoric of Elizabethan Suitors' Letters' *PMLA*, Vol. 96, No. 5, (1981), pp. 864-882: pp.865-66; p.874.

petitions as 'deliberative or persuasive' letters, 'distinct from demonstrative, judicial, and familiar letters.'[11] For Angel Day the 'request' was the defining feature of a petitionary letter: 'inasmuch as these Epistles are so named, for the earnest *Petition* or request in euery of them contained'.[12] It is possible Day's definition already draws on the understanding of petition as a prayer of request, as they are 'named' after 'the earnest *Petition* in euery of them contained'. James Daybell, in his characterisation of the early modern petition, notes the 'blurred' boundaries between different forms of letters, but broadly distinguishes between four central types of petitionary documents: letters of request, including recommendation or supplication; legal petitions formally made to a court; parliamentary petition sent either from the public to parliament, or from parliament to the monarch; and third person administrative documents serving to record a pre-existing agreement.[13] This project predominantly focuses on the first type of petition, however parliamentary petition figures prominently in the final chapter.

Whigham and Daybell have offered a literary critical overview of the petitionary form. Both note Day's classical five-part structure of the petition,

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[11] Daybell (2006): 232.

[12] Angel Day, *The English Secretorie*, London: Robert Waldegrave 1586: 169.

[13] Daybell (2006): 232. Whigham broadly divides the petitions in Christopher Hatton's Letter Book into two types: the first category is 'specific gratification' including 'legal despatch', 'tolerance in bureaucratic procedure' and 'sponsorship's child at baptism'; the second is 'intercession'. Whigham, 1981: 868. Leah Whittington, outlining classical supplication, also distinguishes between 'suppliants who seek help for themselves and those who act as intercessors on behalf of others'. Leah Whittington, *Renaissance Suppliants*: *Poetry, Antiquity and Reconciliation*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016: 14. The historian Brodie Waddell uses the categories: 'Petitions to local magistrates'; 'Petitions to the Crown'; 'Petitions to Parliament', and a final catch-all 'Other Types of Petitions'. This last category is similar to Daybell's first category: 'Informal 'petitionary letters' were extremely common thanks to the importance of patronage networks in this period, sent by artists, writers, traders and almost anyone seeking the support of someone with more power or prestige.' Brodie Waddell, 'Petitions in Early Modern England: A Very Short Introduction', 10th June 2019, https://petitioning.history.ac.uk/blog/2019/06/petitions-in-early-modern-england-a-very-short-introduction/ [date accessed 17/04/2022].

inherited both from the medieval *ars dictaminis* and Erasmus: the '*exordium* (introduction), *narratio* or *propositio* (declaration of the substance of the letter, which often included a request or *petitio*), *confirmatio* (amplification), *confutatio* (refutation of objections), and *peroratio* (conclusion).'[14] Daybell emphasises, however, that not every early modern petition strictly adheres to this structure.[15] Even the most rhetorically sparse petitions, however, tend to use the opening formula 'humbly beseeching', and conventionally end with prayers for the recipient.[16] K.J. Kesselring similarly describes how:

> supplicants added to their pledges of gratitude and loyal service promises to pray for their benefactors. As the patrons interceded for them with the sovereign, so too would they intercede for the patrons with God.[17]

Critics often lightly gesture to a generally recognised petitionary style: Whigham, for example, describes a 'conventional vocabulary of begging'; Annabel Patterson similarly refers to petition's 'supporting rhetoric of humility, its gestures of genuflection'.[18] Leah Whittington has identified that the suppliant gesture of kneeling before authority was an important inheritance from classical literature and Daybell likewise attests to the common use of kneeling imagery in women's petitions.[19] Kesselring also observes the use of physical gestures:

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[14] Daybell (2006): 240.
[15] Daybell (2006): 240.
[16] Daybell (2006): 244. A common example of a petition's closing prayer: '[for the Queen's] prosperous lyfe and raigne, to the honor and pleasure of almightie god, as also for the honorable estates of you all my said Lordships: of her hyghnes Councell I shall as I am bound dayly to pray almightie god', Hatfield, Hatfield House Archives, Cecil Papers 157/141: Fol. 145^{r}.
[17] Kesselring (2003): 126.
[18] Whigham (1981): 866. Annabel Patterson, *Reading Between the Lines,* London: Routledge, 1993: 61.
[19] Whittington (2016): p.15; pp.19-23. Daybell, (2006): 250. It seems, in reality, the importance of kneeling was taken very literally. Hoyle highlights that the Masters of Requests, when presenting a petition to James, would ' "remain on his knees as representing the subject petitioning the king" '. Hoyle (2011): 557. Kesselring also describes how the imprisoned Duke of Norfolk 'had… apparently taken to mending his own hose to emphasize his humility and submission, for fear that the purchase

'petitioners…referred repeatedly to postures of penitence and contrite tears'.[20] Daybell, providing an example of where 'personality' and flair can be found in the petitions of early modern women, describes how Anne Newdigate 'consciously adapted the rather commonplace promise of prayers for the recipient to great effect'.[21] My project is derived from this precise form of rhetorical strategy.

Petition has attracted considerable critical attention from historians in the last twenty years, but literary criticism has not yet been similarly enthused by petitions as a source. Petitions – particularly the other three types of Daybell's taxonomy – provide historians with an almost overwhelming abundance of sources with which to explore questions of bureaucratic process and popular politics. This is especially true of the mass subscribed petition, the form which most closely resembles petition as it exists today. As the AHRC funded Project 'The Power of Petitioning' asks: 'How can people without official political power push the authorities to act? Historically, one of the most common tactics was to create a petition or supplication.'[22] Petitions also offer a rich, if complex, body of source material for studying early modern women.[23] Generally speaking, historians tend to focus more upon the factual contents of petitions than their rhetorical conventions. Some of the hesitancy to treat legal petitions rhetorically is due to the uncertain role of scribal authorship; Frances Dolan explores the interpretive possibilities of these problems in her *True Relations:*

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of a new pair might be misconstrued as a sign of his hope and desire for a longer life.' Kesselring (2003): pp.116-117.

[20]Kesselring (2003): 116.

[21] Daybell (2006): 244.

[22] https://petitioning.history.ac.uk/about/ [date accessed 18/04/2022].

[23] For recent a comprehensive survey of recent historical criticism on petition, included petitions by women, see Brodie Waddell, 'Petitioning in Early Modern England: An Annotated Bibliography', 13th May 2019, https://petitioning.history.ac.uk/blog/2019/05/petitioning-in-early-modern-england-an-annotated-bibliography/ annotated bibliography [date accessed 09/05/2022].

Reading, Literature, and Evidence in Seventeenth-Century England.[24] Ann Marie McEntee and Imogen Peck, however, have focused more closely on the rhetorical strategies of petition.[25] Kesselring has studied petitionary style as an insight into the Tudor pardoning process, arguing that 'in their content and form, they further clarify the reasons behind particular grants of mercy.'[26] Significantly for this thesis, she observes that offering grace to the penitent is one of 'the common motives for pardons'.[27] She notes that in her survey of petitions 'expressions of penitence and humble sorrow appeared in all,' and that 'petitioners focused more on the form, tone, and language of humility than on any mitigating circumstances'.[28]

Secular petitions have received some literary critical attention from critics following from Whigham's pivotal article 'The Rhetoric of Elizabethan Suitors' Letters'.[29] Patterson also sought to 'sketch… a petitioning society' in *Reading Between the Lines,* although this survey does not take into account the religious definition of petition.[30] As petitions offer a large resource of surviving letters written by women there has been recent interest particularly in petition and gender. Daybell's

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[24] 'Many historians refer to "stories" or "fictions" to draw our attention to texts' made-ness, to the process of their production. We must then take their fabrication and provenance into account as part of the story we use these texts to tell.' Frances Dolan, *True Relations: Reading, Literature, and Evidence in Seventeenth-Century England,* Philadelphia: University of Philadelphia Press, 2013: 18. James Daybell also notes scribal authorship as an obstacle for engagement with women's petitions. Daybell (2006): 230.

[25] Ann Marie McEntee, '"The [un]civill-sisterhood of oranges and lemons": Female petitioners and demonstrators, 1642-53', *Prose Studies*, Vol.14, No.3, (1991), pp. 92-111; Imogen Peck, *Recollection in the Republics: Memories of the British Civil Wars in England, 1649-1659,* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021. 'The great unknown: the negotiation and narration of death by English war widows, 1647 – 1660', *Northern History*, Vol.53, No. 2, (2016), pp. 220-35.

[26] Kesselring (2003): 112.

[27] Kesselring (2003): p.112.

[28] Kesselring (2003): p.112; p.116.

[29] Whigham (1981).

[30] See Patterson (1993), Chapter 3 'A Petitioning Society', pp.57-79.

definitions of petition come from his survey of women's petitionary letters.[31] Lynne Magnusson has similarly focused on petition and gender.[32] Alison Thorne has also written extensively on female petitioners.[33]

Whigham sought to justify why petitions were of interest to literary critics, and to new historicists in particular, by isolating the unique selling point of petition in contrast to other literary genres. Although he emphasised the literary nature of the petition which 'relates to its reader by equally symbolic means', he distinguished between local and historical reference in works of drama and poetry versus petitions — arguing that the 'exclusive unity of person and time makes the letter a localized event and distinguishes it from other genres dealing with courtly life.'[34] His conclusion then looked forward to future points of connection to be made between literature and petition.

Rather than seeking to study petitions in isolation from literature, I am precisely interested in the transfer between the formal characteristics of petition and literary forms which drew upon these conventions. Patterson argued that 'at the

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[31] Daybell (2006).

[32] Lynne Magnusson, "A Rhetoric of Requests: Genre and Linguistic Scripts in Elizabethan Women's Suitors' Letters," in *Women and Politics in Early Modern England, 1450–1700*, ed. James Daybell Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004.

[33] Alison Thorne 'Women's Petitionary Letters and Early Seventeenth-Century Treason Trials', *Women's Writing*, Vol.13, No.1, (2006), pp. 23-43; 'Narratives of female suffering in petitionary literature of the Civil War period and its aftermath', *Literature Compass*, Vol.10, No.2, (2013), pp. 134-145; 'The politics of female supplication in the Book of Esther', in *Biblical women in early modern literary culture, 1550–1700,* Victoria Brownlee and Laura Gallagher eds, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2015. I also have forthcoming publications on the early modern petitioner and epistolary writer Elizabeth Bourne. See Leah Veronese and Daniel Starza Smith, 'Elizabeth Bourne' in *Palgrave Encyclopaedia of Early Modern Women's Writing*, Patricia Pender and Rosalind Smiths eds, Cham: Palgrave Macmillan [forthcoming]; Daniel Starza Smith and Leah Veronese, 'Desire, Dreams, Disguise: The Letters of Elizabeth Bourne (1549–99)', *Oxford Handbook to Early Modern Women's Writing in English* (1540-1700), eds Elizabeth Scott-Baumann, Danielle Clarke and Sarah C.E.Ross, Oxford: Oxford University Press, [forthcoming].

[34] Whigham (1981): 864.

other end of the spectrum from an extreme form of petitioning, we might find literature', positing that we might consider Shakespeare's plays 'as a form of petitioning'.[35] Crawford also emphasises the connections between literature and petition, among other forms:

> The mediatrix's function was often carried out textually: through letters, news, petitions and pleas, contracts and orders, opinion papers and responses, and statements of intent. Many of the texts we now think of as "literary" reflect the same kinds of power-brokering we associate with these more direct forms of political engagement.[36]

I follow from these invitations to consider how petition and literary texts are often different manifestations of the same action — seeking to request, to persuade, and to connect.

Daybell highlights how transferable petition was as a genre, often suffusing other forms of letter:

> More fundamentally, elements of the letter of petition are found in almost every kind of Renaissance letter… In practice, suits or requests were often contained in correspondence where the petition was apparently not the sole purpose of the letter. This works further to erode distinctions between 'domestic' or 'familiar' letters and letters of petition or 'practical' letters; letters to family members could in many cases adopt a strategy of petitioning; petitioning could also include a language of affection or friendship.[37]

Extending this observation, I argue that the conventions of petition could travel further into other forms of writing. Just like early modern letters, other genres not traditionally considered as petitionary, like the sonnet or the devotion, can also shift gears into a petitionary mode. Early modern writers also depicted, and reflected on, the process of petitioning.

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[35] Patterson (1993): p.61; p.78.
[36] Crawford (2014): 24.
[37] Daybell (2006): 233.

The closest critical studies to this project are Whittington's *Renaissance Suppliants*: *Poetry, Antiquity and Reconciliation* and Michael Schoenfeldt's *Prayer and Power: George Herbert and Renaissance Courtship*.[38] Whittington's monograph examines how early modern authors thought through and presented 'the scene of supplication through a network of inherited classical texts'.[39] From her definition of supplication at the outset, Whittington '[makes] a distinction between supplication as a pattern of interaction between human actors and supplication as prayer addressed to a divine audience'.[40] Sharing Whittington's interest in both the literary analogues, and the tense power dynamics, of petition, I apply these questions to the relationship between secular and spiritual petition rather than Renaissance and classical supplication. My interest lies in the points of contact between the 'interaction between human actors' and 'prayer[s] addressed to a divine audience', rather than dividing them.

Schoenfeldt's *Prayer and Power: George Herbert and Renaissance Courtship* focuses on how Herbert '[addresses] heavenly authority in a language at times strikingly similar to that used before political authority'. Schoenfeldt is interested in the critical possibilities of such comparisons – a question which we have in common. In some ways, however, our interests move in opposite directions. Schoenfeldt states:

> What this book proposes, then, is a mode of reading devotional poetry that is attentive to its social undertones and political valences. ... I am not arguing that these works [courtesy literature] exercise a direct literary influence on Herbert

[38] Whittington (2016). Michael C., *Prayer and Power: George Herbert and Renaissance Courtship,* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991. See also 'The Poetry of Supplication: Toward a Cultural Poetics of the Religious Lyric', in *New Perspectives on the Seventeenth-Century English Religious Lyric*, ed. John R. Roberts, Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1994.
[39] Whittington (2016): 13.
[40] Whittington (2016): pp.14-15.

> but rather that courtesy literature textualises the social conduct that Herbert's poems bend to God.[41]

In contrast to Schoenfeldt, my thesis does not deny, but rather centres on, 'the direct literary influence' of petition. Whereas Schoenfeldt focuses on how Herbert 'bends' courtesy literature 'to God', I predominantly consider how religious petitionary metaphor is applied in secular contexts – with the main exception of my work on Donne's *Devotions.* Like Schoenfeldt, however, I am interested in the critical potential of comparisons between heaven and earth:

> Herbert's poems do not rest complacently in the conservative political vision that maintains an absolute continuity between earthly and heavenly authority. Rather, they allow the terms of each realm to critique the other… [42]

I expand on the question of continuity or disruption between 'earthly and heavenly authority', by looking beyond devotional poetry to predominantly secular texts.

This thesis revolves around four central themes. The first is to what strategic ends early modern writers put petitionary metaphor. Erasmus identified petition as a persuasive mode; I am interested in how the secular and spiritual senses of petition could be drawn on strategically. Secondly, my project explores the power dynamics of petition. Whittington argues that 'supplication remains a resolutely ambiguous mode of relating. … as a strategy of connecting with others or navigating conflict, supplication is remarkably unstable'.[43] Whilst in context Whittington discusses martial supplication – which has physical 'conflict' at stake – nevertheless, the instability she identifies also relates to both secular and spiritual petition. Theologically, there is a paradoxical powerlessness about petition. In the *Pattern of*

[41] Schoenfeldt (1991): pp.4-5.
[42] Schoenfeldt (1991): 2.
[43] Whittington (2016): pp.3-4.

Catechisicall Doctrine there is a pressure to pray consistently, and in the right manner: 'We must not set days to God, wherein if we be not heard, we will leave prayer and God too; but we must pray continually, without fainting.'[44] This is counterbalanced, however, with the ideal Christian's acceptance that ultimately petition does not affect God. Andrewes asserts:

> We must desire them with condition, if God see it expedient, submitting to his will; as Christ, If it be possible, and if it be thy will: so did David praying for restitution to his kingdom. … He resignes all to Gods will, and there is no more compendious way to obtain what we need, then to resigne all to Gods pleasure, whatsoever means we use, or however we struggle, nothing will avail without this.[45]

The perfect petition requires total submission to God's will. As Alec Ryrie summarises: 'Conscientious petitionary prayer involves humbling yourself before God, admitting your dependence, and bowing your will'.[46]

John Donne made persuasive use of this theological problem in a petition to his angry new father-in-law George More, during his imprisonment in the Fleet:

> And since we have no meanes to move God, when… he wyll not hear our prayers, to hear them, but by prayeng, I humbly beseech yow, allow, by his gracious example, my penitence so good Entertainment as yt may have a beleife, and a pittie.[47]

Donne crystalises, with desperate urgency, the theological feedback loop of responding to unanswered prayer by praying. He replicates the frustratingly circular process with the repetitive phrase 'when he wyll not *hear* our *prayers*, to *hear* them, but by *prayeng*' [emphasis mine], highlighting the almost contradictory position of

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[44] Andrewes, *The Pattern of Catechistical Doctrine* in *A Pattern of Catechistical Doctrine, and Other Minor Works,* Oxford: John Henry Parker, 1846: 106. See also Ryrie (2013): 119.
[45] Andrewes, *The Pattern of Catechistical Doctrine*: 14.
[46] Ryrie (2013): 120. On the submission to God's will as a solution to unanswered prayer see also Ryrie (2013): 123.
[47] John Donne, *John Donne's Marriage Letters in the Folger Shakespeare Library,* Washington DC: University of Washington Press, 2005: 37.

praying for unheard prayers to be heard. Of course, theologically speaking, an unanswered petition might prompt reflection on how appropriate the request itself is, but Donne strategically elides this alternative response.[48] Donne's qualification of the seemingly unequivocal statement 'we have no meanes to move God' with 'but by prayeng' creates the theological impossibility that God is 'move[d]' by prayer. This is the crucial difference between the secular and spiritual petition: whereas a petitionary prayer cannot persuade God, contrastingly persuasion is the primary purpose of a secular petition, as Donne well knew. The comparison between God and More seeks to persuade the latter by evoking the 'gracious example' of the merciful former.

Yet, despite this crucial difference in the dynamics of secular and spiritual petition – between the persuasive power of secular petition versus the inability to persuade God - there is a similar tension between agency and powerlessness in secular petition. Just as Donne draws attention to the fact that God might not 'hear our prayers', likewise there is no guarantee a secular petition will be heard. My project focuses on moments where the power dynamics of petition are exposed or questioned.

Relatedly, the final theme of the project is to what extent writers accepted the ideological parallels between heavenly and earthly justice which underpinned the rhetoric of petition — in which the judgement of the monarch on earth is authorised

[48] 'Some things we pray for may be hurtful to us, (as knives for children) so as that... we are better by wanting then possessing them. ... God in compassion lets not him receive, that which he meant to use ill. … God in mercy hears, and in mercy hears not a faithful suppliant for the necessities of this life; for the Physitian knows what is profitable for the sick man better then himself.' Andrewes, *The Pattern of Catechistical Doctrine*: p.15. See also Ryrie (2013): 124.

by, and mirrors, divine judgement. Whigham's landmark article highlighted petition as a negotiation with power which lay at the heart of courtly culture. For Whittington also, supplication was 'a widespread social phenomenon' which 'raises urgent questions about how to… achieve reconciliation, and how to negotiate hierarchical patterns of relationship between social unequals'.[49] She argues her writers 'all express ambivalence about supplication as a means of making requests or of solving conflicts'.[50] I am similarly interested in early modern 'ambivalence' about petition as negotiating tool between 'social unequals', particularly in how demonstrating the distance between petitioning God and petitioning secular power may be used to express political concern or critique.

Methodologically, in my choice of texts, I have sought to explore the influence of petition in a wide range of literary forms across the period: a sonnet sequence, verse letters, meditations, and verse-libels. Both the diversity of these genres, and their chronological range - from the early Elizabethan period to the Long Parliament - demonstrates the enduring power of petition, both as a persuasive tool, and as a literary stimulus.

My thesis compromises four chapters. Chapter One provides an example of real petitionary rhetoric in action in two successive and related petitions written in 1567 by John Appleyard of Bracon Ash (1529 - c.1574) to the Privy Council. The following chapters explore how early modern writers both employed, and put pressure on, the petitionary strategies Appleyard exemplifies. Chapter Two examines how Edmund Spenser exploits the fruitful points of connection between

[49] Whittington (2016): 8.
[50] Whittington (2016): 8.

political, religious and romantic petition in his sonnet sequence. Paying greater heed to the political connotations of petition, especially in relation to the Smerwick massacre of 1580, enables a greater understanding of the *Amoretti*'s colonial context. Chapter Three compares how Donne uses religious metaphor to negotiate hierarchy and petition for access in his verse letters with his petitions to God in the *Devotions Upon Emergent Occasions*. In the *Devotions,* in his withdrawal from the world in his illness he seems to expose and dismantle the patronage process; yet simultaneously the text itself is embroiled in patronage negotiations. The final chapter studies the 'mock petition' for the first time. Tracing the circulation of the Jacobean verse-libel 'The Commons Petition to St Eliza' reveals an emerging tradition of mock-petitions running from the Spanish Match crisis to the Long Parliament. They highlight the prevalence and increasingly dramatic political significance of petitions during this period, and concomitantly how petitions directly inspired poetry.

Petition was an essential rhetorical mode which early modern people used to negotiate with power. Although the conventional phrase 'suing for grace' is well recognised as a term for negotiations with monarchy, the religious metaphor can be so familiar that it is often glossed and quickly passed over. Paying greater attention to moments when early modern writers draw on the conventions of petition opens up rich and complex questions about the relationship between secular and divine power. Focusing on petition also casts light on previously un-noticed or un-appreciated archival material. Secular petition, as Daybell and Brodie Waddell's taxonomies demonstrate, was not by any means a singular entity; therefore, it is worth distinguishing, for example, between when text a alludes to petitioning a

monarch, or to a mass-subscribed parliamentary petition. Both the range of literary genres this thesis explores, and the different modes of secular petition which are invoked, are testament to the ubiquity, complexity, and power of petition both in early modern society, and on the early modern imagination.

CHAPTER ONE

THE 'SUMMONS OF A REAPROBATE':

JOHN APPLEYARD AND THE RHETORIC OF PETITION

John Appleyard's two petitions written to the Privy Council in 1567 represent the rhetorical opportunities of the overlap between the secular and spiritual meanings of petition. It is testament to the perceived persuasive power of this strategy that *in extremis,* when the stakes were highest, real petitioners like Appleyard drew this weapon from their rhetorical artillery as a saving grace. John Appleyard was selected from a survey of 130 petitions in the Cecil Papers from 1548 to 1575. This is the first literary critical treatment of his petitions, which provide an extraordinary example of the creative and strategic possibilities of petitionary metaphor to a skilled writer. Focusing on his rhetoric also further illuminates Appleyard's own political strategies, who, in the rare occasion he was paid attention to scholars, has previously been given short shrift. The chapter will set out Appleyard's family background, and the context of his petition, before analysing his petitionary strategy.

The biography of John Appleyard

John Appleyard of Bracon Ash in Norfolk (1529 — c.1574) was the son of Roger and Elizabeth Appleyard of Bracon Ash.[1] He was the half-brother of the ill-fated Amy Robsart — the first wife of Robert Dudley, the First Earl of Leicester. For most of his

[1] *The Visitacion of Norffolk Made and Taken by William Hervey, Clarencieux King of Arnam Anno 1563, Enlarged with Another Visitacion Made by Clarenceux Cooke, with many other descents; and also the Vissitation made by John Raven, Richmond, Anno 1616*, ed Walter Rye, London: The Harleian Society, 1891: pp.6-7.

career Appleyard served, and was patronised by, his brother-in-law. He became embroiled in the rivalry between Leicester and Thomas Howard, the fourth Duke of Norfolk, in the mid-1560s, and was imprisoned in the Fleet in 1567; two of his petitions survive from this imprisonment. In 1570 he went on to spearhead a small, unsuccessful rebellion in Norwich, one of several derivative uprisings inspired by the Rising of the Northern Earls in 1569.[2]

Appleyard came from a Protestant background. Appleyard's father, Roger Appleyard of Bracon Ash, died in 1528. The wardship of his sons was awarded to Sir Edward Boleyn of Blickling, the uncle of Anne Boleyn, linking Appleyard to the reformist Boyleyn family.[3] Appleyard had direct Protestant connections through his mother's remarriage to John Robsart. Robsart was a dedicatee of *The Fortress of the faythefull* (1550) by Thomas Becon, a Norfolk native. The long preface advocates Christian charity, and rails against 'the ryche worldelinges in tymes paste [who] coulde buylde greate monasteries for the bellyed hyppocrites, … for subtle cariars and Purgatorie takers'. [4] Becon praises John Robsart and his wife, John Appleyard's mother, for the 'godly affeccion and Christian zele which both you and that good virtuous Ladye youre wife haue borne toward y^{e} pure religio[n] of God these many

[2] Neville Williams, *A Tudor Tragedy: Thomas Howard Fourth Duke of Norfolk,* Guernsey: Barrie Books Ltd, 1964: pp.177-181.

[3] London, The National Archives, State Papers 1/65: Fol.113^{r}; *The Visitacion of Norffolk*, 1891: 52. On the Boleyn family as reformists see E.W. Ives, 'Anne Boleyn and the Early Reformation in England: the Contemporary Evidence', *The Historical Journal,* Vol. 37, No. 2, (1994), pp. 389-40.

[4] Thomas Becon, *The Fortresse of the fayethfull against ye cruel assautes of pouertie and honger newlye made for the comforte of poore nedye Christians*, London: printed by John Daie and William Seres, 1550: Aviiiv. Hereafter *The Fortresse of the fayethfull.*

years'.[5] He particularly notes their charity, not only to the poor but 'specially of such professe ye Gospel', before launching into another colourful attack on 'papystes'.[6]

Becon was an advocate of the Lutheran principle of *sola scriptura* for all regardless of social standing. His *Governans of Vertue* contradicted the 1543 Act for the Advancement of True Religion, which limited the reading of Bible in English to only those above the status of yeomen. Consequently, in 1546, his works were banned by royal proclamation in July and burned in London in September.[7] Becon was thus driven into 'internal exile' in the 1540s, relying on the support of the sympathetic gentry of Derbyshire, Staffordshire and Warwickshire.[8] Johnathan Reimer has studied Becon's relationship with the Kentish patrons with whom he found shelter during the early 1540s. Looking at the dedication to *A Christmas Bankette,* he argues that:

> Unlike [Becon's] dedications to Neville, which show little to no indication of continuing intimate interaction, Becon's addresses to these younger members of Neville's circle each contain details revealing closer, first hand relationships. For example, in his dedication to Whetenhall, Becon praised the "bounteous liberalite shewed toward [him] […] at all tymes" and mentioned the fact that he knew the lawyer to be planting a flower garden at the time of his writing. Likewise, in his address to Scott, Becon acknowledged that he was "more enderted [indebted] and bound, than my poore beggary shal euer may be able to recompence your moost kynd and free gentylnes."[9]

This dedication, which Reimer takes to be evidence of a relationship, sounds very similar to Becon's thanks to the Robsarts. Later, during the reign of Mary, Becon did not go into exile but sought patronage in sympathetic households in exchange for

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[5] Becon, *The The Fortresse of the fayethfull,* (1550): Bviii^{v}.
[6] Becon, *The Fortresse of the fayethfull,* (1550): Bviii^{v}.
[7] Jonathan Reimer, 'Thomas Becon's Henrician Writings: Composition and County Patronage, 1541–1543', *Reformation* Vol. 21 No.1 (2016), pp. 8-24: 9.
[8] http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-1918 [date accessed 26/04/2019]
[9] Reimer (2016): 14.

the tuition of their children, expressing his gratitude in dedications to his texts.[10] In light of this pattern of patronage, it seems highly likely that Becon's reference to 'these many years' indicates a longer connection between Becon and the Robsarts, perhaps dating back to Norfolk during the 1540s.

Reimer also focuses upon the relationships between Becon's patrons' denominational leanings, and the content of the texts he dedicated to them — arguing against Derrick Sherwin Bailey's representation of Becon's Kentish patrons as 'a homogenous group of evangelicals.'[11] Reimer suggests that the theological inconsistencies in Becon's canon can be linked to his more conservative patrons. Following this line of argument, and 'the need to ascribe a greater agency to county patrons as contributors to rather than simply consumers of early modern book production', the Protestant fervor of Becon's dedication to the Robsarts further suggests their religious proclivities.[12] In John Eyre's edition of Becon's work, half the biographical footnote on the Robsarts is enthusiastically taken up with the scandal of Amy's death. Critically this potential patronage relationship has been eclipsed by the glamour of the Robsart murder-mystery.[13]

The Protestantism of John Robsart, in particular, is further demonstrated by his surviving copy of the *Missale adusum insignis ac preclare ecclesie Sarum* (1512), known as the 'Robsart Missal', now in Durham University Library. Aude de

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[10] http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-1918 [date accessed 26/04/2019].
[11] Reimer (2016): 10. Derrick Sherwin Bailey, *Thomas Becon and the Reformation of the Church in England*, Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1952.
[12] Reimer (2016): 21.
[13] *The catechism of Thomas Becon, S.T.P chaplain to Archbishop Cranmer, prebendary of Canterbury, & c.: with other pieces written by him in the reign of King Edward the Sixth,* ed John Ayre. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1844: 583.

Merzerac Zanetti has focused on the Missal's reforming annotations and erasures, describing it as:

> defaced to a high standard of consistency and detail: occurrences of "papa" are replaced with "epi" when used to refer to a historical bishop of Rome, the Good Friday petitions for the pope are heavily blotted out, the missa pro papa was first slightly altered and eventually entirely taken out. The Exultet was carefully rephrased: the word 'rege' was put in place of 'patre'… This very unusual technique highlights the notion that the king had indeed replaced the pope.[14]

Merzerac Zanetti has proposed that the missal was altered by a priest, Edmund Banyard, rather than by Robsart himself.[15] As was common with devotional texts, however, John recorded the birth of Amy in the missal, which suggests his use of, and connection with, the text.[16] It remains an important devotional artefact suggesting the confessional leanings of the family. Amy Robsart's marriage to the leading Protestant Robert Dudley is further evidence for the family's Protestant character. John Appleyard's own son Henry was paid by Leicester to travel to Utrecht during the 1585-6 Netherlands campaign, which Simon Adams describes as being 'as near to "puritanism in arms" as the Elizabethan political system could provide'.[17] John Appleyard also accompanied Leicester on an expedition to Newhaven in 1563, which Adams has argued was, 'in both its Dudley leadership and religious ambivalence, the direct precursor of the symbolically charged

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[14] Aude De Merzerac Zanetti, *Liturgical developments in England under Henry VIII (1534-1547),* Durham theses, Durham University (2011): 134.
[15] De Merzerac Zanetti (2011): 135.
[16] De Merzerac Zanetti (2011): 133.
[17] 'the xvj of June 1586 Payd to Mr Appellyard by lordship's commandment in prest at his going into England from Utrick the same daye'. *Household Accounts and Disbursement Books of Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester,* Simon Adams ed, Camden Fifth Series Vol. 6, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995: 362. Hereafter *Household Accounts.* Simon Adams, *Leicester and the Court: Essays on Elizabethan politics,* Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002: 190.

Protestant Netherlands expedition of 1585.'[18]

Adams refers to Appleyard as part of Leicester's 'clientele'.[19] In 1567, William Cecil made a memo weighing up the advantages and disadvantages of Archduke Charles of Styria and Leicester as suitors to the Queen. Under Leicester's disadvantages, Appleyard was one of nineteen men named who Cecil feared Leicester would favour if he came to power. [20] Leicester made him High Sheriff of Norfolk and Suffolk in 1559. Neville Williams argues that at this moment Appleyard was already caught between Leicester and Norfolk. Leicester appointed Appleyard over Norfolk's chosen candidate; 'this poaching on his preserve was a snub which the duke was slow to forget.'[21] In Appleyard's examination in 1567, he claimed that the appointment was Leicester's repayment of a debt to him.[22]

It appears that Appleyard himself was in financial trouble in the 1550s. He sold his inheritance to Alexander Chapman.[23] A John Appleyard also sold 'Mannors landes and tenements' in Norfolk to support his embezzling brother Philip at some point between 1558 and 1579.[24] It is unclear if this is the same John Appleyard, but it does seem to fit into a pattern of ongoing problems with debt. Appleyard was also dismissed as Sheriff of Norfolk and Suffolk in 1561, for unknown reasons, which would also have deprived him of income.[25] James Gairdner was condemnatory in his

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[18] Adams (2002): 156, 178.
[19] Adams (2005): 155.
[20] Adams (2005): 151.
[21] Williams (1964): 49.
[22] London, The National Archives, C 3/3/24: Fol. 98^{v}.
[23] London, The National Archives, E 210/9745: Fol. 1^{r}.
[24] C 3/3/24: Fol. 1^{r}.
[25] Diamaid MacCulloch, *Suffolk and the Tudors: Politics and Religion in an English County 1500-1600*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986: 416.

appraisal of Appleyard's conduct, when he stated that Appleyard:

> had been all along looking to Dudley to pay his debts and help him on in life; and when Dudley's purse of influence failed he seems to have given vent to expressions which made him a too easy prey to the arts and machinations of others.[26]

Nevertheless, it does seem likely that finances were a motivation in the affairs of 1567.

The late 1560s were an infamously troubled period of Elizabeth's reign, culminating with the Rising of the Northern Earls in 1569. Anxiety about Elizabeth's unsettled succession increased after marriage negotiations with the Archduke Charles, the Hapsburg match, reached stalemate in 1566 over religion; the anxiety intensified with the threat of Mary Queen of Scots' move to England in 1568.[27] In the midst of this rising tension, in 1567 Leicester and Norfolk were also embroiled in their own related, personal rivalry. Leicester was perceived as an even more serious contender of Elizabeth's hand, when she named him as Lord Protector after being struck by smallpox in 1562; rumours of an affair spread by 1564.[28] Dudley was an unpopular candidate among many, but was particularly personally resented by Norfolk, who felt his court career did not sufficiently reflect his title.[29] This was a period of heightened tension, when the tennis episode is claimed to have occurred, and supporters demonstrated their factional allegiance sartorially with colour-coded

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[26] James Gairdner, 'The Death of Amy Robsart', *The English Historical Review,* Vol. 1, No. 2, (1886), pp. 235-259: 249.

[27] Anthony Fletcher & Diarmaid MacCulloch, *Tudor Rebellions,* London: Longman, 1997: 103; Simon Adams, 'Eliza Enthroned? The Court and its Politics' in *The Reign of Elizabeth I,* ed Christopher Haigh, London: Macmillan, 1984: 66; Carole Levin, *The Reign of Elizabeth I,* Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2002: 46.

[28] Norman Jones, *The Birth of the Elizabethan Age: England in the 1560s*, Cambridge: Blackwell, 1993: 132. Levin (2002): 82.

[29] Chambers (1963): 49.

clothing.[30] It was at this point that Appleyard became entangled in the power struggle.

Although the circumstances are unclear, it appears that Appleyard was approached in 1567 by members of Norfolk's faction, who bribed him to spread rumours about the circumstances of Amy Robsart's death, which would suggest she was the victim of Leicester's ruthless pursuit of Elizabeth.[31] According to the examinations of Appleyard, and of his brother-in-law William Huggins, while staying at Hampton Court, Appleyard was dramatically approached at night in the garden by a Thames waterman who told him that 'on the the other side of the water' was a man who promised that:

> if he [Appleyard] wold be content to sturr some matter against him [Leicester] for the death of his wife, he shuld find good maintenance therin, and shuld not want li to relive him.[32]

Appleyard denied that he spread rumours, and protested his continued loyalty to Leicester, however in 1567 he was imprisoned in the Fleet, on an unknown charge.[33] During his imprisonment he requested that a new inquest be opened into the circumstances of his half-sister's death. It is from this stint in the Fleet that his

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[30] Supporters of Leicester wore purple and blue, and Norfolk yellow. Leicester and Norfolk were claimed to have got into a fight over tennis when a sweaty Leicester used Elizabeth's napkin to wipe his face, and an outraged Norfolk threatened to hit him in the face with his tennis racket. For sartorial factional fashion and the tennis episode, see Chambers (1963): 95.

[31] Rumours that Leicester had conveniently killed Amy off began to circulate in court when she died in 1560, and reared their head again in *Leicester's Commonwealth* in 1584. See Adams (2002): 135, and Susan Doran, *Elizabeth I and her Circle*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015: 122.

[32] C 3/3/24: Fol. 67r.

[33] The Acts of Privy Council from May 1st 1567 until May 24th 1570 are missing see *Acts of the Privy Council Vol. VII A.D. 1558-1570,* ed. John Roche Dassent, London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1893: 351. John Appleyard's second letter to the Council, written on 4th June 1567, suggests he was imprisoned in early May 1567, at exactly the point where we have lost the Acts of the Privy Council: 'ymprisonment which I haue ynduered close a full moneth this night' (Hatfield, Hatfield House Archives, Cecil Papers 155/55: Fol. 80r).

petitions date.

What little is known of Appleyard's subsequent life suggests that it was similarly troubled. On 16th May 1570, Appleyard spearheaded a failed rebellion in Norwich, along with other members of the Norfolk gentry.[34] They aligned themselves with the Rebel Earls, and sought to expel foreign Huguenot weavers from Norwich.[35] On 6th of June the ringleaders and a small assembly of troops marched on the city, and there was a small series of skirmishes. The leaders planned to surprise the Mayor of Norwich and his councilors at a banquet, and seize power, however they failed to muster the requisite number of troops. The Mayor was also warned about the conspiracy. Diarmaid MacCulloch interprets the immigration problem as a front for the Rebellion's conservative aims:

> although the conspirators aimed to capitalize on popular resentment against immigrant Dutch settlers, their real aims were to free the Duke of Norfolk and challenge the Protestant settlement.[36]

MacCulloch's analysis of the Rebellion would suggest that Appleyard's allegiance had firmly switched from Leicester to Norfolk.

It is unclear when Appleyard died. MacCulloch states 1572 as the year of death, whereas Walter Rye and Adams both suggest it is likely to be 1574.[37] There is a record of a John Appleyard from a meeting in Greenwich in 1574. An Appleyard was also imprisoned in the Castle of Norwich; if this is our Appleyard, his imprisonment was presumably as a consequence of the Norwich Rebellion. The

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[34] Williams (1964): 181
[35] Williams (1964): 180
[36] MacCulloch (1986): 313.
[37] MacCulloch (1986): 425; Walter Rye, *The Murder of Amy Robsart: A Brief for the Prosecution,* London: Elliot Stock, 1885: 24. Robert Dudley, *Household Accounts*: 461.

Queen allowed Appleyard to be put into the custody of the Sheriff, who could deal with Appleyard as he saw fit.[38] No letters survive from, what it seems likely were, Appleyard's last months.

Appleyard has therefore tended to appear only as a footnote to the lives of Amy Robsart, Leicester and Norfolk. The most substantial treatments of him appear in Gairdner's 1886 'The Death of Amy Robsart,' and in Williams' 1964 biography of Norfolk.[39] He also appears briefly in Rye's *The Murder of Amy Robsart,* which in a delightfully melodramatic mode, is framed in its subtitle as a legal appeal to an imagined jury: 'A Brief for the Prosecution'.[40] Rye's legal metaphor is telling. Both Gairdner and Rye engaged in the ongoing debate over whether Leicester had conveniently disposed of his first wife, Gairdner acting as Leicester's defense lawyer to Rye's case for the prosecution. In their eagerness to get to the bottom of the cold case, Appleyard is posthumously called as a witness, but his letter is seen only as testimony in Leicester's historical trial.[41] Despite providing full, modernised, transcriptions of Appleyard's two surviving petitions, Gairdner does not pass comment on their remarkable rhetoric. Rye transcribed only Appleyard's first letter, cursorily summarizing the second with 'he proceeds to beg for mercy' — an oversight which this chapter seeks to redress.[42] Gairdner characterises Appleyard as

[38] The National Archives, P C 2/10: Fol.215r.
[39] Gairdner (1886). Williams (1964).
[40] Rye (1885).
[41] The circumstances of Amy's death continued to captivate the imaginations of critics and writers throughout the twentieth century, receiving literary treatments by Walter Scott, Victor Hugo and several paintings, including 'Amy Robsart' by Sir William Quiller Orchardson (date unknown) and 'The Death of Amy Robsart' by Frederick Yeames (c.1877). Her death has recently been revisited in the popular history: Chris Skidmore, *Death and the Virgin Queen: Elizabeth I and the dark scandal that rocked the throne,* New York: Saint Martin's Press, 2011.
[42] Rye (1885): 68.

a helpless pawn in the games of loftier courtiers: 'it would seem he was seduced by others who used him as a catspaw… He was a pitiful creature at best'.[43] Rye also damns Appleyard as an unworthy and unreliable 'proper blackguard'.[44] In both Gairdner and Rye's rush to dismiss Appleyard, his rhetoric has been overlooked.

Williams takes Appleyard somewhat more seriously than Rye and Gairdner, looking at him as the instigator of the Norwich rebellion, as well as his link to the Robsart affair. He still does not, however, engage with either of Appleyard's petitionary letters. Thus far, then, Appleyard has not yet been appreciated as a skillful rhetorician – or even as a rhetorician at all. The idiosyncratic surviving petitions warrant a close rhetorical analysis. Such attention demonstrates the literary potential of petitionary rhetoric, and illuminates Appleyard's political strategies.

The two surviving petitions by Appleyard date from his imprisonment in the Fleet in 1567, and both are addressed to the Privy Council.[45] The first is an elaborate and carefully constructed rhetorical performance. The second is sparser, shorter, and more desperate. It makes explicit the strategy which is implicit in the first letter. Religious rhetoric is at the heart of both.

John Appleyard's first petition to the Privy Council (31st May 1567)

On 31st May 1567, Appleyard wrote to the Privy Council about the results of the re-opened inquest into his half-sister's death. He never explicitly requests his release from prison, perhaps in full knowledge that his betrayal of his patron Leicester, one

[43] Gairdner (1886): 249.
[44] Rye (1885): 23.
[45] My full transcription of the first letter can be found in Appendix I.

of the most powerful men on the Council, made it politically impossible for him to do so. His use of religious rhetoric, however, is deliberately deployed to ask what he cannot: he casts himself as a contrite Protestant sinner and the Privy Council as God, who should mercifully redeem him from prison. This Protestant performance must have been carefully tailored to his audience, the Privy Council including not only Leicester, but also the committed Calvinist William Cecil whose own hand endorses Appleyard's second petition.[46]

The letter has three main parts. In the first he professes his shame and his unworthiness of help; this is where most of the rhetorical work is done. The second section pragmatically gets down to the business of his sister's inquest. There is a palpable clunk as he shifts gears in tone, from the depths of despair, to the more perfunctory 'And for the matter of my sister' (l.32).[47] The final section explicitly lays out his requests. Petitions have their formulae.[48] Appleyard 'humbly beseeches' three times at the end of his letter and signs off with *pro forma* 'I do pray to almighty god for the happy preservacon of your honorable estats longe to yndewer' (ll.57-58).[49] By using this set phrase he is generically signaling what, specifically, he is asking for. Appleyard makes three requests: the first is access to the results of the inquest and the freedom to contest it, subject to legal advice; the second is forgiveness if his letter has offended; the third is the council's intercession with 'those noble gentilemen' (l.53), presumably Leicester and Norfolk.[50] Although his

[46] Cecil Papers 155/55: Fol. 82v.
[47] Hatfield, Hatfield House Archives, Cecil Papers 155/54: Fol. 78r.
[48] See Introduction: 10.
[49] Cecil Papers 155/54: Fol. 78v.
[50] Cecil Papers 155/54: Fol. 78v.

description of his decreasing funds and increasing sickness imply that release would be merciful, he never explicitly requests it.

The first section of the letter is the most crucial to Appleyard's rhetorical strategy: his religious rhetoric, and a network of biblical and liturgical allusion, perform a Protestant act of penitence. Having formally addressed the Council with due ceremony on the outside of the letter, Appleyard does not waste time in his opening but immediately lays thick strokes from his religious palette:

> Most honorable, when I consyder the greatnes of my falte, moste heynouslye comyttyd, I bothe blusshe and feare to write.
> (ll.1-2)

In content alone, Appleyard's consideration of 'the greatnes of [his] fault' suggests the self-examination required for confession. The quantitative 'greatnes' implies not only an acknowledgement of his 'falte' but also an estimation of just how badly he has erred, a fitting reflection given the political gravity of his situation. One sentence in, Appleyard already paints a self-portrait of mournfully chastising in his cell. He also draws on a subtle example of the epistolary convention of evoking physical presence, which Gary Schneider describes as 'epistolary contact':

> epistolary contact manifested its affective and epistemological power not by *being* actual face-to-face contact, but by inscribing rhetorical strategies based on speech, aurality, and bodily presence.[51]

This is a frequently adopted strategy in petitionary writing more generally; Appleyard does not use it often, but he does fleetingly here.[52] Not only does he

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[51] Gary Schneider, *The Culture of Epistolarity: Vernacular Letters and Letter Writing in Early Modern England, 1500-1700*, Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2005: 110.

[52] Whigham also notes that petitioners had to find a way to 'inscribe on the page' the 'emotive and nondiscursive effects usually found in face-to-face interaction' and 'impose them on an absent recipient'. Whigham (1981): 872. Kesselring likewise describes how 'petitioners emphasized their submission in terms that sought to emulate the oral petitioning process'. Kesselring (2003): 116.

admit his guilt, but further uses his imagined physical presence to suggest that even his body makes manifest his shame, in his blushing face. Brian Cummings has traced the link in sixteenth century medical treatises between shame and the blush of freshly post-lapsarian Adam and Eve.[53] This connection to man's first disobedience and guilt is fitting with Appleyard's theme.

Linguistically, he then emphasises the religious potential of this confessional tone, with an almost direct quotation from the Book of Common Prayer. Metrically, 'moste heynouslye comyttyd' echoes, and almost exactly replicates the phrasing, of the general confession before the consecration in the communion service: 'we acknowledge and bewayle oure manifold synnes and wyckednesse, whiche we from tyme to tyme *moste grevously have committed*' [emphasis mine].[54] His variant word-choice is fine-tuned to his specific situation. 'Heinously' has specifically legal and criminal connotations ('Hateful, odious; highly criminal or wicked; infamous, atrocious: chiefly characterizing offences, crimes, sins, and those who commit them') in comparison to the more personal offence of 'grievously' ('in such a way as to be oppressive, painful, or hurtful to the affairs, person, or feelings of any one; to an oppressive or injurious extent).'[55] Appleyard's subtle adaptation of the Book of Common Prayer in the very first sentence of his letter lays the foundations for the

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Whittington has also observed the erotic power of Odyesseus's verbally performed physical gestures of supplication to Nausica. Whittington (2016): 23.

[53] Brian Cummings, 'Animal Passions and Human Sciences: Shame, Blushing and Nakedness in Early Modern Europe and the New World' in *At the Borders of the Human: Beasts, Bodies and Natural Philosophy in the Early Modern Period,* eds Erica Fudge, Ruth Gilbert and Susan Wiseman, Basingstoke: Palgrave, 1999: pp. 28-32.

[54] All quotations from the *Book of Common Prayer* are taken from *The Book of Common Prayer: The Texts of 1549, 1559, and 1662,* ed Brian Cummings, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011. Hereafter *Book of Common Prayer. Book of Common Prayer* (1559): 134.

[55] *Heinous,* adj. 1a) http://www.oed.com [date accessed 26/04/2019]. *Grievously,* adv. 1a) http://www.oed.com [date accessed 26/04/2019].

melding of the earthly and eschatological justice systems which he develops in the first section of the letter. The consequences of legal and religious confession are significantly different, however. Secular confession can lead to imprisonment or even death; the general confession could lead to God's mercy:

> haue mercye upon us, mooste mercyfull father, for thy sonne our Lord Jesus Christes sake, forgeue us all that is paste, and graunte that we may ever hereafter serve and please thee.[56]

This is the transformative strategy of Appleyard's rhetoric: political misdemeanor is translated into sin, and sin can be absolved. The admission of guilt becomes a moral good; it becomes contrition, enabling forgiveness. Even the choice of 'falte' potentially redirects his confession from a real political action to a more internal flaw. Kesslering has also identified this as a common technique in her survey of petitions, describing how 'disobedience to royal authority equaled disobedience to divine dictate'.[57] Also, from the alternative perspective of judiciaries 'a conflation of crime and sin shaped responses to offenders', in which the most likely of the accused to go free were the penitent.[58]

Having established this connection between the political and the spiritual, he then plays on the courtly language of grace: 'I blusshe, as asshamed of my facte; and feare, as on condemnyng my selfe unworthye of grace at yor handes' (ll.2-3). Having cast himself as penitent sinner, Appleyard is quick to underline the implied role of the council as God who may save him. The easy but audacious play on the language of the court here has the swagger of courtly performance. This sentence also

[56] *Book of Common Prayer* (1559): 134.
[57] Kesselring (2003): 117.
[58] Kesselring (2003): 92.

crucially develops Appleyard's role. 'Condemnyng my selfe unworthye of grace' is a recognisable stage in the pattern of penitence: despair. Having set the bait, Appleyard immediately drops the loaded term in his next sentence: 'But the noble clemencye I yisterday receyved doth sumwhat abandon from me dyspayre' (ll.4-5).[59] As Ryrie has summarised:

> Calvinists became connoisseurs of despair, finely judging its varieties. They knew that it could be spiritually deadly, but also that it could be a valuable, even a necessary spiritual process: a hollowing-out which might in the end render the spiritual life deeper.[60]

Despair could be deadly in that becoming convinced of your reprobation could, as Appleyard suggests, be a dead-end which prevented seeking salvation. Yet simultaneously, the recognition of your unworthiness was commonly perceived to be an important stage on the path to salvation:

> The paradox at Protestantism's heart is that you can attain forgiveness only when you confront the full horror of your sin; you can only be redeemed when you recognize that you are beyond redemption.[61]

From a purely rhetorical view, the written assertion that you cannot write is an obvious strategy, *apophasis* — a particularly useful one for when, politically, you are in no position to ask for mercy. Appleyard, however, then develops the *apophasis* theologically. He presents himself as being in the potentially fatal state of despair, yet his inability to ask for grace in fact implies his worthiness of grace, according to Calvinist theology. In Robert Linaker's *Comfortable Treatise* (1595), Christ is said to call upon only those who 'are in paine, and throughly tyred with the sense and sorrow of their sinnes'.[62] Richard Sibbes likewise asserted 'None are fitter for

[59] Cecil Papers 155/54: Fol. 78r.
[60] Ryrie (2013): 30.
[61] Ryrie (2013): pp.37-38.
[62] Richard Linaker, *Comfortable Treatise* (1595) quoted Ryrie (2013): 30.

comfort than those that thinke themselves furthest off.…A holy despaire in our selves is the ground of true hope.'[63] By re-figuring his dire political situation in the language of Protestant theology, Appleyard's assertions of his unworthiness of help are, in fact, implicitly arguing for his worthiness of secular salvation.

Appleyard again underlines the conceit of the letter to the council as spiritual confession to God, before elaborating on the 'pain', 'sense and sorrow' of despair:

> although shame dothe still remayne; for yt can not be covered, my falte being trewlye confesed by my owen mouth in so honorable a presence
> (ll.5-7)

It is possible that his confession may here refer to the examination he underwent, for which Cecil wrote the interrogatories.[64] The 'honorable… presence' is an evident play on the Council as God; as with 'grace', Appleyard exploits the overlapping language of court and church. This religious rhetoric changes Appleyard's confession also from secular to spiritual, which concomitantly alters what the consequences of his confession should be.

Appleyard then fleshes out his despairing character with some Biblical padding:

> So that where before I stoode in hope by your honorable meanes to hir Majestie to have happened of sumwhat in my realese, I nowe wishe rather a mounteyne to overwhelme me & hyde me from yor sighte, then ons to dar shewe my spotted face, in yr honorable presences
> (ll.6-10)

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[63] Richard Sibbes, *Bruised reed,* (1630), quoted Ryrie (2013): 38.
[64] For Cecil's interrogatories see Hatfield, Hatfield House Archives, Cecil Papers 202/55: Fols. 55^{r}-55^{v}. For other papers related to the examination see Hatfield, Hatfield House Archives, Cecil Papers 155/62: Fols. 62^{r}-62^{v}; Hatfield, Hatfield House Archives, Cecil Papers 155/63: Fols.63^{r}-63^{v}; Hatfield, Hatfield House Archives, Cecil Papers 155/67, Fols. 67^{r}-68^{v}.

The sinner's wish for mountains to cover their shame occurs twice in the New Testament: in Luke and Relevation. On the road to Gesthemene Christ tells the women of Jerusalem that their children 'shal… beginne to say to the mountaines, Fall on vs; and to the hills, Couer vs.'[65] This a moment of judgement, as in a passage bristling with anti-Semitic potential, Christ suggests their disgrace is so severe that it will affect future generations. Appleyard thus aligns himself with this immense shame. Simultaneously, however, quoting Christ on the *Via dolorosa* simultaneously points his readers to the redemption of sin through the Passion.

> In Revelation, all humanity seeks to hide in the face of Judgement:
>
> And the Kings of the earth, & the great men, and the riche men, and the chief captaines, and the mightie men, and euerie bondman, and euerie fre[e] man, hid themselues in dennes and among the rockes of the mountains, And said to the mountaines and rockes, Fall on vs, and hide us from the presence of him that sitteth on the throne, & fro[m] the wrath of the Lambe.[66]

The allusion to Revelation emphasises Appleyard's shift from a criminal to an eschatological justice system: from crime to sin. The context of the quotation also subtly underlines that sin is universal. The supposed wish to hide himself in shame similarly alters the reality of his situation: Appleyard couldn't 'shewe [his] spotted face' in the Council's 'honorable p[re]sences', because he was imprisoned. Instead, however, Appleyard suggests that he is in a self-imposed, penitent exile — a deft refiguring of the reality of his imprisonment. Whilst harping on his shame, he is subtly re-framing the nature of his fault from a political misdemeanor to more abstract sin. His desire to hide his face from the Council-God also echoes Psalm 61:

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[65] Luke 2.30 (Geneva).
[66] Revelations 6.15-16 (Geneva).

'Hide thy face from my sins, and put away all mine iniquities.'[67] Appleyard fittingly repents with one of the penitential psalms.

> The situation seems hopeless:
>
> > (unworthy of yt) I have hertofore had place and conntynaunce of credyt and better lyked of by all yor honours then I coulde decerve; which nowe ys so justlye bleamyshed, as I se in my selfe ^in^ no possibelytye, whereby I can haue comforte in my lyfe ever to Recover yor good oppynnyons; so that when I fynd some hope by forgiveness, the feare of shame, and losse of credyt with such personages dothe altogither drench me in dispeyer
> > (ll.10-15)

Appleyard's unworthiness is itself unworthy of a main clause; the subordinate clause is apologetically squeezed into parentheses in a moment of supreme grammatical and material groveling. Appleyard has seemingly bowed to his political disgrace, the will of earthly Gods, with the same stoicism with which Protestants in the General Confession voiced their submissions to God's will:

> we acknowledge and bewayle oure manifold synnes and wyckednesse, which we from tyme to tyme most grevously have committed, by thoughte, woorde and deede, against thy divine Majestie, provokynge *mooste justlye* thy wrathe and indignation againste us. [emphasis mine] [68]

However, whereas the general confession petitions God for mercy, Appleyard's despair is *intensified* by the possibility of forgiveness. This possibility is intruded upon by the thought of his soiled reputation. Forgiveness is not sufficient. 'Hope' offers no hope at all. Daniel Bevington and Eric Rasmussen have argued that the 'duality of hope and hopelessness drives the dramatic energy of *Dr Faustus*'.[69] This duality similarly drives the first section of Appleyard's petition: he presents himself

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[67] Psalm 51.9 (Geneva).
[68] *Book of Common Prayer (*1559): 134.
[69] *Dr Faustus: The A- and B- Texts (1604, 1616). A Parallel-Text Edition,* eds David Bevington and Eric Rasmussen, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1993: 10.

as torn between the desire to repent and a particularly courtly form of despair, in which the thought of his damaged reputation, as well as his guilt, prevents him from seeking redemption. Crucially, however, whereas the audience of *Dr Faustus* has no ability to intervene in the drama, Appleyard's audience, the Council, are the arbitrators of his fate. They can save him by releasing him from prison.

> At this point we reach the most open statement of the reality of his situation:
>
> My falte my lordes, which I commyttyd, ar agaynst ij noble gentilemen, such as yf they had enymyes yet theyr enymyes coulde no wayes in honour detect them:/ And I a caytyf (:in many respects bound to them bothe:) haue attemptyd agaynst dewtye, Love & trothe, yea evin agaynst nature, to provoke Iustelye theyr yers./
> (ll.15-19)

For a moment there is a more sincere sense of Appleyard's real vulnerability; he is caught between two of the most powerful men at court. 'Bound to them bothe', might remind his readers that while Leicester was Appleyard's patron, his step-father John Robsart had been a receiver for Norfolk's father, the Third Duke of Norfolk.[70] It is worth noting at this point, that both Leicester and Norfolk were on the Privy Council in 1567. Later in the petition, Appleyard asks the Council to persuade the 'nobel gentilemen' to allow him 'to give me leave to write to eyther of them on privaat letter' (ll.56-57).[71] Appleyard was probably aware, however, that addressing his letter to the Council offered him the opportunity to indirectly petition the two powerful men he would not dare contact personally. Therefore, his emphasis upon his divided loyalty could be seen as diplomatic bet-hedging. The language of imprisonment also subtly negates his agency: Appleyard as 'catif', as

[70] http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-8144?rskey=SLUBZo&result=1 [date accessed 26/04/2019].
[71] Cecil Papers 155/54: Fol. 78v.

prisoner, tied to both men, suggests that he was trapped into his actions, rather than his own actions leading him to his imprisonment. In his revolt 'evin agaynst nature', as well as against the courtly, almost chivalric, values of 'dewtye, Love & trothe', Appleyard returns to conflict on the more cosmic than secular scale.

Having illustrated his despair - and reaching the closest he gets to an explicit confession - the first section of the petition then reaches its climax. Appleyard heavily underlines the parallel he is building between the secular and heavenly justice systems:

> the borden whereof, ys so yntollerable (the greatnes of theyr estats considered) as not only in this worlde, they terryfye me, but also the accompt that must further towardes god be made
> (ll.19-21)

Appleyard already gestured to the general confession in the opening of his letter. He now introduces a direct quotation: 'we do earnestly repente, and bee hartely sorye for these our misdoinges, the remembraunce of them is grevous unto us: *the burthen of theim is intollerable*' [emphasis mine].[72] Appleyard's only alteration is to intensify the burden, '*so* yntollerable' [emphasis mine]. Appleyard's clear signposting of his source reminds his reader of its context: a recited petition for God's mercy. In the liturgy, the priest follows the general confession with a reminder of God's promised redemption of the penitent: 'ALMIGHTYE God, oure heavenly father, who of his great mercy, hathe promised forgevnes of sinnes to al them, whiche with hartye repentaunce and true faith turne to hym'.[73] Even when Appleyard claims that he cannot bring himself to ask for forgiveness, his intertextuality is an implicit prayer

[72] *Book of Common Prayer* (1559): 134.
[73] *Book of Common Prayer* (1559): 134.

for mercy. The 'borden' creates a parallel between, or even elides, political misdemeanor and sin. Thus, if the vehicle of the contrite sinner should be worthy of absolution, Appleyard the tenor should also be saved from his earthly doom.

After this bold quotation, Appleyard then underlines the comparison he has been drawing between earthly and divine judgement: 'as not only in this worlde, they terryfye me, but also the accompt that must further towardes god be made' (ll.20-21). Appleyard thus reminds the council of the role he has created for them: if Appleyard has figuratively become a contrite sinner, the Council should play the merciful Christian God who, according to the general confession Appleyard has just quoted, will 'restore them that bee penitent'.

There is a further, striking effect to the comparison. The third person plural Appleyard fears, 'the greatnes of theyr estats considered', presumably refers to the 'ij noble gentilemen' (l.16) he discussed in the previous sentence, who are likely to be Leicester and Norfolk. Given the obvious potential for Leicester and Norfolk to read the letter at the Council table, this is a great moment of flattery as Appleyard creates a hierarchy in which, given the 'greatness of their estates' he is seemingly as terrified of their earthly wrath as he is of God's. Appleyard's hierarchy could even be described as somewhat skewed. Given his heavy use of religious discourse, the final entrance of God into the letter seems rather bathetic. Divine judgement is a further 'accompt'. It is almost an afterthought: the financial language, whilst playing on the economy of grace, also seems to make divine judgement a continuance of Council business. Remembering his courtly play on the 'grace' of the Council, Appleyard

seems to wink here, brazenly suggesting that the earthly gods of Norfolk and Leicester are his real priority.

After clarifying the role of the Council, and Leicester and Norfolk in particular, as his deities Appleyard finally drops the term which is the culmination of his self-portrait of despair:

> my senses, be wholye benummed, wherby as wisdom ys in me utterlye quayled, so further I consider of my selfe that my decerts in bothe worldes gives me summons of a reaprobate /: I stand so plunged in sorrowes, as yet I see small hope that can comfort me
> (ll.22-25)

The duality of hope and hopelessness returns once more, as Appleyard states what the Protestant reader should already have identified as 'the summons of a reaprobate'. Appleyard presents himself as a Calvinist reprobate, incapable of seeking salvation: 'wisdom ys in me utterlye quayled'. Hope is remote. He brings in again the conjoined realms of heaven and earth with great force, for it is the consideration of 'my decerts in *bothe* worldes' that 'gives' him 'the summons of a reaprobate'. On earth, the Council crucially has the ability to save him. His expression of hopelessness creates a tantalizing window: 'I see small hope that can comforte me'. Stating that there is *almos*t no hope, simultaneously allows the possibility of hope. The legal discourse is particularly crucial, making the use of 'reaprobate' less disastrous than it initially appears: he has '*summons* of a reaprobate'. A legal 'summons' is a call to court; it is an accusation but crucially not a judgement: 'A citation or writ apprising a defendant that an action has been begun against him and citing him to appear to the action, in default of which the court may

proceed to give judgement and award execution against him.'[74] Appleyard pointedly prods his reader: they may save him from figurative despair and damnation, conveniently by freeing him from his imprisonment on earth.

Appleyard closes the first section of the petition with one last rhetorical push, elaborating on his despair with affective lyricism:

> for evin as on[e] ashamed of light, shall eyther wishe all absence of daye, or else for feare of wonderment, must lyke the back [bat] afrayed to be sene of the byrdes, shrowde my selfe in sum decert . / for I shall see no man looke towards me, whom I shall not feare, dothe behold me, to gaze of my shames comytted. / so the more I consyder of my selfe, the deper causes I fynd to synke in dispayer./
> (ll.29-34)

Appleyard imagines, and rejects, a return to court, fearing the judgement of his fellow courtiers. His use of chiaroscuro imbues the situation with religious atmosphere: 'evin as on[e] ashamed of light, shall eyther wishe all absence of daye'. To be 'ashamed' of light resonates with the guilt and shame of despair we have seen throughout the letter, given light's Christian connotations of salvation. The absolute, '*all* absence of day', heightens the drama, perhaps even implying the extreme consequence of despair: suicide. The comparison further builds on Appleyard's courtly despair: his fear of court being likened to a shame of light even more tightly binds the idea that court is the source of grace.

The unusual image of the bat is also emotionally loaded. In his compendium of natural history lore, the serendipitously named Stephen Batman writes that the bat, or 'reremouse,' 'hating light, flieth in the eventide'.[75] Appleyard alters the cause

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[74] *Summons,* n., sense 2a, http://www.oed.com [date accessed [26/04/2019].
[75] Stephen Batman, *Batman vppon Bartholome, his Booke De Proprietatibus Rerum,* London: Thomas East, 1582: 189.

of the bat's nocturnalism: rather than hating light, which would suggest a hatred of God, Appleyard makes the bat 'afrayed' of the birds, thus reflecting Appleyard's fear of meeting other courtiers when his reputation is sullied.

It is likely that Appleyard adapts Aesop's fable of 'The Bat, the Beast and the Birds', in which during the war between the beasts and birds, the slippery bat refuses to join either side, and consequently in peacetime finds himself rejected by both.[76] The fable is morally glossed in two contemporary devotional texts, John Chishull's *The Danger of Being Almost a Christian* and William Fulbeck's *A booke of christian ethicks*. Living between the sky and the land, seen as neither beast nor fowl, the rejected bat becomes a simile for man's dual potential for good and evil**.** Both texts emphasise the bat's rejection. Chishull succinctly puts it: 'like the Bat, which is in the body like a Mouse, and yet winged like a bird, is excluded from the society both of Birds and Beasts. They are plac'd betwixt the godly and the wicked'.[77] Slightly less forgivingly, William Fulbeck writes on monks:

> such demi-worldlinges should bee vsed like the Batte, which was thruste both from beastes and byrdes, and haue a garment shaped after two fashions, that he may learne of his coate what deformitie there is in his mind [78]

Fulbeck's bat is split between corruption and hypocrisy rather than virtue and sinfulness, however in both cases the bat's apparent rejection by the birds and the beasts becomes symbolic of a dual internal nature.

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[76] *The book of the subtyl historyes and fables of Esope whiche were translated out of Frensshe in to Englyshe by wylham Caxton at westmynstre in the yere of oure Lorde M. CCCC.xxxiij*, London: William Caxton, 1484: Sig. CBj[r].

[77] John Chishull, *The danger of being almost a Christian. Shewing, 1. How far men may go without grace. 2. Why some men go so far. 3. Why they go no farther. 4. The dangerous estate of such persons,* London: printed by A Neile for Francis Eglesfield, 1657: pp. 154-55.

[78] William Fulbeck, *A booke of christian ethicks or moral philosophie containing, the true difference and opposition, of the two incompatible qualities, vertue, and voluptuousnesse,* London: printed by Richard Jones, 1587: Fols. Eiii[r]-Eiii[v].

Appleyard crucially invokes the isolation of Aesop's bat. Like Fulbeck and Chishull, Appleyard's bat relates to spiritual duality: it maps onto the binary of hope and hopelessness, day and night. However, unlike Fulbeck and Chishull, Appleyard's bat is not rejected by the other species, but rather exiles itself out of shame: he 'must lyke the back afrayed to be sene of the byrdes, shrowde my selfe in sum decert'.[79] This is a penitent bat: a sinner aware of his own sin, who has not been rejected by society, but is 'shamed', and voluntarily hides from the 'birds' of the day. Appleyard's alteration of the bat cunningly discharges the political relevance of the fable. The duplicitous bat of Aesop's fable lies to the opposing sides, telling the birds he is a beast, and vice versa. Given Appleyard's divided loyalties to Norfolk and Leicester, this could be uncomfortably relevant. He therefore invokes but then re-forms the fable, much like his rhetoric on a wider scale in the letter, deflecting from political misdemeanors by creating the morally admissible character of the penitent sinner. The first section ends with an assertion of hopelessness: 'so the more I consyder of my selfe, the deper causes I fynd to synke in dispayer'; his carefully handled rhetoric, however, has implicitly argued for his worthiness of salvation.

To a certain extent, the rhetorical effort of Appleyard's first petition was successful: from his second petition it is clear that one of his three stated requests was met. He received the outcome of the inquest: 'I receyved from your honours, by Mr Warden of the Flete the copy of the verdyt which in my other Letter I humbly sued for'.[80] But his first petition's subtle, implicit request for freedom was not so successful: a week later, he still writes from the Fleet.

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[79] Cecil Papers 155/54: Fol. 78r.
[80] Cecil Papers 155/55: Fol. 80r.

John Appleyard's second petition to the Privy Council (4th June 1567)

In his second petition, Appleyard describes himself as 'utterly desparatt', and the tone certainly reads like it. What is implicit in Appleyard's first letter, is made anxiously explicit in his second letter written on 4th June.

He employs a similar vocabulary to the first letter. In both letters he uses the liturgical phrase 'myne offences'; in the first letter 'what whisperings ar in judging of myne offences' (l.29-30), and in the second letter 'for all myne offences to almightye god, requyres only the sacrafyce of A contrite and sorrowfull harte'. [81] The phrase occurs in the opening petitions of the litany, daily prayers for the absolution of sin: 'Remember not Lorde *our offences*, nor the offences of our forefathers, neyther take thou vengeaunce of oure synnes: spare us good Lorde' [emphasis mine].[82] It also appears in one of Coverdale's translations of the Penitential Psalms: the *Misere*, Psalm 51: 'have mercy upon me, O God, after thy great goodness; according to the multitude of thy mercies do away *mine offences*' [emphasis mine].[83] In the Book of Common Prayer, the Psalm was appointed for the service of Commination, the penitential service required to be said on Ash Wednesday, the first day of Lent; a fitting period of the Church calendar for Appleyard to allude to.[84]

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[81] Cecil Papers 155/54: Fol. 78r; Cecil Papers 155/55: Fol. 80r.
[82] *Book of Common Prayer* (1559): 117. See also the opening of the Order of Morning Prayer, which quotes Psalm 51: 'Turne thy face awaye from our sinnes (O lorde) and blotte out all *our offences'* [emphasis mine], and the petition after receiving communion: 'And although we be unworthye through our manifolde sinnes, to offer unto thee any sacrifice, yet we beseche thee to accept this our bounden duty and service, not weighing our meites, but pardoning *our offences*' [emphasis mine]. *Book of Common Prayer* (1559): p.102, p.138.
[83] Psalm 50 (*Coverdale)*: Fol. xxr. The phrase 'Deliver me from all my offences' also appears in his translation of Psalm 38: Fol.xviijv. It seems Appleyard has the Coverdale translation in mind, which was frequently bound with the Common Book of Prayer, as the Geneva translates what is their Psalm 51.1 as 'put awaie mine iniquities', and Psalm 39.8 as 'Deliuer me from all my transgressions'.
[84] *Book of Common Prayer* (1559)*:* 179.

The repeated use of the phrase in both letters demonstrates their different strategic modes. In the first letter, Appleyard uses the phrase supposedly reprimanding himself: in the familiar pattern, even when asserting his own guilt he quotes from a liturgical and biblical source which petitions for God's mercy, thus reminding the Council of God's merciful example. In the second letter however, Appleyard lays bare his strategy, spelling out the persuasive point of the intertextual moments in both letters: 'for all myne offences to almightye god, requyres only the sacrafyce of A contrite and sorrowfull harte'. He underlines his own contrition, and explains his previously implicit comparison between the redemption such penitence would receive from God with the council's treatment of his secular contrition. His 'contrite and sorrowful heart' also echoes the liturgy, giving his comparison theological backing:

> O GOD mercifull father, that dispisest not the syghing of a contrite heart, nor the desyre of suche as be sorrowfull, mercyfully assiste our praiers, that we make before thee, in all our troubles, and adversities, whensoever they oppresse us, and graciouslye heare us.[85]

Within the liturgical petition, lies a direct statement: '[thou] despisest not the sighing of a contrite heart'. God will at least hear the prayers of the penitent, and so should the Council.

His references to Christ in the second letter also mark its different mood. In the first letter he makes the passing reference to his 'accompts' that must further be made to God, and his appeal to the Council 'evin in the Name of Christ to be mediatours for me to those nobel gentilemen' (l.56-57).[86] In the second letter he asks

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[85] *Book of Common Prayer* (1559): 120.
[86] Cecil Papers 155/54: Fol. 78[r].

them 'for the tender mercyes of Christ, be good lordes unto me', and more strikingly, 'have mercye for the pressyous blood of our savyour good my lords'.[87] In the first letter, the parallels Appleyard makes between heaven and earth boldly suggest that to him it is earthly, not spiritual judgement, which holds more weight. The second letter, however, is more conventional. The balance is restored: Christ is not named in a passing subordinate clause, instead Appleyard focuses on the redemptive blood of the Passion. The first-person plural unites Appleyard and the Council in their flawed humanity, all in need of divine mercy: 'the pressyous blood of *our* savyour good my lords' [emphasis mine]. This is another direct quotation from the opening petitions of the litany: 'spare us good Lorde, spare thy people whome thou haste redemed with thy moste precious bloude, and be not angry with us for euer'.[88] Unlike the first letter, Appleyard openly appeals to the Council for mercy. Dropping the elaborate performance of the first letter, he more simply appeals to the Council to take Christ as their example, rather than making them his earthly deities.[89]

In the second letter, he refers to his 'ymprisonment which I haue ynduered close a full moneth this night'. In the first letter he had already indicated the pitiful reality of his starvation and sickness:

> As my helth, my good Lords, ys very Evill, so ar my Charges great for I have nothing to fede on but that I send ryddy money for into the towen, and surely my lords I have verye lyttle, And I may not speak with any frynds to helpe me, so that I must verye shortly take what of almes the house will give me . / (ll.59-62)

In the second letter, the situation appears to have become more dire:

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[87] Cecil Papers 155/55: Fol. 80[r].
[88] *Book of Common Prayer* (1559)*:* 117.
[89] Cecil Papers 155/55: Fol. 80[r].

> I am afflictyd with sickenes, and most myserable povertye, for by the trewth I beare to the quenes majestie, my soueraign lady & Mistress I haue not mony left to fynde me two meales [90]

It is unsurprising that in the face of starvation, and having found his subtle rhetorical game failed to earn him his freedom, he drops complexity in favour of a more earnest and direct appeal.

Performing Protestantism

Appleyard's penitential rhetoric in both letters, however, serves another crucial, pragmatic purpose: it is an assertion of his Protestant identity. As we have seen, Appleyard came from good Protestant stock. With the combination of the Robsarts' Protestantism, and Appleyard's service to Leicester, it would be unexpected for his own religious affiliations to be in doubt. However, Appleyard's imprisonment in the Fleet briefly appears in a catalogue in Cecil's own hand endorsed in 1586 as 'A Collection of all accidents betwixt the Queen of England and Queen of Scots ab anno 1559.'[91] There is a fleeting reference under 'May 1567', which simply reads: 'John Appleyard comitted to the Fleet'.[92] Stephen Alford has described how 'it was Burghley's habit to set his thoughts on paper to clarify his thinking' in 'private' documents 'perhaps shown to a few close political friends'.[93] This catalogue appears to be one of them. Given the unclear date of the document, it is uncertain whether the connection between Mary Queen of Scots and Appleyard's stint in the Fleet was

[90] Cecil Papers 155/55: Fol. 80[r].
[91] *Historical Manuscripts Commission Calendar of the Manuscripts of the Most Honourable the Marquis of Salisbury,* Vol. II, London: Eyre and Spottiswood, 1888: 81.
[92] William Murdin, *A collection of state papers relating to affairs in the reign of Queen Elizabeth, from the years 1571 to 1596*, London: William Bowyer, 1759: 763.
[93] Stephen Alford, *Burghley: William Cecil at the Court of Elizabeth I,* New Haven: Yale University Press, *2008*: 192.

made at the time, or whether Cecil retrospectively made the connection between the Norwich Rebellion and Appleyard's previous incarceration. It seems unlikely that the association with Norfolk alone in 1567 would immediately suggest a connection between Appleyard and Norfolk's own involvement with Mary Queen of Scots: in 1567 Norfolk was not yet courting her, and Alford has dated Cecil's knowledge of the match to September 1569.[94] Clearly, at some point however, Cecil connected Appleyard, presumably via Norfolk, with the Catholic plots to place Mary on the throne in the late 1560s and early 1570s; Appleyard became a small cog in what he perceived in 1569 as 'the great conspiracy being masterminded against England.'[95] Although we cannot be certain when Appleyard begins to be perceived as a related player, we can see his careful deployment of the Book of Common Prayer as a performative act, subtly re-enforcing his Protestant identity in case that were in doubt.

In what the Calendar estimates is a letter from 1567, Appleyard writes to his servant Richard, asking him to 'borrow foxe's book of the martyrs' from Mr Yevance.[96] Unfortunately the letter is not dated with a specific month. From its content, however, it seems fairly likely that it dates from around the period of his examination or his imprisonment: he fears that his correspondence is being intercepted, telling Richard to 'be very sawcumspect [circumspect] in delyuering and receiving of letters for theyr is grete eye', and he asserts his faith in God during

[94] Although Norfolk had been officially proposed as a match for Mary in 1564, Norfolk did not actively begin to pursue Mary against Elizabeth's will until 1568. See John Guy, *My Heart is My Own': The Life of Mary Queen of Scots,* London: Harper Collins, 2004: 462. Alford (2008): 158.
[95] Alford (2008): 154. Alford also specifies that in 'late May' or 'early June' of 1569 'Cecil had fallen out seriously with the Duke of Norfolk', which may have been 'merely a personal falling out' or because of an 'effort to subvert Cecil's tough policy on security and the Queen of Scots'. Alford (2008): 157.
[96] Hatfield, Hatfield House Archive, Cecil Papers 155/65: Fol. 96^{r}.

strife: 'I bynd my belefe vppon the same god… who yer ne'er fayled me'.[97] It is especially tempting to imagine that his request for a copy of Foxe is sent from prison, staging the reading of a devout Protestant undergoing hardship, almost like a scene from the book itself (See Figure 1). Even if he wasn't in prison, it has a similar effect. If he believed his letters were being intercepted, he was writing to an audience. In his petitions, his intertextuality, and his performance of Protestant contrition, operates in a similar way. His use of the liturgy textually creates a similar image of an incarcerated Protestant's pious reading list. His theology also reinforces his Protestant identity. Returning to his request for the Council to intercede, it is significant that he invokes the example of Christ: he does not employ a Catholic frame of interceding saints, but appeals to the Council as fellow Christians, using Christ as the only intercessor between God and man. Although the terms 'despair' and 'reprobate' are not unquestionably Protestant, they contribute at least a flavor of Calvin. Therefore, when using religious rhetoric to plead for his release from prison, he also reasserts his Protestant identity, perhaps to assure his readers that, at the very least, he is not a Catholic threat.

[97] Hatfield, Hatfield House Archives, Cecil Papers, 155/65: Fol. 96r.



***Figure 1*:** Praying in prison. John Foxe, *Actes and Monuments of these latter and perillous dayes,* London: John Day, 1563: 1260.

John Appleyard is simply one example of the conscious exploitation of religious rhetoric in early modern petition. Appleyard is one voice taken from the archive which is brimming with hundreds of letters; hundreds of voices; hundreds of political performances. Rather than belittling petitions as '[begging] for mercy', appreciating petitions as complex rhetorical artefacts allows a new perspective from which to consider historical documents and their writers.[98] Looking at petitioners as rhetorical strategists rather than dismissing them as unreliable 'catspaws', releases exciting, skillful and unheard voices from the archive, and as we shall see, sheds new light on literary texts.[99]

[98] Rye (1885): 68.
[99] Gairdner (1886): 249.

CHAPTER TWO

'IN VAIN I SEEKE AND SEW TO HER FOR GRACE':

PETITION IN THE *AMORETTI*

Spenser's 1595 *Amoretti* inspired the title of this thesis. His exploitation of the secular and spiritual connotations of the conventional term 'to sue for grace' in Sonnet XX is just one example of the frequent petitionary metaphor in the sequence.[1] Spenser presents his speaker prostrate before his mistress so frequently, using the language of courtly petition, that critical discussion of the *Amoretti* is often sprinkled with the terms 'petition' and 'supplication'.[2] Nevertheless, metaphors of petition in the sequence have never been the focus of a sustained critical study.

Since the innovation of late twentieth century numerological readings of the sequence by A. Kent Hieatt, Alexander Dunlop, and Alistair Fowler, critics have explored how Spenser both combines and contrasts Petrarchan convention with the liturgical calendar.[3] I am interested in how Spenser similarly sees both the religious and political potential of Petrarchan lovers like Astrophil petitioning their saint-like

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[1] 'In vain I seeke and sew to her for grace', Sonnet XX. All quotations are taken from *Edmund Spenser: The Shorter Poems*, ed Richard A. McCabe, London: Penguin, 1999. For my discussion of Sonnet XX see pp. 84-94.

[2] See for example: 'The word "peace", which occurs in the same line, is also referred to earlier in the sequence but always in such a way as to present the lover as frustrated *supplicant* for peace to a hostile mistress' [emphasis mine]. Donna Gibbs, *Spenser's Amoretti: A Critical Study*, Aldershot: Scolar Press, 1990: 23; 'the legal connotations [of 'sew']… tie them both to *Amor.* 10 and to his "suing", which is his (legal) *petitioning*' [emphasis mine]. William C. Johnson, *Spenser's Amoretti: Analogies of Love,* Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 1990: 23; 'Read in the context of Reform theology, the *Amoretti's prayer* that the lady will be immune to all traces of desire and its commotions is equally a hope that she will escape the economy of sin and solace that compels human beings to marry' [emphasis mine]. Melissa Sanchez, '"Modesty or Comeliness": The Predicament of Reform Theology in Spenser's *Amoretti* and *Epithalamion*', *Renascence*, Vol.65, No.1, (2012), pp.5-24: p.15.

[3] A. Kent Hieatt, *Short Time's Endless Monument: The Symbolism of the Numbers in Edmund Spenser's Epithalamion*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1960; Alexander Dunlop 'Calendar Symbolism in "The Amoretti", *Notes and Queries*, Vol. CCXIV, (1969), pp.24-26; Alistair Fowler, *Triumphal Forms*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970.

mistresses: 'Grant, O dear, on knees I pray/… Shall a heavenly grace want pity?' ('Song Eight', l.49, l.64).[4] Whittington, writing on supplication in trecento sonnets, has argued that Dante sought to separate religious supplication from romantic courtship:

> the *Commedia* carries forward and extends the disaggregation of supplication and eroticism. Supplicatory episodes in Dante's great poem tend to link humble pleading either to religious contexts of prayer or to political speech acts, without the discursive blending characteristic of fin amor.[5]

She suggests that one of the ways that Petrarch responded to Dante was to re-entangle supplication, returning to an:

> earlier troubadour vision of the abject suppliant lover who begs for the lady's erotic pietà to reimagine the lyric beloved as an unstable and equivocal figure, sometimes a guide to transcendence, sometimes an earthly lure, but never a living incarnation of the divine.[6]

Whittington traces how, as part of this enterprise, Petrarch twists together epic martial supplication with erotic supplication. Whittington's characterisation of Petrarch is also applicable to Spenser's intertwining of the religious, political, and erotic senses of supplication in the *Amoretti*. Like Petrarch, Spenser draws on martial as well as courtly supplication, which had very live contemporary associations in light of the Smerwick massacre — a scandal with martial supplication at its heart. Focusing on these different senses of petition draws attention to the tensions in the sequence, without losing sight of its religious narrative, thus contributing to more recent revisionist readings by Rebecca Ann Bach, Melissa Sanchez, James Fleming

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[4] Philip Sidney, *Astrophil and Stella* in *The Oxford Authors: Sir Philip Sidney,* ed. Katherine Duncan Jones, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989: 197.
[5] Whittington (2016): 92.
[6] Whittington (2016): 94.

and Christopher Warley.[7]

My first literary case study brings with it a fictional persona – who is not only fictional, but infamously unreliable. The stakes are, unsurprisingly, very different for a real petitioner like John Appleyard than they are for the *Amoretti's* fictional speaker. These different circumstances enable Spenser to put pressure on the parallels between the judgement of earth and heaven, which are so central to the persuasive devices used by Appleyard. The speaker's hyperbolic political vehicles frequently backfire, revealing his own distorted perception. The vehicles themselves, however, sometimes express anxiety about petitioning secular powers. Spenser's professional career in Ireland also saw his involvement in the Smerwick massacre. Despite justice and mercy being crucial and frequent concepts in the speaker's arguments in the *Amoretti*, there has been no extended discussion of the connections between Book V of *The Faerie Queene* and the *Amoretti.* Here I extend Fleming's approach to the *Amoretti,* who observes: 'the violent patterns of the *Amoretti* are noticeably congruent to those of the *View*, characterised by eruption, imprisonment, insurgency, and slaughter.'[8] I make use of both Book V and *A View of the Present State of Ireland* to help consider how secular petition interacts with romantic and religious petition in the *Amoretti*.

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[7] Rebecca Ann Bach, *Colonial Transformations: the Cultural Production of the New Atlantic World*, Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2000. Melissa Sanchez, 2012; James Fleming, '*A View* from the Bridge: Ireland and Violence in Spenser's *Amoretti*', *Spenser Studies* Vol. 15, No. 1, (2001): pp.135-164; Christopher Warley, '"So Plenty Makes Me Poore": Ireland, Capitalism, and Class in Spenser's *Amoretti and Epithalamion', English Literary History,* Vol. 69, No. 3, (2002), pp. 567-598.
[8] Fleming (2001): 137.

This chapter will establish the colonial context of petition in Spenser's political writing, before tracing in close-readings of ten sonnets how Spenser uses petition to explore the tensions between suing for political and theological grace.

Supplication, Mercy and the Smerwick Massacre

Supplication for mercy lay at the heart of the Smerwick massacre - a crime which lost Spenser's patron Lord Grey his office. Early in Spenser's Irish career, on 9th November 1580, English forces laid siege to Fort D'Oro in Smerwick harbour — a stronghold of Spanish troops sent by the Pope to defend the Catholic cause. Recognising defeat, the commander Colonel Sebasiano di San Giuseppi yielded to Lord Grey, only for Grey to authorise the torture and execution of 600 prisoners. The subsequent debate concerning Grey's actions revolved around whether he had promised mercy to the surrendered prisoners before he killed them, which he fervently denied.[9]

Spenser was both a physical and material witness to the atrocity. As Lord Grey's secretary, it is in Spenser's own hand that his master's account was made to Elizabeth. In this account there is a cruel parallel to the Amoretti's prostrate lover, petitioning for mercy: 'He then embraced my knees, simply putting him self to my mercy, onely he prayed that for the night hee might abyde in the Forte.'[10]

Spenser's *A View* presents a characteristically uncompromising position on martial supplication for mercy. Irenius suggests that Irish supplication - 'suing for

[9] Andrew Hadfield, *Edmund Spenser: A Life*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012: pp. 166-7.
[10] Letter from Lord Grey to Elizabeth, 12th November 1580, *Edmund Spenser: Selected Letters and Other Papers,* Christopher Burlinson and Andrew Zurcher eds, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009: 19.

grace' - is tactical, and not to be trusted:

> the sworde was neuer yeat out of theire hand but when they are wearye with warrs and broughte downe to extreame wretchednes then they creepe a little perhaps and sue for grace till they haue gotten newe breathe. [11]

For Irenius, granting grace is a tactical error which simply allows the enemy time to recover before a new bout of fighting. The perilous conjunction 'till' makes 'suing for grace' not a serious yielding, but part of the cycle of war.

Similarly, in *A Brief Note of Ireland,* Spenser asserted that in no circumstances should 'no one little beame of your large mercie… be shed'.[12] He advises:

> Whereas your Maiestie as you have hitherto made your selfe through all the worlde a gloriouse example of mercie and Clemencye and euen vnto these vile Catifes (though moste vnworthie thereof) So nowe by extending vpon them the terror of your wrath in avengement of there continuall disloyalltie and disobedience you shall |spreade the honorable fame of your Iustice and redeeme both your owne honour and allso the reputacion of your people.... But our feare is leste your Majestes wonted mercifull minde should againe be wrought to your wonted milde courses and perswaded by some milde meanes either of pardons or proteccions, this rebelliouse nacion may be againe brought to some good conformacion which wee beseech allmightie god to averte.[13]

Like Irenius's representation of the suspect 'suing for grace', here Spenser attempts to persuade the Queen that 'pardons or proteccions' are politically detrimental. The consequences are dire enough to warrant petitioning 'allmightie god to averte'. Similarly in *A View,* Irenius, when discussing the Smerwick massacre itself, justifies Lord Grey's decision by arguing:

> the Irish themselves…were no lawfull enemies; but rebells and traytours; and therefore they that came to succour them, no better then rogues and

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[11] All references to *A View of the State of Ireland* are taken from *A View of the State of Ireland,* eds Andrew Hadfield and Willy Maley, Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Ltd, 1997: 21. Hereafter *A View.*
[12] *A Brief Note of Ireland,* in *The Works of Edmund Spenser A Variorum Edition: The Prose Works,* eds Edwin Greenlaw, Charles Grosvenor Osgood, Frederick Morgan Padelford and Ray Heffner, Baltimore: The John Hopkins Press: 1949: 236.
[13] Spenser, *A Brief Note*: pp.241-242.

> runnagates... So as it should bee dishonourable for him in the name of his Queene, to condition or make any tearmes with such rascals, but left them to their choyce, to yeeld and submit themselves, or no.[14]

Not only would Grey offering 'succor' be politically detrimental, but it would even be 'dishonorable' to do so in the name of the Queen. Bach also notes that:

> Elizabeth's offering Tyrone a complete pardon in 1595 indicates the English army's precarious position in the North, and Spenser might well have anticipated that the situation in the South could easily become as instable.[15]

Philip James, writing on *A Brief Note*, highlights the significant difference drawn between *clementia* and *misericordia* in early modern legal treatises, and in advice written to the Queen by both Burghley and Spenser. Thomas Elyot argued that *misericordia* is sympathy, which can be unjust when offered to the unworthy, in contrast to *clementia* which unites mercy with reason. Similarly, Hurault argued that mercy shown to the unworthy was "crueltie towards good men".[16] Thus, Mercilla herself, in *The Faerie Queene* sits with 'a bright steely brand' beneath her feet, long 'rusted', but ready: 'Yet when her foes enforst… She could it sternly draw, that all the world dismayed' (Book V. IX. 30, ll.1-9).[17] Sometimes mercy has to be violent.

When the speaker of the *Amoretti* prostrates himself before his mistress, and conventionally 'sues for grace', the physical gestures and even the phrasing, unavoidably come with political baggage. Despite Said's invitation to critics not to divorce Spenser's 'poetic achievement' from his 'bloodthirsty plans for Ireland', only

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[14] Spenser, *A View:* 105.
[15] Bach (2000): 55. She also notes that 'planters like Spenser feared betrayal, and regardless of their actual degradations as landlords and invaders, they represented themselves as innocent men seeking peace'. Spenser may therefore also have been personally suspicious of Irish petitioners.
[16] James (1970): 114.
[17] All references to *The Faerie Queene* are taken from *The Faerie Queene,* revised 2nd edition, A.C.Hamilton, Hiroshi Yamashita and Toshiyuki Suzuki eds, Pearson: Harlow, 2007.

three have put the *Amoretti* - with its colonial patron and internal references to Ireland - into colonial context: Bach, Fleming and Christopher Warley.[18] Both Fleming and Bach argue that Grey's murder of the Smerwick prisoners 'haunts' the sequence.[19] Whereas Bach argues that 'the fictional love setting enables the poet to explore a colonial crime… and finally [erase] it', Fleming reads the speaker's admonitions against the mistress's violence as an implicit criticism of Elizabeth I: 'one purpose of *Amoretti* is to allow Spenser rhetorical revenge on the queen, by fixing Grey's unique disgrace on her'.[20] In prioritising the politics of the *Amoretti*, neither Bach nor Fleming discusses the spiritual meaning of the sequence — Fleming argues instead that critics too often use the journey to Protestant marriage to explain away the violent metaphor.[21] I read Spenser's metaphors as moving too fluidly between the secular and the spiritual to accept such a precise political reading of the entire sequence; indeed, as all readers of Spenser know, seeking specific allegory is like trying to chase and pin down Malengin. There is also a balance to be struck between acknowledging the *Amoretti*'s often violent imagery, and not taking the often histrionic speaker at his word. Nevertheless, I follow Fleming's call not to laugh off the *Amoretti's* violence but instead to take seriously the political and religious tensions in the sequence's metaphors of petition.

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[18] Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism,* London: Vintage, 1993: 5. Posonby's dedication to the English soldier in Ireland Sir Robert Needham explicitly - and materially - links the *Amoretti* to Ireland. For internal references to Ireland in the *Amoretti* and *Epithamalion* see Fleming (2001): pp.137. For colonial readings of the *Amoretti* see Bach, (2000); Fleming (2001); Warley (2002). For a colonial reading of Sonnet XXXIII, addressed to Lodowick Bryskett, see Bach (2000): pp.38-39; pp.46-47.
[19] Fleming (2001): 156. Bach (2000): 58. Both rather uncannily use the same verb.
[20] Fleming (2001): 160. Bach (2000): 58.
[21] Fleming (2001): 136.

Establishing poems as petitions, and a fictional petitioner

In the opening two sonnets of the *Amoretti* Spenser figures the poems as petitions, sent from the fictional persona to his mistress. In Sonnet I, Spenser exploits the familiar Petrarchan scenario of the lover petitioning his mistress for romantic mercy, using the metaphor to introduce the political and theological connotations of petition. In Sonnet II, his personification of the poem itself as petitioner heightens its secular connotations. The distance between the speaker's view of his own plight, and Spenser's implicit critique of his own speaker, also introduces a new dynamic into the project: a fictionalised petitioner. William C. Johnson has observed that the speaker represents the lady as 'an all-powerful ruler' who 'may or may not grant pardon to him'; however, he does not reflect further on this political metaphor, nor on the poem as a form of petition.[22]

In Sonnet I, Spenser represents the poem as a physical missive sent from the speaker to the mistress, which enjoys the privileges of physical proximity which the speaker is unable to obtain for himself. As Whittington notes of Dante, this is a well-established trope: 'Dante uses the conventional strategy of addressing the personified song and asking it to bring the lover's petition to his lady, utilizing the rhetoric of supplication to persuade'.[23] Spenser, however, quickly and playfully imbues this familiar scene with complex divine and secular vehicles:

> Happy ye leaues when as those lilly hands
> which hold my life in their dead doing might
> shall handle you and hold in loues soft bands,
> lyke captiues trembling at the victors sight.
> (Sonnet I, ll.1-4)

[22] Johnson (1990): 71.
[23] Whittington (2016): 91.

The opening 'Happy' suggests that the personified poem will enjoy gentle treatment in the mistress's 'lilly hands'; however, the line break swiftly disrupts this expectation with a harder welcome. Although the Petrarchan mistress holding her suitor's fate in her hands is not unusual, the expression 'dead doing might' is more brutal than might be expected. The curious adjectival 'dead doing', which McCabe glosses as 'murderous', emphasises death; the syntax places the outcome before the action.[24] This epithet, which feels better suited to an epic warrior or romance knight-at-arms than a Petrarchan lady, does not represent her as the most receptive audience to a petition; her 'lilly hands' seem better suited to wielding a sword than fondling a love-poem. Spenser already evokes the martial connotations of supplication. The 'might' of the lady's hands also introduces another set of connotations: the mighty hand of God.[25] Whilst the speaker hyperbolically imagines his life in the hands of his mistress, Spenser points the reader to a higher judge who holds the speaker's life in his mighty dead-doing hands. Spenser's implicit comparison invites the reader to distinguish between the supposed harshness of the mistress, and the mercy of God.

Spenser's personification of the poem, which makes the speaker and the poet simultaneously subject to the lady 'which hold my life in their dead doing might', recalls another type of urgent missive —the petition. For real petitioners like Appleyard their life could hang in the balance, the petition's reception making the difference between life and death. The familiar melding of a letter's sender with the

[24] McCabe (1999): 670.
[25] See for example 'the Lord brought us out of Egypt by a mighty hand'. Exodus, 13.16 (Geneva). See also Exodus 13.3; Exodus 13.14; Exodus 32.11; Deuteronomy 3.24; Deuteronomy 4.34.

letter itself – in which the letter becomes a proxy of the person – is an epistolary commonplace, one which we have already seen used to persuasive effect in Appleyard.[26]

This secular sense of petition is made more explicit in lines 3-4, as the speaker figures his own poem as prisoner, which the mistress 'shall handle … and hold in loues soft bands,/ lyke captiues trembling at the victors sight.' Spenser playfully jumps backwards and forwards between registers. On the one hand, the tactile engagement with the lady handling and holding the paper prompts the personified letter, and the speaker's vicarious, arousal — 'trembling' at her sight and touch. Yet, the simile of the yielded prisoner introduces fear and control. For Fleming this line is the first instance of 'captivity discourse' in the sequence.[27] As well as figuring the mistress's hands as imprisoning 'bands', even the tactile verbs of her engagement with the letter have undertones of control. Holding is a neutral grasp — in this context as prone to be read as containment, as it is as a loving embrace. Likewise, 'handle', appropriately for the tenor of reading a manuscript, primarily reads as 'to touch or feel with the hand or hands; to pick up, hold, turn over… in the hand or hands'.[28] Yet, it can also be read as a gesture of physical control, or even more abstractly as the coercive manipulation of authority, which resonates powerfully with the vehicle of terrified prisoners.[29] This simile is at once comic - the hyperbole is bathetically punctured when it is remembered that the tenor is a love-poem being

[26] See Chapter 1: 27.
[27] Fleming (2001): 139.
[28] *Handle,* v., sense 1a. www.oed.com [date accessed 21/02/2022].
[29] *Handle,* v., sense 3a 'To exert authority or control over (a person, animal, etc.); to control (a vessel or vehicle); to manage'. www.oed.com [date accessed 21/02/2022]

read - and also vividly unpleasant, as Fleming argues forming part of a wider metaphorical pattern of captivity which evokes the Smerwick massacre.[30] Such a strikingly politicised metaphor makes it clear from Spenser's opening sonnet that his sequence's representation of petitioning a lover will simultaneously explore the power dynamics of petitioning a secular power. As Sanchez characterises Sonnet I: 'Spenser depicts the stages of courtship as a contest of wills'.[31] Bach also sees the poem as representative of the sequence's 'preoccupation with the problematics of submission.'[32]

In the sestet, Spenser shifts from political to religious metaphor, as the sonnet moves from the delivery of the petitionary poem to its reception. The 'light' of the lady's 'starry' gaze illuminates her with the beatific glow of a saint-like Petrarchan mistress.[33] When the speaker describes his 'dying spright', although he employs the ubiquitous 'die' pun of emotional suffering and erotic pleasure reminiscent of many madrigals, the use of the spiritually significant 'spright' places a little more emphasis on dying in its most literal sense. McCabe emphasises how the 'spright' was believed to '[enable] the soul to operate in the body'.[34] Following from the judgement of the first quatrain, the speaker's urgent petition - 'the sorrowes of my dying spright,/ written in teares in harts close bleeding book' (ll.7-8) – sounds like the final prayers of a dying man, addressed to the wrong deity. McCabe suggests that the source for line 8 is 2 Corinthians 3:2-3:

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[30] Fleming (2001): p.139, pp.156-157.
[31] Sanchez (2012): 8.
[32] Bach (2000): 48.
[33] On divine light imagery, see Johnson (1990): 70. Johnson sees the light as more directly analogous: 'God's light, his "heavenly fyre", lifts Paul out of baseness just as the lady does the same for and to the lover'.
[34] McCabe (1999): 671.

> Ye are our epistle, written in our hearts, which is understood and read of all men, In that ye are manifest, to be the Epistle of Christ, ministered by us, and written, not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God, not in tables of stone, but in fleshly tables of the heart.[35]

The biblical imagery of letter-writing and reading interacts illuminatingly with the sonnet, which also represents a missive sent from the speaker to the mistress. In the source Paul distinguishes between his own physical letter, and God as an internal letter who is written in each person and accessible to them. Paul contrasts physical ink with the 'Spirit of God' written 'in fleshly tables of the heart'. The Geneva gloss elucidates the hierarchy: 'By the way he setteth the virtue of God, against the ink wherewith Epistles are commonly written, to show that it was wrought by God.'

Therefore, the speaker's petition to his mistress, written internally from 'teares in harts close bleeding book', comes tantalisingly close to Paul's representation of God himself within 'the tables of the heart' of man, but remains a literal missive sent externally from one mortal human to another.[36] The speaker's misdirection becomes more pronounced as the speaker effuses that she is 'my soules long lacked foode, my heauens blis' (l.9).[37] With the near-miss of the scriptural allusion, Spenser makes it clear that the 'heauens blis' the speaker seeks should be already present within him; he is just unable to 'read' it. He seeks out the external, when he should reflect on the internal.

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[35] 3 Corinthians 3:2-3 (Geneva).

[36] Sanchez reads this line as a moment of shared humanity through emotional confession: 'The poet's admission of suffering generates a bond… between them: as she reads "hart close bleeding book," the mistress cannot avoid the intimacy that such knowledge creates, for she is equally subject to human weakness and the pain it brings.' Sanchez (2012): 9.

[37] On 'the substitution of the mistress as deity for worship' see also Sanchez (2012): pp. 9- 10.

The final couplet of Sonnet I draws an important distinction between a real petition, and a fictional petition from a fictional persona:

> Leaues, lines, and rymes, seeke her to please alone,
> whom if ye please, I care for other none.
> (Sonnet I, ll.13-14)

In some ways, they could equally be true of a real, secular petition. A secular petition ultimately serves to persuade its intended recipient, who is most often the person who holds the power. Petitions are also often tailored in style for their intended recipient. As the speaker addresses his own poem, however, Spenser makes us aware of our own presence as readers — 'if ye please, I care for other none'. We and Spenser know that the poem is no manuscript held in the 'lily white hands' of a lady, but a printed collection, addressed to a patron, and not limited to coterie circulation.

In this moment, Spenser draws our attention to our different position as readers. We are not the intended the recipient of the petitionary poems. We are not who they are meant to persuade. Already, in this first poem, Spenser has invited us to distinguish between the speaker's perception of his affairs, and a wider spiritual meaning he cannot access yet: the speaker should probably care about pleasing God, not just the mistress 'alone'. Spenser also gestures towards the, sometimes brutal, reality of petitioning a secular power. As the speaker simultaneously evokes and defies our presence, Spenser invites us to reflect more critically on the speaker's petitions, and the petitioning process.

In Sonnet II, Spenser amplifies the political sense of petition by shifting from supplicating lover/prisoners to courtly petition. This shifting emphasis on the

courtly, concomitantly emphasises the literary and performative elements of petition.

Just as in Sonnet I, the speaker addresses his poem, imagining it reaching the hands of the mistress. In Sonnet II the speaker urges his 'unquiet thoughts' to intercede on his behalf, and seek 'succour'. The word 'succour' already has strong spiritual connotations. Nearly all of the Oxford English Dictionary's Middle English and early modern examples for the sense of *succour* as 'aid or assistance' describe the soul seeking aid from God.[38] We might initially read seeking succour as obviously referring to seeking out the mistress, however, at the volta the speaker unexpectedly introduces the conjunction 'But if in presence of that fayrest proud/thou chance to come' —as if the encounter is mere happenstance. This seems to be tongue-in-cheek, mock-surprise from the speaker's part – as well as, on a literal level, suggesting the frequency with which his thoughts fall on the mistress - but it also raises the interesting possibility that the speaker does not know from whom he should really be seeking help.

When the speaker's thoughts do happen upon the mistress at the volta, the conventions and language of the court enter the poem with her, with due ceremony:

> But if in presence of that fayrest proud
> Thou chance to come, fall lowly at her feet:
> and with meeke humblesse and afflicted mood,
> pardon for thee, and grace for me intreat.
> Which if she graunt, then liue and my loue cherish,
> if not, die soone, and I with thee will perish.
> (Sonnet II, ll.9-14)

[38] *Succour*, n.1, sense 1a. www.oed.com [date accessed 01/04/2020].

Spenser exploits the convenient overlap between secular and religious penitence. The speaker instructs his personified thoughts - like a penitent sinner, and reverent courtier - to 'fall lowly at her feet'. With the language appropriate for a monarch of earth, or heaven, the speaker instructs his thoughts to 'intreat' for 'pardon' and 'grace'. Thomas Rist notes that the speaker appears to '[abase] himself before the lady like one praying to a saint'.[39] On a less grandiose note, the speaker's initial choice of the vehicles 'some succour' and 'food', are, as we have seen in Appleyard's own petition, the quotidian bare necessities a real courtier in peril might petition for.[40] The argumentative strategy of imagining a text performing the physical gestures the petitioner cannot is also a familiar tactic.[41]

Spenser once again uses the duality of secular and spiritual petition in the sonnet to distinguish between the speaker's misdirected petition, and who the true recipient of his petition should be. By making this sonnet's particular addressee the speaker's own 'vnquiet thoughts', Spenser's demonstrates the speaker's single-mindedness: not only the frequency with which he thinks about the mistress, but also how unreflectively he applies the right language to the wrong source. He seeks 'succour' and 'ease' from pain, but conversely seeks to 'sustayne' his 'unquiet thought'. Rather than reflecting on the cause of his distress, which might release him, he seeks to 'sustayne' his mental distress — concomitantly sustaining the sequence itself with his emotional torment. As in Sonnet I, the mistress's casting as the

[39] Thomas Rist, 'Astrophil and the Stella Maris: Poetics, Ladies and the Culture of Love in Reformation England', *The Sidney Journal,* Volume 32, No.1, (2014), pp.62-92: 88.
[40] See Chapter 1: 50.
[41] See Chapter 1: pp.34-35.

ultimate judge in the final couplet implicitly invites the reader to reflect on the absence of God as a judge in the speaker's world view.

The secular connotations of Spenser's vehicles also reveal a significant reflection on the nature of secular petition. Given that the speaker instructs his own thoughts, like an interceding petitioner, it is interesting to note that the descriptive 'meeke humblesse and afflicted mood' are in fact part of the speaker's instructions to his own thoughts. 'Meeke humblesse' is not, perhaps, a surprising instruction for courtly behaviour — the archaic 'humblesse' oozes with French, chivalric courtliness.[42] The speaker advising the thoughts to appear with 'afflicted mood', however, seems to acknowledge the emotive performance of petition, and its affective power. This line appears to describe the speaker himelf because it is consistent with the previous descriptions of his emotional turmoil in the poem: his 'vnquiet thoughts', 'loue pined hart', 'sighes and sorrowes', and 'smart'. Of course, the ultimate purpose of the metaphor is to express the speaker's mental suffering. Nevertheless, the vehicle is the speaker advising his intercessor to appear 'with…afflicted mood'. This representation of petition as performance forms part of a wider pattern in the sequence, in which Spenser prompts us to question the speaker's sincerity.

Within the first two sonnets, Spenser has clearly coded sonnets as a form of petition. Furthermore, he has evoked the erotic, courtly and spiritual senses of

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[42] *Humblesse,* n., sense 1a. The OED for instance cites Chaucer, *Former Age:* 'Vmblesse and pes good feith the emperice.' There are only two early modern examples cited, one of which is from *The Faerie Queene*: 'And with faire fearefull humblesse towards him shee came'. Although it should be noted the entry was first published in 1899, and has not been fully updated, so it is perhaps unsurprising that one of the early modern examples is a canonical literary author. www.oed.com [date accessed 21/02/22].

petition, already suggesting the speaker's mistake in conflating them. The secular connotations of petition introduce the fraught power dynamics of petition, gesturing to the Smerwick massacre. Spenser does not just criticise the powerful recipients of petition, however; he throws a spotlight on secular petition itself, highlighting that it is an emotionally manipulative performance.

Petitioning Cupid

In Sonnet X - a sardonic and bitter petition to the 'Vnrighteous Lord of loue' – Spenser presents an example of the speaker's distorted attempts at petition. Although Johnson briefly characterises the poem as a prayer to Cupid, it is in fact a politicised, nightmarish petition.[43] Spenser takes the Petrarchan lover's address of Cupid, the Petrarchan conceit of love as battle, and the martial connotations of supplication, to create this unsettling prayer.

With the opening address - 'Vnrighteous Lord of loue what law is this?' (Sonnet X, l.1) - Spenser presents the reader with a double vision of the god of love who the speaker petitions, and a clear alternative deity he could address. With the powerful prefix 'vnrighteous', Spenser gestures to the psalms, drawing a contrast between the pagan god of love, and the Christian God invoked by the Psalmist: 'Let the people be glad and rejoice: for thou shalt judge the people righteously, and govern the nations upon the earth.'[44] The speaker's anger with the laws of the 'Lord' of romantic 'loue', implicitly contrasts with the Christian God's righteous judgement.

[43] Johnson (1990): 96.
[44] Psalm 67.4 (Geneva).

Before expanding upon the sequence's multiple scenes of petition in the second quatrain, Spenser prompts us to question the speaker's perception with the illogic of his hyperbole: 'the whiles she lordeth in licentious blisse/of her freewill, scorning both thee and me' (ll.3-4). This is one of many moments – which we will see notably in Sonnet XX – where the speaker sexualises the lady's chastity. Spenser puns on the lady's 'license', and 'licentious blisse'.[45] The line break particularly highlights the odd dissonance between tenor and vehicle, breaking apart her seemingly lording in 'licentious blisse', and the reality of her supposedly wanton indulgence — which is in fact her exercising her 'freewill'. The caesura further clarifies that the lady's supposed war crime is 'scorning' the petulant speaker.

Although we have been prompted to take the speaker's metaphors with a generous portion of salt, this does not detract from the impact of the quatrain's violent imagery:

> See how the Tyranesse doth ioy to see
> the huge massacres which her eyes do make:
> and humbled harts bring captiues vnto thee,
> that thou of them mayst mightie vengaunce take.
> (Sonnet X, ll.5-8)

Embedded within the speaker's petition to the 'Lord of loue' is another scene of supplication. Throughout the sequence, Spenser returns to the same basic tableau of petition, where suppliants prostrate themselves before a sovereign mistress; we have already seen this tableau in Sonnet II. In Sonnet X, however, she is a maniacal mistress: a 'Tyranesse'. The word crucially undermines the moral validity of royal

[45] See *license,* n., sense 1a: 'Liberty (to do something)'. www.oed.com [date accessed 21/02/2022]. McCabe glosses as 'lawless, but playing on the sense of wanton. Her purity defies "the law" of love.' McCabe (1999): 673.

authority, separating monarch and righteous God. The supplication is also more martial here than courtly; Spenser embellishes the vehicle used in Sonnet I of yielded 'captiues' subjected to the mistress. Now, the mistress herself 'brings captiues' to the Lord of Love, like war prizes. We might already question the speaker's thinking here: what Tyrant submits to a higher authority? The 'humbled harts' of the captives recall the courtly 'meeke humblesse' of the speaker's suppliant thoughts.[46] According to the terms of the vehicle, the suppliants are violently prostrated before the Lord of Love – as the objects of 'bring vnto thee' – rather than actively bowing subjects who 'fall lowly at her feet.' Whittington notes the classical 'ethical duty as victorious conqueror to pardon those who beg for mercy and to protect the weak and vulnerable'.[47] It is possible that the martial connotations of the scene both recalls this classical moral code, and underlines its violation.

The violence of the sonnet makes this scene a martial distortion of courtly petition. The un-even power dynamics in Sonnet I are bought to the fore in Sonnet X, as the mistress becomes not simply a controlling 'victor', but gleefully cruel. As Fleming argues of the mistress's violence across the sequence: 'the great problem with this behaviour is not only how consistently the lady engages in it but how much she enjoys it'.[48] From the speaker's perspective, the Petrarchan mistress's lethal weapon of choice – her eyes – becomes more viscerally violent. The Petrarchan fatal look escalates into 'huge massacres' (l.6). The horror is amplified by the

[46] Johnson sees a bizarre, complex deer-related etymological pun here, demonstrating the lengths critics can go to deflect from the violence of the imagery: 'Both hearts and harts are humbled, meaning humble in the usual sense of the word, but also plays on "umbles", the innards of a deer.' Johnson (1990): 89.
[47] Whittington (2016): 103. On Zeus's protection of suppliants, and the political crises these provoke in the Athenian 'Suppliant dramas' see Whittington (2016): pp.24-26.
[48] Fleming (2001): 154.

tautological quantifying of massacre as 'huge'; the scale of death is inherent in the word 'massacre' alone.[49] The death is further increased by the plural 'massacres' - this is not a singular bloodbath. Given that her eyes are supposedly her lethal weapon, the idea that she 'ioy[s] to *see*' [emphasis mine] her massacres, is an extremely unfortunate verb: her enjoyment of her slaughter might disastrously lead to the deaths of others who get caught in the crossfire.

This sonnet is one which critics uncomfortably seek to laugh off as a burlesque of the Petrarch, and playful parody is undoubtedly present.[50] Nevertheless, the vehicle of violent supplication has unavoidable political resonance. Johnson shakes the legal and martial imagery off as 'far too familiar, both for the lady and for the reader' to countenance seriously.[51] As Fleming, has argued, however, the 'vengeaunce' on yielded 'captiues' is an uncomfortable parallel of the Smerwick massacre.[52] Bach comments:

> Each trope standing alone could easily take its place in any Elizabethan love sonnet, but together in this poem they shock readers. However, their language would be familiar in the embattled colonial front the poet inhabited, and the vocabulary of sonnets X, XI and XII emerges from that front.[53]

The introduction of this unexpected parallel almost gives the vehicle independent life of its own; it is at such a far remove from the mistress and the lover. The accusatory tone of the sonnet gives voice to the anxiety about similar violent

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[49] *Massacre,* n., sense 1a 'carnage… in numbers'. www.oed.com [date accessed 21/02/2022].
[50] For such an example see Johnson (1990): 89. Fleming notes that *Amoretti* criticism tends to take two approaches to the violent imagery of the sequence: the first is to ignore the violent sonnets, or touch on them lightly and fleetingly; the second, following from Louis Martz's reading of the sequence, is to dismiss them as comic parodies of Petrarch. Fleming (2001): 136. Louis Martz, 'The *Amoretti:* "Most Goodly Temperature"' in *Form and Convention in the Poetry of Edmund Spenser* ed William Nelson, New York: Columbia University Press, 1961.
[51] Johnson (1990): 89.
[52] Fleming (2001): p.153; p.158.
[53] Bach (2000): 55.

suppression of yielded opponents to the Smerwick massacre, which is so ardently defended by Spenser's own Irenius in *A View*. Spenser distinguishes between justice and this violent suppression so reminiscent of colonial violence in Ireland. From the sonnet's very opening the action is clearly labelled as 'unrighteous'. This is not the terror wielded by a monarch, but by a tyrant. It isn't justice; it's 'vengeance'. Justus Lipsius - one of the classical sources outlining the difference between justice, equity, and mercy, upon whom Thomas Elyot drew - specified that the prince's mind should 'with judgement, enclineth from punishment, or *revenge*' [emphasis mine].[54]

In the sestet, Spenser contrast the differences in tone between petitioning the Christian God, and petitioning the 'Lord of loue' — pointing us to the speaker's flawed perception. The speaker, in a familiar cry for help in sonnet sequences, petitions the 'Lord of loue' to make the mistress more amenable to his advances. The speaker's expression, however, is more about control then love:

> But her proud hart doe thou a little shake
> And that high look, with which she doth comptroll
> All this worlds pride bow to a baser make,
> And al her faults in thy black booke enroll.
> (Sonnet X, ll.9-12)

Given the colonial connotations of this sonnet, it is fitting that the mistress does not just 'control' but 'comptroll': the financial early modern connotations of 'comptroll' (l.10) almost make the mistress into a calculating bureaucrat, 'to act as controller or comptroller of (accounts)'.[55]

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[54] Quoted James, (1970): 114.

[55] *control*, (comptrol, obs), n., sense 1a. One of the early modern examples provided in the OED even comes from a later English tract on the problem of Ireland, John Davies' *A discouerie of the true causes why Ireland was neuer entirely subdued, nor brought vnder obedience of the crowne of England, vntill the beginning of his Maiesties happie raigne*. www.oed.com [date accessed 13/04/2022].

The bitterness of the speaker's tone is clear from his violent petition for 'the Lord of loue' to physically 'shake' the mistress and have her 'bow…to a baser make'.[56] Spenser's use of scriptural allusion draws into the stark contrast the respective outcomes of petitioning God, and the ugly struggle for power in the speaker's petition to the 'Lord of loue'. The image of Love recording the mistress's 'faults' in a 'black book', invokes secular justice: 'a record of the names of people liable to censure or punishment'.[57] Rather like the mistress's 'comptroll', the word also has bureaucratic, financial connotations: 'A record book or ledger, usually relating to finance or administration'; 'a book of documents… containing an official account of the royal revenues'.[58] The god of love therefore appears to settle disputes with a slightly sinister combination of criminal and financial administration.

The book is also reminiscent of the Book of Life in Revelation:

> And I saw the dead… stand before God: and the books were opened, and another book was opened, which is *the book* of life, and the dead were judged of those things, which were written in the books, according to their works.[59]

The Geneva Bible glosses the book as the individual's conscience: 'As it were, our books of reckoning or accompts: that is, the testimony of our conscience, and of our works, which by no means can be avoided.'[60] The speaker, however, is more fixated on crafting a litany of the mistress's sins against love – daring not to be interested – than any kind of internal reflection. The outcome of his distorted romantic petition

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[56] Gibbs notes that 'the lover is uncharacteristically vindictive in his desire to see his mistress reduced to his level'. Gibbs (1990): 12.
[57] *Black book,* n., sense 2a. www.oed.com [date accessed 13/04/2022].
[58] *Black book,* n., senses 1a and 4a. www.oed.com [date accessed 13/04/2022].
[59] Revelation 20.12 (Geneva).
[60] Revelation 20.12 (Geneva).

does not seem to imagine joy for either party, but rather a shared, rueful snort: 'that I may laugh at her in equall sort,/As she doth laugh at me and makes her pain my sport' (Sonnet X, ll.13-14). The couplet's resolution in mutual mirthlessness, and the sonnet's violent and bitter tone, gestures to the flawed nature of this petition to the 'Vnrighteous Lord of loue' in comparison to a petition to the loving God of Christian theology.

Spenser's use of hyperbole, and the hints of a Christian alternative, undermine the speaker's representation of the mistress's cruelty. The specificity of the violent tenor, however, still gives voice to an unease about the colonial violence it recalls. For the reader the awkward disjunct between tenor and vehicle deflects the speaker's intense criticism of the mistress back on himself. Yet, there still remains an uncomfortable irresolution to the ghosts unearthed by the massacre of yielded captives. Whilst this imagery serves to undermine the speaker's petition to a god of love, as opposed to the Christian God, the parody does not erase the political implications of 'unrighteous' violence against suppliants.

The gestures of petition: all style and no substance

In Sonnet XVIII, the speaker directs his petitions from the god of Love to the mistress herself. This sonnet is the first in which the fairly vocal mistress of the *Amoretti* speaks – if only in reported, rather than direct speech. Rather like Stella's few vocal contributions to *Astrophil and Stella*, the *Amoretti's* mistress meets the speaker's efforts with a resounding 'no'.[61] She even goes a stage further, and actively mocks

[61] See for example 'Song 2' 'Her waking tongue still refuseth/Giving frankly niggard "no" (ll.9-10) or 'Song 4': '"No, no, no, no, my dear let me be."' (l.6).

him.[62] The root of her amusement has implications for secular and spiritual petition alike: although petition can be physically and emotionally performed, a good performance is no guarantee of authenticity.

In the sonnet the speaker complains that the mistress is coldly unreceptive to his petitions. She won't even listen to them:

> Yet cannot I with many a dropping teare,
> And long intreaty soften her hard hart:
> That she will once vouchsafe my plaint to heare,
> Or looke with pitty on my paynefull smart.
> (Sonnet XVIII, ll.5-8)

Even before the mistress enters and responds at the volta, however, Spenser has already set up the joke of imagining the speaker's petition from the mistress's perspective. The speaker's quantifying of his efforts 'with *many* a dropping teare,/And *long* intreaty' is meant to persuade us of his ardour, however, it simultaneously serves to emphasise the frequency and length of his petitions which the mistress has to sit through.

Spenser suggests that not only are the speaker's petitions long and frequent – they're also dull. According to Brooks-Davies, Smith has commented that the sonnet's proverbial couplet matches its proverbial opening quatrain.[63] It is possible that this proverbial tone reflects the flat and uninventive *imitatio* of the speaker's

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[62] Mid twentieth century critics delighted in finding witty literary heroines to liken her to. Fowler in an unfairly harsh judgement on Penelope Rich sees the Amoretti's mistress as 'a keenly intelligent witty person… an Elizabeth Bennet rather than a Penelope Riche'. *Edmund Spenser,* Alistair Fowler and Ian Scott Kilvert eds, Harlow: Longman, 1977: 20. Martz compared the mistress and the speaker to Emma and Mr Knightley. Martz (1961): 154.

[63] *Edmund Spenser Selected Shorter Poems,* ed Douglas Brooks-Davies, New York: Longman, 1995: 231.

petitions. At the volta, as the speaker tries to enforce the mistress's callous humour, the sonnet degenerates into a repetitive compound sentence:

> But when I plead, she bids me play my part
> And when I weep, she sayes teares are but water,
> And when I sigh, she sayes I know the art,
> And when I waile she turnes hir selfe to laughter.
> (Sonnet XVIII, ll.9-12)

The stale direct repetition 'And when I', flattens the emotional intensity of the petitioning campaign. At best, the repeated 'ands' seem like the ragged breaths which punctuate a toddler's temper tantrum. The dull listing of gestures – 'weep', 'sigh', 'waile' - further enforces the mistress's perception of the petitions as an empty performance, taking on the quality of the tired stages of a routine. This is not helped by the speaker repeating exactly the same words in the couplet, as if trying the old routine once more for luck: 'So doe I weepe, and wayle, and pleade in vaine' (l.13). The only thing the speaker's complaint does is to make us sympathise with the mistress rather than pity the speaker for her cruelty.

The mistress's critique has been read as a self-aware wink at the conventional respective roles of the mistress and the speaker in the drama of the sonnet sequence.[64] The mistress's criticism, however, does not just cut to the core of the staged nature of Petrarchan love in general, but also quite specifically to the nature of the lover's petition. The sonnet is littered with the lexicon of petition: 'intreaty' (l.6), 'plaint' (l.7), 'pleade' (l.9). The language of artifice - 'she bids me play my part'

[64] Martz (1961): 157; Gibbs (1990): pp.49-50; Johnson (1990): 101.

(l.9), 'I know the art' (l.11) – acutely highlights the theatrical nature of the lover's own petitions, recalling the courtly performance of Sonnet II.[65]

Thus far, we have often seen how the speaker's petitions are either a flawed echo of a religious petition, or are quasi-religious petitions misdirected to a human recipient. In this particular case, however, secular and religious petition alike are susceptible to the same criticism. Prayer itself, which was part of the Petrarchan toolkit, was also a performative process — a performance whose authenticity was not unquestioned. Samuel Hieron stated that 'Albeit there be many kneelers and speakers…yet there are fewe true petitioners vnto God'.[66] For Ramie Targoff, the crystallisation of this problem is Claudius's failed prayer in *Hamlet*: Hamlet is taken in by the superficial performance of prayer, which internally for Claudius is a failure.[67]

The mistress, however, is in no way susceptible to the physical performance. Her curt reply that 'teares are but water' is relevant to the penitential tears of religious petition, as well as to the sniffles of Petrarchan lovers. Ryrie describes the double bind of penitential tears in Protestant prayer. Unbidden tears could be a sign of election, and were thought potentially to strengthen prayer. Gilbert Primrose – himself collapsing the secular and spiritual meanings of petition - claimed that 'No prayers…come back so swiftly from the Throne with grace & grants, as prayers of

[65] See above: 80.
[66] Samuel Hieron, *A Helpe vnto Deuotion*, (1608), quoted Ryrie (2013): 173.
[67] Ramie Targoff, *Common Prayer: The Language of Public Devotion in Early Modern England*, London: University of Chicago Press, 2001: 3.

teares'.[68] But tears were also regarded with anxiety or suspicion as the hyperbolic performance of the hypocrite. As Ryrie summarises:

> Daniel Featley argued that true Christians could be distinguished from hypocrites by virtue of their being 'more deuout in priuate then in publike'. Amongst other things, this meant that 'the penitent, or compassionate eye, which droppeth in publike should runne and gush our with riuers of water in priuate'. Only behind closed doors can you really let yourself go.[69]

One of the solutions to the problem of tears in devotional tracts was to use tears metaphorically.[70] Christopher Sutton advised that 'the teares of the heart may suffice' for repentance.[71] Therefore the mistress's assertion that 'teares are but water' is especially damning: it robs them of their symbolic value, leaving them a hollow and ineffectual physical performance — a tenor with no hope of a vehicle. Likewise, Spenser's merciless repetition of 'weep' and 'waile' in the sonnet wrings the lachrymose images of their symbolic value. As discussed above, inauthentic petition was a political problem as well as spiritual one: Irenius's description of inauthentic petition also revolves around performative and empty gestures, 'they creepe a little…until they haue gotten newe breathe'.[72]

The speaker describes his poems as prayers throughout the sequence — one such description is in reasonably close proximity to Sonnet XVIII.[73] Yet, in Sonnet XVIII, despite using images prime for metaphors of prayer, not once does the

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[68] Ryrie (2013): 189. Gilbert Primose, *The Christian Mans Teares, And Christs Comforts,* (1625), quoted Ryrie (2013): 193.
[69] Ryrie (2013): 188.
[70] Ryrie (2013): 192.
[71] Christopher Sutton, *Godly meditations vpon the most holy sacrament of the Lordes Supper, (*1601), quoted Ryrie (2013): 192.
[72] See above: 59.
[73] See Sonnet XI and Sonnet XIIII discussed above: 83.

speaker make the comparison. Donna Gibbs likens the mistress's behaviour in general – rather than in Sonnet XVIII - to Samuel Daniel's sonnet in *Delia*, 'Teares, vowes and prayers win the hardest hart'.[74] Daniel's speaker similarly complains:

> Yet though I cannot win her will with teares,
> Though my soules Idoll scorneth all my vowes;
> Though all my prayers be to so deafe eares:
> No favour though the cruell faire allowes.[75]
> (Sonnet XI, ll.9-12)

The similarity between this sonnet and Sonnet XVIII demonstrates how obvious a comparison prayer is, and therefore just how blind the speaker is to it. Whilst the reader might apply the mistress's critiques to the wider pattern of petitionary metaphor in the sequence, in this particular sonnet the religious potential of the speaker's own actions seems to elude him completely. This also reinforces the hollowness of his petitions. They fail to persuade as romantic petitions, but also reinforce the speaker's own limited vision at this point. In a Neoplatonic sense they fail to help raise him from the physical to spiritual, rather sinking like a lead balloon – or perhaps in this case a 'steele' one (l.2).

The disadvantages of petitioning a tyrant

In Sonnet XX, the speaker goes in for another round of petition — with extreme consequences. As we saw in Sonnet X the speaker developed the metaphor of martial supplication: labelling the mistress a 'Tyranesse' for enabling the 'massacres'

[74] Gibbs (1990): 55.
[75] Samuel Daniel, *Delia* in *Poems and a Defence of Ryme*, ed Arthur C. Sprague, Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1972.

of surrendered prisoners. This pattern of martial metaphor is expanded in quick succession in Sonnets XI, XII and XIV.

In Sonnet XI, petition takes on the technical martial sense of parley: 'Dayly when I do seeke and sew for peace' (l.1). Johnson also explicitly uses the term petition here, to connect Sonnets X and XI: 'the legal connotations [of 'sew']… tie them both to *Amor.* 10 and to his "suing", which is his (legal) petitioning'.[76] Spenser continues to play on the multiple senses of petition, as the speaker describes a cycle in which 'no price *nor prayer* may surcease' their 'weary war' (Sonnet XI, l.14, l.4) The speaker still uses the language of emotional coercion: as in Sonnet XVIII, the mistress 'ne wilbe moou'd with reason or with rewth' (Sonnet XI, l.4). In Sonnet XII, as in Sonnet X, the speaker accuses the mistress's eyes of romantic war crimes, ending with an ironic and circular quasi-Marian petition to the mistress for justice against herself: 'So Ladie now to you I doo complaine,/against your eyes that iustice I may gaine' (ll.13-14).[77] In Sonnet XIIII the speaker uses petition militarily to 'lay incessant battery to her heart,/playnts, prayers, vowes, ruth, sorrow, and dismay' (Sonnet XIIII, ll.10-11).

Johnson, discussing Sonnet XI, notes the merging of the political, martial and legal petition; however, rather than considering petition at greater length, he turns to the implications for poetry: 'his initial "seeking" and "suing" now connected with the "prayer" and "price", the poet admits the inefficacy of his poetry to accomplish

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[76] Johnson (1990): 91.

[77] 'Lady' here recalls the medieval style of Marian address, as seen in the lyric 'Of on that is so fayr and bright': 'Ich crie to thee, thou se to me,/ Lady, pray thy son for me' (ll.5-6), *Medieval English Lyrics 1200-1400,* ed Thomas G. Duncan, London: Penguin, 1995. On the irony of appealing to the mistress for justice against her own eyes, see Gibbs (1990): 41.

that of which he was so assured'.[78] Whilst the inefficacy of the speaker's poetry is undeniable, the accumulating senses of petition deserve greater attention. The violence of Sonnet XX, and its accusations of martial violence follows from this short sequence of metaphors of martial petition. What makes Sonnet XX quite so striking, however, is how Spenser combines the martial and spiritual senses of petition, with courtly petition — with shocking political ramifications.

Sonnet XX is one of the sonnets which Lever believed should be cut from the sequence; it is still a sonnet which critics tussle with, and whose violence is often explained away.[79] Johnson claims 'lightness of the tone is evident'.[80] Gibbs sees the 'analogies as a way to demonstrate their failure as parallels and the lack of correspondence between the details of the analogies', and suggests that they should be understood as part of the speaker's attempts to coerce the mistress.[81] Furthermore, she argues that 'the lover's pious adoption of moral critic in these circumstances is amusing rather than edifying, and cannot be taken very seriously.'[82]

Two more recent articles focusing on this sonnet also attempt to explain away the violence. Joan Curbet turns to Pliny as a source to underline that the mistress is unfavourably compared to the lion; it is a comparison of *dis-similitude*, not similitude, thus demonstrating that the mistress 'cannot be correctly read or understood, as she is situated, even through similes, outside the rules of the natural

[78] Johnson (1990): 91.
[79] J.W. Lever, *The Elizabethan Love Sonnet*, London: Methuen, 1956: 102.
[80] Johnson (1990): 105.
[81] Gibbs (1990): pp.96-97.
[82] Gibbs (1990): 86.

world: not human, but not fitting clearly in nature either'.[83] For Curbet, Spenser thus criticises the Petrarchan discourse which the speaker must shake off. Sean Henry highlights the 'cumulative, multi-faceted' signification of the early modern lion: first the lion as heraldic royal symbol of England (and thus Queen Elizabeth, although this is not a comparison he develops in relation to the sonnet); secondly, which most shapes his reading, he stresses the common emphasis in bestiaries on the lioness' supposedly insatiable libido and consequent infidelity; finally, he links the images of the lion and the lamb to Isaiah's peaceable kingdom, pointing towards their marriage.[84] He argues that the sonnet's parodic hyperbole deflates the threat of the violence:

> The tone and imagery playfully threaten to topple over into exaggeration. Even if the poem were limited to the single conceit of the beloved being more cruel than a lion, could any lover hope to woo and win, were such a comparison made in all seriousness? [85]

This last question is a pertinent one. Why make the comparison at all? It doesn't seem like the most seductive technique to ever enter a lover's brain.[86] Johnson even seems to suggest that we almost detach the poem from the love affair entirely: 'By comparing the lady with something as conventional as a lion, the poet exercises his poetic wit and thus takes the pressure off the lover in him.'[87] As we saw in Sonnet X, and as all four of these readings identify, Spenser's vehicles in the *Amoretti* often feel

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[83] Joan Curbert, 'Edmund Spenser's Bestiary in the "Amoretti" (1595)', *Atlantis*, Vol. 24, No.2, (2002), pp. 41-58: 47. Gibbs also identifies Pliny as a source: Gibbs (1990): 72.
[84] Sean Henry, 'Hot and Bothered: The Lions of Amoretti 20 and The Faerie Queene I', *Spenser Studies*, Vol.27, No.1, (2012), pp. 47-76: 59. Johnson makes the same scriptural comparison. Johnson (1990): 106.
[85] Henry (2012): 55.
[86] Gibbs notes that whilst other early modern sonnet writers make use of leonine comparison, Spenser is unique in making the 'predatory creatures generally have a prominent place in overall argument of the poem.' Gibbs (1990): pp.72-3.
[87] Johnson (1990): 105.

at a surreal remove from their tenors. This seems like more of an invitation to explore the tension than it does to explain it away as parody. This is not to deny the parody, but simply to suggest that we should spend longer considering what Gibbs describes as 'the details of the analogies'.[88]

Both Curbet and Henry discuss the lion's classical association with clemency. Curbet does not consider the potential monarchical metaphor of the sonnet beyond the mistress lacking 'magnanimity'.[89] But Henry suggests that:

> the natural kingship of the lion suggests the corresponding reign of the beloved over the speaker's world and implies that, at least from the speaker's point of view, the beloved's reign is just as much according to natural, divinely sanctioned order as that of the lion in the animal kingdom.[90]

He argues that the violence itself is not as un-natural as 'the beloved's abrogation of magnanimity as a ruler' which is 'as much a crime against natural order as her being more bestial (and beastly) than an animal'.[91] Neither petition nor tyranny enters this discussion; the political ramifications of this lack of monarchical clemency should be explored in more detail.

Like the prostration in Sonnet II, Spenser returns to the supplication tableau. The speaker approaches and prostrates himself before a monarchical figure. The distortion of this courtly scene is bought into greater clarity by Artegall and Arthur's approach of Mercilla in Book V of the *Faerie Queene*:

> So sitting high in dreaded soueraynтie,
> Those two strange knights were to her presence brought;
> Who bowing low before her Maiestie,
> Did to her myld obeysance, as they ought,
> And meekest boone, that they imagine mought.

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[88] Gibbs (1990): 97.
[89] Curbet (2002): 47.
[90] Henry (2012): 54.
[91] Henry (2012): 54.

> To whom she eke inclyning her withall,
> As a faire stoupe of her high soaring thought,
> A chearefull countenance on them let fall,
> Yet tempred with some maiestie imperiall
> V.ix.34 (ll.1-9)

Just as Mercilla's physical throne itself is a mesh of scriptural allusion, Mercilla's 'high' throne echoes the highest seat of God's 'dreaded soueravntie'.[92] 'Presence' likewise carries the traditional connection between the physical presence of the monarch, and divine presence.[93] In Mercilla's court, no virtue goes unqualified or unsoftened: just as the speaker advises his thoughts to bow before the mistress with '*meeke* humblesse', so Arthur and Artegall bow low with '*myld* obeysance' to bring a '*meekest* boone' [emphasis mine]. The dual sense of petition is in full operation here: 'boone' is both 'a request addressed to a human being' and 'a prayer to God'.[94] Mercilla graciously deigns to lower 'her high soaring thoughts', physically meeting their bow, by 'inclyning' towards them, and letting her '*chearefull* countenance…fall', like manna from heaven. The control of this smiling release - 'A chearefull countenance on them *let fall*' [emphasis mine] - emphasises the careful deliberation which informs her beneficence, and the knights' fortune in receiving it.

The supplication tableau of Sonnet XX is a graphic distortion of this courtly scene. The speaker similarly prostrates himself before his regal mistress, though he

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[92] For the scriptural sources of Mercilla's throne, see Hamilton et al, 2007: 573.
[93] See *presence,* sense 1c 'With reference to the manner in which Christ is held to be present in the Eucharist'; sense 2a ' the company or society of someone… , esp. royal, person'; sense 6 ' **6.** A person or thing that exists or is present in a place but is not seen, esp. a divine, spiritual, or incorporeal being or influence felt or perceived to be present.' A later eighteenth century example given for p3, *presence-chamber,* embodies this double meaning: 'Will not the Soul be fully perswaded that the Love of God, is better than his past Life, when it shall be Translated unto the Third Heaven, The Imperial Court of God, his Chamber of presence.' M. Pope, *Pract. Disc. Loving Kindness God*. www.oed.com [date accessed 13/04/2022].
[94] *Boon*, n.1, sense 1a www.oed.com [date access 06/04/2020].

receives in return not an inclining ear and a smile but a foot to the neck:

> In vaine I seeke and sew to her for grace
> And doe myne humbled hart before her poure:
> The whiles her foot she in my neck doth place,
> And tread my life downe in the lowly floor.
> Sonnet XX, (ll.1-4)

The first two lines recall the imagined courtly petition of Sonnet II. Rather than his thoughts, the speaker himself now lies prostrate before the mistress - 'and do mine humbled heart before her pour' - with the correct courtly 'humblesse' he advised in Sonnet II. Petitioning for divine grace and courtly favour is combined in the conventional phrase 'sew to her for grace'.

Syntactically, however, 'in vain I seek' has already doomed the process to failure before we even know what it is. Interrupting the main clause 'In vaine… I seek grace' with 'and sew to her for' has further significance for the implied Christian reader. Not only does 'In vaine I seeke and sew to her for grace' suggest that the petition is a failure, but furthermore that *any* attempt to sue an earthly love for grace will be 'in vain'. God should be sued for grace, not the mistress. Metrically this is amplified by the stress on 'to *her*', which adds greater emphasis to the mistress as the wrong source of grace.

This emphasis on 'her' may have further Protestant significance. In *The Faerie Queene,* Spenser enshrines Mercilla in the appropriated Marian discourse of Elizabeth's court: 'my souerayne Lady Queene/ most sacred wight, most debonayre and free,/That ever yet vpon this earth was seene/ Or that with Diademe hath euer crowned beene.'[95] The opening tableau of prostration before the mistress in Sonnet

[95] V.ix.20, ll.6-9.

XX could equally be a petition to the Queen of Heaven as it could an earthly Queen. This adds to the comedy of the opening quatrain, given the decidedly un-Marian behaviour of the stamping mistress. Read in this light, 'In vain I seek and sue *to her* for grace' [emphasis mine], may be a Protestant slight on the Virgin as the wrong mediatrix to 'sue': Marian prayers for intercession are suing in vain to the wrong source.

Whereas in previous sonnets, Spenser has employed both spiritual, courtly and martial senses of supplication, the explosive comic drama of this sonnet is in their simultaneous deployment. Whereas in ll.1-2 we seem to be in a heavenly or earthly court, in line 3 Spenser introduces the martial violence we have seen in Sonnets X, XI, XII and XIIII. All in one sentence, Spenser shockingly evokes the courtly, spiritual and martial senses of petition, making the humble bowing courtier seemingly pinned down by his own Queen in a martial pose of victory over him. This drastic change in tone is further emphasised by the rhyme which ties together 'sew to her for *grace*' [emphasis mine], and 'her foot she in my neck doth *place*' [emphasis mine], connecting and contrasting the disparate courtly and martial images. Crucially, the time-marker 'the whiles' further suggests that the speaker attempts to petition while he is *already* squished underfoot.

This traditional classical pose of triumph, is more reminiscent of Radigund than it is of Mercilla:

> Soone as she saw him on the ground to grouell,
> She lightly to him leapt, and in his necke
> Her proud foote setting, as his head did leuell,…
> As when a Beare hath seiz'd her cruell clawes
> Vppon the carkasse of some beast too weake,
> Proudly stands ouer, and a while doth pause,

> To heare the piteouse beast pleadinge her plaintiffe cause.
> V.IV.40 (ll.1-9) [96]

At least the ursine Amazon spares a moment to *listen* to her victim 'to *heare* the piteouse beast pleadinge her plaintiffe cause' [emphasis mine].[97] Listening is decidedly absent in Sonnet XX, in comparison to the summary of day-to-day business in Mercilla's court: 'She was about affaires of common wele,/ Dealing of Iustice with indifferent grace,/ And hearing pleas of people meane and base' (V.9.36, ll.3-5). Although 'hear' is used in its legal sense ('to listen judicially in a court of law'), nevertheless there is also a sense of Mercilla's personal engagement in the process.[98] She 'hears' in the sense of 'to listen', as well as 'to judge', as is made manifest in her subsequent adjudication of Duessa's case. Hearing is also one of the great uncertainties of prayer, epitomised in so many of the Psalmist's pleas ('Hear my prayer, O Lord, *and* hearken unto my supplication: answer me in thy truth, *and* in thy righteousness.')[99] In Sonnet XX, there is no hearing — in a spiritual, legal, or personal sense.

The chained lion which is kept in check under Mercilla's throne in *The Faerie Queene,* has been let off the leash, or has violently unleashed itself, in Sonnet XX:

> And yet the Lyon that is Lord of power,
> And reigneth ouer euery beast in field:
> In his most pride disdeigneth to deuoure
> The silly lambe that to his might doth yield.
> But she more cruell and more saluage wylde,
> Then either Lyon or the Lyonesse:
> Shames not to be with guiltlesse blood defylde,

[96] In the previous stanza Radigund has also just been likened to a lioness: 'Like a fell Lionness at him she flew', V.IV.39 (l.6).
[97] For comparisons between the pride of Radigund and the mistress of the *Amoretti,* see Bach (2000): pp.49-51.
[98] *Hear,* v.1, Sense 6 [date access 06/04/2020].
[99] Psalm 143.1 (Geneva).

> But taketh glory in her cruelnesse.
> (Sonnet XX, ll.5-12)

As has been well established, the speaker contrasts the lion's proverbial kingly clemency, with the mistress who is 'more cruell and more saluage wylde'. The image of 'the silly lambe that to his might doth yield' might recall the 'captiues trembling' in the hands of the mistress 'which hold their life in my death doing might', as well as more generally aligning with the other early images of the mistress's violent treatment of hostages.[100] The visceral verbs 'deuoure', 'defylde' is worthy of any monstrous opponent in *The Faerie Queene.*

And yet, in a familiar strategy, just as the speaker accuses the mistress of a startlingly violent response to his petition, Spenser embeds images which point us to the ideal recipient of the petition. The unavoidable Christological connotations of the sacrificial imagery of the 'silly lamb' and 'guiltlesse bloud', clearly signpost to whom the speaker should really 'sue for grace'. As Curbert and Johnson draw attention to, the animals in question, the lion and the lamb, also recall and violently invert the peaceable kingdom prophesised by Isiah:

> the wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie with the kid, and the calf, and the lion, and the fat beast together, and a little child shall lead them. And the cow and the bear shall feed: their young ones shall lie together: and the lion shall eat straw like the bullock.[101]

The sonnet's implicit contrast between the docile grazing lion of Isaiah, and the rampaging leonine mistress of Sonnet XX further reinforces that she is the wrong source of grace. Likewise, the regal metaphor of the kingly lion – 'the Lord of power'

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[100] See Sonnet X, Sonnet XI, Sonnet XII.
[101] Isaiah 11:6-9 (Geneva). See Henry (2012): 59; Johnson (1990): 106.

– also gestures towards the ultimate monarch to whom the speaker should pour 'his humbled hart'. On the level of the sequence's Christian metaphor, so far so good. The sonnet's political metaphor, however, is strikingly critical. Spenser manoeuvres his language with guarded precision. The mistress may behave like a queen in the first quatrain, but she is not labelled as such, and she is clearly distinguished from the kingly lions. And yet, Spenser sets up a clear scene of courtly petition, as demonstrated by the parallel scene in *The Faerie Queene* (V.ix.34. ll.1-9), only to violently sever royal and divine justice — the connection which is so crucial to the metaphors this project examines, and the ideology which underscores Spenser's depiction of Mercilla.

In Book V of *The Faerie Queene,* it is difficult enough to countenance Munera's supplication being literally cut short, even when she is a personification of a corruption:

> Yet not for pitty would he change the course
> Of Iustice, which in Talus hand did lye;
> Who rudely hayld her forth without remorse,
> Still holding vp her suppliant hands on hye,
> And kneeling at his feete submissuely.
> But he her suppliant hands, those hands of gold,
> And eke her feet, those feet of siluer trye,
> Which sought vnrighteousnesse, and iustice sold,
> Chopt off, and nayld on high, that all might them behold.
> V.2.36 (ll.1-9)

Her gestures of 'kneeling… submissuely' and pathetically raising 'suppliant hands', are met with uncompromising brutality. Talus 'rudely hayld her forth'. The broken main clause ruthlessly makes 'her suppliant hands' the object of the unequivocal participle 'chopt off'. The power dynamic of male violence against female suppliant makes the scene even more uncomfortable to read. The subordinate clause is crucial,

however. Just as Irenius perceives Tyrone's false supplication as politically dangerous, so Munera's 'suppliant hands… [seek] vnrighteousnesse'. The giving hands of bribery disguise themselves as the innocent hands of the petitioner, but to no avail. Even with the obvious moral frame, the passage is profoundly disturbing. In Sonnet XX, however, no matter how distorted and unreliable the speaker is, he gives a voice to the violently oppressed suppliant. We do not have the luxury of a third person moral guide; we are positioned, through the first person, with the victim of violence. This violence is not inflicted on the agents of 'vnrighteousnesse' and injustice, but the supposedly 'guiltlesse'.

I concur with Fleming's compelling argument that Sonnet XX is 'haunted' by the Smerwick massacre. The couplet enforces, for a second time in the sonnet, the crime of being 'blooded in a yeelded pray'(l.14). It seems highly like, here, that Spenser also draws on the classical divine protection of suppliants.[102] But Fleming also suggests that the emphasis of the sonnet falls on 'let none euer say' (l.13); that is, rather than expressing concern for the violent suppression of suppliants, Fleming argues that Spenser seeks to evoke Grey's loss of reputation, and to transfer his guilt back onto his Queen. And here I demur from Fleming: because this sonnet unavoidably voices concern about the violent suppression of suppliants, by giving them a voice, it seems impossible that the sonnet is only concerned with Grey's loss of reputation. I also believe the sonnet has wider political ramifications, which have not been fully appreciated: with the metaphor of secular and spiritual petition at its

[102] Whittington (2016): pp.24-26.

heart, Spenser critically demonstrates the difference between the justice systems of earth and heaven.

Shooting for *the stella maris* and missing

In Sonnet XX, the speaker claims to be 'suing' a tyrant 'in vain', however by Sonnet XXXIIII the speaker seems to have stopped trying to sue anyone for anything. Instead, he collapses into despair. In his reworking of Petrarch's Rime 189, Spenser uses his source's maritime metaphor to strongly evoke the *Stella Maris* (Mary Star of the Sea). But whilst all of the symbolism is primed for calling on Mary, the speaker does not. He can't petition the ultimate Catholic intercessor, let alone directly petitioning God. The Marian imagery of this sonnet has heretofore gone un-noticed, even by Thomas Rist's Marian reading of *Astrophil and Stella* and the *Amoretti*.[103]

In the first quatrain, as the speaker sets up the epic simile for his emotional torment, Spenser alludes to, and simultaneously undercuts, the *Stella Maris*:

> Lyke as a ship that through the Ocean wyde,
> by conduct of some star doth make her way,
> wheneas a storm hath dimd her trusty gyde,
> out of her course doth wander far astray.
> (Sonnet XXXIIII, ll.1-4)

The opening image is simultaneously Marian and mortal. The image of navigation has connotations of moral guidance – 'by conduct of some star'. Yet 'some' undermines the Marian potential of the image. This star is not honoured with the definite article, but rather vaguely gestured at — 'some star'. This might simultaneously be the speaker's recognition that ultimately the mistress is indeed a

[103] Rist (2014).

mortal, not a deity, but it might also imply to a Protestant reader that the *stella maris* is not the correct source of hope that the spiritual wanderer should look to for moral guidance. Afterall, this star may be 'dimmd' – a 'trusty gyde' which the speaker cannot, in fact, trust in all situations. Following immediately from the famously panegyric *Faerie Queene* sonnet (Sonnet XXXIII), it is possible that Spenser's sequencing creates a contrast between both the Virgin Mary and the human quasi-Marian mistress, versus the Protestant Virgin Queen.[104]

The simile is instantly fraught with moral misdirection. An ominous storm has 'dimd' the speaker's moral lodestar, and with the morally loaded metaphor of losing the path - so familiar from *The Faerie Queene* – the speaker's ship 'out of her course doth wander far astray'. In this first quatrain Spenser represents the speaker's emotional and spiritual turmoil. In the simile, the acknowledgement of the star's unreliability – it is 'some star' which can be 'dimmed' by external factors – does not take the expected direction of berating the mistress for her cruelty. The line break between the dimming of the star and the boat wandering isolates and highlights the speaker's own wandering, rather than claiming that he has been misled or pushed out of course. It seems, for a moment, that the speaker is beginning to gain the introspection required to spiritually save him.

That is, until we reach the second quatrain. There, with some pain for the reader, the speaker explicitly spells out the tenor of the simile. Whilst the ship and

[104] Particularly also given that Spenser's metaphors of life, death, grace, and resurrection in Sonnet XXXIII, almost makes his prayer for 'grace' and 'rest' a hail Mary in the hour of the *Faerie Queene's* temporary death: 'not finishing her Queene of faery,/that mote enlarge her liuing prayses dead' (l.4). Johnson also notes the sequencing of Sonnet XXXIIII following from the *Faerie Queene* sonnet, but he suggests that rather than creating a contrast between the Queen and the mistress, Sonnet XXXIIII might in fact represent 'the poet and Elizabeth I'. Johnson (1990): 134.

star are accounted for, the role of darkness - which is the focus of the quatrain - remains uncast:

> So I whose star, that wont with her bright ray
> me to direct, with cloudes is ouercast,
> doe wander now in darknesse and dismay,
> through hidden perils round about me plast.
> (Amoretti XXXIIII, ll.5-8)

In a surprise to no-one, the speaker sets himself up as the ship and the mistress as the star. The twice-repeated darkness which clouds the second quatrain, however, remains unaccounted for.[105] What are the 'cloudes' which leave the speaker wandering in 'darknesse and dismay'? What are the 'hidden perils'?

In Petrarch's Rime, the metaphor is explicitly related to an internal struggle. The speaker is normally guided by 'la ragion et l'arte' (l.13), translated by Durling as 'reason and skill'.[106] He is lost in a mist 'd'error con ignoranzia attorto' (l.11) — 'of error twisted up with ignorance'.[107] Likewise, in Wyatt's reworking, the speaker is tormented by his 'thought[s]' (l.5), and his hidden guide is 'reason' (l.13).[108] In both poems, the speakers also use the crucial term 'despair'.[109] The image of the speaker wandering in 'darknesse and dismay', isolated from a hidden light, already invites this spiritual diagnosis of his plight. Spenser's sources provide additional reason to read the poem as a simile for despair. The speaker himself, however, remains in

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[105] Johnson also notes that the symbolism of the clouds is never explicitly spelt out. Johnson (1990): 134.
[106] Robert M.Durling trans and ed, *Petrarch's Lyric Poems,* Cambridge Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1976: pp.334-335.
[107] Durling (1976): pp.334-335.
[108] 'My galley charged with forgetfulness'. All references to Wyatt at taken from *Sir Thomas Wyatt The Completel Poems,* ed R.A.Rebholz, Penguin: Harmondsworth, 1978.
[109] Petrarch's Rime 189 closes 'tal ch'i'ncpmincio a desperar del porto' (l.14), translated by Durling as 'so that begin to despair of the port'. Durling (1976): pp.334-335. Wyatt's sonnet similarly closes 'and I remain despairing of the port' (l.14).

darkness. Whilst recognising that it is 'cloudes' which obscure his guiding star, and leave him prone to 'hidden perils', he makes no attempt to reflect on what the cause of the darkness might be.

As discussed in the first chapter, in Protestant theology despair was a crucial, if perilous, stage in the process of repentance, which could direct the sinner back to God.[110] At the volta of Spenser's poem, the last quatrain seems to reintroduce hope and the possibility of salvation:

> Yet I hope well, that when this storme is past
> my *Helice* the lodestar of my lyfe
> Will shine again, and look on me at last,
> With louely light to clear my cloudy grief.
> (Sonnet XXXIIII, ll.9-12)

The speaker shifts from 'darknesse and dismay', to 'hope'; his change in thinking is additionally emphasised by the co-ordinating conjunction 'yet' and the leap into the future tense. Aside from the obvious spiritual connotations of the light imagery, the speaker's that hope the mistress will 'look on me at last' is also brimming with possible scriptural connection. The phrase frequently appears to describe God's blessing, but also to describe God looking upon the faithful in times of hardship. In Job, for instance, the phrase explicitly relates to God's blessing of the penitent:

> He shall pray unto God, and he will be favorable unto him, and he shall see his face with joy: for he will render unto man his righteousness. He *looketh upon* men, and if one say, I have sinned, and perverted righteousness, and it did not profit me, He will deliver his soul from going into the pit, and his life shall see the light. [emphasis mine] [111]

The phrase occurs right in the middle of this cycle of repentance: if man prays, and repents, God offers salvation. In Samuel, the phrase is used to suggest the spiritual

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[110] See Chapter 1: 37.
[111] Job 33:26-28 (Geneva).

benefit of suffering: 'It may be that the Lord will look on mine affliction, and do me good for his cursing this day'.[112] Also in Samuel, Hannah uses the phrase to call on God in grief for her barrenness: 'O Lord of hosts, … look on the trouble of thine handmaid, and remember me'.[113] The scriptural resonance of phrase suggests that the speaker has found the way out of despair. The repeated 'c' rhymes from the second to third quatrain trace the path from suffering to salvation: 'with cloudes is *ouercast*'; 'perils round about me *plast*'; 'this storme is *past*'; 'looke on me at *last*'. He even acknowledges that the clouds are of his own making: 'to cleare my cloudy griefe' (l.12). His emotions are the source of the obfuscation. This demonstrates the self-reflection required of penitence. Now, it would appear, is his moment to repent and pray.

Given the Marian resonance of the imagery, the quatrain's description of the star's return makes the sonnet feel like it will turn into a Marian petition for guidance. As Bernard de Clairvaux expressed, the Marian star should be looked to for guidance when spiritual perils assail the vessel of the soul:

> If you are driven upon the rocks of tribulation look to the star, call on Mary; … Should anger, or avarice, or fleshly desire violently assail the frail vessel of your soul, look at the star, call upon Mary.[114]

Having hit the rocks of tribulation in the second quatrain, in the final quatrain the speaker seems to be climatically building up to a prayer. But crucially, this is not a prayer, but passive description: 'when this storme is past' does not actively beg for the storm to be over, but imagines it passing. Likewise, his certainty that 'the

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[112] 2 Samuel 16.12 (Geneva).
[113] 1 Samuel 1.11 (Geneva).
[114] Marina Warner, *Alone of All Her Sex: The Myth and the Cult of the Virgin Mary*, London: Picador, 1976: 262.

lodestar of my lyfe/will shine again' looks forward to an inevitable return but does not ask for it.

Thus, the sonnet reaches a bathetic false resolution in the couplet: a resolution in form alone, not content. It seems that the speaker has reached the moment where he might - from a Protestant perspective, mis-directedly - petition the Virgin Mary. Instead, however, the couplet takes us confusingly backwards, from the imagined hopeful future, to the present of despair: 'Till then I wander carefull comfortlesse,/In secret sorrow and sad pensiuenesse' (ll.13-14). The passivity of the speaker is even reflected in the unstressed rhyme endings 'comfortlesse' and pensiuenesse'. 'Comfortlesse' is especially frustrating when the speaker seems to have come so close to comfort. That perilous 'wander' brings the sonnet back full circle to the wandering of the first quatrain, as if the sonnet itself is lost and retracing its steps. The sonnet appears to be building up to a petition for salvation which lifts the speaker out of his despair, but instead of grabbing the lifeline which Spenser throws out in plain sight for the reader, the speaker sinks back into his sea of despair. Rather than petitioning the wrong source, the speaker seems to have lost the ability to petition at all.

'Mercy is the mighties iewel'

As the sequence approaches the Easter Sunday climax of sonnet LXVIII, there is a concomitant shift in the speaker's thinking, which changes the representation of petition. Whereas in the earlier phase of the sequence, Spenser implicitly suggests,

through irony, that the speaker should really be petitioning God for mercy and not his mistress, in the late phase the speaker himself for the first time says and does so.

Sonnet XLVIII is the speaker's final complaint about the mistress's cruelty in which Spenser implicitly contrasts the mistress's unwillingness to hear with God's mercy. Although the speaker's vehicles are once again ludicrously hyperbolic – as burnt paper is transformed into an unjustly executed intercessor – the secular vehicles, detached from their tenors, seem to express anxiety about secular petition as they highlight the potential for cruelty in secular justice. [115] In the sonnet, the speaker returns to the metaphor we have seen in Sonnets I and II of the material poem personified as a physical intercessor between the lovers:

> Innocent paper whom too cruell hand
> Did make the matter to auenge her yre:
> And ere she could thy cause wel vnderstand,
> Did sacrifize vnto the greedy fire.
> (Sonnet XLVIII ll.1-4)

The speaker lodges an accusation familiar from Sonnet XX that the mistress won't even countenance a petition before violently despatching the petition itself 'and *ere* she could thy cause wel vnderstand,/Did sacrifize vnto the greedy fire [emphasis mine]'. Here, as in Sonnet X, the speaker accuses the mistress of being motivated by vengeance — 'auenge her yre'.

The curious phrase - 'Did make the matter to auenge her yre' – furthers the representation of the mistress's litmus-paper-rage. Brooks-Davies simply glosses the word 'matter' as 'cause', whereas McCabe succinctly suggests that it signifies 'both

[115] Gibbs, however, believes the sonnet 'convey[s] the impression of actual experience'. Gibbs (1990): 62.

the cause and victim (or object) of her wrath'.[116] The word 'matter' is so vague as to almost overwhelm with its possible meanings. As Brooks-Davies suggests, the primary meaning is that the poem is the cause of the mistress's rage. This understanding is also underpinned by the specifically early modern sense in the *OED* 'to make the matter: to pick a quarrel with'.[117] 'Matter' also has more literary connotations of a subject matter, suggesting that the provocative missive is the subject matter of a furious rant from the mistress.[118] Crucially, in the context of Spenser's metaphor of burning, however, the word 'matter' also reduces the offending petition down to its physical stuff: 'physical objects, vaguely characterized'; 'printed or written material'; 'timber or wood'.[119] This last sense could suggest that under the mistress's fiery gaze, any text, regardless of its contents, would be appropriate material - fuel - to be ignited by her temper. This not only reinforces the representation of the mistress as cruel, but also more significantly avoids or negates the speaker's culpability — anything would set her off. In an even more specific sense of 'matter' - 'the result of the first act of creation; ie substance without form'- the mistress could be seen as a monstrous parody of the creating God, here not shaping matter in loving creation but malevolently using it as fuel for 'her yre'.[120] Suffice to say, as in Sonnet XX, Spenser represents the petitionary process as doomed to fail before it has really begun.

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[116] Brooks-Davies (1995): 251.
[117] *Matter,* n.1, sense 2c. See also sense 2a: 'A subject of contention, dispute, litigation'.
[118] *Matter*, n.1, sense 8, 'The subject of a book, speech'; sense 9a 'the contents of a composition in respect of the facts or ideas expressed, as distinct from the form of words (or *manner*) used to express them'; sense 10a, ' Material for expression; fact or thought as material for a book, speech'.
[119] Sense 1d; sense 17a; sense 18a.
[120] *Matter*, n.1, sense 22b.

In the second quatrain, the speaker criticises the mistress's unjust conduct, but with more specifically secular metaphor:

> Well worthy thou to haue found better hyre,
> then so bad end for hereticks ordayned:
> yet heresy nor treason didst conspire,
> but plead thy maisters cause vniustly payned.
> (Sonnet XLVIII, ll.5-8)

As in Sonnet II, Spenser figures the paper as an interceding petitioner ('but plead thy maisters cause'). Spenser's extension of the metaphor to the lady burning the poem as the legal form of execution for heresy sharply politicises this second quatrain.[121] Spenser plays on the traditional fiery punishment for 'heresy'. As McCabe suggests, Spenser may recall the burnings of the Marian regime.[122] The conjunctions 'yet' and 'but' oppose the crime which warranted such an execution in early modern law, with the innocence of the speaker and his poem-intercessor. This playful hyperbole creates a bizarre narrative in which the personified poem has been burnt to death, merely for attempting to petition a sovereign — and as we know from the first quatrain, the petitioner was not even listened to before being promptly despatched. Spenser's syntax conflates the petitioner with the petition, allowing for 'uniustly payned' to be the speaker's own self-pity - the maister is 'uniustly payned' — or in a rather uncharacteristic moment of understatement, to describe the burnt petitioner who is 'uniustly payned' by their fiery demise. In a similarly flat tone, the double meaning of 'better hyre' at the beginning of the quatrain – as both reward and

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[121] Johnson does not engage with these secular vehicles, seeing them entirely as 'the Petrarchan exaggeration of a lady's cruelty', and preferring to prioritise the poem's 'claim for the artist's immortalising ability'. Johnson (1990): 152.
[122] McCabe (1999): 683.

employment – ironically envisages the disastrous misadventures of a court career, from ambition to execution.[123]

In the third quatrain, Spenser implicitly contrasts the cruelty of the mistress with the mercy of God:

> Whom she all carelesse of his griefe constrayned
> To vtter forth th'anguish of his hart:
> And would not heare, when he to her complayned,
> The piteous passion of his dying smart.
> (Sonnet XLVIII, ll.9-12)

'The piteous passion of his dying smart' simultaneously evokes the martyrdom of those burnt at the stake for heresy, and the conventional self-imposed martyrdom of Petrarchan emotional anguish. Yet, the emphasis on the petitioner's dying confession – 'vtter forth th'anguish of his hart' – and the mistress's unequivocal refusal to listen, imbues the metaphor with more spiritual urgency. Spenser implicitly contrasts the mistress's unwillingness to hear, with God, who should really be the audience of 'the piteous passion of his dying smart'. With this contrast in mind, we might read the mistress's eagerness to unjustly burn things, as a distortion of the final judgement —the fire imagery recalling the 'second death' of the damned in 'the lake of fire'.[124] The eschatological resonance is certainly reinforced by the couplet's claims for the poem's immortality - 'Yet liue for ever, though against her will' (l.13) - splitting apart the imagined manuscript read and destroyed by the mistress, and the printed poem read by the readers. In keeping with the martyr narrative, the speaker shifts from the unjust treatment of his petition

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[123] *Hire,* n, sense 2, 'Payment contracted to be made for personal service; wages'; sense 3, '*figurative*. Reward, recompense, payment'; sense 4, 'The action of hiring or fact of being hired.
[124] Revelation 20.14 (Geneva).

at the hands of a secular judgement, with eternal life – replicating the martyr's mortal suffering and spiritual glory. In Sonnet XLIX the speaker will finally explicitly contrast the cruel judgement of the mistress with the judgement of God.

Before moving on to Sonnet XLIX, however, it is worth noting the political ambiguity of Sonnet XLVIII. The almost mock-epic disproportion between the tenor of the destroyed poem, and the vehicles of secular execution and judgement, familiarly invites the reader not to take the speaker's representation of his mistress's cruelty too seriously. Johnson barely engages with the secular vehicles beyond acknowledging the metaphor of burning heretics. Seeing the courtly metaphor simply as 'the Petrarchan exaggeration of a lady's cruelty', he prefers to prioritise the poem's 'claim for the artist's immortalising ability'.[125] Such dismissal of the main body of the sonnet neglects the political potential of such specific metaphor: the poem's conceit voices some anxiety or criticism about hasty secular execution. The second quatrain seems to accept corporal punishment - burning is 'ordayned' for 'heresy' - but the sonnet as a whole qualifies violent justice. When is it '*too* cruel' [emphasis mine]? When is pain 'uniust'? These concerns are particularly connected to petition: there is concern for when petitioners are simply not listened to, when secular power will simply 'not hear'.

In Sonnet XLIX, the speaker appeals to the mistress as if she is a secular power, finally realising the recurrent contrast throughout the sequence between the mistress and God. This conclusion is not the climactic realisation the sonnet builds

[125] Johnson (1990): 152.

up to, but is dropped in the first quatrain, setting up a new phase of the speaker's thinking:

> Fayre cruell, why are ye so fierce and cruell?
> Is it because your eyes haue powre to kill?
> then know, that mercy is the mighties jewell,
> and greater glory think to saue, then spill.
> (Sonnet XLIX, ll.1-4)

The first two lines initially seem to embark on a familiar diatribe. The first line uses the same style of empty repetition as Sonnet XVIII – the 'fayre cruell' is tautologically 'cruell'. Not only is the line tautological, but it is also metrically awkward. It is difficult to scan because it is unclear whether 'cruell' should be pronounced as a disyllable – making the line hypermetric - or a monosyllable – leaving the line short. Matters are complicated even more, by the further variable of 'why are' which could be elided — 'why're'. It seems likely this is a deliberately clumsy line, both for its tautology and its metre. The epithet 'cruel' echoes the numerous opening 'fayre eyes' and 'fayre proud' with which the speaker has bombarded the mistress throughout the sequence.[126] The second question (l.2) repeats his favourite theme of the mistress's death-doing-eyes, preparing the tired reader for another round of metaphorical massacre.[127]

This seemingly inevitable path is diverted, however, by the conjunction 'then know'. And without warning, the speaker himself finally vocalises the comparison the reader has been waiting for — 'that mercy is the mighties jewell' (l.3). Brooks-

[126] 'Fayre eyes' (Sonnet VII, l.1); 'Faire proud' (Sonnet XXVII, l.1). The address is so frequent it became O.B. Hardison Junior's name for the alternating pattern between 'donna angelicata' and the 'cruel fayre'. See O.B. Hardison Junior, '"Amoretti" and the "Dolce Stil Novo"', *ELR,* Vol. 2, No. 2 (Spring 1972), pp.208-216: 210.
[127] See for example: Sonnet VII; Sonnet X; Sonnet XII; Sonnet XXIIII.

Davies identifies Elyot's *Book of the Governor* as a likely source, and helpfully nuances the immediate impact of 'mighties' with the reminder that it can refer to secular, as well as divine, power.[128] Still, Davies' qualification - '*But possibly* "the Almighty's" is intended' [emphasis mine] - misses the emphasis of the comparison.[129] Johnson likewise notes that this is the first discussion of mercy, rather than injustice, however he does not discuss that it is not just mercy, but God's mercy.[130]

The imagery of spilt blood 'and greater glory think to saue, then spill' looks back to the metaphor of Sonnet XX: it recalls the monarchical 'Lyon or Lyonesse' that 'shames not' to be 'with guiltlesse bloode defylde' (Sonnet XX, ll.10-11). The 'greater glory' directly echoes and contrasts with how the mistress in Sonnet XX 'taketh glory in her cruelnesse'. The alternative divine mercy which was clear (if not explicitly stated) in Sonnet XX - with the Christological presence of the 'lamb' and 'guiltlesse blood' - seems to have finally occurred to the speaker himself now, who recognises that 'mercy is the mighties jewell'. The rhyme even directly contrasts the 'jewell' of God's mercy with the supposedly 'cruell' mistress. Another reason why this line so clearly seems to evoke the mercy of God, is that the speaker's argument is a classic technique used in petitions to a secular power, and most especially a monarch: to remind the addressee of the mercy of God and encourage them to follow the divine example in their judgement.[131] We have seen the tactic at work in Appleyard's

[128] Brooks-Davies (1995): 252.
[129] Brooks-Davies (1995): 252.
[130] Johnson (1990): 155.
[131] It is perhaps most famously expressed by Portia: mercy 'Tis mightiest in the mightiest. It becomes/The thronèd monarch better than his crown'. William Shakespeare, *The Merchant of Venice,* IV.i., ll.183-184 in *The Norton Shakespeare,* eds Stephen Greenblatt, Walter Cohen, Jean E.Howard and Katherine Eisaman Maus, London: W.W.Norton, 1997.

petition. So here, the speaker appeals to the mistress as a queen, reminding her of divine - and, by derivation, regal - clemency.

In the ensuing quatrains, the speaker returns to the supplication tableau of petitioner prostrated before a monarch:

> But if it be your pleasure and proud will,
> To shew the powre of your imperious eyes:
> Then not on him that neuer thought you ill,
> But bend your force against your enemyes.
> Let them feele th'utmost of your crueltyes,
> And kill with looks, as Cockatrices doo:
> But him that at your footstoole humbled lies,
> With mercifull regard, give mercy to.
> (Sonnet XLIX, ll.5-12)

The speaker spins two strands of extended metaphor – love as battle, and courtly supplication. Like Sonnet 48, the speaker seems to condone state violence – 'bend your force against your enemyes'. They deserve 'th'utmost of your crueltyes'; a statement aligned with Irenius's thinking. This complicates the vehicles we have had in Sonnets X, Sonnet XII and Sonnet XIV, where the speaker used martial metaphor to complain about his unfair treatment at the hands of the mistress.[132] When he is not the tenor of such a vehicle, the violence appears perfectly justified, and is eagerly invited with no holds barred — she should perform her 'utmost…crueltyes'. At the volta, the speaker re-introduces the familiar supplication tableau: 'But him that at your footstoole humbled lies,/With mercifull regard, give mercy to'. In Sonnet XX, we saw the combination of courtly and martial imagery. Here again, the speaker more explicitly uses the two strands of metaphor to create the same sense of a monarch inflicting martial violence upon her own supplicating courtier. This is

[132] See above: pp.73-75; pp.82-83.

heightened by the fact this sonnet is preceded by Sonnet XLVIII, with its metaphorical narrative of a courtly petitioner unjustly despatched as a heretic. The rhyme between 'crueltyes' and 'lies' connects the mistress's violence against her 'enemyes' with the prostrate petitioner who 'humbled lies' — as if violence is about to be visited upon him.

The poem ends with a final petition for mercy: 'with mercifull regard, give mercy to'. This emphasis upon mercy rings differently, however, from the speaker's previous petitions, now that romantic mercy has been distinguished from God's mercy. The shift opens the way for a flurry of similar comparisons which punctuate the build-up to the Easter Sunday sonnet. Sonnet LIII similarly concludes, 'But mercy doth with beautie best agree,/as in theyr maker ye them best may see' (Sonnet LIII, ll.13-14), no longer with any ambiguity about who the 'maker' is. Similarly, Sonnet LV concludes, 'Then sith to heauen ye are lykened the best,/ be lyke in mercy as in all the rest' (Sonnet LV, ll.13-14). These are still petitions for romantic mercy, but romantic salvation is 'likened' to divine salvation, not conflated with it. God is the superlative example – 'in theyr maker ye them *best* may see'.

The consequences of misdirected petition

By Sonnet LVI, however, it appears that the petitions of Sonnet XLIX, Sonnet LIII, and Sonnet LV have not gone down well, and the speaker combines his favourite old metaphors in another vitriolic rant against the lady's cruelty. The copious union of several of the speaker's key images (including big cats, prostration, and storms) exposes his continued flawed thinking, and logical coherence is again lost. With the

violence of this imagery, however, Spenser also demonstrates the detrimental effects of misdirected petition. Again, the speaker fails to find the introspection and sense of responsibility required of true petitionary penitence.

In the first two quatrains of Sonnet LVI, the speaker shifts from presenting the mistress as tiger to a storm — the connection between the two similes seemingly being the ability to knock things over:

> Fayre ye be sure, but cruell and vnkind,
> As is a Tygre that with greedinesse
> Hunts after bloud, when he by chance doth find
> A feeble beast, doth felly him oppresse.
> Fayre ye be sure but proud and pitilesse,
> As is a storme, that all things doth prostrate:
> Finding a tree alone all comfortlesse,
> Beats on it strongly it to ruinate.
> (Sonnet LVI, ll.1-8)

Like the hollow repetition of Sonnet XVIII, the speaker here punctuates his rant with phrasal repetition of 'Fayre ye be sure' (ll. 1, 5). Rather than using the progress in his thinking made in Sonnet XLIX to distinguish between the mistress and God, the speaker instead seems to use his newfound realisation that 'mercy doth with beautie best agree' (Sonnet LIII, l.13) to berate the mistress for the cruelty of exercising her own free will. With the same confusing metaphor as Sonnet XX, the mistress's lack of romantic interest is distorted into a metaphor of leonine blood sports. Chaste refusal becomes 'greedinesse' for 'bloud'. The speaker's righteous indignation is rather punctured by the ludicrous polyptoton on 'felling' the feeble beast, and the mistress's 'felly' rage.

The tiger-mistress knocking her victims flat transforms in the second quatrain to a violent she-storm. As the speaker tries out a new simile, the chance encounter of

the hunt in the first quatrain - 'when he *by chance* doth find/a feeble beast' [emphasis mine] – turns into a targeted campaign. The storm maliciously singles out its victim: 'finding a tree alone all comfortlesse,/beats on it strongly, it to ruinate'. Spenser highlights the distortion of the speaker's thinking with the acknowledgement just a line before that in fact the storm '*all* things doth prostrate'. In the heights of his rage, the speaker adapts his simile to best vilify his mistress. Similarly, the awkward, un-necessary repetition of the pronoun 'beats on *it* strongly *it* to ruinate' [emphasis mine] perhaps syntactically reflects the ugly contortions of the speaker's thinking.

The image of prostration also jars with the previous images in the sequence which it recalls. The speaker frequently describes his efforts to prostrate himself ever lower. He is the active subject of 'I… doe myne humbled hart before her poure' (Sonnet XX, ll.1-2), or 'him that at your footstool humbled lies' (Sonnet XLIX, l.11). Here, however, rather than acknowledge that he actively chooses to petition his mistress, he uses the metaphor to completely divest himself of agency. The mistress becomes the subject, herself violently enforcing prostration — 'a storme, that all things doth prostrate'. Rather than acknowledging that he is petitioning the wrong source for salvation, the speaker transforms himself into oppressed prey, or a storm-struck tree, forced to the ground by a greater, malevolent power. Likewise, whereas in the stormy Sonnet XXXIIII, the speaker finally acknowledges that the source of the darkness keeping him from the light is *his own* 'cloudy grief', in Sonnet LVI he resists this introspection, making the external mistress the destructive storm which is the force of his discontent.

The connection between the second and third quatrain appears to be the destructive power of the storm:

> Fayre ye be sure, but hard and obstinate,
> as is a rocke amidst the raging floods:
> gaynst which a ship of succour desolate,
> doth suffer wreck both of her selfe and goods
> (Sonnet LVI, ll.9-12)

The volta does bring a sort of logical change of direction: the metaphorical accusations change from the wilful malice of the 'cruell and vnkind' tiger, to the 'proud and pititlesse' storm, to the more resistant 'hard and obstinate' rock. Logically, however, for the reader it is difficult to follow how an inert rock could be used to describe the same behaviour as a hunting tiger. The sea-scene again recalls the metaphor of Sonnet XXXIIII — except it is brutally clear there is nothing but bad times ahead for the little ship. This shared imagery demonstrates again how the speaker lashes out, asserting blame externally, rather than reflecting internally. The mistress has been demoted from untrustworthy *Stella Maris* to obstinate rock. Given the speaker's insult two sonnets earlier that the mistress is 'no woman, but a senceless stone', Spenser may also be having a little Protestant dig at Marian idolatry here.[133] McCabe glosses the etymological pun that Spenser makes on 'obstinate' and *obstare* – to stand in the way.[134] Whilst, from the speaker's perspective, the mistress is obstinate in her refusal to succumb to his advances, this pun might cause us to question who is getting in the way of what? The connotations of 'succour' again

[133] Hackett similarly reads an idolatry joke in Barnabe Barnes' 'Ode 3' of *Parthenophil*: 'she remains unresponsive "as ... a stonie rocke," a joke about the fact that this is after all only a statue of the Virgin, and, simultaneously, a metaphorical merging of that statue with his stonily unyielding mistress'. Helen Hackett, 'The Art of Blasphemy? Interfusions of the Erotic and the Sacred in the Poetry of Donne, Barnes and Constable', *Renaissance and Reformation/Renaissance and Réforme*, Vol.28. No.3, (2004), pp.27-54: 38.
[134] McCabe (1999): 685.

reaches out for a wider divine source, as they did in Sonnet II; 'of succour desolate', however, reinforces the hopelessness of the speaker's misdirected quasi-Marian petitions. Spenser, here, perhaps also demonstrates the spiritual detriment of misdirected petition. Whilst it is entirely self-inflicted, the speaker is violently destroying himself in the process: his ship 'doth suffer wreck both of her selfe and goods.'

The sonnet's bathetic concluding couplet - like Sonnet XVIII - ends with direct, hollow repetition of the poem's key words:

> That ship, that tree, and that same beast am I,
> Whom ye doe wreck, doe ruine, and destroy.
> (Sonnet XLVI, ll.13-14)

The speaker un-necessarily hammers out the tenor and vehicle of his metaphor, and does so with parallel syntax so schematic (ship/wreck, tree/ruine, beast/destroy) as to be almost embarrassing. Rather than seeking any kind of escape from the pattern, any final change in direction to break the cycle, the sonnet's couplet does nothing but flatly restate its own metaphors. Johnson suggests that the poem as a whole only serves to '[ask] the reader to recollect the sequence's major similes, metaphors, adjectives and motifs', and so Johnson himself concomitantly reduces the sonnet to a literal lineated list of references.[135] The sonnet's irresolution is reflected in the fracture of the form: the neatly interchanging rhyme scheme of the familiar three quatrains, has been leading us up to the expected couplet, but the final word 'destroy' satisfyingly lays waste to the anticipated formal resolution.

[135] Johnson (1990): 165.

This final violent summary recalls an earlier sonnet in the sequence, XXXII, in which the speaker similarly describes the violent cycle of his misdirected petitions to the mistress. There he complains of the failure of 'all the playnts and prayers, with which I/doe beat on the an'duyle of her stubberne wit' (ll.7-8). This barrage of misdirected prayer locks speaker and mistress in a cycle of fruitless enmity worthy of a Loony Tunes duo, as her pride 'harder grows the harder she is smit' (l.11).[136] In Sonnet XLVI Spenser undermines and mocks such accusations against the mistress in the sequence, but the protracted violent cycle demonstrates the spiritual detriment of such misdirected hammering petition.

The agency of suing for political and theological grace

To conclude, I will use points of connection and contrast between Sonnet LXVII and two moments in *A View,* to consider the tensions between the secular and spiritual senses of petition which I have traced through the sequence. It may seem inevitable to close this chapter on Sonnet LXVIII: the sonnet is a direction petition to God, which has been well established to stylistically imitate the Collects in the Book of Common Prayer, making it a very attractive candidate for this thesis.[137] It is partly because Sonnet LXVIII is the sonnet which has already been most clearly recognised

[136] *Amoretti* 32.

[137] 'That the Easter sonnet, "Most glorious Lord of life that on this day" (68), echoes the style of the Collects in the Book of Common Prayer has been recognized ever since Noble's review in 1880; for example, its syntactic pattern — name-of-God + relative-clause + " grant that we " + petition — is also the syntactic pattern of about half of the Collects.' Carol Kaske, 'Another Liturgical Dimension of Amoretti 68', *Notes and Queries*, Vol.24, No.6, (1977), pp.518-519: 519.

as a petition that I turn my attention elsewhere. Sonnet LXVII speaks more to the questions of political submission which this chapter has been focused on.

The first two quatrains of the sonnet recall the wearisome process of misdirected petition we saw climatically summarised in Sonnet XLVI:

> Lyke as a huntsman after weary chace,
> Seeing the game from him escapt way,
> Sits downe to rest him in some shady place,
> with panting hounds beguiled of their pray:
> So after long pursuit and vain assay,
> When I all weary had the chace forsooke,
> The gentle deer returned the self-same way,
> Thinking to quench her thirst at the next brooke.
> (Sonnet LXVII, ll.1-8)

The metaphor of the tired hunter – present of course in the Petrarchan source – also recalls the hunting metaphor we have seen throughout the sequence.[138] The speaker's vocabulary specifically recalls moments in the sequence's exhausting cycle. 'Weary' reminds us that back in Sonnet XI the speaker was already exhausted by petition before the sequence had barely begun. Despite his wasted efforts to 'seeke and sew for peace', 'the *weary* war reneweth' [emphasis mine] (Sonnet XI, ll.1-4). The speaker's summary of his 'vain assay' also links to the dramatic episode of vain supplication in Sonnet XX, 'In *vaine* I seeke and sew to her for grace' (l.1, emphasis mine). Although Sonnet LXVII does not use explicit metaphor of petition, as we have seen, petition is a key part of the 'weary chace'. The absence of the petition which normally accompanies this metaphor is striking.

[138] Johnson (1990): 187.

At various points in the sequence the speaker claims to be exhausted by the destructive pattern.[139] In Sonnet LVII, the speaker uses the metaphor of martial supplication: 'Sweet warrior when shall I haue peace with you?/High time it is, this warre now ended were:/Which I no more can endure to sue' (ll.1-3). For the reader it has been clear for a long time that 'this warre' should be wrapped up, and by Sonnet XLVI Spenser makes it clear the speaker really can 'no more… endure to sue'. This is no bad thing. In Sonnet XXXIIII the speaker's failure to petition was frustratingly symptomatic of his despair. Here, however, rather than continuing to 'wander' in 'carefull comfortlesse[ness]', the speaker instead submits to 'rest'. His recognition of his weariness, and the futility of the cycle, however, is not despair.[140] The pause in the clearing has a different charge to his former self-pity, even before the crucial entrance of the deer. At last, the speaker finally extricates himself from the destructive cycle of misdirected, and false, petition. As Johnson describes, 'The pivotal transitus occurs only after the game has been given up as lost, only after the hunter poet has abandoned the long pursuit'.[141]

Anne Lake Prescott has extensively and compellingly outlined a variety of biblical and exegetical sources for the deer.[142] One stands out especially when considering petition: the French reformer, Queen Marguerite of Navarre, in the sixth lyric of her *Chansons Spirituelles,* uses the deer and the hunter as a parable for salvation by faith alone. A hunter is advised that his deer will not be caught by

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[139] See for example Sonnet XI; Sonnet XII; Sonnet XXV; Sonnet XXVI.
[140] Johnson even reads this 'rest' as a parallel to Christ being laid to rest on Good Friday. Johnson (1990): 194. There could also be an echo here of Genesis 18.4: 'rest yourselves under the tree.' Genesis 18.4 (Geneva).
[141] Johnson (1990): 189.
[142] Anne Lake Prescott, 'The Thirsty Deer and the Lord of Life: Some Contexts for Amoretti 67-70', *Spenser Studies,* Vol.VI, (1986), pp.33-77.

hounds or weapons, but will come to him of its own accord.[143] Johnson similarly reads the poem as a metaphor for grace: 'try as one might to obtain grace it only comes freely, as a gift, not as a reward for our efforts'.[144] Petition plays a role in this lesson: Spenser's connection between the speaker's 'vain assay', and the speaker suing in vain for grace in Sonnet XX, exposes his attempts to use petition as a battering ram throughout the sequence. Just as repeatedly beating the mistress, like an 'an'duyle', with romantic petitions is not likely to win her affection, neither, theologically can grace be sued for by endlessly barraging God with petitions. As Johnson notes of the 'incessant battery' of Sonnet XIIII: 'one does not come to grace by storming a church'.[145] As will become even more clear in Chapter Three, although a petition is a prayer of request, what underlies a theologically sound petition is total submission to God's will. The speaker's reflective 'rest' is in fact a far better position from which to pursue 'grace' then a 'weary chace'. This is a model which the mistress herself has embodied throughout the sequence — as for example in Sonnet XIII, where, appropriately for Lent, she quietly meditates on mortality, and 'how she to heauen she may clime' (Sonnet XIII, l.10). Just as Protestantism tried to transform the Virgin Mary from a mediatrix to a model of human piety, Spenser casting the mistress as the thirsty deer of Psalm 42, reminds us that she is herself a mortal, who also needs grace, and should not be petitioned for it.[146]

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[143] Lake Prescott (1986): pp.44-47.
[144] Johnson (1990): 191.
[145] Johnson (1990): 97.
[146] Johnson likewise reads Sonnet XIII as a moment when 'he discerns the lady not as a saint but as a woman'. Johnson (1990): 94.

As the 'gentle deare [returns] the selfe-same way' Spenser introduces a new, mutual, power dynamic, which contrasts with the sequence's violent scenes of petition, re-enforcing the importance of free will. The penultimate quatrain reverses the opening image of the entire sequence. Whereas in Sonnet I, the speaker's poem is held 'in loues soft bands,/ lyke captiues trembling at the victor's sight' (Sonnet I, ll.3-4), in Sonnet LXVII we find a tender bondage of betrothal: 'till I in hand her yet half trembling tooke,/and with her owne goodwill hir fyrmely tyde' (ll.13-14).[147] This is the first image in Sonnet I - the victor turned trembling captive – however, from the syntax, it is unclear whether 'half trembling' describes the mistress herself, or the speaker. Just as the loop represents the bond of marriage, so the line's ambiguous syntax imbues the speaker and mistress in one mind and body.[148] Spenser is at pains to enforce the mutuality of this (ultimately) marital submission: whilst the speaker 'fyrmely tye[s]' his mistress, the rope itself is 'her owne goodwill'. Likewise, the couplet re-asserts that she is 'with her owne wil beguyled'. The mistress tied 'with her owne goodwill' diffuses the fraught power dynamics of petition we have seen throughout the sequence. Not only are the roles reversed as the supposed bloodthirsty tiger transforms into a biblical Bambi, but the petition tableau of prostrate suppliant before oppressive power is softened into an anticipation of the

[147] Johnson also observes the connection between hands and tying in Sonnet I and Sonnet LXVII. Johnson (1990): 66. Fleming argues further that 'the lady deconstructs captivity'. Fleming, (2001): 143. Although he later qualifies this reading 'That the syntax of this poem also makes the "tender deare" "lyke as a huntsman" shows only that Spenser is firmly in control of these wish-fulfillment contents.' Fleming (2001): pp.151-152.

[148] Johnson (1990): 187. Johnson also similarly reads 'with mylder looke' as potentially referring to both the mistress and the speaker. Johnson (1990): 189.

'mutual benevolence' of marriage.[149] Johnson notes the liturgical significance of the poem's timing, which diffuses the power struggle of the sequence:

> In the Church Calendar, Easter Even… [marks] the transitus from death to life, from the old being to the new, from slavery to freedom. … In the sonnet… the old captivity imagery assumes new meaning, the old beguilement leads to new winning, and "yielding" itself leads to victory.[150]

Johnson, like most critics, deems Sonnet LXVII as 'one of the most important in the narrative structure' of the entire sequence.[151] It is the moment where, after furiously chasing meaning through the sequence, Spenser seems to come demurely to us - as the deer does to the speaker - and to lay this satisfying resolution in our hands. In terms of the spiritual structure of the sequence, it is a dazzling moment. And yet, whilst the sonnet delivers an astonishing spiritual resolution to a frustrating cycle of petition in the sequence, the anxieties raised by the sequence's political vehicles, are not so willingly 'tied' by the loop of Protestant marriage.[152] This is illuminated by the sonnet's connections to two passages in *A View.*

The language of mutual, agentive submission in Sonnet LXVII aligns with Irenius's resolution to Eudoxus's increasingly pressured questions about religion, which Irenius spends a good deal of *A View* deftly avoiding:

> in planting of religion, thus much is needefull to be observed, that it bee not sought forcibly to bee impressed into them with terrour and sharpe penalties, as now is the manner, but rather delivered and intimated with mildenesse

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[149] 'The wife, her duty is… to give him mutual benevolence'. John Dod and Robert Cleaver, *A Godlie Forme of Householde Government,* London: 1598, in Lena Cowen Orlin *Elizabethan Households: An Anthology,* Washington: The Folger Shakespeare Library, 1995: 25.
[150] Johnson (1990): 190.
[151] Johnson (1990): 187.
[152] Sanchez resists the dominant critical narrative of mutual yielding, arguing that the sequence 'desexualises legitimate Protestant copulation, on the one hand, and makes it sound a bit like rape, on the other.' Sanchez (2012): 16. Fleming also notes that the captivity discourse 'is elided, not resolved, when the poet finds his wishes of love so suddenly fulfilled'. Fleming (2001): 156. Bach argues that the sonnet reverses, or rights, the male submission of Sonnet I, noting that 'the victory gains its value from the willingness, the assent of its victim.' Bach (2000): 55.

> and gentlenesse, so as it may not be hated before it be understood, and their Professors despised and rejected. And therefore it is expedient that some discreete Ministers of their owne country-men, bee first sent over amongst them, which by their meeke perswasions and instructions, as also by their sober lives and conversations, may draw them first to understand, and afterwards to imbrace, the doctrine of their salvation.[153]

The Protestant conversion of the Irish should be mild, gentle and meek, just as 'the *gentle* deer' comes with 'mylder' look, to the hunter of her own free will, after he has stopped violently chasing her. The Irish are imagined coming to 'imbrace' the doctrine of their salvation, like the mistress in gently 'with her owne goodwill…fyrmely tyde'. There is similar emphasis upon agency. The aim of religious conversion should be for the free 'imbrace' of grace — although this is achieved with the help of the 'meeke perswasions' of converted Irish priests. The transaction of request requires the co-operation of these two un-coerced parties.

Irenius also tries to awkwardly envisage a similar model of voluntary yielding when describing the ideal Irish petition to Elizabeth 'for grace':

> I wish that there bee a generall proclamation made, that whosoever out-lawes will freely come in, and submit themselves to her Majesty's mercy, shall have liberty so to doe, where they shall either finde the grace that they desire or have leave to returne againe in safety; upon which it is likely that so many as will survive, will come in to sue for grace, of which who so are thought meet for subjection, and fit to be brought to good, may be received, or else all of them; (for I thinke that all wilbe but a very few;) upon a condition and assurance that they will submit themselves absolutely to her Maiesties ordinance for them, by which they shall be assured of life and libertie, and be onely tyed to such conditions as shall be thought by her meet for constraining them ever after in due obedience. To the which conditions I nothing doubt, but they will all most readily, and upon their knees submit themselves, by the proofe of that which I have seene in Mounster. For in that case who will not accept almost of any conditions, rather than dye of hunger and miserie?[154]

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[153] Spenser, *A View:* 153.
[154] Spenser, *A View:* pp.118-119.

On the one hand, Irenius emphasises the people's freedom to submit: those who shall 'freely come in' shall 'have the liberty' to submit themselves to Elizabeth's mercy. They may 'sue for grace'. Unlike Mercilla's grace, however, this grace is not 'Indifferent': it is only available to those 'who so are thought fit for subjection, and fit to be brought to good'. In Sonnet LXVII, grace comes to the speaker only after he has left up the 'weary chace'. Here, however, Irenius's cheery assurance that 'I nothing doubt, but they will all most readily, and upon their knees submit themselves' comes to modern readers with the reminder of the terrible human cost which has brought them to their knees: 'who will not accept almost of any conditions, rather than dye of hunger and miserie?' As he grimly assures Eudoxus, this is 'by the proofe of that which I have seene in Mounster'. Irenius's earlier description of crafty false submission echoes the exhausted speaker in Sonnet LXVII: 'when they are wearye with warrs and broughte downe to extreame wretchednes then they creepe a little perhaps and sue for grace.' Throughout the *Amoretti*, we have seen an exhausting battle in which the speaker violently assails his mistress with petitions and claims to be hit with excessively violent retaliation. Only when he retreats from 'the weary wars' does the cycle end, with grace bestowed by a mutually sought union. Crucially, in the *Amoretti,* however, the battle is figurative and, furthermore, self-inflicted. The narrative of the *Amoretti* is paralleled in *A View,* and the political concerns of *A View* are reflected in the political vehicles of the *Amoretti.* As Bach states 'while Petrarch and his continental and English followers use war as a trope for love, the *Amoretti* uses love as a trope for war'.[155]

[155] Bach (2000): 37.

In *A View,* however, whilst Spenser tries to create the same narrative of mutual yielding, it is abundantly clear that political grace is only achieved by the violent submission of one side. The passage is a fantasy of agency: whilst Irenius imagines how the Irish will 'on their knees submit themselves', the image of the Irish bought to their knees by war and famine aligns more to the speaker's accusation of the violent storm which 'all things doth prostrate' (Sonnet LVI, l.6), then in the idealised gentle mutual yielding of Sonnet LXVII. Bach similarly reads the *Amoretti* as a 'fantasy' of agentive submission: 'bloody, cruel captivity in treason is safe in poetry with the knowledge that the beloved will, like the fantasy Ireland Irenius projects, willingly and happily submit'.[156] In colonial reality, however, politically grace *is* won by the hunt, by long pursuit, and 'assay' which is not in vain.

Throughout the *Amoretti*, Spenser exploits the dual senses of political and spiritual petition, delighting in such shocking clashes as Sonnet XX. The metaphors the speaker uses to vilify the mistress are comically hyperbolic, and yet the specificity of the vehicles often gives them a life of their own. Gibbs has argued that 'both Spenser's and Shakespeare's personae attempt in several sonnets to camouflage something which is of concern to them, with a show of logic or argument about something else'.[157] The extremely specific and often surreally detached vehicles of the *Amoretti* return to the same questions of petition, mercy, and submission which Eudoxus is slowly talked out of in *A View.* Perhaps this forms part of the speaker's unreliability: the anxieties we see as legitimate, may appear politically suspect to an early modern reader of Irenian persuasion. Even the speaker

[156] Bach (2000): 57.
[157] Gibbs (1990): 106.

himself in Sonnet XLIX suggests that 'th'utmost of your crueltyes' is right and just for the 'enemeys' of a monarch.

Yet, even closer to the courtly home than Ireland, the distorted metaphors of petition throughout the sequence represent secular petition as a merciless process. Sonnet XX and XLVIII present the extremes of petitioning a ruler who is not only keener to wield the sword of justice than to offer mercy, but won't even listen to a petitioner in the first place. Walter Lim suggests that 'Spenser is never completely at ease with the concept and implications of mercy'.[158] Mercy is an uneasy concept in the *Amoretti* because Spenser teases apart the conflicting models of secular and divine mercy. Gibbs, arguing that the speaker is blasphemous, states that:

> There are times… when Spenser's lover uses religious language with a sharper edge than usual, times when he challenges the proprieties and appears to be moving outside the acceptable bounds of the interchange of vocabularies.[159]

Spenser does '[move] outside the acceptable bounds of the interchange of vocabularies'. Perhaps, the 'sharper edge' Gibbs identifies is not simply the boundary between the romantic and the religious, but also the political; the phrase 'sharper edge' is itself is an uncanny echo of the 'sharpe… punishment' *A View* insists upon.[160] Spenser sees the creative potential of the overlap between secular and spiritual petition: he uses his metaphor to expose the flaws of courtly petition,

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[158] Walter Lim, 'Figuring Justice: Imperial Ideology and the Discourse of Colonialism in Book V of the Faerie Queene and A View', *Renaissance & Reformation,* Vol.19, (1995), pp.45-70: 46.
[159] Gibbs (1990): 124.
[160] Spenser, *A View*: 92. 'Sharpe' is one of Irenius's favourite and most unsettlingly adjectives, tracing a trajectory of increasing violence: 'sharpe penalties'; 'sharpe censures'; 'sharpely disciplined'; 'sharpe penalties and punishment'; 'sharpe execution'. Spenser, *A View:* pp.56; 70; 76; 92; 104.

and to articulate the difference between suing for grace from God, and from a secular power.

CHAPTER THREE

'THESE ARE PETITIONS, AND NOT HYMNS': PETITION, MEDIATION AND ACCESS IN JOHN DONNE'S VERSE LETTERS AND THE *DEVOTIONS UPON EMERGENT OCCASIONS*

John Donne frequently and clearly makes the comparison, central to this project, between secular and spiritual petition. In a letter to Henry Goodere, Donne demonstrates that the negotiation of hierarchy is an important similarity between the two:

> The Roman profession seems… to bring us nearer heaven; but then that carries heaven farther from us, by making us pass so many Courts, and Offices of Saints in this life, in all our petitions, and lying in painful prison in the next [1]

The letter also asserts the corruption and the authenticity of both Catholicism and Puritanism: 'The channels of Gods mercies run through both fields; and they are sister teats of his graces, yet both diseased and infected, but not both alike.'[2] In his elaboration of the flaws of Catholicism, Donne uses the frustration of courtly petition as a metaphor to criticise Catholic intercession. Donne puns on the multiple senses of 'office' as 'a liturgy devoted to a particular individual', office as 'A service or kindness done', and office as 'a minister of state, or of a party forming a government'.[3] Donne argues that just as courtiers are prevented access to the king by the etiquette of court intercession, so Catholic saintly intercession keeps man at a distance from God.

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[1] John Donne, *Letters of Several Persons of Honour: written by John Donne sometime Dean of Saint Pauls*, London: Fletcher, 1651: 102. Hereafter *Letters,* (1651). Donne reverses tenor and vehicle in another letter, using Catholic intercession to describe the mis-use of court meditation: 'If it be done, I see not how I can admit that circuit of sending them to you, to be sent hither; that seems a kinde of praying to Saints, to whom God must tell them first, that such a man prays to them to pray for him' *Letters,* (1651): 181.

[2] Donne, *Letters,* (1651): 102.

[3] *Office,* n., sense 1, sense 2b and sense 5. www.oed.com [date accessed 23/10/2020].

Donne's courtly frustration is expressed in noticeably spatial terms: man would be bought 'nearer' heaven, but heaven is carried away. Donne maps a series of physical and bureaucratic obstacles 'making us pass so many courts'. The anxiety of isolation from court is even likened to the 'painful prison' of purgatory. Donne's use of 'carries' also introduces a material sense of the petition as letter: secular petitions are physically carried across space to make connections between monarchs, patrons and their clients, but in so doing they paradoxically '[carry] heaven further from us'. Donne argues that through their enforced hierarchies, both secular and Catholic intercession promise proximity and access, but deliver only distance and deferral.

Throughout his career, from desperately petitioning his enraged father-in-law George More from the Fleet, to petitioning Robert Carr by letter, Donne was experienced in the delicate, tactical art of the secular petition.[4] In this chapter's titular quotation, Donne takes pains to specify his verse letter should be read as a petition. The verse letters' critical history has been marked by both discomfort, and defence of, their blatant self-interest, feeding into the wider critical struggles over Donne as a mercenary careerist.[5] Consequently, what the verse letters teach us about

[4] 'Throughout this period Donne was under the impression that in approaching Carr (as he told another intermediary, his friend Sir Robert Ker), "I should not come nearer [Carr's] presence then by a letter"…; this stricture limited Donne's ability to discuss with Carr, except through the equivocal 'conveyance' of Letters, his commitment to his resolution.' Jeanne Shami, 'Donne's Decision to Take Orders', in *The Oxford Handbook of John Donne*, eds Dennis Flynn, M. Thomas Hester, and Jeanne Shami, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011: 531.

[5] Hugh Adlington has argued that Carey's and Bald's accounts of Donne's ambition were 'reiterating, in the lexicon of late twentieth-century psychology, a long-standing critical axiom that runs through the history of Donne's reception' dating back to Donne's post-Romantic reception in the late eighteenth and earlier nineteenth century. Hugh Adlington, ''Do Donne's writings express his desperate ambition?' in *The Oxford Handbook of John Donne* eds Dennis Flynn, M. Thomas Hester, and Jeanne Shami, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011: 719.

the ubiquitous early modern art of petition itself has been overlooked. Hugh Adlington has encouraged critics to follow the example of Brent Nelson in paying 'attention to the remarks of Donne himself on earthly and spiritual forms of courtship and ambition.'[6] This chapter similarly seeks to examine the comparison Donne so frequently made himself between petitioning secular and divine powers.

John Donne's verse letters to his female patrons and his *Devotions Upon Emergent Occasions*, although only occasionally considered together, illuminate one another because both are fundamentally conceived through the arts of petitionary discourse.[7] The verse letters draw on religious imagery to petition their female patrons; the *Devotions* are meditations, expostulations and prayers addressed to God, which openly explore both the nature of prayer itself, and the relationship between secular and spiritual petition. The text itself was dedicated to a royal patron, Prince Charles, and was sent to James' daughter, the Queen of Bohemia, Elizabeth Stuart.[8] The pairing of the verse letters and the *Devotions* is therefore ripe for an exploration both of Donne's comparisons of religious and secular petition, and his own petitionary strategies. Schoenfeldt has written on Donne and Herbert's 'poetry of

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[6] Adlington (2011): 728. Brent Nelson, *Holy Ambition: Rhetoric, Courtship, and Devotion in the Sermons of John Donne,* Tempe: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2005.

[7] Margaret Mauer briefly puts the two in company as 'occasional' texts: 'Generic considerations render more prominent Donne's art in making particular circumstances, what he called 'emergent occasions', the inspiration of poetical invention. Considered this way, Donne's Verse Letters stand between the lyric poetry, on which his reputation still largely rests and none of which he published, and the great occasional writings that he did publish, notably the Anniversaries, Devotions upon Emergent Occasions, and his publicly delivered Sermons'. Margaret Maurer, 'The Verse Letter' in *The Oxford Handbook of John Donne,* eds Dennis Flynn, M. Thomas Hester, and Jeanne Shami, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011: 206. Margret Fetzner compares the verse letters and The *Devotions* to distinguish between what Donne attempts to achieve in prose and in verse, reaching the conclusion: Donne's 'prose engages in maintaining a relationship, verse in striving to establish that connection in the first place'. Margret Fetzner, *John Donne's Performances: Sermons, Poems, Letters and Devotions,* Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988: 266.

[8] For the copy of the *Devotions* sent to Elizabeth Stuart, see Fetzner (1988): 255.

supplication, which uses the strategies of social supplication to complicate and enrich the act of petitioning God'.[9] His discussion of Donne is largely focused on *The Holy Sonnets*. In an opening discussion of Donne's petitions to Egerton and More, he makes a passing reference to Donne's verse letters to Bedford:

> What is playful in the verse letter to the countess of Bedford – addressing her, for example, as a "divinity" whose "friends" are here "elect[ed]" "saints" – is in these letters to More and Egerton a mark of terror at the apparent wilfulness of secular and sacred power.[10]

The comparison appears to be one of circumstance and tone – where the verse letters, and their theological metaphor, is 'playful', the dire situation of the petitions to More and Egerton makes them more of a serious engagement with 'secular and sacred power'. Whilst I do not deny the playful tone of the verse letters to Bedford, I treat them as equally suited to an analysis of the relationship between 'secular and sacred power' as Donne's petitions to male social superiors.

My study follows from several recent spatial and material engagements with the verse letters. David Aers and Gunther Kress saw both a real and performed social isolation in Donne's epistles to Bedford.[11] Whigham argued that:

> The basic task of a letter, overcoming physical separation, … distinguishes the letter as a genre… from the sonnet, which extends in a sequence because the lover fails in his appeal for union with the lady. The business letter seeks to bridge the gap between two particular persons and form their community.[12]

It makes sense that Whigham's advocation for the literary critical appreciation of the petition seeks to define its distinguishing characteristics in contrast to other literary

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[9] Schoenfeldt (1994): 77.
[10] Schoenfeldt (1994): 81.
[11] David Aers and Gunther Kress, '"Darke Texts Need Notes": Versions of Self in Donne's Verse Epistles', *Literature and History*, Vol. 8, (1978), pp.138-158: 143.
[12] Whigham (1981): 866.

forms, which justifies its merit for study. Nevertheless, Donne's verse letters put pressure on Whigham's classifications. His poems to Bedford in some ways merge the sonnet and the business letter, appealing for 'union with the lady' which 'seeks to bridge the gap between two particular persons and form their community.' More recently, Dianne Mitchell, Melanie Marshall and Daniel Starza Smith have considered 'the real problem of geographical separation' which Donne's verse letters to male friends represent and negotiate.[13] As Marshall and Smith observe, 'many of his verse letters to male friends represent themselves as a means of sustaining those bonds across time and space'.[14]

My chapter traces how Donne imagines his petitions navigating geographical, social and spiritual distance. My reading of the verse letters is shaped by Crawford's desire for critical alertness to Donne's use of theological metaphor when addressing his patrons, not as general 'borrowing', but as 'an invitation to a conversation about religion.'[15] I therefore analyse Donne's theological metaphor as a form of petitionary strategy. The chapter is broken into four sections, to consider the similarities and differences between petitioning secular and divine recipients: patrons, God, kings, and finally, through the crucible of his own illness, discovering the self as the object of its own petition.

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[13] Dianne Mitchell, 'Donne's Poetics of Mediation', *Journal for Early Modern Cultural Studies*, Vol. 18, No.4, (2019), pp.73-99: 75.

[14] Melanie Marshall and Daniel Starza Smith, 'Mingling: The Early Modern Verse Letter as Social Media', in Jason Scott-Warren and Andrew Zurcher eds, *The Oxford Handbook of Renaissance Poetry*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, [forthcoming]. I am grateful to Dr Daniel Starza Smith for access to a pre-publication draft of the chapter.

[15] Crawford (2014): 129.

I. Petitioning Patrons

Even in Donne's early poetry, in his verse letters to male friends, he imagines negotiating geographical space using some of the central metaphors which are developed in the verse letters to his female patrons. Donne playfully presents his friends' presence as divine presence, subsequently conceiving of the letter traversing not only geographical, but cosmological distance, as it becomes a mediator between earth and heaven. This framework of divine presence and mediation will be used more strategically in the verse letters. Rather than writing to sustain relationships with social equals, he courts and maintains patronage relationships with social superiors — negotiating both physical and social distance.

In 'To Mr Thomas Woodward/Hast thee, harsh verse' Donne recalls and disrupts the familiar Petrarchan metaphor of the text as intercessor who will 'plead' to the beloved, as divine judge:

> I've given thee, and yet thou art too weak,
> Feet and a reas'ning soul and tongue to speake.
> Plead for mee, and so by my and thy labour
> I am Thy creator, thou my Savïour
> (ll.3-6)[16]

The verse letter is figured as the intercessor, who will 'plead' for its sender. Donne extends the early modern epistolary commonplace of letter as an embodiment of its sender, by providing it with an anatomy. The pun on metrical feet and the feet of his little papery envoy melds the physical letter's ability to cross distance, with poetry's ability to connect the distanced friends, by evoking Donne's absent presence. The

[16] All poetry quotations are taken from *The Complete Poems of John Donne,* ed Robin Robbins, Abingdon: Routledge, 2013 revised edition.

letter's ability to successfully breach the distance waxes and wanes across the line break. The sentence bathetically undermines the letter's power to connect, even before it has been described, by interrupting itself with the subordinate clause 'and yet thou art too weak' — just as the poem's opening urgent instruction 'haste thee' is qualified with the poem's supposedly 'lame measure'. The breaking of the sentence across lines 3 and 4 however, isolates and thus asserts the text's intercessory potential: it does have 'Feet and a reas'ning soul and tongue to speak'.

Donne playfully and hyperbolically extends the familiar Petrarchan metaphor of text as intercessor, however, by making the intercession specifically Christological; a suitable role for this intercessor made from words. Conventionally, we would expect the beloved to play 'the saviour' who dispenses romantic redemption. Here, however, Donne seems to present us with a world in which he is both Alpha and Omega: he is 'creator' of his own mediating 'saviour'. In the *Devotions Upon Emergent Occasions,* Donne appeals to God in two aspects of the Trinity: '*Be* my salvation, and *plead* my salvation', enforcing Christ's role not only as redeeming saviour but as mediator between God and man.[17] 'Haste thee, harsh verse', therefore, with comic theological specificity, not only recasts the interceding verse letter as Christ, but reinforces the dual roles of Christ — entertaining Thomas Woodward with its excessively specific extension of the familiar commonplace of

[17] All quotations from the *Devotions Upon Emergent Occasions* are taken from *Devotions Upon Emergent Occasions,* ed Anthony Raspa, McGill-Queen's University Press, Montreal and London, 1975. Hereafter *Devotions*. *Devotions*: 28. George Klawitter also reads these lines as a metaphor of the Trinity: 'He calls the letter "my Saviour" as it is by him, God the Father ("I am thy Creator"), to carry a message of love to Woodward. This is the traditional division of Trinitarian labors (creation, mission, infusion by love) parcelled out in dogma to Father, Son and Holy Spirit'. George Klawitter, *The Enigmatic Narrator: The Voicing of Same-Sex Love in the Poetry of John Donne*, New York: Peter Lang, (1994): 11.

poem as lover's intercessor.[18] The crossing out of ll.5-6 in the Westmoreland manuscript suggests one reader did not appreciate the joke.[19]

'Haste thee, harsh verse' and 'To Mr Ingram Lister/ Blest are your North parts' both foreground the significance of space, as Donne transforms physical distance into spiritual despair. 'Blest are your North parts' wittily dares with a more controversially catholic iteration of the interceding metaphor: 'And since thou art in paradise and need'st crave/No joy's addition, help your friend to save' (ll.11-12).[20] Janel Mueller comments 'since these lines are found only in the Westmoreland manuscript, copyists other than Rowland Woodward must have found them blasphemous'.[21] Perhaps it was, even more specifically, the Catholic variety of blasphemy which offended. The lines clearly figure Lister as an intercessor in heaven. The poem in this moment becomes a forbidden prayer for saintly intercession; the poem's geographical journey to 'your North parts' (l.1) transforms into a further leap from earth to heaven.

In 'Hast thee harsh verse' the breach is widened, not simply from earth to heaven, but from hell. Donne gestures to a background of theological controversy, a device we will also see in his verse letters to female patrons: 'Tell him, all questions which men have defended,/Both of the place and pains of Hell are ended' (ll.7-8). With a wink of sprezzatura there is a disparity between the verse letter read, and the imagined or perhaps missing accompanying letter: the imagined letter swaggeringly

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[18] I follow from Klawitter, Mitchell, and Marshall and Smith's queer reading of the male verse letters. Klawitter (1994); Mitchell (2019); Marshall and Smith, [forthcoming].
[19] For the reader's eradication of queer content from the poem, see also Klawitter (1994): 12 and Mitchell (2019): 74.
[20] *Twenty First Century Oxford Authors: John Donne*, ed Janel Mueller, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015: 392.
[21] Mueller (2015): 53.

suggests Donne's ability to summarise '*all* questions' [emphasis mine] of Reformation eschatology. The development of the eschatological metaphor at the volta shifts the role of God from Donne to Woodward: 'And 'tis decreed our hell is but privation/Of him, at least in this earths habitation' (ll.9-10).[22] Absence from the beloved is figured as despair. The final qualifying clause establishes the hierarchy of Woodward as secular god. Wesley Milgate complained that ll.5-6 did not make sense as a metaphor: 'God's Son is not God's Saviour and does not plead for his Father with a third party'.[23] This does not acknowledge that Donne shifts the tenors of his conceit through the poem — a device we shall also see in the verse letters to the female patrons. By the poem's end Woodward is not 'a third party' but God, nor is he to be read exactly as God, but God only 'in this earths habitation'. The poem's personal, as opposed to general, cosmology is amplified by the variant '*our* hell' [emphasis mine] — rather than 'but hell' in the Westmoreland manuscript.[24] The shifting theological metaphor foregrounds the significance of space: the metaphor of mediation and despair ultimately expresses the anxiety of distance. Donne uses the structure of earth, heaven and hell to create his own personal cosmology, where language, and specifically prayer, can traverse distance. This metaphor for personal and emotional longing in 'Haste thee, harsh verse' is employed tactically to negotiate social stratification in Donne's letters to his female patrons.

In his verse letters to female patrons, Donne develops these concepts of divine presence and mediation to petition for patronage. Whereas the metaphor of 'Hast

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[22] Marshall and Smith have also traced the relationship between Donne and the recipients of his verse letters as the relationship between man and God. Smith and Marshall, [forthcoming].
[23] W. Milgate, *The Satires, Epigrams and Verse Letters,* Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967: 213.
[24] See Mueller (2015): 46.

thee, harsh verse' is centred on the verse letter itself as mediator, in 'Madam, Reason is our soul's left hand' Donne focuses on the mediating power of the patron, to implicitly petition for her assistance. Donne complicates the tenor of the heavenly metaphor we have seen in the verse letters to male friends, emphasizing Bedford's crucial power to travel between realms. Both Bedford's access to power, and Donne's access to Bedford, are key. The poem's theological vehicles are carefully tailored to suit Bedford's religion, creating a specifically Calvinist God, and evoking Marian intercession only to reject it.

'Madam, Reason is our soul's left hand' is not as explicit a petition as 'Madam, You have refined me'. Nevertheless, it uses similar imagery to implicitly petition Bedford. The poem's slightly more taciturn tactics might be related to its likely composition at the beginning of Donne and Bedford's relationship.[25] Eckhard Auberlen describes the poem as 'basically indistinguishable from an epistle mendicant although it is characterised by an extraordinary degree of indirectness'.[26] I would suggest that 'it is basically indistinguishable from an epistle mendicant' - a petition - precisely because it is one. Its 'extraordinary indirectness' is a crucial part of its tactics.

'Madam, Reason is our soul's left hand' initially casts Bedford metaphorically as a Calvinist God, pragmatically highlighting the power of the patron to favour. As Crawford has summarised, Donne 'equates the process by which a patron selects

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[25] Ann Hurley, *John Donne's Poetry and Early Modern Visual Culture,* Selinsgrove, PA: Susquehanna University Press, 2005: 186; Lesley Lawson, *Out of the Shadows: The Life of Lucy, Countess of Bedford,* London: Hambledon Continuum, 2007: 85; Crawford (2014): 121.
[26] Eckhard Auberlen, *The Commonwealth of Wit: The Writer's Images and his Strategies of Self-Representation in Elizabethan Literature,* Tübingen: Narr, 1988: 38.

which poets to support to the process by which God elects Christians for salvation—her "Saints" are those friends whom she has rendered "elect" by her support.'[27] Donne dangles the potentially fraught word 'Saints' at a line break: 'I study you: first in your saints/Those friends whom your election glorifies' (ll.9-10). 'Election' in the following line, however, firmly asserts a Protestant communion of saints, with the godly Bedford at the centre.

With logic similar to 'Haste thee, harsh verse', to be in Bedford's presence is to be in heaven. 'By these we *reach* divinity' (l.2) [emphasis mine] is an implicitly spatial metaphor. Barbara Lewalski limits 'reach' in context of the line: 'to "reach" (that is, to love) divinity'.[28] The stanza's ensuing division, however, is based on proximity to God: 'Those loves who have the blessings of your Sight' (l.3) and those who must develop 'from fair faith' (l.4). In the Dowden manuscript 'Fayth' is even spatially qualified 'farr'.[29] 'Reach' must therefore maintain both its immediate physical, spatial meaning, as well as its contextual sense of attaining spiritual knowledge. Donne emphasises his physical distance from Bedford, acknowledging their limited acquaintance. The development and theological specificity of the heavenly metaphor in the third stanza, however, changes the focus from Donne's access to Bedford, to Bedford's own socially symbolic action: her 'election' of her friends (l.10) and her virtuous 'deeds' (l.11). This emphasis upon Bedford's virtuous action injects the poem with light pressure for the subject to match the panegyric, discreetly petitioning for Bedford's patronage.

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[27] Crawford (2014): 123.
[28] Barbara Lewalski, *Donne's Anniversaries and the Poetry of Praise: The Creation of a Symbolic Mode*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1973: 61.
[29] See Mueller (2015): 131.

Donne shifts the casting of Bedford during the poem, to both underline her socially significant role as mediator, and specifically tailor his vehicles to the denomination of his recipient. Where Bedford begins as God, by the poem's end she has been demoted to an Angel:

> But you, of learning and religïon
> And virtue and such ingredients, have made
> A mithridate, whose operatïon
> Keeps off or cures what can be done or said.
>
> Yett thys is not your physic, but your food,
> A diet fit for you: for you are here
> The first good angel since the world's frame stood,
> That ever did in woman's shape appear.
> (ll.25-32)

Drawing on debates over whether angels could eat, what matter their angelic forms were composed from, and their crucial role as conveyors of divine knowledge, Donne shifts from the idea of Bedford being made from 'learning' and 'virtue', to her consuming learning.[30] Her angelic status has pragmatic significance.

The tactical gendering of the angelic imagery may be illuminated by a comparison with 'The Litany', which describes the Virgin Mary similarly as a female angel. Marina Warner has argued the Virgin Mary has historically functioned as an exceptional woman who proves the misogynistic, patriarchal rule.[31] Strictly, and even iconographically, speaking, the Virgin Mary is not an angel. Nevertheless, in 'The Litany', Donne describes her as such: 'That she-cherubin/ Which unlocked Paradise, and made/One claim for innocence, and disseised sin' (ll.38-40). Donne

[30] For the scholastic debate on angelic corporeality see Peter Marshall and Alexandra Walsham, 'Migrations of angels in the early modern world' in *Angels in the Early Modern World,* eds Peter Marshall and Alexandra Walsham, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006: 6.
[31] Warner (1976): 77.

develops the traditional counterpoint between Mary and Eve - in which Mary (Ave) reverses the consequences of the Fall (Eva) through the incarnation – using angelic metaphor.[32] Eden was guarded from fallen humanity by cherubim; the Virgin Mary is a 'she-cherubin' who unlocks the garden.[33] There may also be a further paradoxical level of punning on the traditional image of the Virgin Mary's virgin womb as a *hortus conclusus,* an enclosed garden*:* the incarnation of Christ in her miraculously locked garden-womb subsequently 'unlocked Paradise'.[34] This image of unlocking is also an image of access: the mediating Mary allows man access to the restricted space of Paradise.

Intercession is an important common feature between the Catholic understanding of the Virgin Mary and angels. Before the Reformation, angels were understood, like saints, as intercessors, which may be another reason why Donne presents Mary as angel in 'The Litany'.[35] It is no coincidence the poem sequentially descends from Mary to 'The Angels'.[36] The legal imagery of Mary making a 'claim' evokes the medieval description of the interceding Mary as 'advocate'. [37] Following from Jeremy Maule's invitation to pay greater heed to the specifics of property law in these lines, 'claim' presumably has the specific sense of 'a demand for something as due; an assertion of a right to something' and the 'Right of claiming; right or title

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[32] Warner (1976): 60.
[33] Robbins reads the image as a reference to Genesis 3.24. Robbins (2013): 77.
[34] On the *hortus conclusus* see Miri Rubin, *Mother of God: A History of the Virgin Mary,* London: Penguin, 2010: 311.
[35] Marshall and Walsham also summarise how certain angels like St Michael, Gabriel and Raphael took on cults which shared many similar features with the veneration of individual saints. Marshall and Walsham (2006): pp.11-12.
[36] See Stanzas 5 and 6 of 'The Litany'.
[37] *Advocate*, *n.*, sense 1a: 'A person or agent believed to intercede between God and sinners; spec. Christ or the Virgin Mary'. www.oed.com [date accessed 24.10.2020].

(*to* something or *to* have, be, or do something)'.[38] Therefore Mary dispossesses - 'disseised' - sin by claiming her title of 'innocence'.[39] Whilst this legal action appears to be taken on Mary's behalf, its consequences lead to man's redemption. The continued spatial metaphor - 'and disseised sin;/Whose womb was a strange Heav'n, for there/God clothed himself, and grew' (ll.40-42) - furthers the legal sense that Mary dispossesses sin in order for her womb to house Christ, underlining her role in man's salvation.

Donne's continued legal metaphor highlights Mary's role as an advocating intercessor: 'As her deeds were/ Our helps, so are her prayers, nor can she sue/In vain, who hath such Titles unto you.'(ll.43-45) Here is the, by now, familiar secular and spiritual petitionary pun: Mary 'sues' on behalf of humanity.[40] The differentiation between her 'Deeds' and 'her prayer' appears to separate intercessory prayer and action. If 'Deed' is read in a legal sense, however, this continues the legal metaphor, further underlining her entitlement to intercede on man's behalf: 'an instrument in writing… purporting to effect some legal disposition'.[41] This legal sense might make her 'deeds' the physical document resolving the property dispute.

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[38] 'But when Donne, in *The Litanie,* says that the Virgin Mary "made/ One claime for innocence, and disseiz'd sinne', or when Herbert's *Redemption* sends its tenant off to the manor for a new lease, these are not novel terms…. The power behind such apparent conceits rests on a better understanding of property than now held – property conceived not just an object, a thing, but as a relationship to that object.' Jeremy Maule, 'Donne and the Words of the Law' in *John Donne's Professional Lives,* ed David Colcough, Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2003: 30.

[39] *Disseise*, v.1 'To put out of actual seisin or possession; to dispossess (a person) of his estates, etc., usually wrongfully or by force; to oust'. www.oed.com [date accessed 03/02/2021]. See also Maule, 2003: 34. It is inviting to read her 'innocence' as the Catholic doctrine of Mary's own immaculate conception, however a Protestant could read these lines without needing to engage with the immaculate conception. As Robbins glosses 'innocence': 'she alone was asserted never to have sinned'. Robbins (2010): 501.

[40] 'Nor can Shee sue/In vayne' recalls Spenser's leonine grotesque of Marian intercession in the *Amoretti's* Sonnet XX 'In vain I seek and sew to her for grace' (l.1), *Edmund Spenser: The Shorter Poems*, ed Richard A. McCabe, London: Penguin, 1999.

[41] *deed*, n., sense 4. www.oed.com [date accessed 11/02/2021].

Donne continues to use notably secular imagery to describe Mary's especial role as mediatrix: 'nor can she sue/In vain, who hath such *Titles* unto you [emphasis mine]. The 'deeds' of the dispute further entitle her to God's ear. Mary has access to God. Although, as Robbins, following from Oliver, argues Donne sails as perilously close to the Thirty-Nine Articles as possible - boldly presenting Mary as intercessor – he never petitions her for intercession.[42] The final second person 'who hath such *Titles* unto you' underlines the stanza's address to God, despite its praise of Mary. We shall see how he similarly praises Bedford as an intercessor without explicitly petitioning her for intercession.

Until Crawford, debate over Donne's image of Bedford as 'the first good angel… in woman's shape' had predominantly been led by critics' interest in gender and misogyny.[43] Certainly Donne draws on and disrupts, the simultaneous androgyny, but commonly male pictorial representation, of angels: Bedford is the first angel to appear in *female* form. Crawford drew attention to the angel as a suitably Protestant intercessor to compare Bedford with:

> When Donne refers to Bedford as an "Angel" (with its contingent joke about women's general inapplicability for the role), he relies on this transdenominational reference point; the Countess of Bedford was certainly a powerful "saint" at court, but it was clear to everyone who knew her that James I was in no way analogous to her God. As Donne's modification of the trope acknowledges, if Bedford considered herself a "saint" of any kind, it was the puritan kind.[44]

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[42] 'In order to avoid colliding with the letter of the Thirty-Nine Articles, Donne makes sure that… the speaker addresses God'. P.M. Oliver, *Donne's Religious Writing: A Discourse of Feigned Devotion,* Harlow: Longman, 1997: pp.86-7. See also Robbins (2010): 502.

[43] Le Comte argues Bedford 'drew Donne to ecstatic freedom from misogyny' whereas Booth argues like the Virgin Mary, Bedford becomes 'the glorious exception of the depravity of her sex'. Marotti also argues for the line's misogynistic undertones. Edward Le Comte, *Grace to a Witty Sinner: A Life of John Donne*, New York: Walker, 1965: 114; Roy Booth, *The Collected Poems of John Donne*, Hertfordshire: Wordsworth Editions Limited, 2002: 318; Arthur Marotti, *John Donne: Coterie Poet*, Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1986: 209.

[44] Crawford (2014): 125.

Whilst most Reformers stripped all such heavenly intercessors of their power, angels were still understood at the very least to be messengers between heaven and earth who enacted God's will.[45] Mueller has noted that in his 1630 Easter Sunday Sermon Donne melds the Marys at Jesus's tomb with angels: 'Here are good women made Angels, that is messengers, publishers of the greatest messengers of our religion'.[46] In the sermon, the crux of the angel comparison is an etymological pun, yoking the Greek root of 'evangel', 'bringing good news' with the angels' role as legitimate messengers.[47] This same messenger function is the crux of the angelic comparison in Donne's verse epistle to Bedford. By casting Bedford as the 'first good angel' in female form, Donne shifts her role from the electing God, to God's intermediary — an intermediary also compatible with Bedford's godly Protestantism.[48]

Developing from Crawford's reading of the Protestant angel, I suggest that the image is specifically designed to recall the Virgin, only to then reject her — staging and amplifying Donne's Protestant tailoring of his vehicles to fit his patron. In light of the Virgin Mary's traditional Catholic role as exceptional woman, and Donne's specific description of Mary as a female angel in 'The Litany', the Virgin Mary perfectly fits the casting call for exceptional female angel. The insistence on time 'since the worlds frame stood' further allows for the possibility of Mary, as a mortal historical woman, to be a candidate; but Donne gives the role to Bedford.

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[45] Marshall and Walsham (2006): 15.
[46] Potter and Simpson, *Sermons,* ix.8.33-4 (p.190). Mueller (2015): 459.
[47] *Evangel,* n.2, www.oed.com [date accessed 04/02/2021]
[48] As discussed in the Introduction, Levy Peck, describing the religious metaphor for courtly mediation notes that William Trumball described brokers not only as saints, but as angels: 'The whole Kingdom hath cast their eye upon you as the new rising Star, and no man thinks his business can prosper at Court unless he hath you for his good Angel'. Levy Peck (1990): 50. See Introduction: 7.

On the secular side of the conceit, the role of angel is also more analogously appropriate for Bedford's role as courtly broker. In an earthly parallel of heaven, Bedford logically cannot be God. This might also be why in Donne's seemingly unequivocal assertion that Bedford will stand for God in the poem, 'By these we reach divinity, that's you' (l.2), he opts for the slightly more ambiguous term 'divinity'. Elsewhere in Donne's poetry, he does use the word 'divinity' to describe God, however he also he uses it more broadly, and disparagingly, to refer to mortal theology, as opposed to God himself.[49] This sense of divinity as theology is also compatible with Donne's efforts to 'study' Bedford (l.9), and the description of her being composed of 'Learning and Religione' (l.25).

In a courtly analogy, Bedford can't be God; but she can be an angel. In Holy Sonnet 11 Donne describes God 'by angels waited on/In Heav'n' (ll.3-4). In 'The Litany', in an invitingly spatial, and specifically national, metaphor, Donne describes angels being to the manor born: 'And we in wardship to thine Angels be-/Native in Heaven's fair palaces,/Where we shall be but denizened by thee' (ll.46-49). Just as the angels are 'Native in Heaven's fair palaces' and wait on God, so Bedford was a native at court, and a favoured servant of Queen Anne; she was proximate to power. Peter Marshall and Alexandra Walsham note that Pseudo Dionysus's conception of angelic hierarchy in 5 AD 'provided not just a model for heavenly order, but a

[49] For 'divinity' as God, see 'A Valediction: Of the Book': 'Here Love's divines (since all divinity/Is love or wonder) may find all they seek', (ll.28-29). For 'divinity' as theology see *Satire II*: 'As slyly as any commenter goes by,/ Hard words, or sense; or in divinity/As controverters, in vouched texts leave out/Shrewd words, which might against them cleare the doubt.' (ll.99-102) and 'Madam, You have refined me': 'But these (as nice, thin school divinity/ Serves heresy to further, or repress)/Taste of poetic rage or flattery,/And need not where all hearts one truth profess' (ll.61-64.) Robbins glosses 'divinity' as 'knowledge of God', Robbins (2013): 672.

crucial validation for social and political hierarchies in the created world.'[50] From their conception, early Christian angels have been inextricably linked to social stratification. Donne's punning, in 'The Litany', on the 'guardian' of a ward, and angels as moral guardians, adds another level to Bedford's role as angel in the poem: her moral influence guiding Donne to heaven reflects her secular patronage leading him to court.[51]

In the last stanza, following Bedford's new metaphorical identity as angel, she logically takes an intermediary position between earth and heaven. Donne further complicates the metaphor, troping Bedford not just as a messenger, but also as an intercessor:

> Since you are then, God's masterpiece, and so
> His factor for our loves, do as you do;
> Make your return home gracious, and bestow
> This life on that; So make one life of two.
> For so God helpe me, I 'would not misse you there,
> For all the good which you can do me here.
> (ll.33-38)

The supposed bluntness of these final lines has caused some critical discomfort or distaste. As Margaret Maurer neatly summarises: they have been found 'too blatantly motivated'.[52] William Zunder describes how as a plea for patronage, the poem's 'precise vulgarity is unusual'.[53] It is a curious double bind: Donne's petition is 'extraordinary in its indirectness' according to Auberlen, whilst being too vulgarly precise for Zunder. Donne's assumption that he could benefit from their

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[50] Marshall and Walsham (2006): 5.
[51] On Aquinas and other scholastic teaching that 'all humans were assigned a specific angel to watch over them during their lives and to help them choose good over evil' see Marshall and Walsham (2006): 10.
[52] Margaret Maurer, 'John Donne's Verse Letters', *MLQ,* Vol.37, No.3, (1976), pp.234-59: 254.
[53] William Zunder, *The Poetry of John Donne: Literature and Culture in the Elizabethan and Jacobean Period,* Brighton, Harvester Press, 1982: 67.

relationship is emphasised with the modal 'can'. Yet, as a plea for patronage, the nature of the 'good' Bedford will do Donne is left tactfully open-ended.

The poem's end enforces Donne's sensibility to 'there' and 'here'; the deixis of place intensifies the awareness of the between-space that both Bedford, and with her Donne's desires, must travel through. One really does feel quite pertinently here the sense of isolation which characterises Donne's verse letters for Aers and Kress.[54] The nature of the 'good' Bedford could do, relates to the potential situating of 'there' and 'here'; Donne's deixis is not as clear-cut as it first appears. There are multiple possible tenors for the spatial metaphor. In terms of the spiritual vehicle, 'home' is clearly heaven, making her 'return home' her death, and to 'bestow/This life on that' is her living a godly life to prepare for heaven. Therefore, on a figurative level, the good Bedford can do Donne 'here' is her moral influence on his spiritual life, re-enforcing her role as guardian angel. Significantly, despite calling Bedford a 'factor', a word to which we will return, Donne does not suggest that Bedford can do Donne 'good' in heaven: this would be too Catholic a model, recalling the logic of 'Blest are your North parts'.

What, however, is the tenor of heaven? At first, it very clearly seems to refer to the court. Donne's advice to Bedford to 'Make your return home gracious' introduces further overlapping spiritual and courtly metaphor, which suggests Bedford's power as a patron. 'Gracious' entails Bedford's own courteous nature and its benefit to her — 'Of nature or character: likely to find grace or favour'.[55] This sense, in itself, would imply Bedford's advantageous position and its concomitant

[54] Aers and Kress (1978).
[55] *Gracious*, adj., senses 1b, www.oed.com [date accessed 05/02/2021].

benefit for Donne. The word has an even clearer sense of Bedford's own ability to bestow grace, however: 'characterized by or exhibiting kindness, courtesy, or generosity of spirit', 'of a person of high (social) status, an employer, etc.: kind, indulgent, or benevolent to others of lower (social) status'.[56] Therefore, we can read the courtly sense of 'Make your return home gracious' as a clear request for assistance. The exemplary quotation from Gower cited by the *OED* for this last sense - 'be gracious and do largesse' - underlines this common wordplay on secular courtliness and largesse as a reflection of divine grace.[57] This leaves unclear the 'good' Bedford may do Donne 'here' though, if 'there' is both the court and heaven.

The clear parallel between heaven and court is complicated by the alternative tenor of Bedford's own 'home' Twickenham, a reading proposed by both Mueller and Robbins: 'If Lady Bedford makes a stay at Twickenham, Donne will not repine at this even though it will deprive him of her good efforts on his behalf at court.'[58] At Twickenham Bedford cannot play the secular intercessor between Donne, and the courtly God James. This rather complicates what initially seems to be a simple binary between the secular world and the divine. This reading also shifts Donne's place: being present 'here' actually makes him present 'here' at court, rather than the 'there' of Twickenham. And yet, while 'here' should locate Donne, the poem's disorientating shifting of tenor further underlines that he is in some ways nowhere — he is not yet in Bedford's elect circle, which (in a spiritual reading of the conceit) we assumed to be heaven and the court. Robbins suggests that Twickenham and the

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[56] *Gracious,* adj., 2a and 2b, www.oed.com [date accessed 05/02/2021].
[57] *Gracious*, adj., sense 2b. John Gower, *The English works* www.oed.com [date accessed 05/02/2021].
[58] Mueller (2015): 459. Robbins also reads Twickenham as a potential meaning for 'home', Robbins, (2013): 676.

court act as simultaneous vehicles. The lines represent both her life on earth and heaven, and her courtly life at her own seat in the country, and in the court:

> She may devote "this life" on earth to spiritual matters, and continue to exercise the virtue she shows at Court in '"that life" in the country. If God enables D[onne] himself to reach Heaven, he would rather not lack her company there, for all the good spiritual influence she may have on him here; on the other hand, if she is at Twickenham, he will not repine for the loss of her good offices at Court.[59]

In some ways, these multiple readings demonstrate the disorientation Donne creates by paradoxically combining specific deixis with ambiguous, multiple vehicles. This confusion is a significant literary effect which should not be effaced in our commentary. Throughout the poem, Bedford's courtly world and heaven appear to be clearly aligned. The final stanza, however, unhinges this alignment. The blurring of the tenors powerfully conjures a profound longing for an ever-shifting 'there', for spatial access to power. Wherever the literal position of this goalpost changes to, 'there' Donne is not. Whigham has described how:

> Under Tudor absolutism, royal "presence" had become an ultimate reality. … To those who were ambitious for courtly fruits, physical isolation from court came to signify "nowhere" (the reverse of eutopia) - nonexistence and insignificance. The ambitious seriously needed contacts at court; the letter bore the burden of fostering many such relationships.

The ending of this poem certainly reinforces the sense Donne creates of 'nowhere', and the verse letter to Bedford as the way out.[60]

It is testament to the parallels between the secular and spiritual throughout the poem that Donne is able to so clearly evoke the world of court in the final stanza, with very little specific language to actually suggest it. Perhaps the word which most

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[59] Robbins (2013): 676.
[60] Whigham (1981): 867.

clearly evokes the world of court, other than the loaded 'gracious', is the description of Bedford as 'factor'. As Crawford has summarised, 'factor' in the seventeenth century was a word rich in variant meanings: Bedford was a 'factor' in terms of managing an estate and a political 'factor'. As 'the Queen's chief courtier' she was 'able to, quite literally, determine the "accesses and restraints" of myriad petitioners.'[61] Etymologically, Donne puns on the root of 'factor' – *facere,* to make. Bedford is God's factor, in that she was first made by God, 'Gods master peece'; perhaps she in turn can make Donne. The curious possessive '*His* factor' emphasises her mediation: Donne describes Bedford's ability to mediate on man's behalf, as underlined by the first personal plural 'our loves', therefore it might in some ways be less torturous to describe Bedford as 'our factor'. The possessive makes Bedford God's representative. This further playfully justifies the mediation Donne implicitly requests by cunningly making it her divine purpose, not simply to help him, but anyone. In the structure of the sentence, the possessive even positions Bedford between God and man, dividing 'His' and 'our'. 'Factor' therefore firmly introduces very secular, pragmatic and intermediary connotations. Donne's divine metaphor, however, knowingly elevates and reverses his desire to benefit from Bedford's access to royalty, into God's desire to access man through Bedford.

Whilst the overall sense of where is 'here' and where is 'there' by the poem's end becomes more nebulous, what the image clarifies is Bedford's occupation of, and ability to travel between, the two. This is what makes access to Bedford herself so

[61] Crawford (2014): pp.129-130. For the present project it is also especially pleasing that the OED even uses an example from a medieval petition for its first sense of a factor as 'A person or business. An agent for another': 'The factours and the attournes of the seide suppliantz'. OED, *factor,* n., sense 1a. www.oed.com [date accessed 25.10.2020]

important. In the context of the stanza, it has rather been overlooked that Donne does not explicitly ask Bedford to act as his 'factor'. The concluding request is for her to return to 'home', which in the last line is clearly distinguished from the 'good you can do me here'; although as we have discussed the 'gracious' return has implicit benefits for Donne. Whilst I argue that the final two lines do not petition as boldly as has been critically assumed, the final line break isolates and emphasises Bedford's ability to act as mediator — 'For all the good which you can do me here'. Donne is thus able to petition Bedford to act as a courtly intercessor without once explicitly making the request. This complex, playful, implicit communication is a socially significant tool, as shall become evident later.

In comparison to 'Madame Reason ys our Soules left hand', 'Madam, You have refined me', has no qualms about petitioning: 'these are petitions, and not hymns' (l.33). Donne's explicit signposting of the poem concomitantly emphasises the socially significant themes of access to Bedford, and her actions. Despite its open declaration, however, the poem's petitionary work is subtly carried out in its vehicles, as Donne embeds desirable courtly positions in his conceits. A greater spotlight is thrown onto Donne's desire for access as he uses elaborate architectural metaphor to describe, and petition, Bedford. The audacious rendering of Bedford both as Rome and the Escorial serves several functions: it wittily provokes Bedford with denominational difference, aligns Bedford and Donne as Protestant outsiders looking in at a Catholic other, and demonstrates to Bedford that Donne would make a worthy opponent for theological debate. Finally, Donne's praise of Bedford's moral

influence, and her virtuous action, further impels her to match the praise and act on his behalf.

Where 'Madam, Reason is our soul's left hand' represented, and emphasised, Bedford's own role as mediator moving between worlds, in 'Madam, You have refined me' Donne implants courtly offices in his vehicles to suggest his own aptitude for such work. The poem uses a clearer spatial framework than 'Madam, Reason is our soul's left hand'. The secular royal court is very clearly separated from heaven:

> Therefore at Court, which is not Virtue's clime
> (Where a transcendent height, (as lowness mee)
> Makes her not be, or not showe), all my rhyme,
> Your virtues challenge, which there rarest be;
> For, as dark texts need notes, there some must be
> To usher Virtue, and say, 'This is She'.
> (ll.7-12)

There is a still a spatial polarity: a world where Bedford belongs, to which Donne does not. Bedford as virtue remains at 'a transcendent height' whereas Donne self-consciously prostrates himself in the abject combination of a subordinate clause in parentheses *à la* Appleyard: '(as lowness me)'.[62] Donne is clearly positioned in the world of the earthly court.

Rather than focusing on Bedford's secular mediation, Donne offers his own services as mediator between Bedford's 'transcendent height' and the worldly court: 'there some must be/To usher Virtue, and say, "This is She"'. Here, as Aers and Kress noted, we seem to have hit the request at the heart of the petition.[63] Donne's

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[62] See Chapter One: 40.

[63] 'It is in this second world, that countess is "worthyest", most valuable, and it is here that Donne so desperately wishes to find the employment as the official usher of the valued one.' Aers & Kress (1978): 140.

courtly vehicle is not insignificant: Donne's praise makes Bedford herself virtue, announcing her presence to the unknowing corrupted courtiers. Simultaneously, the poem's panegyric mode demonstrates his literary skillset and how it may be utilised to Bedford's advantage. He would not make a bad, literal, usher. Furthermore, in using 'usher' as verb rather than noun, Donne further emphasises the oral sense of ushering. The early modern meaning of 'usher' could be the physical, ceremonial, processing of an usher before their employer, 'to admit ceremoniously; to conduct, attend, or introduce with ceremony *from*, *to* or *unto* or esp. *into* (a place)'.[64] 'Usher' can also, however, be oral: 'To introduce (something uttered)'.[65] Ushering as a spoken, literary, act is then underlined as Donne continues: 'To usher virtue, and say, "Thys is Shee"'. For a poem which explicitly presents itself as a petition, this clear request for employment is not framed as such: Donne embeds his request in the vehicle of his metaphor. Like the *modus operandi* of advertising - creating the need - Donne creates the requirement for virtue's usher and glossateur, and, as it just so happens, Donne perfectly fits the bill.

Just as Donne uses secular vehicles to suggest Bedford needs an usher, he similarly turns the sun into Bedford's courtly 'delegate'. 'Madam, You have refined me' creates a Bedford-centric universe:

> In this you've made the Court th'Antipodes,
> And willed your delegate, the vulgar Sun,
> To do profane autumnal offices,
> (ll.25-30)

[64] *usher*, v., sense 1a, www.oed.com [date accessed 20/02/2021]. In terms of Donne acting as mediator it also interesting to note this spatial sense of processing 'from, to or unto or… into (a place)
[65] *usher*, v., sense 4 www.oed.com [date accessed 20/02/2021].

The division between the court, and Bedford's court, which we began to see at the end of 'Madame, Reason is our Soules left hand' is openly stated here: 'In this you've made the Court th'Antipodes'. Donne upends the geography of power: the heart of the world is not the royal court, but Bedford's own in Twickenham.[66] The sun takes on a significantly interceding role: 'your delegate, the vulgar Sun'. Donne is at a further remove this time. He is not the tenor of the metaphor, as he was with the usher earlier; here it is the sun who is the intermediary between the true court of Bedford and the antipodean royal court. Nevertheless, the specificity of Donne's courtly metaphor subtly introduces another intermediary role to which he would be well suited. Just as the sun is imagined as Bedford's ambassador between Twickenham and the court, Donne himself could occupy such a role in reality. Once more, however, this petition for employment remains at a discreet remove: the petitionary work is done in the vehicles, not their tenors.

When Donne does drop the crucial term 'petition', the explicit request he makes is put in spatial terms:

> Whilst here to you we sacrificers run;
> And whether priests, or organs, you we obay,
> We sound your influence, and your dictates say.
>
> Yet to that deity which dwells in you,
> Your virtuous soul, I now not sacrifice;
> These are petitions, and not hymns; they sue
> But that I may survey the edifice.
> (ll.28-34)

[66] Crawford has further illuminated the division between the royal court and Twickenham, by comparing the poem to Ben Jonson's 'Epigram on the Court Pucell', in which Twickenham Park is 'not only seen as a site of literary production and exchange, but also of theo-political opposition and critique—… a kind of counter court.' Crawford (2014): 150.

With commonplace Petrarchan imagery of the mistress's devotees as priests offering up sacrifices, Donne employs the familiar metaphor of Bedford as deity — now a pagan one. Donne extends this metaphor, by focusing on Bedford herself as temple. He corrects the idea of Bedford herself as a god, 'to that deity which dwells in you': now Bedford's virtuous soul is a manifestation of God's goodness.[67] Having carefully elucidated the real relationship between Bedford and the divine, Donne can boldly introduce the joke of petition as prayer and as request: 'These are petitions, and not hymns'. In Mueller's commentary upon *La Corona* as a 'Crowne of Prayer and Prayse', Mueller notes that in the Sermons Donne makes a similar connection between praying and praising in the Psalms: 'prayer and Praise is the same thing'.[68] In 'Madam, You have refined me', however, rather than aligning praise with prayer, Donne employs the traditional division of prayer in his metaphor to emphasise the pragmatic function of his poem: this is not thanksgiving, but petition.[69] Donne's prayers are not praising, but asking. His use of the familiar formula of secular petition 'they sue' amplifies that this is a moment of request.

The highlighted moment of petition does not take us in the direction which the soft hints about employment in Donne's vehicles led us to expect. The explicit request which Donne makes is for access: 'They sue/But that I may survey the edifice'. The metaphor is spatially disorientating. The extended metaphor builds on the comparison between Bedford and a temple; in the previous stanza Donne and

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[67] Mueller argues that Donne's belief in the Platonic unity of virtue is crucial to the verse letters: the poems 'link every manifestation of beauty and goodness on earth with God and the divine, thus weaving a rationale for even the most extravagant praise'. Mueller (2015): pp.457-8.
[68] Potter and Simpson, *Sermons,* v.14.78-9 (p.270).
[69] See Introduction: 8.

Bedford's fellow devotees 'runne' to her shrine, 'Whilst *here* to you we sacrificers run'. 'Here' appears to position the 'sacrificers' with Bedford at Twickenham, in the opposite direction to the delegate sun returning to court. Donne's petition however, 'They sue/But that I may survay the Edifice' seems to place Donne back, locked on the outside of the temple, rather than residing and worshipping within. Donne zooms in with the first person singular - 'that I' - dissolving the other devotees, leaving us with the more dramatic reduced cast of Donne alone without, and Bedford within. The poem's explicit petition redirects our focus from the poem's implicit petition for employment, to the vital importance of literal, spatial, access to power.

Donne's conceit of the temple's translucent interior crystalises Bedford's simultaneous accessibility, and inaccessibility:

> So in this pilgrimage I would behold
> You, as you're Virtues temple, not as she:
> What walls of tender crystal her enfold,
> What eyes, hands, bosom, her pure altars bee
> (ll.43-46)

The primary function of the conceit is, of course, to reinforce the idea that Bedford herself is a manifestation of God's goodness, not God himself — 'you are Virtue's temple, not as she'. She is the temple of Virtue. Yet, the emphasis on translucent boundaries - 'what walls of tender crystal' - also creates a simultaneous sense of Bedford's physical imminence, and her separation. 'Madam, Reason is our soul's left hand' began with Donne's distance from Bedford; 'Madam, You have refined me' imagines Bedford's longed for presence. The poem itself also journeys from outside

'the edifice' to within 'Virtues temple'. It is a fantasy of the access Donne petitions for.

Donne uses similar translucent imagery in 'Honour is so sublime perfection':

> This, as an amber drop enwraps a bee,
> Covering, discovers your quick soul, that we
> May in your through-shine front your heart's thoughts see.
> (ll.25-27)

In both iterations of the image, Bedford's body is a transparent precious jewel through which her soul (virtue) may be easily perceived, unlike the common Neoplatonic imagery of the body as the soul's slimy prison.[70] Donne describes her body: 'You, for whose body God made better clay,/ Or took soul's stuff such as shall late decay' ('Honour is so sublime perfection', ll.22-23). Although Bedford is not called an angel in the poem, this question of her body's composition, potentially as spiritual matter, recalls the debates over angelic bodies. He also compares her, again, to a temple:

> You teach, though we learn not, a thing unknown
> To our late times: the use of specular stone,
> Through which all things within without were shown.
> Of such were temples; so and such you are:
> Being and seeming is your equal care,
> And virtue's whole sum is but know and dare
> (ll.28-31)

Again, to see Bedford is to see the manifestation of virtue. Donne's emphasis on prepositions, however, also demonstrates how this reoccurring architectural imagery seemingly dissolves boundaries — 'all things within without were shown'. To be

[70] The variant 'gross soul' makes Bedford's soul even more accessible, if we understand gross in the sense of 'said of things material or perceptible to the senses, as contrasted with what is spiritual, ethereal, or impalpable.' *gross,* adj., sense 8a www.oed.com [date accessed 26/10/2020]. Bedford's soul may thus be accessed through the physical senses.

outside the building is not to be denied access to it. Everything can be seen. This visibility has social implications. Robbins notes another parallel image of the 'specular stone' of pagan temples in Donne's sermon on 1st April 1627:

> The heathens served their Gods… where they could, in Temples made of *Specular stone* that was transparent as glass, or crystal, so they which walked without in the streets, might see all that was done within.[71]

The image of pedestrians seeing 'all' the rites within the temple, already creates a democratizing sense of access. 'They which walked without in the streets' gives no indication of class. The similar contrasting of 'within' and 'without' dissolves any sense of exclusivity. Neil Cuddy has described how the architecture of the Tudor court from Henry to Elizabeth was based on 'the rigorous limitation of the "entrée".[72] He argues that under James the Bedchamber superceded the Privy Chamber as the most exclusive base of power. Court architecture therefore created an interlocking sequence of spaces with increasingly intimate and exclusive access to the monarch. Architectural space, and access to it, was a well understood delineation of power and status. The conceit of Bedford's body as a translucent building therefore subtly but dramatically creates a fantasy of access to power: a fantasy in which 'Covering' obstacles paradoxically 'discover[s]', where there appears to be no substantial difference between being without and being within.[73] Donne's petition

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[71] Robbins, (2013): 691. David Colclough also makes the comparison between the passage and 'Madame, You have refined me' in his edition of the sermon. *Oxford Edition of the Sermons of John Donne,* iii.5.126 and *cmt* p. 326.

[72] Neil Cuddy, 'The revival of the entourage: the Bedchamber of James 1, 1603-1625' in *The English Court from the Wars of the Roses to the Civil War,* ed David Starkey New York: Longman Inc, 1987: pp.177-78. For a famous Elizabethan lyric application of court geography to the female body, cf. Sidney's *Astrophil and Stella* 9 ('Queen Virtue's court').

[73] The image of Bedford as building has pervaded the meta-language of some criticism. Woolf elides Donne's female patrons with the space they provide: 'He sought sanctuary naturally enough elsewhere, and naturally had to pay rent for that relief. Great ladies… with well-spread tables and fair gardens, must be conciliated'. Virginia Woolf, *The Second Common Reader,* London: Leonard and

however, to 'survey the edifice', to gain access to Bedford, reminds us that the temple interior is an imagined fantasy. Boundaries are even inherent in the parallel images of translucence in the poems: '*walls* of tender crystal her enfolde' in 'Madam, You have refined me', and the 'amber drop' which '*enwraps*' Bedford's soul in 'Honour is so sublime perfection' '[emphasis mine]. These are delicate boundaries, but boundaries nevertheless, which are further emphasised with the prefixes '*en*folde' and '*en*wrap.'

In 'Madam, You have refined me', Donne puts the conceit of Bedford as temple to further use: not only does he foreground his petition for access, but he extends the metaphor to introduce more complex elements of his religious games. Donne's extension of the temple metaphor into Protestant tourism to Catholic monuments both playfully evokes the Catholic world, and his own background, but once again positions him denominationally with Bedford. In an astonishing comparison, Donne compares Bedford first with Rome, and then the Escorial:

> In all religions, as much care hath bin
> Of temples' frames and beauty as rites within.
>
> As all which go to Rome, do not thereby
> Esteem religions, and hold fast the best,
> But serve discourse, and curiosity
> With that which doth religion but invest,
> And shun th'entangling labyrinths of schools,
> And make it wit, to think the wiser fools.
>
> So in this pilgrimage I would behold
> You, as you're Virtues temple, not as she:

Virginia Woolf at the Hogarth Press, 1932: 24. Maurer more figuratively plays on Woolf's own famous title: 'Donne moves out of the intimate, pretty room-of-their-own he has been building to continue the poem as a sermon about the behaviour that constitutes effective action in the world.' Maurer links Donne's spatial metaphor with the intimacy it attempts to create: Donne not only reaches out across space but creates his own shared world for himself and Bedford. Margaret Maurer, 'The Real Presence of Lucy Russell, Countess of Bedford, and the Terms of John Donne's "Honour is So Sublime Perfection"', *ELH*, Vol. 47, No. 2, (1980), pp. 205-234: 227.

> What walls of tender crystal her enfold,
> What eyes, hands, bosom, her pure altars be
> And after this survey, oppose to all
> Babblers of chapels, you th'Escorial.
> (ll.35-48)

In terms of the poem's argument, the double analogy demonstrates that in seeking to 'survey the edifice' of Bedford, Donne only seeks to see her, he does not dare to gain access to her mind and soul - just as tourists visiting Rome or the Escorial visit them for the architectural value, leaving theological controversy at the door. The limits of Donne's petition were already indicated in its phrase 'they sue/*But that* I may survey the edifice' (l.34, emphasis mine). If Donne achieves access to Bedford, this metaphor partly assures he will not encroach upon the boundaries of the acquaintance.

It is a knowingly dicey move to make the Protestant Bedford, not only the tenor of 'Rome', the seat of Catholicism, but also emphatically to make her Philip II's recent architectural prestige project: 'you th'Escorial'. Donne further complicates the confessional positioning by swinging across the spectrum in his register: whilst metaphorically making his journey to Bedford a Protestant grand tour, he then knowingly reverses the claim by making it a Catholic 'pilgrimage'. The ambiguity of Bedford either as the representation, or the real bodily manifestation, of virtue - 'I would behold/You, as you're Virtue's temple, not as she' - introduces the logic behind the very controversies of iconoclasm and true presence which Donne claims his secular tourist would leave to 'th'entangling labyrinths of schools'. Simultaneously, however it also proposes the familiar Pauline imagery of the human

body as a temple of the holy spirit.[74] Finally, Donne's *coup de grâce* declaration of Bedford as the Catholic Escorial introduces and opposes Puritans, the pejorative 'Babblers of chapels', making them another ridiculed sect.

As a petitionary strategy, the specificity of Donne's elaborate vehicle first allows him to align himself religiously with Bedford, by making himself a curious, but guarded, Protestant tourist looking up at the impressive edifice of a Catholic other. Donne uses a similar technique in his verse letter to his patrons Lady Carey and Mrs Essex Riche, where he humorously exploits the Catholic locale of his travels, to justify his poem's double address:

> Madam,
> Here, where by all all saints invoked are,
> 'Twere too much schism to be singular,
> And 'gainst a practice general to war.
>
> Yet, turning to saints, should my humility
> To other saint than you, directed be,
> That were to make my schism heresy.
>
> Nor would I be a convertite so cold
> As not to tell it; if this be too bold
> Pardons are in this market cheaply sold.
>
> Where, because faith is in too low degree,
> I thought it some apostleship in me
> To speak things which by faith alone I see.
> (ll.1-12)

Here, in Amiens, Donne is quite literally a tourist in a Catholic country. It is notable how Donne performs comic disdain for the *mise-en-scène* not only to solve the awkward problem of addressing two potential patrons simultaneously, but also to clearly define himself against the backdrop. Donne's repetition of 'all' puns on the

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[74] 'Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?' 1 Corinthians 3. 16 (AV).

feast of All Saints. He bathetically punctures the feast as he conceives it as observed by Catholics: 'all' (as in everyone) praying to 'all saints' suggests a comic excess, and a lack of discernment in Catholic veneration. Whilst Donne locates himself 'here', this parodic opening very clearly positions him outside the Catholic crowd, with their plurality of venerated saints. Whereas 'Madam, Reason is our soul's left hand' carefully specifies a suitably Protestant intercessor for its Protestant recipient, here Donne openly co-opts Catholic metaphor to parodically undermine the doctrine. Donne justifies his address of both Carey and Riche, by supposedly conforming to the local, expedient veneration of all saints, rather than schismatically rejecting the practice. But he then sets Carey and Riche above those Catholic saints because, he says, to turn to saints other than them would be 'heresy'. 'Heresy' itself, however, still jokingly implies that Donne's veneration of Carey and Riche is perfectly within the confines of Catholic doctrine. Donne's gleeful extension of his Catholic conceit undermines the vehicle, whilst simultaneously praising and amusing his Protestant addressees.

The combined specificity and ambiguity of Donne's vehicles, however, brings us to the second petitionary purpose of this imagery in both 'Madam, You have refined me' and 'Madam, Here where by all all saints invoked are'. Like 'Madam, You have refined me' Donne carefully deploys the register of different religious identities. It is extremely unclear metaphorically what Donne is converting from and to. 'Nor' makes Donne's unspoken conversion an alternative (and rejected) choice of heretically appealing to the Catholic saints, as opposed to appealing to Carey and Riche. It is unclear therefore if his conversion is from Catholicism to his veneration

of Carey and Riche. Yet, as we have seen, his use of 'schism' and 'heresy' playfully treats what in any Catholic reality would be blasphemous praise of the patrons as if it were Catholic doctrine. In some ways, it actually does not matter: even if what Donne claims to convert to is unclear, a conversion does appear in Donne's vehicles. The disparaging reference to the economy of indulgences - 'Pardons are in this market cheaply sold' (l.9) - which Donne jokingly uses to excuse himself from having potentially offended his recipients with his 'bold' praise, is appropriately followed by a Lutheran declaration of his faith in Carey and Riche despite their absence: 'I thought it some apostleship in me,/ To speak things, which by faith alone I see' (ll.10-11). Crawford has expressed frustration with the critical treatment of Donne's theological vehicles in 'Madam, Reason is our soul's left hand': 'The theological frame … is not a "borrowing" of theological terms so much as an engagement with them, and the letter is best understood as an invitation to a conversation about religion.'[75] This 'invitation to a conversation about religion' could also be understood as a petitionary strategy for friendship: Donne's ability to conjure different denominational affiliations, and to think creatively with them in his vehicles, showcases his depth of theological knowledge. Donne's ability to '[converse] about religion' is as promising a service as his literary ability itself.

Having sued for access, and showcased his intellectual talent, the close of 'Madam, You have refined me' refocuses on Bedford's own action, to subtly petition his patron to act on his behalf. Donne's praise of Bedford reintroduces the term 'deeds', which described Marian intercession in 'The Litany':

If good, and lovely were not one, of both

[75] Crawford (2014): 129.

> You were the transcript and original.
> The elements, the parent, and the growth
> And every piece of you, is both their all.
> So entire are all your deeds, and you, that you
> Must do the same thing still: you cannot two.
> (ll.55-60)

On the surface, Donne describes Bedford as she is; however, in the classic hallmark of panegyric, Donne's praise of Bedford's virtuous 'deeds' impels her to act according to an ideal. Whigham notes the coercive power of characterising a respondent: 'The letter writer understood the force of imposing on the patron a mantle of generosity, the refusal of which disconfirmed the patron's status, not the petitioner's.'[76] 'Deed' in and of itself suggests action. It is a word which Donne frequently returns to in his praise of his patrons: Donne likewise describes Bedford's 'deeds, accesses and restraints' (l.11) in 'Madam, Reason is our soul's left hand', and in his poem to Carey and Riche he uses 'deed' to counsel virtuous action:

> Virtue's but aguish, when tis several,
> By occasion waked, and circumstantïal,
> True virtue's soul always in all deeds all.
> (ll.34-36)

This particular assertion that true virtuous action should occur unprompted, is significant in a poem which does not make any form of open request. Donne allows his patrons to exercise their spontaneous virtue, by offering them no obvious 'occasion' to use their influence. 'Madam, You have refined me' is not a poem which focuses on Bedford's role as intercessor to the same extent that 'Madame, Reason is our Soules left hand'. Nevertheless, Donne's association between 'deeds' and

[76] Whigham (1981): 873.

intercession in 'The Litany' helps to illuminate why 'deeds' are such a suggestive quality to praise in women whose deeds could be his helps.

Given this emphasis on Bedford's potentially intercessory action, it is unsurprising that Donne closes 'Madam, You have refined me' with a final image of Bedford, once more, as a realm-travelling angel:

> Leaving, then, busy praise, and all appeal
> To higher courts, sense's decree is true;
> The mine, the magazine, the common weal,
> The story of beauty in Twick'nham is, and you.
> Who hath seen one, would both; As, who had bin
> In Paradise would seek the cherubin.
> (ll.67-72)

Mueller reads the 'praise' and 'appeal' to 'higher courts' as Donne laying 'aside the dictates of reason and the witness of memory – the mind's faculties – to accept the verdict of sense perception, the only authoritative judge of beauty.'[77] But the vehicle of appealing to 'higher Courts', simultaneously conjures up the earthly judicial system, the royal court on earth, and the royal court of heaven. The unclear subject of 'Leaving… all appeal' creates a momentary image of Bedford herself as pleading intercessor, rather than Donne appealing to 'the dictates of reason and memory'.

Donne's metaphor of Bedford as a 'cherubin' creates the same Edenic connotations at work behind the image of Mary as a 'she-cherubin' in 'The Litany'. His evocation of the cherubim's guardianship of man's lost paradise, returns to the question of access to Eden, the ultimate exclusive space. To gain access to Twickenham as an Eden-upon-Thames is to return to the home of the tree of life, which the 'cherubin' guard. The metaphor, however, leaves unoccupied, the role of

[77] Mueller (2015): 461, concurring with Robbins (2013): 688.

God himself. As well as guarding the tree of life, biblically the throne of God is flanked by cherubim: 'O Lord of hosts, God of Israel, that dwellest between the cherubims'.[78] The image of '[seeking] the cherubin' in Paradise closes the poem with a reminder of Donne's petition for access, but it also represents Bedford herself as the access point to highest heights of human hierarchy: the monarch.

Auberlan's reading of 'Madam, Reason is our soul's left hand' separates its petitionary purpose from its indirect style: the poem is 'basically indistinguishable from an epistle mendicant *although* it is characterised by an extraordinary degree of indirectness' [emphasis mine]. My examination of Donne's secular petitionary style to his patrons has demonstrated, however, that 'indirectness' is a crucial strategy. Donne's vehicles often perform subtle deeper ideological work beyond their obvious referents, teasing the poem's recipients with both parody and praise of their religious identities, and offering theology as a mutual passion which may develop their relationship. Even the poem which most explicitly claims to be a petition embeds an implicit petition for employment within the poem's overall explicit (if complex) petition for access.

Donne's style of petition showcases another courtly skill – discretion. Maurer describes:

> To Donne's patrons, these arguments have an important operational dimension. They reveal his capacity to function in the sphere he seeks to enter. His command of the idiom of the court implicitly recommends him to the figures that idiom empowers.[79]

[78] Isaiah 37.16 (AV). See also Ezek. 1.4-28, 10.1-22, and Psalm 80.1.

[79] Maurer (1980): 212. It should be noted that her focus is on Bedford's own discretion, which called into question by the Salisbury episode. In her essay, Maurer explicitly states her aim to redress the unequal balance in verse letters scholarship: the texts are most often used to learn about Donne, rather than Bedford. 'Our sense of her [Bedford] is restricted almost entirely to those parts of her life and character that seem relevant to our understanding of the verses written for her. It is an incidental goal of this essay to say more about her than is customarily said in footnotes to his poems. My

Whigham similarly notes that early modern petitions for employment were in epideitic: 'one may speak well of a subject and of one's own expressive skills at the same time.'[80] Analysing Dr Toby Matthew's petition for Deanery of Durham in the early 1580s, Whigham highlights:

> what is striking is that these letters present so little discussion of Mathew's qualifications for the office … The letters thus provide evidence not of particular professional competences but of "the suppler skills of the courtier". But even these political skills are demonstrated principally at the stylistic level and are not addressed directly.[81]

Donne's verse letters, which petition for courtly employment, similarly demonstrate his eligibility for the work: he speaks the language of court.

Crawford further notes that the concept of 'discretion' was important to both Donne and Bedford as they had both been linked to religious positions that were oblique to strict conformity: Donne through his Catholic heritage and Bedford through her support of the Essex rebellion and radical ministers.[82] The letter to Goodere, despite its criticism of court and of Catholicism, demonstrates how vitally important court mediation was to a career. Donne's petitions appeal to Bedford to work on Donne's behalf as an intercessor, and the texts themselves serve as material intercessors between Bedford and Donne. Mitchell reminds us that, in reality, Donne's letters required a further level of mediation through the letters' erased bearers; in the case of letters to Bedford, this was often Henry Goodere. These acts of

primary objective, however, is to show that this more detailed account of her will affect how we read the poems for which she is a correspondent.' Maurer (1980): 205. On the Salisbury episode, see Maurer (1980): pp.216-223.

[80] Whigham (1981): 866.

[81] Whigham (1981): pp.870-871.

[82] Crawford (2014): 128.

intercession suggest Donne's wider awareness of social stratification — awareness of the physical and social distance which must be breached to gain access to power. Donne's petitions to Bedford demonstrate the skills required to navigate this system.

The scholarship on the role of 'discretion' in Donne's sermons further elucidates the discretion of Donne's petitions.[83] Jeanne Shami has emphasised that Donne believed the discretion of the preacher was both to choose a scriptural text appropriate to his congregation, and make his exegesis and oratory appropriate for them.[84] In this sense, Donne's petitionary poems are discreet, in that their vehicles are carefully adapted to communicate decorously with their recipients. These poems also offer moral advice, even if their emphasis on virtuous action is self-serving counsel. The role of the preacher's discretion is also significant in Donne's *Devotions,* a text which not only elucidates the difference between petitioning a secular patron and petitioning God, but also Donne's ability to achieve both simultaneously.

II. Petitioning God

Having examined how Donne petitions his worldly patrons, I will now explore how he petitions God in his *Devotions*. The text is in no way removed from patronage: it is

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[83] Shami herself even briefly refers to the verse letters: 'Accordingly, we should not be surprised to find Donne constantly reiterating, as he did even in the verse epistles, the need for both zeal and discretion in his sermons.' Jeanne Shami, 'Donne on Discretion', *ELH,* Vol. 47, No. 1, (1980), pp.48-66: 55.

[84] Shami (1980): 48. David Colclough and Peter McCullough have both used Donne's sermon to the Royal Household as an example of how Donne tailors his sermons to the social roles of his audience. See David Colclough, 'Upstairs, Downstairs: Doctrine and Decorum in Two Sermons by John Donne', *Huntington Library Quarterly*, Vol. 73, No. 2, (2010), pp. 163-191. Peter E. McCullough, 'Donne as Preacher at Court: "Precarious Inthronization"' in *John Donne's Professional Lives* ed David Colclough, Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2003: 185. Nelson has also argued how Donne's use of worldly images is a form of tailoring more generally for a fallen audience: 'Donne's strategy of courtship is directed at the needs and condition of his audience who, being human and fallen, are inclined more to the ways of the flesh than to the ways of the spirit.' Nelson (2005): 85.

dedicated to Prince Charles, was sent to Elizabeth Stuart, Queen of Bohemia, and describes Donne's relationship with King James.[85] Like the verse letters, the text is 'occasional', inspired by, and supposedly composed during, Donne's convalescence from a life-threatening illness. Whilst the first-person voice feels intensely personal in its interrogation of God, the voice also engages in, and draws on, the tradition of the meditation.[86] His autobiographical subheadings prompt expansive theological consideration of more generalised human experience, designed to encourage the reader's own meditation. But Donne's personal petition of God is performed for an audience: this double perspective allows Donne to simultaneously withdraw from, and engage in, secular petition. Donne's self-conscious spiritual journey through the text, with its detachment from the world and desire for heaven, concomitantly exposes the power structures which underlie the verse letters.

Petitioning a divine power, as opposed to an earthly power, disrupts the questions of spatial access which were central to Donne's petitions to his female patrons. In the early stages of Donne's sickness, his persona learns that, unlike a secular power, God does not need to be petitioned for access. This realisation is provoked in the narrative by Donne's inability to pray in church. Understanding

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[85] John Stubbs also emphasises that Donne was very acute to the decorum of the dedication: 'Donne had checked with Sir Robert Ker, a member of the Prince's household, whether this would be appropriate'. John Stubbs, *John Donne: The Reformed Soul,* London: Penguin, 2007: 404.

[86] 'Most early Stuart meditations shifted easily between some combination of the first-person singular of the Everyman and the more didactic first-person plural, so that the voice is generic and exemplary even when it expresses penitence or joy.' Kate Narveson, 'The devotion', in *The Oxford Handbook of John Donne,* eds Dennis Flynn, M. Thomas Hester, and Jeanne Shami, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011: 309. Ryrie highlights that while meditations can sometimes be referred to as soliloquies, 'written meditations throughout our period are indeed commonly addressed to the self—in exhortation or in reproach—but they are equally often addressed to God, or not obviously addressed to anyone, and some are addressed to the Devil, to abstractions such as the Church or Faith, or to historical figures from Adam onwards. Many move seamlessly from one mode of address to another.' Ryrie (2013): 111.

God's accessibility leads the persona to focus upon the nature of petition itself, learning that the foundation of any petition should be total submission to God's will.

Donne tackles the problem of spatial proximity early in the *Devotions,* in Section 3: in the narrative, he must retire to his bed, preventing him from worship in Church. In the closing prayer of the preceding Section 2, Donne had already petitioned to see God, recalling the opening metaphor of 'Madam, Reason is our soul's left hand' and its distinction between 'those… who have the blessing of your sight' and those who don't:

> And, *O my God,* who madest thy selfe a *Light* in a *Bush,* in the middest of these *brambles,* & *thornes* of a sharpe sicknesse, appeare unto me so, that I may see thee, and know thee to be my *God,* applying thy selfe to me, even in these sharp, and thorny passages.[87]

Donne's petition is clearly not simply for physical access. The petition to 'see' God is reminiscent of the recurring anxious plea in the Psalms for God not to withdraw his face.[88] The physical prompt of the section is that '*the function of the Senses… change and faile',* however, in a traditional connection sight becomes spiritual perception. The 'thorns' of Donne's sickness suggest the link between the suffering of sickness and Christ's passion. Suffering is an obstacle to faith which, if overcome, may lead to salvation. The prayer closes with Christ's sacrifice: 'Doe this, *O Lord,* for his sake, who was not the lesse, the *King of Heaven,* for thy suffering him to be *crowned* with *thornes*, in this world.[89] The development of the passage from sight to understanding, develops also with the image of right-reading 'even in these sharp, and thorny

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[87] Donne, *Devotions*: 14.
[88] See for instance Psalm 102.2 (AV): 'Hide not thy face from me in the day when I am in trouble; incline thine ear unto me: in the day when I call answer me speedily.'
[89] Donne, *Devotions*: 14.

passages'. Sickness is both a journey to undertake, a 'passage', but also a text to be read and correctly interpreted. We can already see here how physical access will not be the same problem that it was in the verse letters. Prayer seeks to close a mental and spiritual gap. Whilst he must still undergo a physical ordeal, the 'passage' to be made is no longer a spatial journey.

Whereas Donne's verse letters to Bedford focus on the enabling space of Twickenham, in Section 3 of the *Devotions* the bedridden Donne struggles with his isolation from a crucial enabling space. He is unable to pray in church:

> How shal they come to thee, whom thou hast nayled to their bed? Thou art in *Congregation*, & I in a solitude: when the *Centurions* servant lay sicke at home, his *Master* were faine to bring him to *Christ;* he could not come. … *Peters* mother lay sicke of a fever, and Christ came to her; she could not come to him. My friends may carrie mee home to thee, in their prayers in the *Congregation;* Thou must come home to me in the visitation of thy *Spirit,* and in the seale of thy *Sacrament*; But when I am cast into this bedd, my slacke sinewes are yron fetters, and those thin sheets, yron dores upon me; and *Lord, I have loved the habitation of thy house, and the place where thine honour dwelleth;* I lye here, and say, *Blessed are they, that dwell in thy house;* but I cannot say, *I will come into thy house, and the place where thine honour dwelleth;* I may say, *In thy feare will I worship towards thy holy Temple*, but I cannot say in thy holy *Temple*.[90]

Ryrie has observed that early modern prayer was commonly imagined to *lift* man up to God's presence, as in the words of Elnathan Parr: 'Prayer is a golden chaine, which God lets downe from heauen; when we lay hold of it, we thinke we draw God to vs; but indeed, wee are by it drawne vp to him'.[91] The passage shares Parr's sense of prayer that lifts up, as the congregation's interceding prayer carries Donne to heaven for healing. Where Parr emphasises, however, that prayer's power of connection comes from God himself, the sick persona in the early stages of the

[90] Donne, *Devotions:* pp.16-17.
[91] Elnathan Parr, *Abba father: or, a plaine and short direction concerning priuate prayer. Also, sundry godly admonitions concerning time, and the well vsing of it,* (1618) quoted in Ryrie (2013): 101.

Devotions is still focused on the act of prayer in church. Nevertheless, the reader can see the change in direction. The prayers of Donne's friends 'carrie' him to heaven, however Christ himself can 'come home' to Donne: this may be achieved by taking the sacrament in church, but also simply in Donne's own body in and of itself as a Pauline temple of God. Unlike Donne's worldly patrons, God can come to him: even in 2.Prayer Donne petitions God to 'appear unto' him. Donne's reference to the centurion in 3.Expostulation may remind the reader of his words: 'Master, I am not worthy that thou shouldest come *under my roof*' [emphasis mine].[92] All Donne's examples from Matthew 8 demonstrate that Christ's healing is a moveable feast.

Donne's persona, however, fixates on the church alone as 'home' —as the inaccessible and desired space. His friends may pray for him 'in Congregation', in the house of God, in contrast to Donne's 'solitude'. This anxiety of his isolation from 'they', from a desired physical location, creates a polarity reminiscent of the 'here' and 'there' of the end of 'Madam, Reason is our soul's left hand'. His tissue of psalm quotations, is torturously bound to literal location: 'I lye here, and say, *Blessed are they, that dwell in thy house;* but I cannot say, *I will come into thy house, and the place where thine honour dwelleth.'* The interpretation follows the Geneva Bible's gloss on the Psalm as 'David complaineth that he cannot have access to the Church of God to make profession of his faith, and to profit in religion.' The persona obsesses over prepositions and directions - 'I may say, *In thy feare wil I worship towards thy holy Temple*, but I cannot say in thy holy *Temple*' – 'towards' and 'in' underlining the literal, rather than figurative, understanding of the physical church from which

[92] Matthew 8.8 (AV).

Donne is isolated. Richard Strier finds in this passage the same 'discounting God's ubiquity… characteristic of the group associated with Andrewes and Laud. … God is not, effectively, everywhere: "Thou art in the congregation, and I in a solitude."'[93] He further argues 'Face to face, in solitude, is the wrong way to approach God. Donne does not think that any fully positive religious action can be performed in private.'[94] This reading, however, takes Donne's early, sick persona too much at his own word. In the passage, Donne plants the seeds for the realisation which both his spiritually progressed persona, and the reader, will learn: God does not need to be petitioned for access.

Donne's use of Psalm 84 in the passage demonstrates how deliberately he avoids the metaphor of heaven as court, which was so central to the verse letters. The conventional translation of the Psalm offers Donne the opportunity to use secular imagery: '*the courts* of the Lord'.[95] Donne's decision not to draw on this inviting imagery is significant: his emphasis is placed more on the communal: 'congregation', 'house' and 'temple'. The image of Donne imprisoned in his body recalls the imagery in Donne's letter to Goodere, expressing anxious separation from power. Imprisonment here is not simply Donne's sickness dividing him from church, but his own human frailty dividing him from God. Donne avoids the secular

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[93] Richard Strier, 'John Donne and the politics of devotion' in Donna B Hamilton and Richard Strier eds, *Religion, Literature and Politics in Post-Reformation England, 1540-1688,* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996: 103.

[94] Strier (1996): 104.

[95] 'My soul longeth, yea, and fainted for *the courts* of the Lord', Psalm 84.2 (Geneva); 'My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of the LORD: my heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God.' Psalm 82.2 (AV); 'For a day in thy courts is better than a thousand *other where*: I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tabernacles of wickedness.' Psalm 84.10 (Geneva); 'For a day in thy courts is better than a thousand. I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness.' Psalm 84.10 (AV).

vehicles of access he used in the Goodere letter. The body begins as prison - 'my slacke sinewes are yron fetters' - culminating at the end of the Expostulation as trapping man between earth and heaven:

> As yet God suspends mee betweene *Heaven* and *Earth,* as a *Meteor*; and I am not in Heaven, because an earthly bodie clogges me, and I am not in the Earth, because a heavely *Soule* sustaines mee.[96]

This shares the same anxiety of entrapment, and separation between the worlds, as the verse letters and the Goodere letter ('The Roman profession seems… to bring us nearer heaven; but then that carries heaven farther from us, … by making us pass so many Courts … in this life… and lying in painful prison in the next'). There is the same sense of paralysis as the Goodere letter; the present participle 'suspends' particularly emphasises the torturous sense of unending entrapment, as if poised for ever 'between'. Crucially, however, as the Expostulation develops Donne zooms increasingly outwards from his own individual predicament to man's general plight, caught between the earth he is made of and the spiritual world he desires. This is a spiritual, not a secular, problem.

Donne's confinement not only causes him to fret about the physical location of prayer, but even prayer itself as a public performance which he is too sick to enact:

> Why callest thou me from my calling? *In the grave no man shall praise thee;* In the doore of the grave, this sicke bed, no Man shal heare mee praise thee: Thou hast not opened my lips, that my mouth might shew *thee* thy praise, but that my mouth might shew *foorth* thy praise.[97]

[96] Donne, *Devotions*: 17.
[97] Donne, *Devotions*: 17.

Donne frustratedly echoes the liturgy of morning and evening prayer which he cannot recite, either as a congregant or celebrant:

> *Then likewise he [the Minister] shall say*
> O Lord, open thou our lippes
> *Aunswere* And our mouth shall shewe furth thy prayse[98]

Donne's distinction between 'showing' praise and 'shewing forth' praise puts an alarming emphasis on Donne's fellow men as the audience of prayer, rather than God. Donne consciously triggers the widespread seventeenth century anxiety about prayer as spiritually empty performance.[99] If we understand 'praise' simply as prayer here, it shouldn't matter that 'no *Man* shal heare mee praise thee' [emphasis mine]: man is not the ultimate audience of prayer, just as 'showing' praise is sufficient and does not require externally 'showing forth'. Margret Fetzner argues that this moment demonstrates 'the speaker is not content to communicate but with God', but she does not acknowledge that fundamentally, according to the purpose of prayer, he should be.[100] Furthermore, in context Psalm 51, the origin of 'my mouth shall shew forth thy praise', focuses upon the internal spiritual state required to praise: 'Behold, thou desirest truth in *the inward parts*: and in *the hidden part* thou shalt make me to know wisdom' [emphasis mine] (Psalm 51.6); 'Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me.' (Psalm 51.10).[101] Shewing forth praise follows from internal spiritual work. The Geneva Bible's gloss emphasises not the vocalization of praise, but the redemption it celebrates: 'By giving me occasion to

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[98] *Book of Common Prayer* (1559): 104.
[99] See Chapter Two: 80.
[100] Fetzner (1988): 236.
[101] Psalm 51.6 (AV); Psalm 51.10 (AV).

praise thee, when thou shalt forgive my sins.'[102] 'Praise' in this passage, as well as describing personal prayer, is also tied to Donne's role as preacher praising God in his sermons — which more fully requires an audience. We shall return to this anxiety of the bed-bound preacher.

In 3.Prayer Donne reaches the realisation we saw embedded in the Expostulation, that God is always accessible:

> O most mightie and most merciful *God,* who though thou have taken me off my feet, hast not taken me off of my foundation, which is *thy selfe*, who though thou have removed me from that upright forme, in which I could stand, and see thy throne, the *Heavens,* yet hast not removed from mee that light, by which I can lie and see thy selfe, who, though thou have weakened my bodily knees, that they cannot bow to thee, hast yet left mee the knees of my heart, which are bowed unto thee evermore; As thou hast made this *bed* thine *Altar,* make me thy *Sacrifice*; and as thou makest thy *Sonne Christ Jesus* the Priest, so make me his *Deacon*, to minister to him in a chereful surrender of my body and soule to thy pleasure, by his hands. *O God, my God*, I come unto thee, (so as I can come, I come to thee, by imbracing thy comming to me) I come in the confidence, and in the application of thy servant *Davids* promise, *That thou wilt make all my bed in my sicknesse; All my bedd;* That which soever I turne, I may turne to thee.[103]

In comparison to the architectural metaphor of access in 'Madam, You have refined me', in 3.Prayer Donne imagines his own body as building to emphasise God's presence: 'though thou have taken me off my feet, hast not taken me off of my foundation, which is *thy* selfe'. God as foundation binds man and God with God's stabilising and inextricable presence. The Expostulation implied the Pauline metaphor of the human body as God's temple: 'Thou must come home to me in the visitation of thy *Spirit'*.[104] This metaphor is fully realised in the Prayer's architectural

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[102] Psalm 51 gloss (Geneva).
[103] Donne, *Devotions*: 18.
[104] 'Know ye not, that your body is the temple of the holy Ghost, *which is* in you, whom ye have of God? and ye are not your own.' 1 Corinthians 6.19 (Geneva).

conceit, resolving the problem of Donne being unable to access the physical church. God can be accessed from within. Donne also shifts the location of God's 'house' from the church to Heaven: 'though thou have removed me from that upright forme, in which I could stand, and see thy throne, the *Heavens*'. Although the prostrated Donne can no longer see the sky, he is lit from within: God 'hast not removed from mee that light, by which I can lie and see thy selfe'. Donne echoes the performed physical gestures of prayer, to refocus on prayer as an internal process: 'though thou have weakened my bodily knees, that they cannot bow to thee, hast yet left mee the knees of my heart, which are bowed unto thee evermore'. Donne returns to God as focal point of prayer, 'bowed *unto thee* evermore' [emphasis mine], as opposed to fellow congregants as his prayer's audience. Ryrie has traced how the conventional images of kneeling hearts countered anxiety about the potentially spiritually bankrupt, physical performance of prayer: 'since the inner attitude matters more than the outward posture, sometimes kneeling can become entirely metaphorical'.[105] Donne may come to God internally: 'I come unto thee, *O God, my God*, I come unto thee, (so as I can come, I come to thee, by imbracing thy comming to me)'.[106] Furthermore, not only does Donne reach out for God, but God reaches out for him: 'I come to thee, by imbracing thy coming to me'. The prayer ends with a traditionally medieval conceptualisation of Christ's wounds themselves as open space: 'when I have deposed them [sins] in the wounds of thy Sonn'.[107] Unlike the transparent

[105] Ryrie (2013): 173.
[106] Donne, *Devotions*: 241. In a petition to James I from the Tower in November 1603, in a parallel scenario of physical restriction, Walter Raleigh writes 'I do therefore on the knees of my hart beseich your Majesty'. Quoted Daybell (2006): 253.
[107] Donne, *Devotions*: 241.

boundaries of Bedford's body, the body of Christ is entirely open: there is no division between Christ and man, no barriers to be traversed. The body of Christ, and crucially the salvation it offers is always accessible. There is no need to petition for access. As Donne overtly describes in a letter to Goodere:

> And that advantage of nearer familiarity with God, which the act of incarnation gave us, is grounded upon Gods assuming us, not our going to him. And, our accesses to his presence are but his descents into us; and when we get anything by prayer, he gave us before hand the thing and the petition.[108]

Donne presents the incarnation removing the boundaries of 'access'. God descends into man, 'assuming us', recalling Matthew 1.23: ' Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us.'[109] God's imminence is emphasised with the same two-way movement as the Prayer in Section 3: just as 'I come to thee, by imbracing thy coming to me', so here Donne describes how the desire for 'our accesses to his presence are but his descents into us'. In stark contrast to the need for secular access, to yearn for access to God is itself evidence of his presence and affect. Schoenfeldt compares this letter to Goodere with the *Holy Sonnets,* arguing that 'this deep awareness of divine familiarity and condescension does not preclude Donne's sense that God is also far more distant than even the most exalted monarch'.[110] In contrast, the *Devotions* is much more in keeping with the letter. The idea that God grants petitions before they have even been made introduces another crucial difference

[108] Donne, *Letters,* (1651): pp.110-111.
[109] Matthew 1.23 (AV).
[110] Schoenfeldt (1994): 81.

between secular petition, and the theology of petition, which is developed in the *Devotions.*

In Section 6, Donne introduces and contrasts secular and spiritual petition. In the narrative, the physician's fear prompts Donne to consider the role of fear in the relationship between God and man. Donne's meditations on God's unexpected accessibility not only reinforces the contrast between petitioning God and a patron, but also demonstrates just how deeply entrenched negotiations for limited access were to early modern secular power dynamics. In 6.Expostulation, Donne works through the question 'Dost thou command me to *speake* to thee, and commaund me to feare thee, and do these destroy one another?'[111] Donne foregrounds, not simply speaking to God, but petitioning God: 'I must then *speak* to thee, at all times, but when must I *feare* thee? At all times to. When didst thou rebuke any petitioner, with the name of *Importunate*.'[112] The persona struggles with the possibility that the petitioner's unlimited freedom to badger God might test his patience with the petitioner — recalling Whittington's observation that one of the tensions of supplication is that 'instead of inhibiting violence, by a strange and sickening logic, supplication may end up provoking more.'[113] Donne assures himself, however, that God would never 'rebuke a petitioner', by referring and expanding upon the parable of the friend 'importuned' for bread at midnight (Luke 11.5):

> Thou hast proposd to us a *parable* of a *Judge* that did Justice at last, *because the client was importunate, and troubled him;* But thou hast told us plainely, that thy use in that *parable,* was not, that thou was troubled with our importunities, but (as thou sayest there) *That wee should alwayes pray.* And to the same purpose thou proposest another, that *If I presse my friend, when hee is in bed, at*

[111] Donne, *Devotions*: 30.
[112] Donne, *Devotions*: 30.
[113] Whittington (2016): 3.

> *midnight, to lend mee bread, though hee will not rise because I am his friend, yet because of mine importunitie, he will.* God will do this, whensoever thou askest, and never call it *importunitie.* Pray in thy bed at midnight, and God wil not say, I will heare thee to morrow upon thy knees, at thy bed side; pray upon thy knees there, then, and God will not say, I will heare thee on *Sunday,* at *Church*; *God* is no *dilatory God,* no froward *God;* Praier is never *unseasonable, God* is never asleep nor absent. But, *O my God,* can I doe this, and *feare* thee; come to thee, and speak to thee, in all places, at all houres and *feare* thee? Dare I aske this question? There is more boldnesse in the *question*, than in the *comming*: I may doe it, though I *feare* thee; I cannot doe it, except I feare thee.[114]

Donne's reimagining of the parable contrasts petitioning a secular and a spiritual power, to highlight the physical restrictions of petitioning a mortal. In comparison to the mortal friend 'God is never asleep or absent'; you may speak to God 'in all places, at all houres'. The imagined capriciousness and commandments of the 'friend' makes this friend noticeably royal, without being described as such. Worldly power has already entered the passage with the parable of the Justice, or the importunate widow (Luke 18.1-8): in the symbolism of the parable itself the Justice stands for God, but Donne's use of the vehicle here also introduces worldly justice systems and power structures into his comparison. Daybell has also noted that in petition of Frances, Countess of Essex, seeking Cecil's assistance after the execution of her husband 'wrote that she had presented to his wife "the image of the importunate widow mentioned in the scripture"'.[115] The importunate widow was, therefore, a useful scriptural counterpart to draw on in secular petitions, building on the common petitionary phrase to 'importune'.[116]

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[114] Donne, *Devotions*: 31. 'If I presse my friend, when hee is in bed, at midnight, to lend mee bread, though hee will not rise because I am his friend, yet because of mine importunitie, he will.' Donne, *Devotions*: 31.

[115] Daybell (2006): 254.

[116] Daybell also provides other examples of female petitioners importuning: 'Mary Everard wrote to Bassingbourne Gawdy, "I will kneele on my knees vnto you to crave your favour". Muriel Tresham,

The veiled allusion to royalty at work behind this passage is further clarified by a sermon of 1620, in which Donne makes explicitly the same comparison between petitioning secular and divine power:

> If we have an apprehension when we beginne to pray, that God doth not heare us, not regard us, God is content in the fervor of that prayer, we say with David, *Evigila Domine,* and *Surge Domine*, Awake O Lord, and Arise O Lord; God is content to be told, that he was in bed, and asleepe, when he should heare us… Bring a petition to any earthly prince, and say to him, *Evigila,* and *Surge,* would your Majesty would awake and reade this petition… what Prince would not (and justly) conceive an indignation against such a petitioner? … And yet our long-suffering, and our patient God, (must we say our humble and obedient God) endures all this.[117]

Donne evokes the same scenario — a prayer received at night. Here, however, Donne does not use the parable of the importunate friend, but makes an explicit secular comparison: this is not 'a friend' importuned for 'bread', but an 'earthly prince' asked to 'reade this petition'. Satisyingly, petition accordingly shifts in the secular analogy from a prayer to a written letter – 'reade this'. The impossibility of the 'earthly' scenario is contrasted with 'our long-suffering, and our patient God'. When Donne makes the royal comparison explicit, however, he pulls his punches: 'what Prince would not (*and justly conceive*) an indignation against such a petitioner?' [emphasis mine]. When the comparison is implicit, Donne does not similarly compromise.

Arthur Marotti has argued that 'Through contrasts as well as analogies between the monarchical and the divine, the courtly and the heavenly, Donne

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writing to secure leniency for her recusant husband, described herself as "a looly wife on my knees with importunacy". Daybell (2006): pp.250-251.

[117] Sermon Preached at Lincolns Inn on Trinity Sunday, 1620 on Genesis 18.25, *The Oxford Edition of the Sermons of John Donne,* v.1.367-72 (p.11).

reinforced the connection between the political and the religious in his sacred poetry'.[118] The passage from 6.Expostulation is an example of the significance of the implicit contrast between the monarchical and the divine. Unlike an earthly power, God does not control access, 'God wil not say, I will heare thee to morrow', nor continually change the conditions and locations required to successfully petition: 'pray upon thy knees there, then, and God will not say, I will heare thee on Sunday, at Church'. The imperious instruction to 'pray upon thy knees' especially reinforces the image of kneeling before a king, as well as penitent prostration and congregational kneeling. The imperious maliciousness is particularly emphasised with 'froward': 'disposed to go counter to what is demanded or what is reasonable; perverse, difficult to deal with, hard to please'.[119] R.W. Hoyle notes that 'it was part and parcel of the Secretary's and Master's trade to be aware of the monarch's mood before their audience'.[120] This transparent, un-necessary and unreasonable capriciousness underlines and exposes such hoop-jumping in the secular world.

Petitioning a secular power is a strategic balancing act. Sometimes it requires the right intermediary and, as we have seen throughout, it frequently relies on using the right style. As the verse letters to Bedford reinforce, access to the right physical space is also crucial. The persona's surprise at God's accessibility, and his difficulty imagining an authority who does not play games, underlines how integral the dance of access is to secular power. The physical and temporal conditions of secular

[118] Marotti (1986): 248.
[119] *froward,* adj., adv. & prep., sense 1a www.oed.com [date accessed 14.10.2020].
[120] Hoyle (2011): 556.

petition are set in contrast to the eternal patience and limitless accessibility of God.[121] Secular petition is tied to place and time, subject to wilful delay of 'delatory' powers. Petitionary prayer is not subject to time, 'Praier is never *unseasonable*', because neither is God: Donne may 'come to thee, and speak to thee, in all places, at all houres'. Donne's focus on spatial access at the end represents a significant shift in his thinking: 'There is more boldnesse in the *question*, than in the *comming*'. It is not bold to come to God, as it is to come before a king uninvited, because God may always be approached. The focus then shifts to the petition itself, 'the question': the petitioner needs to think carefully about what they petition for, and why.

Having reached this realisation, 6.Prayer introduces a very different, and frequently occurring petition in the *Devotions*:

> Let mee not therefore, *O my God,* bee ashamed of these *feares,* but let me feele them to determine, where his feare did, in a present submitting of all to thy will.[122]

Initially, Donne petitions to accept weakness, and culpability for it, rather than to be ashamed of sin. Donne then establishes Christ as an exemplary petitioner, echoing the Lord's Prayer: 'thy will be done'. Donne may also refer to Christ's prayers to God in the garden of Gethsemane.[123] Whilst Christ prays to escape his impending sacrifice, his second prayer is a submission to God's will: 'O my Father, if this cup

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[121] Nelson has similarly observed that 'The courtier-turned-preacher understood very well the workings of desire within hierarchy.' Secular courtship is 'a never-ending cycle where appetite begets satiety, and satiety begets a new appetite', however 'because God's goodness is inexhaustible, the courtship of God never ends'. Nelson (2005): 90.

[122] Donne, *Devotions*: 255.

[123] Anthony Raspa also sees a potential reference to Gethsemane earlier in the prayer: 'Many of thy blessed *Martyrs,* have passed out of this life, without any show of *feare*; But thy most *blessed Sonne* himself did not so.' Raspa (1975): 140.

may not pass away from me, except I drink it, thy will be done.'[124] Therefore, emulating Christ, whilst Donne's petition begins as an explicit request, it is in fact a petition for nothing except the ability to submit to God's will. In Section 5 Donne similarly petitions, even more explicitly using the Lord's prayer: Donne does not 'clog… my *prayers* to thee, with any limited conditions, but inwrap[s] all in those two petitions, *Thy kingdome come, thy will be done,* prosper him and relieve me, in thy way, in thy time, and in thy measure.'[125] 'Inwrap' is potentially a soft material gesture to the practice of enclosing a petition in with a letter to a chosen mediator.[126] In Section 5, Donne still petitions for 'relief', however tactically ambiguous that relief may be - potentially encompassing death as well as healing. In Section 6, however, Donne's petition is reduced to the 'present submitting of all to thy will'. These prayers contribute to the fundamental lesson of the *Devotions* as a whole, not to fear and struggle against sickness, but to accept God's will — whether that entails embracing death and potentially salvation, or trying to live a devout life until death. Theologically, however, they also reveal how petitionary prayer works. God, unlike

[124] Matthew 26.42 (AV). Even the first prayer to remove his fate is still framed in accordance to God's will: 'O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: *nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt.*' [emphasis mine].

[125] Donne, *Devotions*: 29. Donne also adapts the Lord's Prayer in 7.Prayer again to emphasise a submission to God's will: 'I humbly beseech thee, to make this correction which I acknowledg to be part of my *daily bread*, to tast so to me, not as I would, but as thou wouldest have it taste, and to conform my tast, and make it agreeable to thy will.' Donne, *Devotions*: 39. On the forwarding of petitions by an intercessor with a supporting letter, see Daybell (2006): 232. In a particularly striking variant of this practice, on the petition of William Forthe, a prisoner in the Fleet, his wife writes a short petition of intercession on the outer leaf of his petition. Hatfield, Hatfield House Archives, Cecil Papers Petitions 13.

[126] In his Sermon preached at St Pauls on Whistunday 1627, Donne shows similar sensitivity in his conceit to the petition as material document: 'As therefore the Church of God scarce presents any petition, any prayer to God, but it is subscribed by Christ; the Name of Christ, is for the most part the end, and the seale of all our Collects'. Potter and Simpson, *Sermons,* v.18.551-53 (p.379). Donne imagines the collects as a petitionary letter, authenticated by subscription and seal of Christ, as mediator.

a secular power, is not affected by prayer. God does not grant requests — as Donne writes to Goodere, 'when we get anything by prayer, he gave us before hand the thing and the petition.'[127] Any outcome of a successful petition was already part of God's plan. Aquinas and Augustine both framed prayer as seeking to alter the inward self, as John Preston argued:

> When you goe about to striue with God in prayer…you alter not him, but your selues: for those arguments that you vse, are not so much to perswade him to helpe you, as to perswade your hearts to more faith, to more loue, to more obedience.[128]

Donne's petition to submit to God's will fulfils this ideal of petition ultimately as persuading the petitioner's own heart to 'obedience'. To petition God for the ability to submit to his will is perhaps the best way of thinking about a petition at all. This exposes an underlying tension in secular petition also: in comparison to petitioning God, a secular power can be affected by a petition. [129] That is a petition's primary purpose. Nevertheless, there is an inescapable and inherent power dynamic in petition: a petition may not be granted; it might not even be opened. Fetzner sees Donne's letter to Goodere 'wavering between passive prostration before God and active attempts for his presence.[130] Theologically the tension between the desire to petition and the ultimate powerlessness of the petitioner is undoubtedly a problem, but one which the 'passivity' of submission to God's will is meant to solve – no matter how satisfactory a resolution that is. Fetzner's point, however, can be

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[127] Donne, *Letters,* (1651): 111.
[128] Richard Day, *The saints daily exercise A treatise concerning the whole dutie of prayer,* (1629) quoted in Ryrie, 2013: 120.
[129] Donne exploit this difference in the petition to George More discussed in the introduction. See Introduction: pp.17-18.
[130] Fetzner (1988): 250.

extended to the peculiar position of the secular petitioner also: knowing their own powerlessness to help their cause, but still feeling the desire to rhetorically act and persuade.[131]

III. *Petitioning Kings*

Section 8 is the most explicitly panegyric section of the *Devotions*: James sending his own physician in the narrative prompts Donne to celebrate his largesse, impelling Prince Charles to follow his example. The section demonstrates that despite the spiritual lessons of the *Devotions*, the text still exists within worldly power structures.[132] The section has a similar logic to the petitions to the female patrons in its connection between God and the patron: the use of '*Rex*' in the section's title, charges Donne's use of the word 'king' with potential royal reference. Whereas in the verse letters the comparison between the patron and God is justified through their virtue as representative of God's goodness ('divinity'), Donne can more explicitly link his royal patrons to God because of the sovereign's divine right. As he

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[131] Whittington contrastingly sees an innate power in the submission of the suppliant: 'If the pattern of plea and response sparks a reciprocal interaction in which asking necessitates answering, nevertheless, the content of the response remains contingent on the individual circumstances and actors. … The burden lies with the respondent to return an answer—and that burden can be felt as a crushing weight—but precisely what the answer will be remains a matter of individual choice and freedom. Nothing the suppliant does can entirely prescribe the result. … [T]he structure of the interaction acquires a destabilizing charge because of the paradox of the suppliant's powerful powerlessness', Whittington (2016): pp17-18.

[132] The politics of the *Devotions* led to some divisive contestation in the late twentieth century, which was as much tied to questioning new historicism as an approach, as it was about the text itself. Following from Cooper's argument in the late 1970s that in the *Devotions* Donne offered James advice on the rising anxiety about the Spanish Match, Dave Gray and Shami (1989) focused on the Spanish Match crisis and James's *Directions for Preaching*, positing that the text represented Donne's advocacy of not taking counsel exclusively from Buckingham. See Robert M. Cooper, "The Political Implications of Donne's Devotions," in Gary A. Stringer ed, *New Essays on Donne*, Salzburg: Institut fur Englische Sprache und Literatur, 1977; Dave Gray and Jeanne Shami, 'Political Advice in Donne's *Devotions*: "No man is an island"', *Modern Language Quarterly*, Vol.50, No.4, (1989): pp.337–56. See also Mary Arshagouni 'Politics of John Donne's Devotions Upon Emergent Occasions: Or, New Questions on the New Historicism', *Renaissance and Reformation/Renaissance et Réforme*, Vol.15, No.3, 1991, pp 233-48; Strier (1996); Brooke Conti 'The *Devotions Upon Emergent Occasions*: Popular and critical reception', *John Donne Journal* Vol. 26, (2007), pp. 365-372.

states in 8. Expostulation: '*O my God*… I speak of them as they are in *thee,* & of thee, as thou art *in them*'.[133] The Expostulation formally differs from the others: rather than entering into 'debatement with God', it makes a series of assertions. The Expostulation's focus upon kings, ties king and God formally, as well as in content, by using the space most frequently use to explore God's nature.

Rather than opening with a fanfare, Donne introduces kings with a meditation on the 'misery' of human mortality. The concomitant invitation for his royal dedicatee to consider his own mortality allows the bed-ridden Donne to showcase his powers as royal preacher:

> In this *world*, that is *Mankinde,* the highest ground, the eminentest *hils,* are *kings;* and have they line, and lead enough to fadome this *sea,* and say, My misery is but this deepe? Scare any misery equal to *sicknesse;* and they are subject to that equally, with their lowest subject. A glasse is not the lesse brittle, because a *King's* face is represented in it; nor a King the less brittle, because *God* is represented in him.[134]

By referring to 'kings' in the plural, Donne considers the general hierarchy of man to God, rather than a specific nation. He employs the commonplace of death as the great leveller: 'they are subject to that equally, with their lowest subject'. *All* are the subjects of death — king or no king. Donne's dedication to Prince Charles clearly invites the royal dedicatee to also address his own 'brittle' nature.

Mueller notes that while Donne directly quotes from Psalm 82 which was 'widely regarded in Donne's time as biblical proof for the divine rights of kings', his quotation emphasises royal mortality: ''I have said, Ye are gods; and all of you are

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[133] Donne, *Devotions*: 42.
[134] Donne, *Devotions*: 40. Lewalski has also argued that when reading the *Devotions* we should remember 'the near-identification of sermon and meditation in terms of methods and purposes'. Lewalski (1973): 83.

children of the most High. But ye shall die like men, and fall like one of the princes.'[135] Donne questions:

> Are they [kings] *gods*? He that calld them so, cannot flatter. They are *Gods,* but *sicke gods;* and *God* is presented to us under many human affections, as far as *infirmities*; God is called *angry,* and *sorry,* and *weary,* and *heavy*; but never a *sicke* God: for then hee might die like men, as our *gods* do.[136]

Donne's landing upon the reality of the Psalm's seventh verse, rather than the flattering ideology of the sixth, demonstrates the candidness appropriate for a regular court preacher. In the verse letters to the female patrons, the growing proximity between Donne and Bedford potentially alters the content, as discussed above.[137] In 8.*Expostulation* Donne describes James's encouragement of Donne to enter the ministry, and the section's narrative itself, the sending of the royal physician, is evidence of their relationship. Therefore, perhaps this passage demonstrates the intimacy gained from his royal service: he does not shy away from demonstrating that the human struggle of sickness which the text works through is as applicable to his royal dedicatee as it is to his general audience.[138] Donne openly discusses the two-way system of patronage in 'Honour is so sublime perfection'; in the *Devotions* rather than offering glorification and fame, Donne offers his spiritual services. The section is the ideal courtly petition — framed, just like his petitions to the female patrons, not only to petition his patron, but also to demonstrate the service he offers. His display did not go un-noticed: one year later, Charles chose

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[135] Mueller (2015): pp.567-568. Psalm 82.6-7

[136] Donne, *Devotions*: 41.

[137] See above: 133.

[138] Mueller also notes that 'James at the end of autumn [of 1623] had been struck by severe diarrhea that aggravated his chronic symptoms of bronchial congestion and "incredible sadness". Then the king's arthritis returned, compelling him "to sit in a chair and be carried or helped along by the support of others". Mueller (2015): 570. The memory of James' recent afflictions may have reinforced the human frailty of royalty.

Donne to preach the sermon at his first public appearance as King at St James Palace on Sunday 3rd April 1625.[139] Peter McCullough has noted that Donne 'gained a degree of royal favour under Charles that he did not enjoy from the King who played some part in chasing him into the pulpit.'[140]

In a similar tactic to Donne's praise of his female patron's virtue, Donne's celebration of James' royal largesse implicitly petitions Charles to continue to display the same generosity. In theory he merely offers gratitude for James' act of generosity during his sickness, but the implication to keep giving is clear. Whigham has highlighted that in George Puttenham's advice on petitioning princes, he suggested it was better to praise for previous acts of generosity then to ask for new ones: 'in craving their bountie or largesse… remember unto them all their former beneficences, making no mention of our owne merits'.[141] This strategy is clearly at work in the passage.

Developing from Psalm 82.6-7, Donne considers how God appears to man 'under many human affections', asserting that humility is the most godly aspect of kingliness. The passage overflows with the imagery of largesse:

> But their *Deitye* is better expressed in their *humility,* than in their *heighth*; when abounding and overflowing, as *God,* in means of doing good, they descend, as *God,* to a communication of their abundances with men, according to their necessities, then they are *Gods*.[142]

This celebration of kingly 'abundances' includes James's generosity in sending the royal physician; this is made more explicitly clear in the Expostulation. Donne's

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[139] McCullough (2003): 188.
[140] McCullough (2003): pp.187-88.
[141] George Puttenham, *The Arte of English Poesie,* quoted Whigham (1981): 871.
[142] Donne, *Devotions*: 41.

vehicles of 'abounding and overflowing' goodness participates in the traditional connection between largesse and the grace of god. Jean Starobinski in his monograph on largesse emphasises the importance of the etymological root of largesse, *largus,* meaning both an abundance of water, and a moral sense of generosity; elsewhere in the *Devotions* Donne makes the common connection between the fluid imagery of largesse and Christ's overabundant blood.[143] Donne's punning on Bedford's graciousness in 'Madam, Reason is our soul's left hand' demonstrates the common connection between aristocratic generosity and the abundant grace of God.[144]

In 8.Expostulation Donne openly discusses James's kingly largesse. In a moment of performed abashment, Donne fears that his celebration of the gesture will be read as gloating:

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[143] 'Once we have a better sense of this welling up of spring or river, we can use our imaginations to extend it to various mythical gifts of the earth and sky. Images flow from every direction, evoking miracles that satisfy hunger and thirst: nourishing manna that falls from the sky or a rock that, when struck, allows water to flow from it.' Jean Starobinski, *Largesse,* trans Jane Marie Todd, Chicago: University of Chicago, 1997: 11. In 4.Prayer, Donne marvels 'Is there any thing incurable upon which that *Balme* dropps? Any veine so emptie, as that that *blood* cannot fil it?' (Donne, *Devotions*: 23) in a reversed ratio to *La Corona's* Sonnet 5 'And at thy death, giving such liberal dole, */Moist, with one drop of thy blood, my dry soul*' (ll.13-14). In Sonnet 5 the emphasis rests more obviously upon charitable generosity, as Donne contrasts Christ's 'liberall' bleeding of alms with the 'one drop' required to secure redemption. 4. Prayer primarily focuses on Christ's blood as a spiritual panacea; the repetition of 'any', however, still marvels at the vast scale of Christ's cure. The volume of Christ's blood is emphasised with the image of Christ's blood refilling man's veins.

[144] Starobinski uses the example of Louis XIII in 1610 to elucidate the relationship between secular and spiritual largesse: 'An equivalence seems to be established between the oil and holy water dispensed through religious power and the money then scattered by the king. The grace that has descended from on high is transmuted: it is the oil on the King's head, and it becomes gold in the herald's hands. A favour granted by the highest Authority descends to the people. The archbishop performing the unction and the king scattering the coins are merely the mediators of grace.' Starobinski (1997): 16. In *La Corona,* Donne draws more openly on the financial character of largesse 'Thou which of good, hast, yea, art treasury' (Sonnet 1, l.3). Donne earlier in the *Devotions* reverses the roles of landlord and tenant, making God a rent-paying landlord, to emphasise the disproportionate generosity of grace: 'We are *Gods tenants* heere, and yet here, he, our *Land-lord* payes us *Rents*; not yearely, not quarterly, but hourely, and quarterly; *Every minute he renewes his mercy*, but wee will *not understand, lest that we should be converted, and he should heale us*.' Donne, *Devotions*: 9.

> But let me stop, *my God,* and consider; will not this look like a piece of art, & cunning, to convey into the world an opinion, that I were more particularly in his care, than other men? And that heerin, in a shew of *humilitie,* and *thankefulnesse,* I magnifie my selfe more than there is cause? But let not that *jealousie stopp me,* O God, but let me go forward in celebrating thy mercy exhibited by him.[145]

With amusingly audacious apophasis, Donne spells out what is blatantly happening, but makes such an interpretation the corrupt reader's problem not his own. Donne's justification for his praise of James's generosity, however, it is significant for the logic of the passage: 'let me go forward in celebrating thy *mercy* exhibited in *him*'.[146] James' earthly largesse is a manifestation of God's mercy. Once again, Donne puns on graciousness: 'This which hee doth now, in assisting so my bodily health, I know is common to me with many; Many, many, have tasted that expression of his graciousness.'[147] The 'graciousness' described, is the King's evil, building the connection between James and God as spiritual healer. The triple repetition of 'many' amplifies James' generosity.

Thus far, these descriptions have crucially been celebrating acts of generosity already fulfilled. Donne's description of largesse as a defining and godly characteristic, however, changes the mode from panegyric on James, to counsel for Charles:

> It is kingly to *give*… To *give* is an approaching to the Condition of *Kings,* but to give *health*, an approaching of the *King* of *Kings*, to *thee.*[148]

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[145] Donne, *Devotions*: 43.

[146] Donne, *Devotions*: 43. Nelson notes that this is a theme which Donne also emphasises in his preaching – that the praise of worldly power is specifically understood centrally as a reflection of God: God is not satisfied with us praising the creature in substitution for the Creator. … All respect for earthly honour and authority must conduce to God's glory, not to the subject's personal advancement nor the prince's gratification'. Nelson (2005): pp.73-74.

[147] Donne, *Devotions*: 262.

[148] Donne, *Devotions*: 43.

The infinitive changes the mode: it is not an instruction, but it feels instructional. The focus is still upon giving healing, as opposed to a more worldly gift: 'to give health' is more godly than kingly. Nevertheless, that infinitive, 'It is kingly to give', leaves generosity hanging as definitive kingly behaviour, lightly suggesting to Charles that such generosity should be continued. Nelson has similarly observed how, 'preaching before Charles I, Donne relates a well-known axiom of patronage in application to God: "there cannot be a more effectual prayer for the future, then a thankful acknowledgement of former benefits."'[149]

> In the 8. Prayer Donne introduces the economic vehicles of largesse:
>
> yet here also in this world, givest us such *earnests* of that full payment, as by the value of the *earnest,* we may give some estimat of the tresure, humbly, and thankfully I acknowledge, that thy blessed *spirit* instructs mee, to make a difference of thy blessings in this world, by that difference of the *Instruments,* by which it hath pleased thee to derive them unto me.[150]

Donne evokes the parable of the talents, in which a master entrusts his servants with money while he travels (Matthew 25.13-40; Luke 19.12-27). Blessings on earth are 'earnests' - 'a sum of money, paid as an initial instalment, esp. for the purpose of securing a bargain or contract'- which offer some sense of what is promised in heaven.[151] Donne's also connects earthly beneficence and God's beneficence; by focusing upon the role of God's 'instruments' he divinely authorises patronage. Donne's 'earnests' metaphor does not simply focus upon earthly blessings, but upon those who make it happen: 'thy blessings in this world, by that difference of the *Instruments*, by which it hath pleased thee to derive them unto me'. The logic is

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[149] Nelson (2005): 82.
[150] Donne, *Devotions*: 44.
[151] *earnest,* n2., sense 1. www.oed.com [date accessed 27/10/2020].

similar to the angelic imagery of the verse letters, where Bedford acted as a mediating 'factor' between heaven and earth. Angels were understood, to a certain extent, to ensure the enactment of God's will.[152] In the *Devotions,* here Donne unequivocally describes God directly acting through his 'instruments'. Grammatically, this is likely because God is the subject of the verb 'it hath pleased thee to derive them unto me'. Theologically, Donne may also make the connection between God and instrument clearer because he is describing a King, the highest point of connection between God and earth according to divine right. Like the assertion that 'It is kingly to give', this linking of the King's earthly largesse to God's own boundless grace encourages his generosity to be similarly abundant.

God's 'instruments', however, are not just limited to his royal patrons. Like Bedford's 'election' of her friends, Donne makes courtly preferment a symbol of divine grace:

> *Nature* reaches out her hand, and gives us corne, and wine, and oyle, and milk, but thou fillest her hand before, and thou openest her hand, that she may rain down her showres upon us…*Friends,* reach out their hands, & prefer us, but thy hand supports that hand, that supports us. Of all these thy *instruments* have I received thy blessing, *O God*[153]

The passage develops the nexus of images of largesse: the abundant 'showres' which lead to natural fecundity, echo God's promise in Deuteronomy: 'I will give you the rain of your land … that thou mayest gather in thy corn, and thy wine, and thine oil.'[154] The interlocking hand imagery focuses on the mediation of God's grace: just as Nature 'reaches out her hand' to distribute plenty, so 'Friends reach out their

[152] Marshall and Walsham (2006): 18.
[153] Donne, *Devotions*: 45.
[154] Deuteronomy 11.14 (AV).

hands' to offer preferment. The interlinking of God's hand, on the hand of the patron, legitimises and glorifies the patronage relationship, whereby the patron's generosity to the client parallels God's love of man; it also encourages the patron to imitate God's beneficence.[155] 'Friends' is a flexible word: on the one hand, it could lower the status of secular patron from royalty to any significant ally, such as Bedford. On the other hand, Donne presents James' generosity in sending his own physician, not simply as an act of patronage, but of friendship, encouraging Charles also to consider Donne as a more intimate friend. Donne's organic metaphor naturalises and aggrandises patronage relationships at every level.

The closing petition of Section 8 formally cements the parallels between the King and James. With the close of the prayer, Donne petitions God for his continued protection of the State and Church, and of its head, James:

> Humbly beseeching thee, that as the wonted meanes, & instruments… so continue to the same blessings upon this *State* and this *Church* by the same hand… And be to him, *O God*, in all distempers of his body, all anxieties of *spirit,* in all holy *sadnesses of soule,* such a *Phisician* in thy proportion, who art the greatest in *heaven,* as hee hath bin in *soule, and body* to me, in his proportion, who is the greatest upon earth.[156]

In the context of the *Devotions,* this closing prayer makes James the 'reflexion' of God, to use Donne's own image.[157] Every prayer up to this point, with the exception of 4.Prayer and 6.Prayer, end with references to Christ. The placement of James at the end of this prayer therefore enforces the parallel between God and James, just as

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[155] This image of interlocking hands conforms to the hierarchy topos in Donne's sermons identified by Nelson, where 'courtship… is figured archetypally in various hierarchical configurations of upwardness and downwardness, often in relation to man's place in created order.' Nelson (2005): 78.
[156] Donne, *Devotions*: 45.
[157] 'A glass is not the less brittle, because a *King's* face is represented in it; not a King the less brittle, because *God* is represented in him'. Donne, *Devotions*: 41.

taking kings for the subject matter of the Expostulation made the connection between kings and God in form as well as content. Donne's prayer for God to spiritually and physically heal James, not only echoes James sending his doctor to Donne, but ends by making James himself a doctor 'such a Phisician…as hee hath bin in soule and body to me'. The casting of James as doctor then parallels the running image throughout the text of God as healer.

Donne's petition also echoes the conventions of secular petitions. Even the most administrative and least rhetorically elaborate petitions adhere to a final promise of prayer to God for the continued health of the recipient. Donne's phrase 'Humbly beseeching' is a bedrock of secular petition. Of course, as this project has been tracing, these formulas move from petitionary prayer, into secular petitions — and this is after all a petition to God. But perhaps, in a slightly more subtle way to 'These are petitions, and not hymns', Donne's use of these formulas, which are found in secular petition, signals that this prayer not only functions as a petition to God but as a petition to his patron. The standard sign-off prayer to God for the health of the recipient in secular petitions is an exchange for the secular patron's service rendered. The use of these petitionary formulas perhaps underlines the section's emphasis upon largesse, encouraging James, and Prince Charles upon his future accession, to continue their generosity.

IV. *Exposing petition*

As Donne's sickness worsens in the biographical narrative, however, and Donne learns to withdraw from the world, he exposes the unspoken systems of power

which both the verse letters and the *Devotions* are engaged in. In Section 11, in which the Doctors 'use Cordials, to keep the venim and Malignitie of the disease from the Heart', Donne's secular vehicles begins to unpick the very idea of preferment and patronage which we saw divinely authorised in Section 8.[158] Donne opens with a scathing disavowal of worldly reputation:

> Whence can wee take a better argument, a clearer demonstration, that all the *Greatnes* of this world, is built upon the *opinion* of others, and hath in it self no *reall being,* nor power of subsistence, than from the *heart of man?*[159]

The primary sense of the passage describes the vulnerability of the human heart which is 'the soonest endangered and the soonest defeated'. Already, however, Donne's connection between anatomy and society renders public reputation empty 'all the *Greatnes* of this world, is built upon the *opinion* of others' and entirely devoid of substance - it 'hath in it self no reall being'.

Donne considers the doctor's prioritisation of the heart over other organs, despite its relative weakness. He suggests that the heart has '*Principalitie*' over the organs; even if 'there is a possibilitie' the brain or the liver 'may subsist' in the sickness, 'there is no possibilitie that they can subsist if the *Heart* perish'.[160] The other organs 'serve and obey' the heart because it is superior, even if is 'weaker' – just as 'children' serve their 'Parents' and 'all persons to all kindes of *Superiors*'.[161] He suggests that 'obedience of *Superiors,* is of the Law of Nature', but then counters this with the reflection that 'in the *primarie* law of Nature, there was no *Superioritie*'.[162] He

[158] Donne, *Devotions*: 56.
[159] Donne, *Devotions*: 56.
[160] Donne, *Devotions*: p.56; p.57.
[161] Donne, *Devotions*: 56.
[162] Donne, *Devotions*: 57.

therefore concludes that the 'contribution of all to the Sovereigne, of all parts to the Heart' is in fact from 'the very *first dictates of Nature*; which is… to have care of our owne *Preservation.*'[163] Having reached this conclusion, given his secular vehicles of service to the 'Sovereigne', Donne shockingly cuts to the core of courtly service, and with it the patronage system in which the verse letters and the *Devotions* are engaged:

> and so, when we seeme to begin with others, in such assistances, indeed wee doe beginne with our selves, and wee our selves are principally in our contemplation; and so all these officious, and mutuall assistances, are but *complement* towards others, and our true end is *our selves.*[164]

What in Section 8 was deemed to be God blessing man through his 'instruments' - say, for example, patronage from princes or countesses - here is candidly reduced to 'officious and mutuall assistances'. Donne's use of the first-person plural obviously makes this passage more self-recriminatory then accusatory of others, but nevertheless the very system he describes implicates not only himself but also the courtly mediators he took such pains to petition. Donne's earlier analogy of the prioritisation of the heart and royal service to a weak monarch shockingly even implies that royal service itself is ultimately motivated by self-preservation.

In 11.Prayer Donne returns to the metaphorical and real spatial relationship, between himself, the church, and God – themes reminiscent of Section 3. Donne emphasises the same conclusion, that unlike an earthly power God can come to him. The architectural metaphor he uses to reach this conclusion has striking courtly implications:

> O eternall, and most gracious *God,* who in thy *upper house*, the *Heavens,*

[163] Donne, *Devotions*: 57.
[164] Donne, *Devotions*: 57.

> though there bee many *Mansions*, yet art alike, and equally in every *Mansion,* but heere in thy *lower house,* though thou fillest all, yet art otherwise in some roomes thereof, than in others, otherwise in thy *Church*, than in my *Chamber,* and otherwise in thy *Sacraments,* than in my *Prayers,* so though thou bee alwayes present, and alwayes working in every roome of this thy House, my body, yet I humbly beseech thee to manifest alwayes a more effectual presence in *my heart,* than in the other Offices. Into the house of thine Annoynted, disloyal persons, Traitors will come; into thy House, the *Church, Hyprocrites,* and *Idolatrers* will come; Into some Roomes of this thy House, my *Body, Tentations* will come, *Infections* will come, but bee my heart, thy *Bed-chamber* O my God, and let them not enter.[165]

Donne returns to the theme of God's accessibility. Developing Christ's metaphor in John 14.2 that 'in my Father's house are many mansions', Donne makes the architecture of heaven notably egalitarian. The 'many Mansions… art alike', and God resides 'equally in every Mansion' — in stark contrast to the topography of court where hierarchy was spatially mapped through 'the rigorous limitation' of entry to the key rooms used by the monarch.[166] David Colclough, writing on Donne's Sermon on John 14.2 given at the Chapel Royal on Tuesday 18th April 1626, demonstrates how Donne uses the imagery of royal architectural to simultaneously authorise the strictly hierarchal world of the court, and even the hierarchal seating plan of the chapel royal, but then to delineate the lack of hierarchy in heaven:

> Donne has thus acknowledged that hierarchy and rank, on earth and in heaven, are both fitting and necessary. But the entire final section of his sermon… is concerned with the eradication of such divisions and their replacement with a vision of total equality or "parity".[167]

The overall technique is very similar to the *Devotions*: to authorise and participate in the courtly world, whilst contrasting the difference between earth and heaven. In this passage, Donne seems to make the reverse journey to the sermon: not from

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[165] Donne, *Devotions*: 61.
[166] Cuddy (1987): 177.
[167] Colclough (2010), pp. 163-191: 174.

hierarchy to equality, but equality to hierarchy. Donne opens with God's omnipresence in heaven: God, unlike a monarch, is simultaneously present in every room of the court of heaven. His persona's concern about presence, however, returns to the same anxiety that he is restricted from Church: 'though there bee many *Mansions*, yet art alike, and equally in every *Mansion,* but heere in thy *lower house,* though thou fillest all, yet art otherwise in some roomes thereof, than in others, otherwise in thy *Church*, than in my *Chamber,* and otherwise in thy *Sacraments,* than in my *Prayers*'. The persona struggles with the knowledge of God's omnipresence against his feeling that God is more present in the Church, and manifested in the Sacrament, than in Donne's own private room and private prayers. His struggle is reflected in the initial absence of a quantifier: he anxiously compares how God 'fillest all' with his presence, 'yet art otherwise in some roomes thereof, than in others'. 'Than in others' invites us to search for some comparative quantifier, yet theologically, God's omnipresence does not enable this: God is everywhere simultaneously. Donne is imagining God acting like a secular monarch.

Donne then introduces the quantifier his initial comparison invited, as he petitions God to be most present in his own heart: 'so though thou bee alwayes present, and alwayes working in every roome of this thy House, my body, yet I humbly beseech thee to manifest alwayes a more effectual presence in *my heart*'. Donne returns to the same Pauline image he used in Section 3, of his own body as church: just as the church may be entered by 'Traitors', 'Hypocrites' and 'Idolatrers' so Donne's own temple-body is a space spiritually and physically vulnerable to access by unwanted 'tentations' and 'infections'. Donne's final architectural turn of

the metaphor, to make his own heart God's bedchamber, transforms his own body from church to the heart of the Jacobean court. Cuddy has demonstrated that James shifted the traditional Tudor architecture of power, by making the Bedchamber and its staff the political heart of court, as opposed to the Privy Chamber and its gentlemen.[168] Donne's use of the bedchamber in a Sermon given at Lincoln's Inn on 30th January 1620 further demonstrates how it functions as a symbol of protected power:

> I enquire not what God did in his bed-chamber, in his cabinet counsell, in his eternal decree, I know that hee hath made *Judicium electionis* in Christ Jesus.[169]

Donne's playfully reverent and polite distance from the machinations of power contrasts with his opposing request in *The Devotions* not only to enquire 'what God did in his bed-chamber', but for God to set it up in Donne's own body. There is a stark contrast in Donne's choice of architectural vehicles to address Bedford and God: where he petitioned to 'survay the Edifice' of Bedford, for access to the outermost point, here he petitions God not only to come to him but to occupy Donne's own heart as his seat of power. Rather than petitioning to access a desired space, Donne instead imagines petitioning to lock the world and its temptations out. God, unlike worldly powers, can come to him. Nelson has observed that Donne saw the transition from worldly to spiritual desire 'enlarged in an upward movement in the scale until only the eternal can satisfy'.[170] Donne's vehicle of courtly access, to contrastingly describe his increasing seclusion from the world itself, performs Nelson's upward sliding scale of desire 'only the eternal can satisfy'.

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[168] Cuddy (1987).
[169] Potter and Simpson, *Sermons,* ii.15.448-450 (p.323).
[170] Nelson (2005): 91.

We will close with Section 19, in which Donne emerges from his sickness. Given the proximity he has gained to God during the peak of his sickness, Donne's return to the world with a sense of critical distance – reflecting the doctors' decision that 'they may safely proceed to purge'.[171] In 19.Meditation Donne contrasts the earthly and eschatological systems, directly referring to, and criticising, 'Court mediation':

> There are of *them* that will *give,* that will doe *justice,* that will *pardon*, but they have their owne *seasons* for al these, and he that knowes not *them,* shall *starve* before that gift come, and *ruine*, before the Justice, and *dye* before the pardon save him: some *tree* beares no fruit, except much *dung* be laid about it, and *Justice* comes not from some, till they be richly manured: some *trees* require much *visiting*, much *watring,* much *labour;* and some men give not their *fruits* but upon *importunitie;* some *trees* require *incision,* and *pruning,* and *lopping;* some men must be *intimidated* and *syndicated* with *Comissions*, before they will deliver the fruits of *Justice;* some trees require the *early* and the *often* accesse of the *Sunne*; some men *open* not, but upon the *favours* and *letters* of *Court mediation*[172]

Donne's implicit comparison between petitioning earthly power and God in Section 6 is made explicit here. Whereas in Section 6 Donne states that God will listen to prayer 'whensoever thou askest, and never call it *importunitie*', here Donne explicitly voices his frustration that some earthly powers will never help 'but upon *importunitie*'.[173] Likewise the emphasis upon God's availability 'whensoever' in

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[171] Donne, *Devotions*: 97. In Section 14, Donne's breakdown of time itself in comparison to God's infiniteness concomitantly crumbled the physical world and its values. The position and esteem the verse letters seek to gain lose any sense of innate value as the persona realises that 'honour' only lies in the eye of the beholder: '*Honors, Pleasures, Possessions,* presented to us, out of time, in our decrepit, and distasted, & unapprehensive *Age,* loose their *office, &* lose their Name; They are not *Honors* to us, that shall never appeare, nor come abroad into the Eyes of the people, to receive *Honor,* from them who give it.' Donne, *Devotions*: 72. In Section 18 Donne even petitions God to destroy the entire world to hasten on heaven: 'I humbly beg at thy hand, O our most mercifull *God*… that as thou hatest *sinne* it selfe, thy *hate* to *sinne* may be expressed in the abolishing of all *instruments of sinne,* The *allurements* of this *world*, and the *world* it selfe.' Donne, *Devotions*: 96. Whilst Donne universalises, 'all instruments of sinne', his use of the very same word 'instruments' he earlier used to describe his patrons strikingly acknowledges that court 'allurements' may well be a temptation to sin.

[172] Donne, *Devotions*: 98.

[173] Donne, *Devotions*: 98.

Section 6, is contrasted here with the changeability of earthly powers: 'they have their owne seasons for all these'. The idea of 'their *owne* seasons' perhaps also suggests the different unspoken ways in which different individuals operate, all of which must be navigated. The passage's focus upon the unpredictable and circuitous means of achieving 'Justice' and 'Pardon' on earth contrasts with God's open, omnipresent mercy.

The horticultural image of the tree and its ambiguous 'fruits' potentially opens the relevance of this passage out, not only to the justice system, but more generally to the rewards and ways of the royal court. The farming imagery recalls and parodies the image of the cornucopia of largesse used to divinely authorise patronage in Section 8: rather than finding an easy fecund abundance of earthly grace, instead Donne presents patrons as petulant and demanding little trees. The image of the 'richly manured' trees disdainfully grotesques careful negotiations with social superiors; it could even be relevant to the careful cultivation of patronage relationships, suggesting that the two-way exchange of patronage equates to manuring your patron with panegyric dung. Donne's reversal of the association between the sun and royalty, further emphasises the labour of the petitioner: the petitioner is not warmed into fruition by the sun, but themselves must warm the patron. Donne even uses the crucial term 'access'. The image of trees requiring access to the sun 'early' and 'often' recalls the capricious friend in Section 6 demanding and changing the time that the petitioner must appeal — reinforcing not only the importance of access, but the frequency, or 'much visiting' required to cultivate a relationship. Finally, Donne even abandons the metaphors of husbandry

to strike at the very roots of the focus of this chapter: 'the favours and letters of Court mediation.' Donne unequivocally rejects the petitionary work we saw him so engaged in with the verse letters.

As a text itself however, with its royal patronage, the *Devotions* cannot extricate itself from the system which its content eschews - nor is it intended to. Donne's devotional reflections themselves are the literary and spiritual product which are at the heart of the patronage exchange. In his convalescence, Donne finds a way to preach both to a public congregation, but more specifically to the prince, when he was unable to reach the pulpit.[174] Shami argues that the heart of Donne's discretion as a preacher 'is manifested in the language through which he communicates with his various congregations'.[175] The preacher's own language should aim to emulate the eloquence of 'the Holy Spirit, the author of the Scriptures': 'A more studied and carefully considered sermon must apply its eloquence to the salvation of its hearers, and Donne's concern that this application move discreetly explains his increasing emphasis on the importance of the literal sense of the text he is using.'[176] Shami emphasises that 'literal sense' does not mean literal as opposed of figurative. This recalls Donne's own discussion of God's literal and metaphorical language in the *Devotions*:

> My *God,* my *God,* thou art a *Direct God,* may I not say, a *literall God,* a *God* that wouldest bee understood *literally,* and according to the *plaine sense* of all that thou saiest? But thou art also… a *figurative,* a *metaphoricall God* too… This hath

[174] Stubbs emphasises that the *Devotions* 'was in final form perhaps only six weeks after Donne first fell ill', being entered into the Stationer's Register on 9th January 1624. Stubbs (2007): p.404, p.519. Conti also observes that throughout the *Devotions* 'Donne emphasises his identity as a minister by frequently addressing his readership as though speaking to his usual audience at St. Paul's'. Brooke Conti, 'Donne, Doubt and the *Devotions Upon Emergent Occasions', John Donne Journal,* Vol. 22, (2003), pp.145-164: 147.
[175] Shami (1980): 57.
[176] Shami (1980): 58.

> occasioned thine ancient *servants,* whose delight it was to write after thy *Copie*, to procede the same way in their *expositions* of the *Scriptures*, and in their composing both of *publike liturgies*, and of *private prayers* to thee, to make their accesses to thee in such a kind of *language,* as thou wast pleased to speake to them, in a *figurative*, in a *Metaphoricall language*[177]

Lewalski similarly uses the same passage to argue that:

> John Donne's discussions of scriptural language affirm the common Protestant position both as regards his insistence that the literal sense always be preserved, and his conviction that the literal sense is often rendered through poetic figures which must be apprehended and analyzed as such.[178]

'Figurative and Metaphoricall language' is crucial to Donne's communication: as a reflection of divine language, and as a tool for his discretion. In the passage Donne still expresses prayer spatially: the church fathers 'make their accesses to thee in such a kind of language, as thou wast pleased to speake to them in.' These prayers for access tailor their language to reflect God's own, just as Donne tailors his own language as preacher to the specific congregation, and as a client to their specific patron. Thus, when Donne petitions God, Donne can be open and candid, in comparison to the complex manoeuvres Donne's secular patronage relationships require. In its content the *Devotions* makes it spiritual application clear for its audiences — general and royal. In content, the text can invite its audience to question the secular world and their place in it. Much like the 1626 Sermon on John 14.2, however, Donne can simultaneously participate in secular hierarchy, whilst effacing it in comparison to divine power.

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[177] Donne, *Devotions*: pp.99-100.
[178] Lewalski (1973): 153.

CHAPTER FOUR

'IF SAINTS IN HEAVEN CAN EITHER SEE OR HERE': 'THE COMMONS PETITION TO ST ELIZA' AND THE MOCK-PETITION

Until this point in the thesis, the petitionary language I have examined has largely been used to strategically praise and negotiate with power. Spenser and Donne sometimes use the metaphor of petition more satirically, criticising the assumed parallels between earth and heaven. Only in the *Amoretti* has the legitimacy of the petitioners' requests ever been in doubt.

This final chapter focuses on a particular sub-section of Stuart verse-libel which I describe as 'the mock-petition'.[1] Just as mock-epic replicates, and pastiches, the conventions of epic, so these poems are written in the form of petitions, or formal responses to petitions. The poets make use of the conventions of petitions such as formal address, compliment, subscription, and enumerated requests. They sometimes even circulate alongside real petitionary letters: in British Library Additional MS 25707 they keep company with copies of petitions by Penelope Rich and Sir Walter Raleigh; and in Bodleian MS Ashmole 36,37 an autograph letter from Andrew Woode to the Baron of Kinderton, sealed with a dove of peace, containing a variety of biblical quotations about supplication.[2]

Ritchie Robertson, in his study of mock epic, distinguishes between the mock-epic and the mock-heroic by suggesting that:

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[1] In her study of female petitioners of the Long Parliament, Ellen McArthur notes that their efforts were parodied, using the same term: 'The unrest among women, whether royalist or puritan, is reflected in satires, such as Neville's Parliament of ladies, and in various mock petitions'. Mc Arthur (1909): 704.

[2] London, British Library Additional MS 25707: Fols. 145^{v}-146^{v}; Fols 147^{r} – 147^{v}. Oxford, Bodleian MS Ashmole 36,37: Fols.272^{r} - Fol. 273^{r}.

> the latter [mock heroic] acknowledged the cultural authority of serious epic by using its devices to ridicule the actions of lowly beings… while mock epic implies a critical attitude to serious epic as such, and thus tends to oppose and subvert its authority.[3]

The mock-petitions studied in this chapter could be placed on a similar spectrum. On one end are playful acts of *imitatio*, which are not focused on a critique of petition itself.[4] At the other end are more satirical poems, which are critical of the petitionary process; the powers appealed to in petitions; or even of petitioners themselves. The hyperbolic rhetoric of personal petitions, and their emotional intensity are rich with parodic potential. In the wake of the civil war, petition itself was also becoming an increasingly politically contentious force which provoked comment and critique.

At the heart of this chapter is the Jacobean verse-libel 'The Commons Petition to St Eliza'. The poem forms part of a diptych, or sometimes triptych, of poems: the first is 'The Commons Petition to St Eliza' (hereafter 'The Commons Petition'); the second is another petition to the Great Chancellor of Heaven ('If bleeding harts dejected soules find grace', hereafter 'If bleeding harts'); the occasional third, a response from Elizabeth herself to the petitioners ('Your bould petition mortals I haue seene'). I focus here on the first poem in the series, 'The Commons Petition': although the second poem is bookended by petitionary metaphor, it includes a lengthy embedded elegy on the death of Prince Henry, as well as a critique of the flaws of Jacobean England presented as God's plagues visited on Egypt. 'The

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[3] Ritchie Robertson, *Mock-Epic Poetry from Pope to Heine,* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009: 5.
[4] Robertson also suggests that *imitatio* was an important ancestor for the mock-heroic and mock-epic: 'The pleasure of literature was supposed to lie in recognizing the familiar within an unfamiliar guise, and in admiring the ingenuity with which well-known models had been adapted.' Richardson (2009): 7.

Commons Petition' better embodies my interest throughout this project in petition as letter, prayer, and literary mode.

William D. Macray, in his catalogue entry for Bodleian MS Rawlinson 398, states, not perhaps without a slight tone of resignation, that the 'Commons Petition' poems 'are not infrequently met with In MSS'.[5] There are at least eighteen known copies of 'The Commons Petition'.[6] My pursuit of this libel's circulation in manuscript brought to light a plethora of similar mock-petitions. By reading them together, I examine what anxieties these parodies reveal about real petitionary culture, and the relationship between petition and literature. The mock-petitions invite reflection, and sometimes explicitly comment, on petition as both an imaginative and a political act.

The very title of 'The Commons Petition' brings a further sub-genre of petition into view: the parliamentary petition. As Daybell summarises, petitions can be 'the form by which the Houses of Parliament formerly presented a measure for the monarch's granting, or by which parliament was itself approached.'[7] The mock-petitions studied in this chapter range in date from the late Jacobean period to the early 1640s. The complete cycle was also printed in 1642.[8] As the rapidly

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[5] William D. Macray, *Catalogi codicum manuscriptorum Bibliothecae Bodleianae partis quintae fasciculus tertius, viri munificentissimi Ricardi Rawlinson, I.C.D., codicum classis quartae partem priorem (libros sc. miscellaneos octingentos et sexaginta) complecten,* Oxford: 1893: 272.

[6] The circulation of 'The Commons Petition' has been studied by Joshua Eckhardt in his work on Spanish match libels, and Anne Baynes Coiro on Inns of Court manuscripts in the Folger Shakespeare Library. Joshua Eckhardt, *Manuscript Verse Collectors and the Politics of Anti-Courtly Love Poetry,* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009. Anne Baynes Coiro, 'Milton and class identity: the publication of *Areopagitica* and the 1645 *Poems'*, *The Journal of Medieval and Renaissance Studies*, Vol. 22, No. 2, (1992), pp.261-298.

[7] Daybell (2006): 232.

[8] *The humble petition of the vvretched, and most contemptible, the poore commons of England, to the blessed Elizabeth of famous memory. Also a most gratious answer, with a divine admonition and propheticall conclusion,* London: printed for E.P and E.B, 1642. [ESTC R5688].

deteriorating relationship between monarch and parliament was partly mapped out in parliamentary petitions, it is unsurprising that libellers chose the form of the petition to question or challenge royal authority, and who has the right to a voice in the public sphere. Starza Smith has suggested that 'the manuscript miscellany can exist as an archival cocoon, producing new interpretive possibilities by releasing its contents into new contexts'.[9] The circulation of 'The Commons Petition' with pre-Civil War poetry pushes the poem into precisely such 'new contexts', producing a record of the escalating conflict between subjects and monarchs. The Jacobean date of the poem, with its nostalgic Elizabethan conceit and its later Civil War circulation allows the thesis to close by looking backwards through the periods it has covered, as well as forwards to the advent of the Civil War.

The texts discussed largely derive from three main sources: Additional MS 25707, known as 'The Skipwith Manuscript'; Bodleian Library MS Eng. Poet. f.10; and Ashmole 36,37. The Skipwith MS is a composite family miscellany which belonged to the Skipwiths of Cotes in Leicestershire. It begins with a selection of Donne poems, possibly obtained from the Skipwith's relative Henry Goodere, to which the family added further gatherings during the 1620s to 1630s.[10] 'The Commons Petition' is one of these later additions.[11] Bodleian MS Eng. Poet. f.10 is the commonplace book of Oxford undergraduate Simon Sloper, who matriculated

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[9] Daniel Starza Smith, 'Before (and after) the Miscellany: Reconstructing Donne's *Satyres* in the Conway Papers', in *Manuscript Miscellanies in Early Modern England*, eds Joshua Eckhardt and Daniel Starza Smith, Surrey: Ashgate, 2014: 36. Eckhardt similarly observes: 'When people collected poems from different sources, added to anthologies over a period of time, or bound different manuscripts together, recontextualisations necessarily occurred.' Eckhardt (2009): 21.

[10] Eckhardt (2009): 21. See also Arthur Marotti, *The circulation of poetry in manuscript,* London: Routledge, 2021: 105.

[11] Eckhardt (2009): 103. According to Marotti's identification system, 'The Commons Petition' is written in 'Hand G'. Marotti, (2021): 110.

from Magdalen Hall in 1615. Alongside endearing lists of term-dates, and an interleaved copy of John Sansbury's 1608 *Ilium in Italiam* (a Latin guidebook to the history of Oxford colleges which Sloper assiduously annotated) Sloper collected a range of texts, including: works by Francis Bacon and Bacon-related libels; local poems about Oxford scholars and public figures; love poems; bawdy verses; epigrams; medical cures; and a substantial amount of both serious and parodic epitaphs.[12] Ashmole 36,37 is a titanic folio 'consisting of a great variety of papers, to the number of 348 leaves ; which were bound together in Ashmole's time, the back being stamped with his escutcheon'.[13] Ashmole's verse-collection ranges from Jacobean material right up to the Restoration, including his own panegyric upon Charles II ('Sol in Ascendente'). The manuscript opens with verses celebrating Royalist military victories in the Civil War, which remains a persistent presence throughout the manuscript.

This chapter will first give an overview of 'The Commons Petition', before examining four main strands of enquiry which arise from the poem and its companions: metaphors of court intercession; the problem with petitioning the King; petitioning Parliament; and petition as poetry. The main texts discussed alongside 'The Commons Petition' are: an elegy on the death of the Prince of Wales 'Englande & Fraunce vnhapily att warrs'; 'A Peticion to the King put into the Young Princes hand, by one of the Nurses who had lost her place'; a real petitionary letter from

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[12] John Sansbury, *Ilium in Italiam. Oxonia ad protectionem Regis sui omnium optimi filia, pedi sequa,* Oxford: Joseph Barnes, 1608. [ESTC S116762].

[13] William Henry Black, *A descriptive, analytical, and critical catalogue of the manuscripts bequeathed unto the University of Oxford by Elias Ashmole Esq., M.D., F.R.S., Windsor Herald, also of some additional MSS. contributed by Kingsley, Lhuyd, Borlase, and others,* Oxford: 1845: 16.

Francis Phillips to James I which uses the Protestant rejection of Catholic intercession to justify directly petitioning James without a courtly intermediary; 'The Wiper of the People's Teares' which imagines James's response to petitioners; 'Alderman Wiseacre's Speech', a parody of the Root and Branch petitions; and 'The Humble Peticion of the Poets to the 5 Members' which explicitly connects petition and poetry as creative acts, with dramatic political consequences. Together, these mock-petitions express such familiarity with the rhetoric at the heart of this project, that it can be recognisably reproduced and undermined. These texts also trace a striking re-orientation of power in the petitionary process, as frustration with petitioning James in the Jacobean mock petitions gives way to petitioning Parliament in the early 1640s.

'The Commons Petition to St Eliza'

'The Commons Petition' presumes three overlapping types of petition within its controlling conceit: letter, prayer, and parliamentary petition. Catherine Gray observes that the poem engages in a Jacobean tradition of ghost libels, which ventriloquise or address the dead glitterati of Elizabeth's court, to critique the 'pacificism of James and Charles' and the 'pastimes and abuses' of the Jacobean present.[14] The poem petitions none other than the dead Queen Elizabeth herself, as if

[14] Catherine Gray, *Women Writers and Public Debate in 17th-Century Britain,* New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007: pp.150-151. In Ashmole 36,37 the poem keeps company with ghost libels from the voice of Walter Raleigh (Fols.11^{r}-16^{r}), and the Duke of Buckingham whose assassination was commonly memorialised in the ghost-libel form (Fols.6^{r}-10^{v}). The ghost of Walter Raleigh laments his inability to petition saints for intercession due to his inherent sinfulness: 'shall I to heauenly saintes my woes recite/And hope that they will moane my wretched case/I no it is theire office and their place/To iudge such guiltie sinfull soules as I/And therefore no releife may come thereby' (Fol.11^{r}). Marie-Louise Coolahan and Erin A. McCarthy have also identified not only a tradition of celebrity ghost poems, but also specifically female ghost complaint. See Marie-Louise Coolahan

she were a saint in heaven, asking her to intercede with God on the people's behalf. In their petition, the Commons of England complain to Elizabeth about the difficulty of petitioning James, in comparison to her accessibility during her lifetime. In return, they offer her an extravagant shrine which will 'make proud Rome/On pilgrimage to come' (ll.48-49). The poem is addressed and subscribed as if it were a petition. The full title - 'The humble petition of her now most wretched and most Contemptible, the Commons of poore distressed England' - introduces the third understanding of petition: parliamentary petition.

As Daybell describes, a parliamentary petition has two possible forms – 'the form by which the Houses of Parliament formerly presented a measure for the monarch's granting, or by which parliament was itself approached.'[15] Since at least the fourteenth century, 'the parliamentary commons largely took over from the barons the right to speak in the name of the "community of the realm" and thus emerged, by the late 1320s, as the primary authors of the petitions designated as "common" in the business of parliament.'[16] It is unclear, however, exactly 'who determined the "common" nature of petitions'.[17] Although the 'humble petition' of the poem's title is a conventional formula from secular petitions, the phrase 'the Commons of poore distressesd England' more specifically follows the formulas

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and Erin A. McCarthy, 'From Manuscripts to Metadata: Understanding and Structuring Female-Attributed Complaint', *Early Modern Women's Complaint: Gender, Form and Politics,* eds Sarah Ross and Rosalind Smith, Cham: Springer Nature Switzerland, 2020: 279.

[15] Daybell (2006): 232.

[16] W.Mark Ormrod, Helen Killick and Phil Bradford, *Early Commons Petitions in the English Parliament, c.1290-1420*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press for the Royal Historical Society, 2017: 2.

[17] Omrod, Killick and Bradford (2017): 2.

rooted in these medieval common petitions — which include 'the poor people of the realm of England' and 'the common people of the realm of England'.[18]

The second form of parliamentary petition - the way in which parliament addresses the monarch - has particular political significance given the poem's circulation with Spanish match libels.[19] Based on internal evidence, Alastair Bellany and Andrew McRae date the poem to ca. 1623, and Joshua Eckhardt has traced the poem's circulation with other Spanish match libels.[20] This context, however, has not yet been connected with the poem's play on the parliamentary sense of petition.[21] Two years earlier, in 1621, James dissolved parliament in direct response to a petition from the House of Commons, which demanded that Charles be married to a Protestant princess, and that James intervene in the war in the Palatinate.[22] James perceived the petition's advice on foreign policy as a drastic over-stepping of Parliament's role.[23] The poem's title therefore unmistakably alluded to a real, and recent, source of offense to James. The rift between James and Parliament is, of course, reinforced by the poem's address, not to James but to his predecessor. McRae and Bellany note that the title of the poem in the Bodleian Malone MS 23 'confusingly dates it "Anno domini 1621. ultimo Martii. 1623" (that is, either 1621 or

[18] Omrod, Killick and Bradford (2017): 7.
[19] "Early Stuart Libels: an edition of poetry from manuscript sources." eds Alastair Bellany and Andrew McRae, Early Modern Literary Studies Text Series I (2005), http://www.earlystuartlibels.net [date accessed 14/07/2021]: Niv. Hereafter 'Early Stuart Libels'. Eckhardt, (2009): pp.95-101.
[20] 'Early Stuart Libels': Niv.
[21] Baynes Coiro briefly comments that the poem 'offers a specific critique of James' failings and of Parliament's justified anger' but does not develop the connection between the poem's content and its petitionary form. Baynes Coiro (1992): 275.
[22] Brennan C. Pursell has suggested, based on correspondence between James and the Spanish ambassador Gondomar, that James had pre-planned the dissolution of parliament before the petition had been presented. Brennan C. Pursell, 'James I, Gondomar and the Dissolution of the Parliament of 1621', *History*, Vol. 85, No. 279, (2000), pp. 428-445.
[23] Conrad Russell, *The Crisis of Parliaments - English History 1509-1660,* New York: Oxford University Press, 1971: 296.

the last day of March 1623)'.[24] While the reference is 'confusing', it is significant in connecting the poem to 1621, when James dissolved parliament over a petition.

Heretofore, Queen Elizabeth has largely been the focus of the four studies of the 'The Commons Petition' by Hackett, Anne Baynes Coiro, Eckhardt and Catherine Gray. This emphasis is evident from Catherine Gray's shorthand for the cycle: 'the Eliza poems'.[25] Hackett uses the poem as an example of how Elizabeth could be 'uncontroversially thought of as a saint in heaven' after her death, and mobilised as 'a fictional character, for whatever purpose the contemporary political climate create[d].'[26] Baynes Coiro reads the poem as a critique of Jacobean nostalgia for an Elizabethan golden age.[27] Conversely, Catherine Gray, using the poem to contextually inform Anne Bradstreet's elegy on Queen Elizabeth, takes the Elizabethan nostalgia at face value. She largely focuses on the final poem in the cycle (Elizabeth's prophetic reply to the Commons), reading the cycle as part of the Jacobean creation of an idealised Elizabethan 'pan-Protestantism', which looked forward to a transnationally united, militant, Protestant future.[28] Eckhardt's study of Spanish match libels reads the poem's connection with other bawdier representations of the Spanish Infanta as an implicit contrast between the supposedly saintly Elizabeth and the Infanta.[29]

None of these, though, attends to the poem's insistent play on 'petition' in at least three different and pertinent senses. I will therefore consider the poem's

[24] 'Early Stuart Libels': Niv.
[25] Gray (2007): 153.
[26] Hackett (1995): pp.231, 234.
[27] Baynes Coiro (1992).
[28] Gray (2007): 153.
[29] Eckhardt (2009): pp.95-101.

parodic and critical representation of petition, and the political implications of such a representation. Specifically, I will discuss the petitionary aspects of the poem: the poem employs the rhetoric of supplication, particularly playing on the double sense of petition as physical text and as prayer; how it uses heavenly metaphor to describe access – or lack of access - to the sovereign; and how it draws attention to the inherently unstable power dynamics of petition.

In Malone MS 23 the poem is accompanied by an additional framing narrative, which engages with the spiritual and secular layers of the poem's metaphor: 'The Coppie of a Libell put into the hand of Queene Elizabeths statue in Westminster by an vnknowne person Anno domini ~~1619 /~~ 1621. vltimo Martij i623./'[30] Eckhardt reads this frame as a factual record of the poem's initial circulation.[31] Whether or not this is true, the little narrative is rich with potential meaning. The gesture likely recalls the practice of pinning elegiac poems - and indeed sometimes libels in the infamous case of Archbishop Whitgift's hearse - to the funeral effigy in funeral processions which served as a model for the later funerary monument.[32]

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[30] Oxford, The Bodleian Library, Malone MS 23: Fol.32.

[31] Eckhardt (2009): 95.

[32] Alistair Bellany, 'A Poem on the Archbishop's Hearse: Puritanism, Libel, and Sedition after the Hampton Court Conference,' *Journal of British Studies*, Vol. 34, No.2, (1995), pp.137–64: pp.137-140. In Oxford, The Bodleian Library, MS Eng. Poet. f.10, although the poem is sadly lacking the same framing narrative as Malone MS 23, the poem sits alongside Sloper's extensive collection of epitaphs, ranging from the serious to the libellous and bawdy. Serious epitaphs include poems on the death of: the King of Sweden (Fol.85r); King James, Queen Anne and Prince Henry (Fol. 92r); the death of Prince of Lodovick, Duke of Lennox (Fol.116v). Comic or bawdy epitaphs can be found on Fols. 89r; 94r; 94v; 95r; 97r and 101v. In a particularly Eckhardtian moment of 'anti-courtly' juxtaposition, the epitaph on Prince Lodovick is immediately followed by a bawdy epitaph mourning a man whose 'end he made with his owne blade/Betwixt his ladies thies' (Fol. 116^{v}).

The libel slipped into the statue's hand also evokes the Catholic *ex voto* tradition, giving material amplification to metaphor of Catholic intercession.[33] An *ex voto* is any small object left at the shrine of a saint, often as a prayer for healing.[34] Often there is a connection between the object and the prayer: for example, a model body part prays for the healing of that body part. If we read the Malone MS 23 gloss as an evocation of the *ex voto* tradition, then the senses of the poem as an imagined material object, and the poem as a prayer, bleed into each other. The material sense of petition as physical text is already present: it is 'put into the hand' of Queen Elizabeth, echoing the petitioners' call to 'give it to his hands that cann relieve us' (ll.55-56). This can be read as the journey of the petition as a secular letter. If it is imagined as an *ex voto,* the poem passed into the statue's hands is a written prayer. Taken to its furthest extreme, given the *ex votos'* traditional link between the object, and the cure – sometimes a miraculous cure - then a petition supposedly left in a statue's hand complaining about the inability to petition the sovereign, might seek to heal the petitionary process in the same way a tooth might seek a cure for dental ailments. As Duffy describes such miraculous healing*:* 'such *ex votos* were the most eloquent of all possible testimonies to the reality of healing, assurances of triumph in a world which must often have seemed dominated by suffering and death.'[35]

The 'vnknowne person' who places the petition in the statue's hand might suggest that we simply read the 'Commons of poore distressed England' as an

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[33] Duffy (2005): pp.196-199.
[34] Duffy describes the contents of York fabric tools which itemise *ex votos* left at the shrine of Richard Scrope in York Minster in the sixteenth century: 'They included nine assorted images of men and women, two cows, sixteen eyes, thirteen legs, ten hearts, ten teeth, four breasts, as well as a fleet of model ships and an assortment of anchors, boat-hooks, and horse harnesses. Many of these were of silver or gold, instead of the more usual wax'. Duffy (2005): 197.
[35] Duffy (2005): 199.

everyman figure. The association with Parliament is underscored, however, by the statue's location 'in Westminster': not only the Abbey, but metonymically the heart of both parliamentary and royal power.

Although not all copies of the poem include the Malone MS 23 framing narrative, in the poem itself the poet similarly imagines the poem as a physical document which will be passed from hand to hand: 'Read blessed Soul, oh read it and believe us/Then give it to his hands that cann relieve us' (ll.55-56). On the one hand, this traces the journey of a courtly petitionary letter, passed from the chosen intercessor to the central authority. The poem's circulation with the petition to the Great Chancellor of heaven, 'If bleeding harts', even further echoes this journey by replicating the material practice of sending a petition wrapped in a supporting letter.[36] This focus upon the poem as a physical petition which will be passed from hand to hand, underlines - in a similar way to Spenser's personified poem-petitioners - how poems themselves can function as petitions: 'Pardon for thee, and grace for me, entreat' (Sonnet II, ll.12).

The poet delights in using form to simultaneously represent the poem as a secular document, and as a prayer – with similar effect to the richly productive exploitation of the various connotations of 'Westminster' in Malone MS 23. Just as the poem is addressed like a secular petition, it is also subscribed like one: 'The most faithfull Beadsmen and dayly oratours the poore distressed Commons of dejected England' (ll.57).[37] This subscription from the 'faithfull Beadsmen' - which evokes the

[36] See Chapter Three: 169.
[37] All quotations are taken from "Early Stuart Libels: an edition of poetry from manuscript sources." eds Alastair Bellany and Andrew McRae, Early Modern Literary Studies Text Series I (2005), http://www.earlystuartlibels.net [date accessed 14/07/2021]: Niv. Hereafter 'Early Stuart Libels'.

quasi-Marian imagery of the Sir Henry Lee Retirement Pageant – simultaneously represents the poem as a prayer and a secular petition.[38] Formally it is subscribed like a secular petition – the *OED* in one definition even notes that 'orator' is both 'A person who offers a prayer or petition' and 'commonly used in closing a letter or petition to a superior'.[39] As a cultural reference, the 'beadsmen' - recognisable from the accepted panegyric language of Elizabeth's court – simultaneously conjure Catholic prayer and the language of courtly service.[40] As discussed above, the formula of 'the poore distressed Commons of … England' also throws a further secular sense of petition into the mix - the parliamentary Commons Petition.[41]

Unsurprisingly, the poem represented as a prayer makes frequent use of theological metaphor. The petitioners' appeal to 'give it to his hands that cann relieve us' is also an example of the poem's playful representation of Catholic intercession. With some Catholic theological accuracy, Elizabeth is, like the Virgin Mary, presented as chief among the saints in heaven as intercessor and conveyor of petitions from man to God. 'The Great Chancellor of Heaven' is an ambiguous metaphor. If read in the sense of 'the King's Chancellor … the highest officer of the crown, and an important member of the cabinet', this could perhaps be read as

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[38] 'allow this aged man his right,/To be your Beads-man now, that was your Knight', 'Account of Sir Henry Lee's Retirement Tilt', *John Nichols's The Progresses and Public Processions of Queen Elizabeth: A New Edition of the Early Modern Sources, Vol. 3: 1579-1595*, eds Elizabeth Goldring, Faith Eales, Elizabeth Clarke, Jayne Elizabeth Archer, Gabriel Heaton, and Sarah Knight, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014: 524.

[39] *Orator,* sense 2a. www.oed.com [date accessed 09.03.2022].

[40] Hackett notes that 'beadsmen were courtly love figures already used in entertainments for Elizabeth, such as the description of Leicester as a beadsman in Rombus's speech at the end of the Lady of May'. Hackett (1995): 146. Daybell has also noted that female petitioners sometimes 'styled themselves as beadswomen, promising prayers for the addressee', although 'this form appears to have declined after the Reformation'. Daybell (2006): 248.

[41] See above: pp.206-208.

metaphor for Christ – therefore depicting Mary's specific role as intercessor between man and Christ.[42] The petitioners also pray to their saint with the familiar gestures of reverence and penitence: 'Looke downe blest Soule, and heare oh heare us nowe/Whose humble harts lowe as our knees doe bowe' (ll.4-5). Like Donne in the *Devotions*, these suppliants know that prayer should ultimately come internally, from 'the knees of my heart'.[43]

The realms of heaven and earth do not run in parallel in the poem, however. Using a pun similar to Donne's on Bedford's 'graciousness', Elizabeth is appealed to both as a monarch and a saint: 'O be not now lesse gratious then of old' (l.7). The Commons then contrast both the court of Elizabeth, and of heaven, with the court of James:

> O be not nowe lesse gratious then of old:
> When each distressed Vassall might be bold
> Into thyne open hand to putt his greife
> And thence receive tymely and faire releife
> Be not lesse good, less gratious then before
> In heaven the supplications of the poore
> Are heard assoone as suits of greatest kings
> If our petitions then blest soule want wings
> To mount them to the Judge of Judges throne
> O helpe them mightie soveraigne with thine owne
> Carry our just complaints since just they are
> And make a tender of them at the barr
> Where noe corruption, noe fraud, noe bribe
> Noe griping lawyer, avaritious scribe
> Noe favorite, noe parasite, noe
> Mynion Cann lead, or alter the opinion
> Of that great Chancellor
> (ll.7-22)

[42] *Chancellor,* n., sense 2a. www.oed.com [date accessed 04.10.2021]
[43] See Chapter 3: 172.

The Commons compare the supposedly ubiquitous access of 'each distressed Vassal' to Elizabeth with the egalitarian judgement of heaven – recalling Mercilla personally hearing petitioners daily at her court (*Faerie Queene,* V.9.36, ll.3-5).[44] This is subsequently contrasted with the corruption of the earthly justice system. The authenticity of the petitioners (who doggedly assert the justness of their complaints on multiple occasions), and the 'faire releife' of Elizabethan justice, is set against 'the fraud' of the earthly world.[45] The image of Elizabeth '[making] a tender of them att the barr' might also evoke the medieval sense of the Virgin Mary as 'advocate'.[46] The familiar pun on 'suit' simultaneously imagines legal process, and petition to God. God as monarch is still imagined at a spatial distance, requiring Elizabeth-come-Mary as intercessor to help the petitioners 'mount them to the Judge of Judges throne'.

Yet it is not just the corrupt legal system which is the problem.[47] The litany of iniquity culminates in favourites, parasites and 'minions' who 'cann lead, or alter the opinion' of the king. Eckhardt has described how any reader in the summer of 1623 could identify which particular 'Mynion' was being referred to, after the Duke of Buckingham and Charles had been sent to Spain for marriage negotiations in February 1623.[48] The identity of 'that great Chancellor' at l.22 simultaneously unites

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[44] See Chapter Two: 90.
[45] Similarly in Ashmole 36,37 an epitaph upon a judge praises him as 'The best of Judges in the worst of times': Bodleian MS Ashmole 36, 37: Fol.32^{r}. In Bodleian MS Eng Poet. f.10 a poem defending Francis Bacon also attacks the blight of bribery: 'The seale is counterfeite the/Haue taken bribes': Bodleian MS Eng. Poet. f.10: Fol.106^{r}.
[46] See Chapter Three: 136.
[47] It should also be noted that bribery, and monopolies which are complained about in the poem to the Great Chancellor of Heaven, were both subjects of debate in the 1621 Parliament. See Russell (1971): pp.295-296.
[48] Eckhardt (2009): 96.

and contrasts Christ and James. Christ is 'that great Chancellor' who won't be led by opinion, and to whom the Commons petition St Eliza to 'carry' their complaints. James is 'the great Chancellor' on earth for the heavenly king, who will be led by the opinion of his favourites, who they cannot approach.

The Commons' complaint about their inability to access the current monarch may not just be those of frustrated courtiers, but specifically of the House of Commons whose attempts to petition James had been frustrated. The petitioners go on to complain that 'Thy once best subjects have so oft bene curst/For offering upp Petitions of this kinde' (ll.28-29). The Commons appeal to Elizabeth: 'O be not nowe lesse gratious then of old: /When each distressed Vassall might be bold/Into thyne open hand to putt his greife' (ll.7-9). The petitions they nostalgically recall might not simply be petitions from common men, but parliament's petitions to Elizabeth; Elizabeth did not dissolve parliaments upon receiving petitions, including those that infuriated her, such as the Commons Petition for her to marry in 1563.[49] As Catherine Gray notes of Elizabethan-nostalgia poems 'in presenting this golden age, these pamphlets eradicate the stickier relations between Elizabeth and her leading courtiers'.[50]

This political frustration informs the sense of uncertainty or futility underlying the poem. From its opening, it encapsulates the underlying anxiety I have been tracing about whether petition will be answered: 'If Saints in heaven can

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[49] Russell (1971): p.146, p.148. J.M. Neale, *Elizabeth I and her Parliaments 1559-1581,* London: Johnathan Cape Ltd, 1953: pp.105-109. As Elizabeth Read Foster says of Elizabethan parliamentary petition: 'Petition… was the only form parliament could use to express its opinion in affairs of state, and even petition was not always acceptable'. Elizabeth Read Foster, 'Petitions and the Petition of Right', *Journal of British Studies*, Vol. 14, No.1, (1974), pp. 21-45: 28.

[50] Gray (2007): 149. The House of Lords' petition on her marriage and succession in 1563 did not go down well. Neale (1953): 109-111.

either see or heare/Or help poor Mortalls, O then lend thine eare' (ll.1-2). This opening mockingly winks at the Catholic metaphor it adopts. From its start the poem undermines the doctrine of Catholic intercession to saints, by drawing attention to its inefficacy. The answer to the rhetorical question from a Protestant standpoint is no, they decidedly can't 'help poor Mortalls'. Simultaneously, the idea that the very method of petition itself is uncertain, does accurately reflect the power dynamic of petition: it is uncertain whether an intended recipient will 'see or heare' the petition.

From a Protestant perspective, saints in heaven cannot see or hear, but there is a further stage of ludicrous impossibility to the poem's conceit, in appealing to a dead public figure for help (even if in the full three-part form of the cycle she does rather harshly respond). There is a comic futility to their bemoaning 'Thy wonted goodness that oh that doth cheere us/That onely gives us hope that thou wilt heare us' (ll.31-32). If the memory of Elizabeth is their 'onely' source of 'hope' then they're in a fairly hopeless state. This bleak outlook is further underlined by the poem's melodramatic penitential tears:

> …Oh then begunn our feares
> And had wee then the kingdome drown'd with teares,
> And in those flood convay'd our soules to heaven
> To wait on thyne, wee had not now bene driven
> To cry, and call thee from thy fellowe Saints
> To heare and pittie those our just complaints
> (ll.35-40)

The petitioners' hyperbolic preference for drowning in their own tears upon Elizabeth's death, rather than living through James' reign may be a comic grotesque of the lachrymose rhetoric of petition. Nevertheless, there is something striking

about the nihilism of these tears. They are not penitential. They do not offer the chance of redemption, but of self-inflicted annihilation in a redemptive 'flood'. Better to die under Elizabeth than live through James. Although a dark joke, it underlines how, ludicrously, it is more productive to helplessly petition a dead queen, than it is to petition the current monarch — a sentiment which becomes more pertinent when the poem's parliamentary context is considered. These questions about the accessibility of the monarch, and the power dynamics of petition offer points of contact with the other mock-petitions and texts with which the poem circulates.

The problem with court intercession

'The Commons Petition' circulates with other texts which echo its metaphor of court intercession — an unfortunate connection to a poem which is centred on the inaccessibility of James. One petitionary letter which the poem circulates with takes issue with the metaphor, explicitly rejecting the conceit of Catholic intercession as a rhetorical strategy to justify direct petition to James.

'The Commons Petition' circulates with two other poems which use the metaphor of intercession to flatter.[51] Both specifically imagine royal children as intercessors. The first is a Caroline eulogy on the stillbirth of the first Prince Charles in 1629.[52] The poem appears in both Ashmole 36,37 and MS Eng. Poet. f.10. Like 'The Commons Petition' it makes use of Marian imagery, however in a less tongue in cheek tone — unsurprisingly given its occasion. Presumably tailored to the royal

[51] A transcription of both poems may be found in Appendix IIa and IIb.
[52] On the stillbirth see Ann Baynes Coiro, '"A ball of strife": Caroline poetry and royal marriage' in *The Royal Image: Representations of Charles I,* eds Thomas N Corns, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999: 28.

mother's personal veneration of the Virgin, Henrietta Maria is flatteringly compared several times to the Virgin — although the poet clearly differentiates between the two women.[53] The Prince of Wales 'for entertainement…staide' in a 'roome/So fitt as chast and bles'd Marias woombe' (ll.3-4). The poet explicitly makes the connection between their names 'Maria then (a name for euer blest)' (l.6). Like Mary's childhood visit to the Temple in Marian lore, Henrietta Maria also visits the Temple:

> Maria then vnto the temple hies
> There paies her vowes there offers sacrifize
> What did our bless'd Maria less; she goes
> And in the temple paies the vowes she owes
> She offers there the priest Te Deum singes
> In each religion in each holy thinge
> She imitats that Virgin who is stil'd
> The blessed mother of a blessed childe
> (ll.8-15)

Whereas the poet represents Henrietta Maria imitating the Virgin Mary, the Prince of Wales is more clearly asserted as a heavenly intercessor. Like Donne's ambassadorial angels, the poem also compares the child to an angelic diplomat. Charles is imagined as mediator between France and England 'England & Fraunce vnhappily att warrs/Heauen sent an Angells to end all iarrs' (ll.1-2), who successfully negotiates between them — 'a peace was mediated by the child' (l.5). His life is represented as a

[53] Within months of arriving in England Henrietta Maria retired to Denmark House with her ladies for her Marian devotion. Salvetti described how 'there they sang the Hours of the Virgin, and lived together like nuns' (quoted in Caroline Hibbard, 'Translating Royalty: Henrietta Maria and the transition from princess to queen', *The Court Historian*, Vol.5, No.1, (2000), pp. 15-28: 20). Jessica Bell has also studied both Marie de Medici and Henrietta Maria's patronage of Marian portraiture, and their own Marian visual iconography. Henrietta Maria's Privy Chamber had four Marian portraits, and her private chapel in Somerset House was also abundantly decorated with Marian iconography which met with the ire of iconoclasts in 1643. Jessica Bell, 'The Three Marys: The Virgin; Marie de Médicis; and Henrietta Maria' in *Henrietta Maria: Piety, Politics and Patronage,* ed Erin Griffey, Ashgate: Aldershot, 2008. Ben Jonson also wrote a Marian poem celebrating the birth of the Charles II, 'to the Queen, then Lying in' which begins 'Haile Mary, full of grace', quoted Baynes Coiro (1999): 32.

short and successfully completed assignment, allowing him to return to his native country of heaven:

> The peace concluded & proclaimed: what then
> Had gods embassidores to doe with men
> He left our earth & vp to heaven ascended
> For peace beinge made there his commission ended
> (ll.16-19).

This metaphor of the child's return from earth to heaven is ultimately a consoling elegy, however the political vehicle of the child as an 'ambassador' on a 'commission' still connects with the theme of mediation in 'The Common's Petition'.

Secular intercession is more clearly at work in the second poem, 'A Peticion to the Kinge put into the Younge Princes hand, by one of the Nurses, who had lost her place' (hereafter 'The Nurse's Petition'). The speaker of the poem is a dismissed Nurse, who wittily uses her proximity to the Prince to petition the King to be reinstated by placing her petition in the child's hand.[54] Her petition is written in the first person, adopting the voice of the infant Prince, as if he intercedes on behalf of his Nurse.

Like 'The Commons Petition', the poem is imagined as a physical letter, placed in the hand of prince — just as 'The Commons Petition' is supposedly placed in Elizabeth's hands. From its opening, the poem uses paternal royal imagery to create instantly Christological metaphor: 'Reade royall father Mighty King/What my little hands doe bringe' (ll.1-2). These parallels are brought out more explicitly later

[54] Although 'The Nurse's Petition' is fictional hyperbole, Hoyle has noted that 'high proportion of those seeking grants… were household officers of one sort or another', suggesting that members of the household might '[act] as facilitators between king and subject.' Hoyle (2011): 576. Here in a closer chain of connection the Nurse exploits her position in the household to use the infant Prince as her intermediary.

in the poem: 'to the Father she doth run/By mediacion of the Sonn' (ll.12-13). 'She' here might even recall the Virgin Mary appealing to Christ. The letter itself, however, is also presented as the Nurse's material intercessor:

> Though an Infant doe not breake
> The lawes of Nature whyle I speake
> By this Interpreter, for One
> Whose Face doth blush, whose hearte doth Groane
> For her knowledged offence
> To gayne her Mercy
> (ll.5-10).

The petitionary poem becomes the mediator - or 'Interpreter' - through which the Nurse may 'speake' her case.[55] The poet plays on the Latin root of 'Infant': '*infans* – unable to speak'.[56] Thus the infant, and through him the Nurse, is miraculously able to 'speak' through an 'Interpreter' — the petitionary letter he holds. As with John Appleyard, the letter describes the physical gestures of penitence which the absent Nurse cannot, referring to her as 'one/Whose Face doth blush, whose hearte doth Groane/For her knowledged offence'.[57] Just as 'The Commons Petition' imagines a clear physical journey of the poem from hand to hand – 'give it to his hands that cann relieve us' (ll.55-56) – so 'The Nurses's Petition' traces the journey from blushing nurse, to the 'little hands' of the infant prince.

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[55] There is a delightful epitaph on a letter-bearer in Simon Sloper's commonplace book. The poem possibly also makes similarly realised the playful religious potential of the mediation of physical letters: 'oft hath he gone/In Embassidie twixt father & the sonn'. The common pun on angels as currency and heavenly bodies also makes an appearance, describing the bearer's reanimation from idleness: 'And there he sticks indeed still like to stand/Until some Angill lend a helping hand'. Bodleian MS Eng. Poet. f.10: Fol.101^{v}.
[56] *Infant,* n.1 (and adj.), www.oed.com [date accessed 21/03/2022].
[57] See Chapter One: 27.

The poem very intimately suggests the access permitted by physical proximity to power - even when this access is to a baby, unconscious of their status or power. The Christological metaphor is made most explicit at the poem's end:

> If therefor now ô Royall Sir
> My first request may purchase her
> Restoring into Grace, To me
> Though Prince, it shall an honor be
> That in my Cradle wilbe said,
> I Master of Requests was made./
> (ll.14-19)

The child's three identities as Christ, secular mediator and infant are simultaneously bought into light. The child wishes to 'purchase her/Restoring into Grace' with the familiar economic metaphor for Christ's sacrifice. 'Grace' clearly also carries its secular meaning of the nurse's reinstatement in her position. The child is also imagined as the very real, specific and secular role of Master of Requests – 'I Master of Requests' - who selected and presented petitions to the Crown.[58] The softly comic impossibility of child's role as voluntary mediator, however, is reinforced with 'in my Cradle', just as the poet earlier draws attention to the child's inability to speak and his 'little hands' (l.2).

This tone of this poem is not critical; it is a witty metaphorical game to tell an affecting narrative. Nevertheless, even with such an improbable conceit, the poem highlights the importance of physical access to power. The speaker exploits her proximity to the prince, no matter how intellectually capable a mediator he is. In

[58] See Hoyle (2011).

Additional MS 25707, a real petition by Francis Phillips takes issue with this very idea, to justify his direct petition to the king.[59]

Francis Phillips turned to James on behalf of his brother Sir Robert Phillips of Somerset — a member of parliament who had been arrested with Sir Edward Coke and examined by the Privy Council in December 1621, and imprisoned in the Tower January 1622.[60] Although the precise circumstances are unclear, it appears that Robert Phillips was arrested in the backlash of James' dissolution of Parliament in 1621. Locke wrote to Dudley Carleton on 1st January 1622: 'The King is so annoyed with the protestation that it is thought he will dissolve Parliament. Sir Edw. Coke is committed close prisoner to the Tower, and Sir Robt. Phelips sent for.'[61] It seems likely that this context is one of the reasons that the petition appears in the Skipwith MS with Spanish Match libels, as well as its more general connection to the other petitionary letters found in the manuscript. The number of letters to Dudley Carleton from three different correspondents tracing the imprisonment of Sir Edmund Coke and Robert Phillips also suggests that the case itself was a hot topic.[62]

During his imprisonment Robert was unable to receive visits from his wife or Francis his brother, although it does seem at least that he was offered a selection of his servants.[63] Francis Phillips and his sister-in-law appealed to the Privy Council for

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[59] A full transcription of the petition may be found in Appendix IIc. Marotti has identified that the petitions of Penelope Rich, Walter Raleigh and Francis Phillips form one gathering in the manuscript, which he identifies as gathering no. 9. Marotti, 2021: 114.

[60] See *Acts of the Privy Council of England 1621-1623, Issued by the Authority of the Lords Commissioner of His Majesty's Treasury Under the Direction of the Master of the Rolls,* London: His Majesty's Stationers Officer, 1932: p.107; p.115. Hereafter *Acts of the Privy Council of England 1621-1623.*

[61] *Calendar of State Papers Domestic: James I, 1619-23*, ed. Mary Anne Everett Green, London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1858: 332. Hereafter *Calendar, 1619-23.*

[62] See *Calendar, 1619-23*: p.318; p.332; p.336; p.337; p.404; p.418; p.439; p.440.

[63] 'A letter to the Lieutenant of the Tower to receaue into his custodie the person of Sir Robert Phillips, knight, and to keepe him close prisoner in the Tower untill further order, suffering him to make

access without success.[64] With the added pressure of Francis's own financial dependence upon Robert, and having exhausted the appropriate avenues, Francis decided to petition James directly.[65]

To justify this direct petition, Francis Phillips inventively turned to the metaphor of courtly intercession, making his direct petition to James without a courtly mediator the true Protestant method of petition:

> If the thrones of Heauen and Earth were to be sollicyted one and the same way, I should haue learned by my often prayinge to God for your Maiestie, how to pray to your Maiestie for others. But the liturgies of the Church and Courte are different as in many other points, soe especially in this, that in the one, there is not soe poore a Sinner but may offer his Vowes immediately to the almightie, whereas in the other, a right Loyall Subiect may powre out his soule in vaine, without *Ora pro nobis*; now such is the obscure Condicion of your humble suppliant as I know noe saint about your sacred person, to whome I can addresse my orizons, or on whose mediacion I dare repose the least assurance, let yt therefore bee lawfull for me in this extraordinary occasion, to passe the ordinary formes, and rayseinge my spiritt aboue vncertainties, fix my Intire faith vpon your Maiesties supreame goodnes which is, and euer ought to be, esteemed both the best tribunall, and best Sanctuary, for a goode Cause.
> (ll.1-14)

Phillips lays bare the courtly metaphor of petition: in theory, 'the thrones of heaven and Earth' are 'to be sollicyted one and the same way'. Court, like the church, has its own 'liturgy' — its own set forms and orders of prayer and ceremony. Phillips expresses frustration with the contrast between the Protestant belief in direct access to God, and a courtly system which mirrors Catholic intercession through mediating

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choice of some of his owne servaunts to attend upon him soe as hee bee kept closse with him'. *Acts of the Privy Council of England 1621-1623:* 115.

[64] 'he was as soone Committed to the Towre, where he hath beene euer since kept close prisoner, and that with soe strict a hand, as his beloued Wyfe, and my selfe, haueinge sometimes since, an urg[ent] & Vnfaigned occasion to speake with him, about some priuate businesse of his family, and theruppon mak[ing] an humble suite vnto the Lords of your Maiesties most hon[orable] priuy Counsaile, for the fauour of accesse, wee we[re](to our great discomforte) denied' Appendix IIc, (ll.53-58).

[65] 'I haue noe meanes to liue your Subiect but what proceeds from his brotherly loue and bountie'. Appendix IIc, ll.89-90.

saints — much like the Commons in 'The Commons Petition', and Donne's metaphor of courtly-come-divine-intercession in his letter to Goodere. According to Protestant theology, 'there is not soe poore a Sinner but may offer his Vowes immediately to the almightie', whereas in James' court 'a right Loyall Subiect may powre out his soule in vaine without *Ora pro nobis*'. In the Skipwith MS this quotation from the Catholic Litany of the Saints – '*Ora pro nobis*' - bristles against the secretary hand in italics; in a copy in the State Papers it is also distinguished in majuscule.[66] The problem of access once again comes to the fore, as an appropriate 'mediator' is imagined in terms of physical proximity: an ideal mediator should be a 'saint *about* your sacred *person*' [emphasis mine]. Phillips' metaphor uncannily echoes James' own words in the *Basilikon Doron*:

> be in your giving access so open and affable to every rank of honest persons, so as to make them peart without scarring at you, to make their own suits to you yourselves, and not to employ the great Lords their intercessors: for intercession to Saints is Papistrie.[67]

It is possible Phillips inter-textually, as well as theologically, justified his petition to James, implying that he was merely playing by James' own ostensible rules.

Like the Commons' frustration with a corrupt earthly justice system, Phillips rejects the 'ordinary formes' of legal and courtly process, choosing James himself as 'the best tribunall, and best sanctuary, for a good Cause'. Later, he expresses

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[66] Additional MS 25707: Fol. 139[r]. London, The National Archive, State Papers 16/524 f.216: Fol. 257[r]. Marotti has also observed that religious conflict is a theme of the Skipwith MS: 'There are items in the manuscript directly or indirectly dealing with religious divisions.' Marotti, 2021: 124. For the Catholic Litany of the Saints see *Antiphonale ad vsu[m] ecclesie Sa[rum]. politissimis imaginibus decoratum,* Paris: Per W. hopyliu[m], imp. F. byrchman [in London], 1519: Sigs.clxxvi[r] -clxxx[r].

[67] Quoted Hoyle (2011): 252.

frustration about subjecting himself to other courtiers, stating he will only accept redemption from James himself:

> for yf we had not libertie to appeale thither [to James],… instead of beinge your Maiesties Subjects, [we] become other mens Slaues from your Maiestie therefore yo[r] faithfull Subiect craues and expect the Ioyfull word grace (ll.124-128)

Only from God's representative on earth can 'grace' carry its full meaning. This moment is heightened in the State Papers copy which even more assertively states 'from your Maiestie therefore, and no other'.[68]

Of course, Phillips' metaphor is strategic. Having failed to achieve access to his brother through the Privy Council he took matters into his own hands, trying to go straight to the top — and he needed a good excuse for doing so.[69] The Calendar appreciatively notes his artistry in its summary of the letter: 'It is long, but artfully penned'.[70] Nevertheless, while Phillips' metaphor seeks to justify his bold petition, his frustration with the machinations of court is palpable.[71] This is only heightened

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[68] State Papers 16/524 f.216: Fol. 258v.

[69] Of course, it should be acknowledged that James was rather infamously physically beleaguered with petitioners, outside the palaces and even on his hunts. Hoyle (2011): pp.252-253. Laura Flannigan, on her work on the Court of Requests, has also studied the earlier 16th century behaviour of physically bombarding, and even trailing the king on his progress. Laura Flannigan, 'Signed, stamped, and sealed: Delivering royal justice in early sixteenth century England', *Historical Research: The Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research,* Vol. 94, No. 264, (2021), pp. 267-281: p.272. For the peripatetic work of the Court of Requests on royal progress, see also Laura Flannigan, 'Litigants in the English "Court of Poor Men's Causes," or Court of Requests, 1515–25', *Law and History Review*, Vol. 38, No. 2, (2020), pp. 303-337: 304. Perhaps Francis Phillips was particularly skewered by his social status: too well placed to petition the king from outside the world of the court, but not well placed enough to be able to reach him from the inside.

[70] *A Catalogue of the Harleian Manuscripts in the British Museum. With Indexes of Persons, Places, and Matters ... Printed by Command of His Majesty King George III, in Pursuance of an Address of the House of Commons of Great Britain*, England: G. Eyre and A. Strahan, 1812: Entry 1221, 46, p.609.

[71] The implication of court corruption in 'the Church and Courte are different as in *many other* points' [emphasis mine], is made explicit later in the letter when he contrasts the corruption of court with the innocent path of service trodden by his brother: 'my deare and onely brother, … hath fallen, or rather beene pusht into your heigh displeasure, not in darke and Crooked wayes, (such Ill affected, and Corrupt Subiects, vse to walke, and were wont to breake theire necks in) but euen in that great Road, which both him selfe, and all good English men (that know not the priuy path of the Courte) would

when connected to 'The Commons Petition', which is copied out in the same hand in the Skipwith MS. Perhaps this is another way of reading the facetiously Catholic metaphor of 'The Commons Petition'. The Catholic metaphor could be read as part of the poem's critique, suggesting the ludicrous extremes people feel pushed to in a court whose systems of mediation (and obstruction) better resemble a Catholic universe than a Protestant one; where it is more conceivable to pray to a dead Queen for intercession than it is access James without the right intercessor.

Phillips' petition is also a prime example of the tight-rope act that is petitionary writing. Just as Donne learns that petition ultimately requires submission to God's will, Phillips must appeal to James for mercy, without questioning James' will, and asserting his ultimate submission to that will:

> May ytt there fore please your Most Excelle[nt] Maiestie, now att the length, after three Moneths extrea[me en]durance to ordaine some such Course of Expedicion in his Cause as may stand with your Iustice, and yet not auert your mercy, either of them will serue our turnes, but that which is most agreeable to your Royall and pracious Inclinacion will best accomplish our desires, to Liue still in close prison, is all one to be buryed aliue, and for a man that hath anie hope of Saluacion, ytt were better to pray for the day of Iudgement then to lye languishinge in such wakeinge misery, yet not ours but your Maiesties will be done
> (ll.66-73)

Phillips attempts to balance an understanding of, and submission to, James' 'Iustice', with an appeal to his 'mercy'. Initially, he viscerally represents his brother's incarcerated isolation as a form of despair: 'Saluacion' may only be achieved by the swift coming of Judgement Day, and the end of his living torment 'languishinge in such wakeinge misery', 'buryed aliue' in solitude. This vivid and affective

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haue sworne had lead most safely and most direct[ly] to your Maiesties seruice, from your Maiesties displeasure' (ll.34-40).

description, however, is then followed by a courtly echo of the Lord's Prayer: 'yet not ours but your Maiesties will be done'. This sudden shift in tone reinforces the powerlessness of the petitioner and the tight-rope walking act of petition, balancing appealing for mercy without questioning royal judgement. Kesslering has similarly observed that:

> even when they denied responsibility for the particular offense with which they were charged, petitioners … did not dispute the justice of their punishment… Submission by no means guaranteed mercy, but it was a necessary precondition.[72]

In his closing appeal to James for grace, Phillips makes a striking comparison between petition and treason:

> and he who thinkes he can neuer speak enough, may easily lye too much, my Comfort is, that neither my brother, nor my selfe can be said, to haue failed, or exceeded in anie thinge but in words, but what will that availe us, vn[lesse] your Maiestie will pardon, without that all Crimes are Equall and as much danger lies, in an humble peticion as in a plot of heigh treason, be pleased then most dread and gracious Soueraigne, to giue vs backe our questionable words, and keepe our Vndoubted hearts, att least sho[w] us soe much mercy, as to Iudge Vs according to your owne goodness
> (ll.117-124)

Phillips here acknowledges the very real risk of over-stepping the mark: it is easy to 'lye too much'. This is perhaps another way in which 'as much danger' can lie 'in an humble peticion as in a plot of heigh treason'. Phillips himself sails perilously close to the wind when he holds James accountable for the death of his father in a very colourful, theatrical moment in which the letter is haunted by his father's 'ghost'.[73]

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[72] Kesselring (2003): 116.

[73] 'I know none but *Our Father which art in Heauen* of whome I can begge my dayly bread He that was my Father Vpon earth is longe since departed, and If I haue not beene misinformed, who was then beyond seas, (*pormhes pecathos*) your Maiesties anger was to him little better then the messenger of Death ,… pardon me dread Soueraigne, yf in this occasion I cannot hinder my Fathers Ghost from appearinge, [140^{v}] For how can it possibly be att rest as longe as your fatall Displeasure raignes in his poore family, and makes it the howse of Continuall mourneinge' (ll.90-105).

Where rhetorically, however, the brothers can proffer their 'Vndoubted hearts' to James rather than their 'questionable words', in reality questionable words are all they have. And as Phillips states, without a royal pardon 'as much danger lies, in an humble peticion as in a plot of heigh treason'. The perilous power dynamics of petition at work in Phillips' real petition, are displayed and criticised in some of the other miscellany-companions of the 'The Common's Petition'.

Before moving on, however, I am happy to report that it appears that Francis Phillips did not sue in vain. In March, the Privy Council wrote to the Lieutenant of the Tower of London:

> Whereas instance hath ben made unto us on behalf of Sir Robert Phillipps, now prisoner under your charge in the Tower, that such persons as have the charge of solliciting his private business may have conferrence with him for their better direccion therein

He was later released from the Tower in August 1622.[74] Although '*instance hath ben made* unto us on behalf of Sir Robert Phillipps' [emphasis mine] is rather vague, given the particular emphasis that Francis Phillips places on the inaccessibility of Robert to his loved ones, it does seem likely that his petition might have played a role in alleviating Robert's isolation in prison. As for the release, Chamberlain notes to Carleton in June 1622 that 'The King is vainly petitioned to allow greater freedom to the Earl of Oxford and Sir Robt. Phelips.'[75] Although these petitions appear not to have been initially successful, it does seem that Francis Phillips was not as alone at court as he thought.

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[74] *Acts of the Privy Council of England 1621-1623*: 308.
[75] *Calendar, 1619-23:* 404.

The problem with petitioning the King

Two mock-petitions 'The Commons Petition' circulates with explicitly reflect upon the power dynamics of petition. 'The Wiper of the People's Teares' (hereafter 'The Wiper') – a poem with James himself as its fictional speaker – gives a rather unfavourable depiction of the other side of the conversation between monarch and petitioner. Like 'The Commons Petition', the exact identity of the petitioners in question is flexible; they shift from everyman 'commons', to parliamentary 'Commons'. In the second poem, 'Alderman Wiseacres speech' (hereafter Alderman Wiseacre), which I date from after December 1640, the roles are reversed: parliament is the authority being addressed, rather than the monarch. Instead of focusing upon the relationship between petitioner and addressee, the poem reflects on the identity of the petitioners themselves, questioning who has the right to petition about public affairs.

Before discussing 'The Wiper', it is worth taking a moment to discuss its authorship, which has been speculated about since its original circulation. At least four manuscript copies claim royal authorship in their titles.[76] Bellany and McRae note that several letters recorded a poem written in response to a libel, which may or may not have been written by James.[77] But Joseph Mead, writing to Sir Martin Stuteville on 18th January 1623, raised and rejected James' authorship: 'There is also a great paper of verses, in way of answer to these libels and State meddlers, vulgarly

[76] The poem is entitled: 'The King's Verses' in London, British Library Additional MS 28640: Fol. 123^{v}; 'Certen verses made by the king. Februarie. 1622: as an answeare to some other verses made to him' in London, British Library, Additional MS 29303: Fol. 5^{r}; 'K James his Answer vnto the libel called the Commons Tears' in London, British Library, Additional MS 52585: Fol. 4^{r}; 'His Majesties answere unto a Libell' in London, British Library, MS Lansdowne 498: Fol. 32^{r}.
[77] 'Early Stuart Libels': Nvi1.

said to be the King's; but a gentleman told me that he will not own it'.[78] Mead also sent Stuteville a copy of the poem: 'some say, the king hath disclaimed expressly; but what he saith to the other, I know not. But if it be not his, it is worse than a libel, and not to be read. But till that appears, I suppose, there is no danger'.[79] Mead's suggestion that it might be 'worse than a libel' is inviting: does the danger lie simply in royal impersonation, or might the content be as critical as a libel, with its presumed speaker making it an even more dangerous game?

The contemporary uncertainty about the poem's authorship became more contained in modern reception, not least due to its inclusion in James Craigie's 1958 edition of James' poetry. Appearing in the section 'Uncollected Poems', Craigie describes how 'The Wiper' and other poems were 'well known in the second quarter of the seventeenth century and have survived in numerous copies in private poeticall miscellanies and other manuscript collections of the time.'[80] Craigie's copy text for the poem is from the miscellany Malone MS 23. Despite this questionable use of miscellany circulation as evidence for authorship, Craigie has remained 'the standard edition of James' poems and the last word on his poetic canon'.[81] Both Bellany and Kevin Sharpe assert the poem's royal authorship unequivocally, citing Craigie's edition.[82] Curtis Perry was the first to suggest that the edition 'may be

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[78] Quoted Bellany and McRae, 'Early Stuart Libels': Nvi1.
[79] Quoted Bellany and McRae, 'Early Stuart Libels': Nvi1.
[80] James Craigie, *The Poems of King James VI of Scotland* II, Edinburgh: printed for the Scottish Texts Society by W.Blackwood, 1958: pp.xxvi-xxvii.
[81] Curtis Perry, 'Royal Authorship and Problems of Manuscript Attribution in the Poems of King James VI and I', *Notes and Queries*, Vol. 46, No. 2, (1999), pp. 243-246: 243.
[82] Alistair Bellany,' "Raylinge Rymes and Vaunting Verse": Libellous Politics in Early Stuart England, 1603-1628' in *Culture and Politics in Early Stuart England,* ed Kevin Sharpe, Stanford Uni Press 1993: 294; Kevin Sharpe, *Image Wars: Promoting Kings and Commonwealths in England, 1603-1660*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010: 35.

overdue for a re-examination in light of recent advances in our understanding of manuscript poetry and its circulation'.[83]

Perry's solution to the problem is based upon newsletter evidence about another of James' supposed poems, 'Jacke and Tom's Journey': in a letter from John Chamberlain to Dudley Carleton, Chamberlain described how 'they were fathered at first upon the king, but I learne since that they were only corrected and amended by him'.[84] Perry traces potential collaborators for other 'Amatoria' contained in Craigie's edition.[85] He uses the Dudley letter as a springboard, to suggest a wider theory of collaborative royal authorship:

> Since I am treating these poems as attempts to recuperate the king's discursive authority, it is worth noting that they are subject to the kinds of collaboration which routinely contributed to the crown's self-construction. For though James himself was unquestionably interested in writing, it is inaccurate to see all of the public texts that bear his name as the product of a single consciousness. James' speeches and proclamations were sometimes written collaboratively or by others, usually (though not always) to fit the crown's agendas…. while I will refer to the poems in question as James', I understand royal authorship in this broader sense. I am treating these poems as public, political documents intended for manuscript circulation: they speak for the crown, but they may or may not have been literally produced by the hand and heart of the king.[86]

Perry offers three potential theories for reading 'The Wiper', based on Chamberlain's cryptic description of the authorship of 'Tom and Jack's Journey':

> James may have penned them; they may have been (as Chamberlain suggests in the case of "Off Jacke and Tom") written by others, vetted by the king, and then fathered upon him; or they may have been written for, or authorized by, the king.[87]

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[83] Perry (1999): 243.
[84] Quoted Perry (1999): 243.
[85] Perry (1999): pp.244-245.
[86] Curtis Perry, '"If Proclamations Will Not Serve: The Late Manuscript Poetry of James I and the Culture of Libel" in *Royal Subjects: Essays on the Writings of James VI and I*, eds Daniels Fischlin and Mark Fortier, Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2002: pp.211-212.
[87] Perry (2002): 212.

Marie-Louise Coolahan and Erin McCarthy, in their brief discussion of the poem, similarly propose either that the poem was 'a convincing prosopopoeia', or that if it was written by James:

> in the context of libel culture, discretion might sensibly check claims to authorial responsibility; it would be advantageous for the real James to maintain an ambiguous authorial relationship to a poem that excoriates his critics'.[88]

The flexibility of these readings feels closer to the contemporary ambiguity surrounding the verses — although, at least in Mead's case, whether they were written by the king or not does appear to have been of some significance. Whilst leaving the poem's authorship as open and flexible, the theories are still centred on the idea that the poem is a favourable, and authorised, representation of the king.

In Perry's reading of 'The Wiper', the poem is in some ways a gift to New Historicism — a poem constructed to uphold royal authority, which simultaneously reveals monarchy's own fissures:

> if the poem shows us how seriously James took libel, it also demonstrates his inability to stop it. Indeed, the poem is written in acknowledgement of the failure of royal proclamation against libel… the poem undermines its own depiction of monarchy's all powerful "angrie browe," demonstrating the limits of the king's power.[89]

For Sharpe's depiction of James' literary self-fashioning, and for Bellany's early pivotal work on libel culture, unequivocal royal authorship of the poem reinforces their respective arguments: for James to have rolled up his sleeves and entered the manuscript-based fray both emphasises his own literary exploits and the significance of libel culture.

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[88] Coolahan and McCarthy (2020): 283.
[89] Perry (2002): 216.

I propose a fourth possibility. Perhaps the poem, written without the king's involvement, appears to 'undermine' royal authority precisely because it was intended to: an act of deliberate criticism, rather than monarchical propaganda caught in an internecine and self-undermining struggle. Certainly, in this way, an audacious impersonation could be 'worse than a libel'. I offer here the first reading of the poem as a criticism of the King, rather than a defence of him.

The poem was written in response to a lost libel, 'The Commons Tears'.[90] Bellany and McRae have raised the tantalising possibility that 'The Commons Tears' could in fact be 'The Commons Petition':

> one might note a partial similarity to the title of the verse "If Saints in heaven cann either see or heare"… Both copyists' notes and internal evidence, however, suggest that "If Saints in heaven" was written after March 1623, thus at least two months after James' poem began to circulate.[91]

Whilst there is no extant copy of 'The Commons Petition' bearing the title 'The Commons Tears', 'The Commons' is central to the poem's metaphor, and the poem makes dramatic reference to tears, as discussed above.[92] The similarities extend beyond tears alone, however. In 'The Wiper' James' defences of his favourite, and of his foreign policy, could respond both to the fleeting reference to the 'Mynion' who 'Cann lead, or alter the opinion' (ll.21-22) in 'The Commons Petition', and the urging for a more aggressive foreign policy in 'If bleeding harts'.[93] 'If bleeding harts' also laments 'Wee had a Parliament a salve for soares/ A Magna Charta all cast out of

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[90] Bellany and McRae, 'Early Stuart Libels': Nvi1. Two copies describe the poem as a response: 'The Answere to the Libel called The Commons tears', London, British Library, Harley MS 367: Fol. 151^{r}; 'K James his Answer unto the libel Called the Commons Teares', Additional MS 52585: Fol. 4^{r}.
[91] Bellany and McRae, 'Early Stuart Libels': Nvi1.
[92] See above: pp. 216-217.
[93] 'Early Stuart Libels': Niv, l.232-241, l.252-255.

doores' (ll.250-251). In 'The Wiper' the speaker reclaims the monarchal ownership of the Magna Carta: 'The Charter which yow great doe call/ Came first from Kings to stay your fall/ From an unjust rebellion moved' (ll.119-121).

The two poems often appear in the same manuscripts – which may in part be due to their shared Spanish match context.[94] In Malone MS 23, however, 'The Commons Petition' cycle is immediately followed by 'The Wiper'.[95] The poems also appear in reverse order in British Library Additional MS 52585 and in the Skipwith MS.[96] This ordering compellingly draws the two poems into conversation in three different manuscripts. It is extremely tempting to read this ordering as the compilers' recognition that the poems are a corresponding pair. Later in Malone MS 23 a famous pair of libels - Richard Corbett's defence of the Duke of Buckingham in response to the 1628 Parliament, and the counter libel which responds to Corbett - are placed together in a chain of explicitly labelled relation.[97] Corbett's poem is entitled 'Verses supposed to be made by Doctor Corbett Bishop of Oxford against the opposing the Duke in Parliament. 1628' and the response is entitled ''An Answere to the same Line for Lyne'.[98] In contrast, the titles for 'The Commons Petition' cycle and 'The Wiper' are not so explicitly linked. As discussed above,

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[94] For example, both poems appear in: Additional MS 25707: Fol. 74^{r}; Fol.76^{r}; in Ashmole 36,37: Fol.58^{r}; Fol. 303^{r}; Malone MS 23: Fol.49; Fol.32.

[95] Malone MS 23: Fol.32; Fol.49. Additional MS 25707: Fol. 74^{r}; Fol.76^{r}. It should be noted that the order of the pages of Malone MS 23 appear to have been muddled by later binding, meaning that the 'Commons Petition' sequence begins halfway through the second poem and is followed by the first half. However, according to the original pagination, 'The Commons Petition' is followed by 'The Wiper'.

[96] Additional MS 52585: Fol.4^{r}; Fol.6^{r}. The folio on which the Commons Petition is torn to a small fragment, but it is recognisably ll.14-21 of the 'Commons Petition': 'If our petit/To moue the/Oh helpe them/Carry our iust/And make a tende/Where noe Corrup/Noe griping Lawier/Noe favorite noe Par'. Additional MS 52585: Fol.6^{r}.

[97] See Andrew McRae, *Literature, Satire and the Early Stuart State*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004: Chapter 5 'Satire and sycophancy: Richard Corbett and early Stuart royalism'.

[98] Malone MS 23: Fols.116- 117.

Malone MS 23 expands on the fictional frame of 'Commons Petition'.[99] 'The Wiper' similarly provides a short descriptive frame 'King James his verses made vpon a Libell lett fall in Court and entituled The Wiper of the Peoples teares The dryer vpp of doubts & feares.'[100] They are, therefore, not so clearly presented as a poem and 'answere'. And yet, they do share a phrasal echo: 'a Libell putt into the hand' and 'a Libell lett fall'. It is also possible to read the gloss for 'The Wiper' serving the same function of the gloss for 'The Commons Petition': the compiler of Malone MS 23 engaging in the fictional framing narrative. In the most optimistic reading, the manuscripts' ordering – especially Malone MS 23 - offers further evidence that 'The Commons Petition' could be 'The Commons Tears'. Even if the compilers did not see the two poems as a libel and response pair, the adjacent placing might suggest a conscious recognition of the parallels between the two poems. The ordering in Malone MS 23 seems to create a narrative in which the people of England parodically petition the dead Elizabeth for help, and James answers their petition. At the very least, even if entirely unintentionally, the placing highlights an overlooked connection between the poems: petition.

'The Wiper' is frequently read as evidence of the power of libel culture: Bellany's ground-breaking article in libel studies takes its name from the poem.[101] Perry and Sharpe also read the poem as a defence against libel.[102] Bellany and McRae's shorthand for the poem is even 'Against the Libellers'.[103] Libel culture is

[99] See above: 209.
[100] Malone MS 23: Fol.49.
[101] Bellany (1993).
[102] Perry (2002): pp. 211 - 217. Sharpe (2010): 35.
[103] Bellany and McCrae, 'Early Stuart Libels': Nvi1.

undoubtedly a crucial context to the poem, however, the poem should first and foremost be considered in terms of petition. The critical focus on libel culture has overlooked the mock-petition genre, which is used as a vehicle for the libel. I therefore propose that we not only read the poem as a criticism of James, but as a criticism which is inextricably linked to petition.

'The Wiper' offers us an alternate perspective to the power dynamic we have seen throughout this thesis: rather than a petitioner addressing a monarch, as in earlier chapters, the poem presents itself as a monarch responding to a petitioner. With this new perspective comes a new use of the parallel justice systems of earth and heaven. Whereas we have seen petitioners frequently use the parallel to appeal for mercy, the royal speaker of 'The Wiper' uses the parallel to doggedly defend his prerogative, threatening the petitioners with judgement rather than mercy. In doing so, the poem reinforces the relative powerlessness of the people to engage with their sovereign. And of course, the poem is further illuminated by understanding the process of parliamentary petition.

The opening of 'The Wiper', whether in response to 'The Commons Petition' or not, very clearly figures James responding to petitioning people: 'O stay your teares yow who complaine/ Cry not as Babes doe all in vaine' (ll.1-2).[104] 'Complain' in this context may have the more literary sense of complaint poetry, as well as voicing a criticism or grievance.[105] If the poem is a response to 'The Commons Petition', its opening suggests that the libellers' were really onto something when

[104] Unless otherwise stated, all quotations from 'The Wiper' are taken from Bellany and McRae, 'Early Stuart Libels': Nvi1.
[105] 'To utter in complaint; to compose as a complaint', *complain*, v., sense 1a, www.oed.com [date accessed 14.07.2021].

they claim: 'Thy once best subjects have so oft bene curst/ For offering upp Petitions of this kinde' (ll.28-19). Perry has noted the contrast between the poem's paternal title and its opening: 'Given the gentle, paternal quality of its title, James' poem threatens libelers with remarkable vehemence', wiping away tears with a slap in the face.[106] Sharpe also notes the surprisingly threatening tone: 'And, though it reiterated a king's love for his subjects, it uncharacteristically and unregally threatened'.[107] As an attempt to 'dry up fears', the vehement insults of the opening image leave a lot to be desired. Rather than offering comfort, the flippant opening 'O stay your tears', suggests a rigid early modern parent not suffering childish complaint, just as Donne describes the short shrift children's complaints receive: 'as in the tendernesse of our childhood, we suffer, and yet are whipt if we cry, so we are complained of, if we complaine.'[108] The people crying 'in vain' denies the legitimacy of the people's complaint by undermining the cause of suffering — just like the propensity of babies for tears, so the people are quick to complain. And yet, 'in vain' also echoes the fear of powerlessly suing 'in vain', expressed in 'If bleeding harts', the *Amoretti*, and the petition of Francis Phillips.[109] 'In vain' suggests James' unwillingness to hear or respond. The painfully alliterative ridiculing of the 'prating' 'purblind People' feels like a harsh response to supplicants. This supposedly royal response to a scene of supplication rather unfortunately recalls Donne's anxiety in

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[106] Perry (2002): 212.
[107] Sharpe (2010): 35.
[108] Donne's Second Prebend Sermon (Jan. 1626), Potter and Simpson, *Sermons,* vii.1.114-16 (p.54).
[109] 'Lett us noe longer begg and sue in vaine' (l.79); 'In vain I seek, and sue to her for, grace', The *Amoretti* Sonnet XX, (ll.1-2); 'a Right Loyall Subiect may powre out his soule in vaine without *ora pro nobis'* (ll.6-7).

the *Devotions* that ceaselessly importuning God might anger him.[110] It is possible that this might simply be the unpalatable reality of absolutism to the modern reader; the tone-deaf response might betray the insensitivity of the monarch, or the monarch's defender. The other possibility, however, is that this tone is intentionally, 'uncharacteristically', and disproportionately threatening because it is intended as a critique of the obstinate position it hyperbolically voices.[111]

Throughout the poem, the familiar parallels between earth and heaven repeatedly place a blunt emphasis on the sovereign's power to judge. Sharpe notes how critical quotation of the opening of James' *Basilikon Doron* is often tactfully truncated to back up 'James' succession as marking the onset of a constitutional crisis, sparked by claims for divine right kingship'.[112] The first two lines assert divinely authorised power: 'God gives not Kings the stile of Gods in vaine,/For on his Throne his Scepter doe they swey'.[113] Sharpe argues that critics often strategically separate these opening lines from the following two lines which the rhyme scheme and metre make 'inseparable': 'And as their subjects ought them to obey,/So Kings should feare and serve their God againe.'[114] James' sense of a king's parallel fear and service due to God is completely absent from 'The Wiper', which might again point to it being a parody of James, rather than a supportive piece of propaganda. The poem quickly delineates the hierarchy from men, to Kings, to God:

You cannot judge what's truely myne

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[110] It adds power to Donne's comparison between monarchs and God in *Devotions,* that Phillips when petitioning James uses exactly the same word: 'I thus Importune your Majesties grace' (ll.32-33); 'I am the more bold to Importune your Majestie in this point' (l.87).
[111] Sharpe (2010): 35.
[112] Sharpe (2010): 20.
[113] Sharpe (2010): 20.
[114] Sharpe (2010): 20.

> Who see noe further then the Ryne
> Kings walke the heavenly milky way
> But yow by bypathes gadd astray
> God and Kings doe pace together
> But Vulgar wander light as feather
> I should be sorie you should see
> My actions before they bee
> Brought to the full of my desires
> God above all men kings enspires
> Hold you the publique beaten way
> Wounder at kings, and them obey
> For under God they are to chuse
> What right to take, and what refuse
> (ll.5-18)

God and Kings decisively 'pace' together, whilst people aimlessly 'wander' and 'gadd astray' – with an implicit sense of moral misdirection. The 'purblind' people are contrasted with the cosmic gaze and direction of the king. The warning - 'I should be sorie you should see/My actions before they bee/Brought to the full of my desires' - equates the King's plans with God's omniscience. James is divinely inspired by God – 'God above all men kings enspires' - concomitantly rebuking the people for their criticism of divinely ordained plans whose future consequences they cannot truly conceive of. Their place is to 'obey' and 'wounder', not to reason why. Just as kings are imbued with divine omniscience, they are also the closest judges to God — as the speaker commandingly asserts 'you cannot judge'. The speaker emphasises the King's prerogative to 'chuse/What right to take, and what refuse' - the contrasting pair 'take' and 'refuse' echoing 'the Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away'.[115] Line 17 ending on 'chuse' places the emphasis more upon James' divine right to decide, then on the decisions themselves.

[115] Job 1.21 (AV).

James goes on to threaten the petitioners if they do not learn to 'hold [their] peace':

> Whereto if yow will not consent
> Yet hold your peace least you repent
> And be corrected for your pride
> That Kings designes darr thus decyde
> By railing rymes and vaunting verse
> Which your kings brest shall never peirce
> Religion is the right of kings
> As they best knowe what good it brings
> Whereto you must submitt your deeds
> Or be pull'd upp like stubborne weed
> (ll.19-28)

The passage contains images we might expect to be associated with mercy: 'repent', the 'peirce[d]' 'brest' of the king. They evoke, however, a decided lack of mercy. The people are warned to 'hold your peace lest you repent'. Their hubristic 'railing rymmes and vaunting verse' 'your kings brest shall never pierce'. The image of the pierced breast evokes affective sensitivity, especially in proximity to the tears and complaint of the poem's opening. There is, however, no mercy to be found. The image does not emphasise James' compassion, but an assurance criticism will 'never' be heard — almost an early modern 'sticks and stones'. An assertion which is obviously proved completely redundant by the poem's very existence. Subjects can learn to shut up and 'be corrected for your pride', 'or be pull'd upp like stubborne weeds'. This commonplace of the garden of state is made even more unpleasant with the manuscript variation 'stinking weeds'.[116]

The poem emphasises royal justice throughout. In a particularly telling order, when defending royal favour, the speaker states: 'Whereof the choyse doe rest in

[116] London, British Library MS Harley 367, quoted in Craigie, 1958: 185.

kings/ Who punish, and reward them brings' (ll.39-40). Punishment takes precedence over reward. At its most violent extremes he warns:

> Kings doe make Lawes to bridle yow
> Which they may pardon, or embrue
> Their hands in the best blood you have
> And send the greatest to the grave.
> (ll.115-118)

Whilst here pardon comes before punishment, the heavy and brutal emphasis remains on the king's bloody hand of justice. The closing of the poem threatens 'pratling' writers with violent punishment:

> slowe I am revenge to take;
> And your amendments, wroth will slake
> Then hold your pratling spare your penn
> Be honest, and obedient men
> Urge not my Justice, I am sloe
> To give yow your deserved woe.
> (ll.169-174)

James may threaten Parliament as well as libellers: 'amendments', whilst primarily meaning moral correction, might also pun on the sense of 'a formal change made to a parliamentary bill or an item of legislation'.[117] Whilst he urges provocateurs to 'urge not my Justice', and claims to be 'sloe' to wield the sword of justice, the line break isolates and emphasises the unequivocal 'give yow your deserved woe'. An earlier threat - 'Alas fond men play not with kings/ With lyons clawes, or serpents stings/ They kill even by theire sharpe aspect' (ll.50-53) - might recall, and underline the absence of, the same proverbial lore of leonine kingly clemency which Spenser

[117] See *amendment*, sense 2 'the action or fact of correcting or reforming one's own or another's conduct; moral or spiritual improvement' and sense 6a. www.oed.com [date accessed 14/03/2022].

draws on in *Amoretti* XX.[118] Here, as there, no clemency is to be found — only bloody tyranny. The petitioners in 'If bleeding harts' similarly highlight the disproportionate ratio between justice and mercy:

> …Is there yet a soule
> Whose vertue power hath but to controule
> Thy heav'd upp hand of Justice if there bee
> For his, or her sake rouse thy clemencie
> Awake thy mercie lett thy Justice slumber
> (ll.159-162)

In 'The Wiper', in an especially self-conscious moment, the speaker evokes and rejects stage pardoning as a role for theatrical kings alone:

> O what a calling weere a King
> If hee might give, or take no thing
> But such as yow should to him bring
> Such were a king but in a play
> (ll.41-44)

The imagined scenario is purposefully ambiguous: 'he might give, or take no thing'. It follows from the discussion of how 'the choice doth rest in kings/whoe punish and reward them brings', and immediately precedes the leonine threat. The emphasis is on transaction — 'give or take no thing', 'to him bring'. The speaker reviles the idea of not being the prime mover — being brought something, rather than making the choice to give or take. The theatrical metaphor highlights agency, perhaps suggesting that fictional kings are mere plot functions, subject to the whims of their subjects — or the playwright for that matter. Sandwiched between two images of judgement, however, the stage metaphor is explicit. The absence of mercy

[118] 'And yet the Lyon that is Lord of power,/and reigneth ouer euery beast in field:/in his most pride disdeigneth to deuoure/the silly lamb that to his might doth yield.' *Amoretti* XX, *Edmund Spenser: The Shorter Poems*, ed Richard A. McCabe, London: Penguin, 1999.

from the poem seems to relegate the pardon to the stage.[119] Mercy as the elusive 'thing' being exchanged is reinforced when the language of transaction returns later more explicitly in the context of petition: declaring that the king 'gives to all that sues for grace' (l.152). Whilst what exactly the people may be bringing is unclear — an alternative man to 'advance', a request for 'reward', a petition, or parliamentary petition – the metaphor does make the speaker's ideal hierarchy apparent.

The poem's clear delineation of hierarchy is certainly a reaction to parliamentary petition and might also be a reaction to verse petition. The speaker clearly underlines that: 'Religion is the right of kings'; preferment is the king's decision and the king's alone; state affairs are only for the discussion of the king and his counsellors, especially the Spanish match; and that James may call and dissolve parliament at his pleasure.[120] The correcting of such 'foolish over-reaching' (l.154) very clearly relates not just to Parliament, but to the petition itself which advised James on religion and foreign policy. This petition is just as central to 'The Wiper' as it was to 'The Commons Petition'. Glossing the following lines, Bellany and McRae make the significant note that 'James' comments might…be directed at members of parliament rather than at the libel':

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[119] This fictional James' prising apart of the dramatic conventions of stage kings, versus the behaviour of real kings, reflects Bernadette Meyler's theory about James' refusal in reality to play the stage-king when it came to the Gunpowder plotters: 'Although another—Shakespearean—model of tragicomedy was also available [as opposed to revenge tragedy], James remained constrained by his own generic paradigm and declined to adopt it. In responding to the threat of revolution by punishing rather than pardoning, James refused to rethink the state and instead commenced a shift in the place of sovereignty, a shift that ultimately undermined his own broad claims for monarchical authority.' Bernadette Meyler, *Theaters of Pardoning,* Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 2019: 76.

[120] On preferment: 'Content your selfe with such as I/ Shall take neere, and place on highe' (ll.33-34). On state affairs: 'What counsells would be overthrown/ If all weere to the people knowne?/ Then to noe use were councell tables/ If state affaires were publique bables./ I make noe doubt all wise men knowe' (ll.73-81). On the Spanish match: 'The moddell of our princely match/ You cannot make but marr or patch' (ll.85-86). On parliament: the parliament I will appoint/When I see thyngs more out of joynt /Then will I sett all wry things straight/And not upon your pleasure wait' (ll.60-63).

> Kings will inquire and find the way
> How all of yow may easiely pay
> Which theyle lay out as the thinke best
> In earnest sometimes and in jeast.
> What counsells would be overthrowne
> If all weere to the people knowne?
> Then to noe use were councell tables
> If state affaires were publique bables.
> I make noe doubt all wise men knowe
> (ll.73-81)

Bellany and McRae refer specifically to lines 73-74, suggesting that they are a:

> probable allusion to the royal right to raise revenue and spend it as the King sees fit. This might be rebutting charges in the lost libel "the Comons teares" concerning extra parliamentary taxation or the usage of money granted to the King by parliament.[121]

From a literary perspective, the slipping address from the catch-all term 'the People', to the 'rayling rymes' of libellers, to Parliament itself, powerfully equates the hubris of libellers with the petitioning Parliament. 'Public babels' reinforces the correlation between royalty and Old Testament God: whilst 'public babels' describes the discordant clamour of many tongues discussing public affairs, there is of course a pun on Babel, suggesting the people's hubris in debating matters of state. This is reinforced by pronunciation to rhyme with 'tables'. The noisy and vainglorious 'publique bables' also recalls the 'railing rymes and vaunting verse'.

The lines 'Which theyle lay out as the thinke best/In earnest sometimes and in jeast' is a particularly difficult line in which to identify the elusive third person plural. Grammatically, the pronoun appears to replace 'Kings', however it is uncertain why kings would set out financial planning 'in earnest sometimes and in jeast'. It does, however, reinforce the elision the poem makes between formal and

[121] Bellany and McRae, 'Early Stuart Libels': Nvi1.

informal modes, just as the poem combines the over-stepping of parliament and the scribbling of libellers as equally significant acts of disloyalty.

Towards the end of the poem, clearer petitionary terms are used:

> Kings cannot comprehended bee
> In comon circles. Conjure yee
> All what you cann by teares or termes
> Deny not what your king affirmes
> Hee doth disdaine to cast an eye
> Of anger on you least you die
> Even at the shadowe of his face
> It gives to all that sues for grace
> (ll.145-152)

As discussed above, the familiar 'gives to all that sues for grace', here somewhat unconvincingly, asserts kingly mercy to petitioners.[122] Again the speaker aligns himself with God: 'least you die/Even at the shadowe of his face' is remniscient of God's warning to Moses 'Thou canst not see my face: for there shall no man see me, and live'.[123] Even when finally describing mercy, the speaker emphasises the most fearsome aspects of God.[124] Although the comparison aligns James with God rather than with Moses, the allusion to the chapter in which God talks to Moses 'as a man speaketh unto his friend' might also serve to reinforce the idea that 'God and Kings doe pace together' in comparison to the rest of humanity. Given the proximity of this chapter to the worship of the golden calf and the delivery of the Ten Commandments, James' rebuke of his people throughout the poem might also more generally be aligned to Moses's moral reprimand and redirection of the Israelites.

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[122] See above: 243.
[123] Exodus 33.20 (AV).
[124] Although the comparison aligns James with God rather than with Moses, the allusion to the chapter in which God talks to Moses 'as a man speaketh unto his friend' might also serve to reinforce the idea that 'God and Kings doe pace together' in comparison to the rest of humanity.

'Tears or termes' also evokes both the emotive and formal modes of petition. Clearly 'tears' recall the poem's opening, and presumably the 'tears' of 'The Commons Tears'. 'Termes', however, has more legal connotations.[125] The play upon magic 'circles' and conjuring undermines the legitimacy of petition, equating the rhetoric and results of petition with the incantations of magic rather than of prayer. 'Comon circles' however also feels like a parliamentary pun. This is even more the case in the manuscript variant 'Comon mouths'.[126]

Elizabeth Foster Read's work on the development of the Petition of Right also provides further context for the framing device of 'The Wiper'. She traces the origins of the 1628 Petition of Right by looking at the parliaments of the early 1620s:

> The concept of a parliamentary petition of right evolved gradually during the early Stuart period. It was shaped by attempts of parliament, particularly the lower House, to find a remedy for grievances and further defined by both Houses in defense of their privileges. When the Commons were convinced that purveyors had committed particular acts which were demonstrably illegal, they asked for redress in a petition of right.[127]

Foster argues that by the end of James' reign, Parliament had set expectations, both as to how their petition should be constructed and presented, and also crucially how that petition should be received. Petitions were drafted in the House of Commons, and debated in the House of Lords; a set form was finalised by both houses.[128] The petition would then be formally presented to the King at a requested formal

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[125] 'A condition under which something may be done, settled, agreed, or granted; a stipulated requirement or limitation.' *terms*, n., sense 6a. www.oed.com [date accessed 22/07/2021].
[126] MS Harley 367 quoted in Craigie, (1958): 191. An even more sophisticated pun is made in 'Rodamontados', a poem pertaining to be Buckingham's response to the Lower House about the 1628 Petition of Right: 'Coblers their Latchets ought not to transcend/Meddle with Comon matters, Comon wrongs/ To th'house of Comons Comon things belongs'. Malone MS 23: Fol.115.
[127] Foster (1974): 37.
[128] Foster (1974): 37.

audience, and a point-for-point response was expected.[129] In 1624, James singularly failed to meet Parliament's expectations:

> James' reply to the elaborate petition of 1624 was disappointing. He ignored the Commons' request for an answer before the end of the session and made only a general response. … The Commons had hoped for a detailed answer to the petition which they had prepared so thoroughly and for an answer while parliament was still sitting. Did not a petition of right require an answer?[130]

In some ways, 'The Wiper' might parodically produce what Parliament never received in 1624: a point for point response to their petition. The poem is a response to what very clearly seems to have been a mock-petition, and parodically responds with the monarch's expected response to a parliamentary petition. In 'The Wiper', the imagined response itself - which harshly insults the petitioners, and uses the conventional divine and secular parallels in petition to threaten justice rather than offer mercy, and stubbornly defend royal prerogative - replicates the broken lines of communication between James and Parliament.

This effect is especially highlighted in two other manuscripts containing 'The Wiper', which also feature copies of real Parliamentary petitions and royal replies.[131] In the case of British Library Additional MS 29303 'The Wiper' is immediately followed by 'The King's Majesties answeare to the Lords & Commons who presented vnto him the humble advice of the whole Parlament: 9th of March : 1623:'; 'A true copie of the Commons petition to his Majestie agreed vpon by the lower

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[129] Foster (1974): 38.
[130] Foster (1974): 39.
[131] Additional MS 28640 and Additional MS 29303. Additional MS 28640 contains: 'The Wiper' on Fol. 123v; 'A copie of 2 petitions of the Lords & Commons to his Majestie' and 'The Kings answere to the ij petitions' on 147r; 'The kings Majesties message to the house of Commons. Jun. 6. 1628' (Fol.19v); 'The kings answere inrolled vnder the petition of Right' (Fol. 20r); 'The heads of the Remonstrances which the house of Commons entred to present his Majesty' and 'His Majestie's Speech to both houses at the end of this Session of Parliament Jun.26.1628' (Fol. 20r)'.

house of Parlament the third of April: 1624://'; and ''The kinges Maties speech & answeare to: the petition the. 23th . of April :1624:'.[132]

I have offered two new ways of reading 'The Wiper': first as a critical act of *prosopoeia*, and secondly as a parody of the traditional royal response to a parliamentary petition. When read in this light, the poem develops greater formal and political depth, allowing us both to appreciate the witty formal play of a mock royal response to a mock parliamentary petition, and also to further understand the role of petition in the break-down of communication between James and his subjects.

Petitioning Parliament

'Alderman Wiseacre', another poem which appears with 'The Commons Petition' in the Civil War-saturated Ashmole 36,37, pushes us forward in time from Jacobean to Caroline petition. The early 1640s saw 'unprecedented' levels of local petitioning — from the Root and Branch petitions to conformist counter-petitions defending the Book of Common Prayer.[133] Local petitioning was nothing new: Waddell, discussing the Power of Petitioning Project, has argued that a better understanding of early seventeenth century petitioning illuminates the explosion of local petitioning in 1640s.[134] Waddell estimates that over 30,000 petitions to local magistrates survive,

[132] Additional MS 29303: Fol.5r; Fol. 6v; Fol.8r; Fol.8v.

[133] John Walter, 'Confessional Politics in Pre-Civil War Essex: Prayer Books, Profanations and Petitions', *The Historical Journal*, Vol.44, No.3, (2001), pp.677-701: p.677; p.678. Anthony Fletcher, *Outbreak of the English Civil War,* London: Bloomsbury Academic, 1981: 192. He also asserts 'Petitioning had reached a new scale in 1642, as the numbers game demonstrated. Essex demanded attention with 30,000 hands, Suffolk with 14,000, Surrey and Shropshire with 10,000, Norfolk with 88000.' Fletcher (1981): 195.

[134] Brodie Waddell, 'Parochial Petitions, Social Identity and Popular Mobilisation in Early Modern England'. Paper presented at the Social History Society Annual Conference 2021 on 7th July 2021.

from the 1570s to 1690s.[135] Nevertheless, the sheer scale of petitioning the Long Parliament was materially undeniable: as Anthony Fletcher summarises 'of the 40 English counties, 38 sent up petitions for presentation to parliament between December 1641 and August 1642 and Wales also added its voice'.[136]

Whilst the uniform phrasing of Root and Branch petitions has led historians to believe that the petitions were ultimately steered by politicians from within Westminster, Fletcher was amongst the first to demonstrate that local petitions of 1642 were a reflection of 'deeply felt local opinion'.[137] Judith Maltby, specifically focusing on conformist petitions to the Long Parliament, asserts that 'the campaign to defend episcopacy and the liturgy by petition against attack in 1641-1642 – though not one enjoying any central coordination – was a lay led and lay supported campaign.'[138] 'Alderman Wiseacre', with its clear parody of working class subscribers, attests both to the prevalence of this local petitioning, and elite anxiety about it. 'The Wiper' created a very general hierarchy in which 'the people' simply refers to anyone who is not the king (or not in his intimate circle). Perry also notes how the poem's reference to 'the best blood' indicates the high status of those

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[135] Brodie Waddell (2019). https://petitioning.history.ac.uk/blog/2019/06/petitions-in-early-modern-england-a-very-short-introduction/ [date accessed 17/04/2022].

[136] Fletcher also vividly illustrates the very physical accumulation of petitionary documentation which amassed during the period: 'The massive rolls of paper and parchment, made up of parochial returns stitched together, that now rest in the House of Lords are a monument to the industry displayed by many of those who were in charge of the petitions at the county level. D'Ewes became so used to seeing these huge rolls dumped on the table in the Commons that he noted how unusual it was that Staffordshire's petition, presented on 14 May, consisted of a top sheet "and then the names of those that had subscribed filed together like a chancery bill". Fletcher (1981): 195.

[137] Fletcher (1981): 191.

[138] Judith Maltby, *Prayer Book and People in Elizabethan and Early Stuart England*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998: 93.

involved in libel culture.[139] In contrast, 'Alderman Wiseacre' parodies labourers involved in the local petitioning campaigns.

'Alderman Wiseacre' specifically satirises the first so-called Root and Branch petition presented to the Long Parliament in December 1640 from London. The poet criticises the Root and Branch petition, by mocking and undermining its anti-episcopalian subscribers. The anti-episcopalian petition was presented by the Puritan Alderman Isaac Pennington, complete with 15,000 subscribers, and accompanied in person by 1,500 men.[140] The internal reference to 'millions more of such good soules as last weeke/attended on St Burton, Pryn & bastweeke (ll.116 – 117) dates the poem after the Long Parliament's release of Burton, Prynne and Bast in 1640.

There are two copies of the poem in Ashmole 36,37, and in Folger Shakespeare Library MS X.d.20. It has yet to receive any critical notice. Written in the first person, the poem is presented as 'Alderman Wiseacre's speech' to the House of Commons. Both 'wiseacre' and 'woodcock' have derogatory usage: 'wiseacre' had the contemporary sense of 'one who thinks himself, or wishes to be thought, wise', and 'woodcoke' referred to 'a type of gullibility or folly; hence applied to a person: a fool, simpleton, dupe'.[141] In Ashmole 36,37 the superscript attributions above

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[139] Sharpe (2002): 213.

[140] Fletcher (1981): 91. Valerie Pearl also describes him as Puritan 'well-known to be antagonistic to the government'. Pearl, *London and the Outbreak of the Puritan Revolution: City Government and National Politics, 1625-43*, London: Oxford University Press, 1961: 112. Thomas Wiseman, the City Remembrancer also suggested to Pennington's cousin that Isaac's Puritan allegiances prevented him from being knighted, claiming that Isaac had a reputation 'rather to please himself than to strive to do any acceptable service to the King, if it stand not with the sense of the preciser sort of the House of Commons.' Quoted Pearl (1961): 129.

[141] See *wiseacre,* sense 1a, www.oed.com [date accessed 15/03/2022]. The name 'Alderman Wiseacre' appears again as a stock character in a Restoration Comedy: Edward Ravenscroft's (1682) *The London Cuckolds*. See *woodcock,* sense 2, www.oed.com [date accessed 15/03/2022].

'Alderman Wiseacre' and 'Alderman Woodcoke' suggests that one reader identified 'Alderman Wiseacre' as a satirical representation of Alderman Isaac Pennington who read the petition aloud to Parliament, or as John Wollaston, whose claim is less direct but was at least a 'well-known city Puritan' who was 'rumoured' to have signed the Root and Branch petition.[142] The Ashmole reader identifies 'Alderman Woodcocke' as 'Warner' — most likely the Puritan Alderman John Warner who was also 'rumoured to have been a signatory of the Root and Branch petition in December.'[143] All three men, whom Valerie Pearl describes as 'leading parliamentary puritans', also refused to submit 'lists of the richest men in each ward who would be compelled to contribute' to a Parliamentary loan to Charles in the spring of 1640.[144] Folger MS X.d.20 does not contain similar attributions, but simply uses the pseudonyms.[145]

In the poem, Wiseacre offers a short formal address to Parliament, before describing at length the subscribers of the petition and the accompanying crowd presenting it. It concludes with a short summary of the petition's anti-episcopalian demands. Throughout, the poet takes every opportunity to present the petition's subscribers as violent and ignorant. This attitude also reflects the reception of a

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[142] Pearl (1961): pp.99-.100; p.329. Although not related to the Root and Branch petition, Pennington and Wollaston were also connected by their 'dispute with the Court of Aldermen, which was eventually taken to the Privy Council, concerning their claim to the disposal of the keepership of Newgate.' Pearl (1961): 329.

[143] Pearl (1961): 140; 326. Julie Spraggon also notes John Warner's zeal for enforcing the Commons 1641 order for the suppression of innovations in his own parish. A newsletter described how he 'pulled down all the painted glass in the windows of his parish church, which some value at £1000; they were so 'artificially' painted.' Julie Spraggon, *Puritan iconoclasm during the English Civil War*, Woodbridge: Boydell, 2003: 150.

[144] Pearl (1961): p.100; p.144. Warner and Wollaston would go on in the mid-1640s to become 'Parliament's leading financiers and financial administrators'. Pearl (1961): 210.

[145] Washington, The Folger Shakespeare Library, MS X.d.20: Fol. 1r.

slightly later 1641 Presbyterian City petition, presented to parliament by John Fowke. When he presented the petition, he complained that there had been attempts to obstruct it. When the House of Commons subsequently investigated this accusation, they discovered that 'the Lord Mayor had declared that only ignorant and idle people subscribed to it.'[146]

'Alderman Wiseacre', much like 'The Commons Petition St Eliza', frames itself as a petition: it is supposedly a petition 'presented to the House of Commons' from the people, however, rather than a petition from parliament to the monarch. 'The Commons Petition' slides between petition as prayer and as text; 'Alderman Wiseacre' conflates the written petition itself, with the oral presentation of the petition to Parliament:

> Alderman Wiseacres ^Penningtons^ ^Wollaston^ speech vpon that discreete Peticion against: Bishops & Church Goverment: subscribed by him & Alderman Woodcoke ^Warner^ together with some i500 ingenious & understanding Craftsmen & by them either without feare or witting faintheartednes presented to the House of Commons
>
> You may suppose he hath made his Legg &
> thus the speaker [147]

In some ways these shifts between the petition as oral and textual, reflect the material journey of 1640s parliamentary petitions, which were 'public utterances intended for general consumption. Most of them were printed, either as broadsides or in pamphlet form, within a few days of their acceptance at Westminster.'[148] The specific number 'i500' which appears in the title presumably refers to the crowd of 1,500 who accompanied the Root and Branch petition to Parliament. As we shall see,

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[146] Pearl (1961): 131.
[147] Ashmole 36,37: Fol.79[r]. A full transcription of the poem can be found in Appendix IId.
[148] Fletcher (1981): 198.

the poem makes multiple references to a large crowd — ambiguously shifting from the subscribers on paper, to those physically accompanying the petition to parliament. The repeated numbers 'i500' and 'i5000' (reflecting the 1,500 who accompanied the petition to Parliament, and the 15,000 who signed it), the imagined Aldermen presenting the petition, and the poem's satire of Presbyterian values clearly suggest a parody of the first Root and Branch petition from London. The Folger copy is also annotated on the last page: 'The Ballot agt the City peticon'.[149] Given that Puritans based in the City of London were a central organising force behind the London petition, 'the City peticon' may indicate that one contemporary reader identified the poem as a criticism of the inaugural London Root and Branch petition.[150]

The poem parodies the religious rhetoric of petition. The hallmark overlap between petition as letter and prayer appears early on:

> That Anty christian callinge tis dooth greiue vs
> From which wee pray yor goodnesse to releaue vs
> for since theise are the greate abomination
> the froggs and locusts in the Revilacion
> Sound each of them, yould finde a Pope in's belley
> as plaine as one may smell a turd from Ielly
> This holy cause hath moud vs rayse an Army
> of Supplyants whose prayers I hope will charme ye
> (ll.19-27)

The poem itself opens with a generalised form of the traditional prayer for the recipients of the petition: 'To you grand speaker & the rest beside/Grace from above, and peace bee multiply'd' (ll.1-2). 'Alderman Wiseacre's subscribers familiarly 'pray

[149] Folger MS X.d.20: Fol.2^{v}.
[150] Fletcher (1981): 91. On the rise of prominent parliamentary Puritans in the City elections of 1640 and the unprecedent ousting of Alderman Acton, see Pearl (1961): pp.110-112. On the City's handling of 'the citizen's petition' – the Root and Branch petition - see Pearl (1961): 113.

your goodnesse to releaue vs', just as 'The Commons Petition' prays to Elizabeth to 'give it to his hands that cann relieve vs' (l.56). The petitioners are described as 'Supplyants' and the petition their 'prayers', although the tongue can be detected in the cheek with the verb 'charme' (l.27) — language one can imagine the godly would be keen to avoid. There is also extremely unsubtle biblical reference: 'the froggs and locusts in the Revilacion'.[151] Apocalyptic imagery is not an unfamiliar feature of early modern satire, as the final two poems of 'The Commons Petition' cycle bear witness to. Fletcher notes, however, that sermons in favour of the Root and Branch petition 'communicated a sense of apocalypticism and put Root and Branch in the context of the Popish conspiracy'.[152] Furthermore, later in May 1641, members of Parliament were met at their entrance with a paper declaring: 'The voice of God is the cry of the people; bishops the limbs of Antichrist and the plague of the kingdom; destroy them and take away Antichrist'.[153] The poem later similarly uses the rather memorable phrase 'hoyst/ out of there throwne these Impes of Antichrist' (ll.30-31).

These familiar tactics, and the inflated millennial rhetoric, however, are undermined by some classic libel scatology: 'Sound such of them, yould finde on Pope in's belley/ as plaine as one may smell a turd from Jelly'. The scatology is not, however, the only pin to prick the pious apocalyptic bubble. Throughout the poem,

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[151] 'And I saw three unclean spirits like frogs come out of the mouth of the dragon, and out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet.' Revelation 16:13 (AV). ' And there came out of the smoke locusts upon the earth: and unto them was given power, as the scorpions of the earth have power… And the shapes of the locusts were like unto horses prepared unto battle; and on their heads were as it were crowns like gold, and their faces were as the faces of men.' Revelation 9.3-7 (AV).
[152] Fletcher (1981): 103.
[153] Quoted Fletcher (1981): 111.

the poet imagines the supporters of the petition as a violent mob.[154] Here the language is more formal, the imagery perhaps of holy war: 'This holy cause hath moud vs rouse an Army/of Supplyents whose prayers I hope will charme ye'. The line break simultaneously softens the threat of the 'army' - they are an 'Army/ of *Supplyants*' [emphasis mine] – but also undermines the humility of the suppliants - they are an 'Army'.

The army's actions are certainly dynamic:

> …Oh tis a pious werke
> to bringe the English to the Scottish kirke
> or now or neuer lend your ayde to hoyst
> out of there throunes these Impes of Antechrist
> It glads my harte to thinke our sage aduice
> hath stickeled first to breake this holy ice
> (ll.28-33)

The writer undermines the 'pious' enterprise of importing Scottish Presbyterianism to England by abolishing episcopy, by representing it with ungainly dynamism — hoisting the Bishops out.[155] The wisdom of the petitioners' advice is also destabilised by the rough and tumble of 'stickeled': 'To officiate at a wrestling match or other contest; to act as a referee. Hence more generally: to act as a mediator; to intercede or intervene.'[156] The 'pious' intervention of the Presbyterian Londoners, throwing out 'these Impes of Antechrist', becomes an even more physical contest, as if they are

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[154] This might in part due to rising violent religious discontent in 1640, in which altar rails, prayers and surplices were destroyed. Fletcher, 1981: 110. In May 1640 London apprentices marched on Lambeth Palace to try and hunt "Laud, the fox", and break open prisons to free the Aldermen imprisoned by Charles. See Pearl, 1961: pp.107-8. In 1641 riots also broke out over altar rails, where parishioners took matters into their own hands. On 7th June 1641 at St Saviour, Southwark, it was noted that the rails were torn out by eight of 'the meaner sort of parishioners'. Spraggon (2003): 138.

[155] Pearl also notes that in 1640 'The Scottish war brought a new element of political insecurity as the cause of the Covenanters was espoused by their Puritan brethren in the City'. Pearl (1961): 107.

[156] *Stickeled,* v., sense 1a. www.oed.com [date accessed 16/08/2021].

umpiring a popular fight over English Christendom, or even getting tangled up in the fray themselves.

The comic violence of the petitioners becomes increasingly apparent as the poem progresses:

> Guesse at a troope where wee that goe before 'em
> May for our vnderstandinge bee o'th Quorum
> The first that march i'th vantgard of Complayners,
> are Shoemakers sty'de otherwise Cordwayners
> whoe allbeit bat of indifferent fashon
> yet shure they're men of vpright Conuersacon
> may they haue liberty they'le tell you playne
> they hould the Bishopps Papist knaues in grayne
> There's neare a man in all the zealous Bunch
> But faine would haue there Lordships feele his punch
> how ever matters heretofore haue past
> they hope Religion will tredd right at last
> (ll.46-57)

The sense of army as mob becomes clearer, as the poet compares 'the troope' of the godly with the democratic process: 'Guesse at a troope where wee that goe before 'em/ May for our vnderstandinge bee o'th Quorum'. 'Our vnderstandinge' particularly suggests a discrepancy between quorum as the minimum number of members required to validate the proceedings of a meeting, and the petitioners' implied understanding of quorum as a violent mob. The thuggishness of the petitioners becomes more facetiously clear, as the poet gleefully contrasts sombre pious rhetoric ('they hope Religion will tredd right at last') with the caricatured, henchmen-like threat 'would haue there Lordshipps feele his punch'. The rhyme between 'zealous Bunch' and 'feele his punch' particularly drives the parodic point home.

The London Root and Branch petition was accompanied by the aforementioned 1,500 men who Fletcher describes as reportedly 'thronging "the Hall

and places thereabouts".[157] The poem's later reference to the crowds of supporters for Burton, Prynne and Bast also reinforces the sense of scale, as well as Puritan zeal: '& millions more of such good soules as last weeke/attended on St Burton, Pryn & bastweeke (ll.116 – 117). As Kishlansky colourfully describes: 'In 1640 they were welcomed home as conquerors of old, on flower-strewn paths amid jubilant throngs.'[158] These crowds would become another feature of the local petitions of the early 1640s: the presentation of Parliamentary petitions was often a physical spectacle. The Buckinghamshire petition of 1642 was accompanied by 3000 men on horseback, who 'waited more than two hours for parliament's answer, standing and pressing towards the door.'[159] Similarly large crowds accompanied the Kentish petition of 1642, which boasted between 7000 to 10,000 attendees; the Essex petition had 3000, and Bedfordshire and Suffolk had around 1000.[160] Whereas the Buckinghamshire procession was noted for its 'fair and orderly manner', Fletcher describes that other congregations were not 'as well organised, it seems, as the Buckinghamshire one. Indeed, they were probably largely spontaneous expressions of enthusiasm which rather alarmed some MPs'.[161]

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[157] Fletcher (1981): 91.
[158] Mark Kishlansky, 'Martyrs' Tales', *Journal of British Studies,* Vol. 53, (2014): pp. 334–355: 335.
[159] Fletcher (1981): 197.
[160] Fletcher (1981): 197.
[161] Fletcher (1981): 197. McArthur makes striking explicit comparisons between women petitioning the Long Parliament, and the suffragettes. Describing the violent suppression of large crowds accompanying the petition to parliament, McArthur draws implicit parallels with the police brutality faced by the suffragettes: 'Another news-letter records that "many hundreds of women waited upon the house with a petition of about 10,000 hands in behalf of the common right of the people", that the soldiers were "most uncivil and inhumane". They presented pistols ready cocked, forced the women downstairs and threw squibs among them. Only twenty were admitted into the lobby, probably in accordance with a regulation passed in the previous year to check tumultuous assemblies.' McArthur (1909): 706.

Whilst the Buckinghamshire petition was accompanied by sword-bearing gentlemen, and the Oxfordshire petition was also remarked to be '"the best attended by gentlemen of quality" of any yet delivered', what is abundantly clear from 'Alderman Wiseacre' is the satirical connection the poet wants to make between the violence of the 'troope' and their class.[162] Even before the detailed and derogatory catalogue of subscribers-come-processors, the poet is at pains to underline the illiteracy of many subscribers:

> What doe you lacke, peticions wee have brought
> one worth the notice, plentifully fraught.
> With Carectarres of vnderstanding hands
> whose consciences are all at your Comands
> Or if some Could not write yett I dare pr'mise
> they make an S For Iohn or C For Thomas
> (ll.3-8)

The poet emphasises some subscribers' ability to sign with a mark rather than a complete signature.[163] This was a reality for location petitions: many were signed with marks, and some petitions gathered subscription orally from the pulpit.[164] This oral collection of subscriptions in 1640s puts pressure on the general shift Patterson argues for, from feudal oral petition to physically subscribed and politically radical petition.[165]

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[162] Fletcher (1981): 197.

[163] Mark Hailwood has argued that we need to re-assess our hierarchy of literarcy. Rather than seeing a binary opposition between marks and signatures, illiteracy and literacy, Hailwood argues that we require more precise sub-categories which recognise that different marks demonstrate different levels of manual dexterity. He highlights that there is significant overlap between the dextrous skills required of manual labour, and those required in penmanship, meaning that more people might have had basic familiarity with holding a pen then we may have realised. Mark Hailwood, 'The Meaning of Marks: Reassessing Writing and Ability in Rural England, 1550-1700'. A paper presented at the Oxford Literature and History Seminar in May 2021. The research is due to published as 'Rethinking Literacy in Rural England, 1550-1700' in *Past and Present*.

[164] On marks see Fletcher (1981): 196. For the oral collection of subscribers see Fletcher (1981): 195.

[165] Patterson (1993). Patterson places particular emphasis upon the written signature which she argues 'imply both a degree of literacy and a ritual of self-determination'. Patterson (1993): 61.

The detailed catalogue of 'the vantgard of Complayners' (l.48) suggests the petitioners are better equipped for a brawl than a theological debate, as if their illiteracy prevents them from truly understanding the questions at hand. Just like the 'Army of Supplyents', 'the vantgard of Complayners' creates a similar discrepancy between the supplicatory and military; 'Complayner' again perhaps carries an ironic literary sense of complaint poetry. The direct assault on Bishops and MPs is introduced after the first identification of the vantgard as working class 'Shoemakers' and 'Cordwayners'. The poet continues to enjoy themselves, by incorporating the language and objects of the workers into the theological debate. 'A band of honest handed weavers' deny that they are 'shuttle headed fellowes' (ll.65-66), which of course reinforces the poet's opinion that this is exactly what they are. This synecdoche of tool for person continues in one of the moments of elision between the physical procession to Parliament, and the written subscribers on the page:

> next on the paper are sharpe pointed pinners
> their prickt to'th harte that some now bould & dradlesse
> are not like theire cast wayres, bow'd & made headeles
> close ioyn'd to theise in this our pious labor
> (ll.95-98)

The appearance of 'sharpe pointed pinners', 'on the paper' does fleetingly suggest the transferable skill of their manual dexterity as a form of writing, as if they are pricking the paper with their tools — reinforcing Mark Hailwood's theory about the transferrable skills between the instruments of manual labour and literacy.[166] In its primary sense 'not like theire cast wayres, bow'd & made headeles' jokes about the

[166] Hailwood (2021). See also fn 162 above.

fate of the pins, which are 'bow'd & made headles' by hammering; for a modern reader, however, this might offer a fleeting glimpse of the subversive power of the pinner's courage who refuse to submit. Nevertheless, there is a decided smirk behind in the double sense of 'pious *labor*' (l.98, emphasis mine).

Reversing the petitionary technique of tailoring your language to your recipient, the poet tries to tailor the imagery to both mirror the petitioners themselves, and undermine their ability to petition:

> I neede not tell you whose those bee that follow
> your nose informes you that they smell of tallow
> & chandlers though they bee they're quicke enough
> to take such foule Indignityes in snuff
> they pray that e're the parliament bee ended
> these blincking lights o'th Church may bee amended
> (ll.76-81)

Again, the poet returns to the physical procession, with the mocking sneer that you can smell the tallow-chandlers before you see them. The candle puns then come thick and fast: 'they're quicke enough', 'in snuff'. Candles were a point of contention in Parliamentary debates over Laudian church decoration: the placing of tapers and candles sticks on the communion table was linked to the inappropriate elevation of the communion table. The original Root and Branch petition sought to right 'the great conformity and likeness both continued and increased of our church to the church of Rome'.[167] Candles were stipulated against in several early pieces of iconoclastic legislation: a report of 1641, which was the basis for the Commons' Order for Suppression of Innovations, included 'the removal of all tapers, candlesticks and basins from the communion table'; the remit of committee of lords

[167] Spraggon (2003): 62.

and bishops established in 1641 to debate Laudian innovations included the use of candles on the communion table; and candles were underlined as contraband again in the 1643 ordinance.[168] Candlesticks could also have the misfortune of bearing offending engravings.[169] One of the driving forces behind the iconoclastic legislation was none other than Alderman Isaac Pennington.[170] Therefore, in the early 1640s considerable effort was being made by Puritans petitioning parliament and Puritans within Parliament to ensure 'these blinking lights of church [were] amended'. The application of the chandlers' candle-based puns to the religious matters at hand, however, further suggests their limitation: they can only see as far as candles themselves. Robbed of their theological value, 'these blinking lights o'th' Church' bathetically reduces the debate, as if to the misplacing of a few tealights. This simultaneously suggests the subscribers' ignorance of the theological matters at hand, but perhaps also suggests the poet's own perception of how out of proportion the church reform is. 'Broomemen' and 'combemen' are similarly represented as limited by their trade:

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[168] Spraggon (2003): p.64; p.66; p.76.

[169] In Nehemiah Wallington's account of changes at his local parish church at St Eastcheap in 1643, he noted that: "the picture of the Virgin Mary on the branches of the candlesticks was broken", quoted Spraggon, 2003: 146. There was an order from St Pancras Soper Lane that "the crosses set upon the walls and upon the candlesticks by the pulpit… be all demolished", and similarly at the Church of St Andrew by the Wardrobe in c.1646-7, a St Andrew's cross was cut off a branch of a candlestick. Spraggon, (2003): 170.

[170] In January 1641, Pennington told Parliament that as a consequence of its inability to act on religious matters, the City would withdraw its proposed loan of £60,000. Consequently, the Commons promised to meet with the Lords to organise commissioners responsible for the removal of offensive items in parish churches across the country. The conference did not happen. Pennington returned to Parliament in February 1641 with 'what D'Ewes described as "an excellent act" to abolish superstition and idolatry and set up "true religion". Spraggon (2003): 63. When Parliament continued to drag its feet on this proposed bill, Pennington proposed to parliament they release an order to pull down altar rails and move communion tables, which the Commons agreed to. Spraggon (2003): 64. Pearl also describes how 'Alderman Pennington… had already established himself as intermediary between the Commons and London's money-bags. In the following weeks Alderman Pennington used his financial power openly and with great pertinacity to promote political ends.' Pearl (1961): 200.

> …the Broomemen see some
> necessity of a reforming Beesome
> to sweepe gods house & Combe men they determine
> the teeth of Iustice must scratch out there vermyne,
> (ll.106-109)

The conflation of the abstract and the concrete tools - the 'reforming Beesome' and 'ye teeth of Justice' – suggest that the broom men and comb men believe that religious reform is as simple as giving the institution a good wash and brush up.

The very structure of the poem suggests its noticeable focus: the poem is predominantly spent colourfully caricaturing the occupations of the petitioners themselves. Only the last thirty-two lines, out of an 152 line poem, present the religious demands of the petition; although the Presbyterian cause has been invoked throughout. The class of the petitioners themselves is as much a target of the satire as the actual reforms proposed by the Root and Branch petitions. John Walter describes how 'groups beyond the normal boundaries of formal political participation were pulled into the political process' during the early 1640s — and it is abundantly clear that the author of 'Alderman Wiseacre' didn't like it.[171] The form of the poem itself also takes on political significance. In the short section of the petition's actual demands, the poet focuses directly on literacy:

> Greate liuinges are not fitt for men of letter
> to weilde, fyne pretty pensions would doe better
> in one thinge more wee crave yor reformacon
> to disanull all needeleese consecracon
> for point of holynesse wee are not able
> to see greate difference twixt a Church & Stable
> the word of gods all one, nor can wee learne
> more pfitt in a Church then in a Barne
> (ll.126-133)

[171] Walter (2001): 677.

The poet contrasts the literate clergy the petitioners attack - the 'men of letter' - with the ignorance of the petitioners themselves who cannot 'see greate difference twixt a Church & Stable' and would happily study scripture 'in a Barne'.[172] By creating a mock petition, the writer demonstrates their knowledge of convention and thus their aptitude for writing petitions. The poem is hardly one of the most elegant feats of early modern poetry. Nevertheless, this verse petition - filled with gleeful wordplay and burlesqued petitionary convention - attempts to exploit the very skills which its poet believes exempts the real petitioners from being able to engage in the religious and political debates of the hour: literacy. The mock petition thus attempts to demarcate petition as an elite form.

The changing imagined recipients of these mock-petitions over time are significant. Walter argues that 'collective petitioning was an important consequence of the political breakdown between king and government.'[173] Fletcher asserts that 'neither among gentry nor among the countrymen was there as yet any sense of course that loyalty to the representative body of the nation might come into conflict with or even preclude loyalty to the king'. Yet he also suggests that:

> nationals ills were seen in national terms and parliament was seen as the institution best fitted to restore normality in a time of crisis. The petitions present incontrovertible evidence of the hold parliament had obtained on the nation's mind.[174]

The mock-petitions considered in this chapter certainly do trace the changing perception of the centre of power. 'The Commons Petition' reflects the frustration of

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[172] This class-based caricature of Puritans also appears in another mock petition in Ashmole 36,37, 'The humble Peticion of the house of Commons', which demands 'Lest the Elect should goe astray,/Let Coblers teach the vpright way,/ to heavens dore'. Ashmole 36,37: Fol. 96[r].
[173] Walter (2001): 667.
[174] Fletcher (1981): p.196; p.222.

courtiers, and of Parliament, with their inability to communicate directly with James without the sway of his favourites. 'The Wiper of the People's Tears' still imagines the King as the ultimate seat of power, but it certainly betrays the sense that this authority has been disrupted. The pre-Civil War mock-petitions, however, are frequently addressed to Parliament. 'Alderman Wiseacre' parodies a local petition to Parliament. Another mock-petition in Ashmole 36,37 - 'The humble Peticion of the house of Commons' - appears, like 'The Commons Petition', to be a mock parliamentary-petition to the sovereign, but its final demand is for Charles to 'but resigne yor Crowne'.[175] These mock-petitions trace a pattern in which Parliament, and not the Crown, becomes the central authority at the heart of the petitionary process.

Petition as poetry

By their very form, each of the mock-petitions examined in this chapter has implicitly drawn the connection between petition as a rhetorical performance and as poetry. I will conclude with a discussion of 'The Humble Peticion of the Poets to the 5 Members' (hereafter 'The Humble Peticion of the Poets'), by the Royalist John Denham, which explicitly draws the connection between petition and poetry as imaginative acts.[176] Denham underlines the danger of this connection given petition's potential for serious political consequences.

'The Humble Peticion of the Poets' responds to both the developing constitutional dilemmas of the pre-Civil War period, and to the local petitioning

[175] Ashmole 36,37: Fol. 96^{v}.
[176] A full transcription of the poem can be found in Appendix IIe.

campaign of the early 1640s. Strikingly, the poem associates the creative nature of petition itself, with the subversive constitutional elasticity of the early 1640s. The poem appears with 'The Commons Petition' in Ashmole 36,37; it also survives in five other manuscript copies.[177] Written in the first-person plural, the poem presents itself as a petition from the nation's poets addressed to the Five Members. Denham uses his mock-petition to undermine the political stability of the Grand Remonstrance, and of petition itself. The poets complain about 'the greate violacon/Of Priviledges' (ll.15-16): their own inherited privilege of 'Poeticall lycence' (l.26) which has been infringed upon by the Five Members. They claim that the Five Members have taken to lying and writing their own poems 'in prose' (l.44), and that they have made the entire country into poets by impoverishing them - 'If poverty be a part of our trade/Soe farr ye whole Kingdome poets ye haue made' (ll.53-54). What Denham makes abundantly clear is that he feels petition has been so over-used that it has lost any kind of authority as a political tool.

The poem has received one critical reading by Rory Tanner. Tanner contextualises Denham's poem within the broader scale of his corpus. He argues that Denham:

> sought… to cast into doubt that prevailing parliamentary view that popular representation through political discourse – whether at Westminster or farther afield – could be a reliable means of directing the affairs of state.[178]

[177] Bodleian MS Rawlinson D.398; Oxford, The Bodleian, MS Rawlinson Poet. 62; Washington, The Folger Shakespeare Library, MS V.a.339; San Marino, The Huntingdon Library, MS HM16522; Yale MS fb.228/1.

[178] Rory Tanner, 'Political Authority, Discourse and Tumult in the Revolutionary Writing of John Denham' in *Sir John Denham (1614/15-1669) Reassessed: The State's Poet*, ed Phillip Major, London: Routledge, 2016: 107.

He argues that 'Denham's political writing within its wider context invites its study … as a commentary on the aims and achievements of languages used in political discussion.'[179] I build upon Tanner's broader contextualisation of the poem. On the local level of the reading, I believe that more specific attention is required to petition itself as a 'political discourse' to which Denham responds. Before Tanner's discussion of 'The Humble Petition', he invitingly, but briefly, observes the connections to be made between libel and petition:

> Diarists and miscellany compilers recorded numerous instances of poems that were posted on the doors of Westminster, "dropped" within the Commons, chamber and "affixed" in public places. Inasmuch as they focused public attention of the Commons, such writings at the time served a parallel function to the formal genres of public petition and of published parliamentary speech. But taken as a whole by contemporary readers – royalist or otherwise – these materials point towards the disorder as a defining feature of that emerging literary public sphere.[180]

Despite this useful observation, Tanner's reading of the poem neglects petition, privileging the poem's reflections on poetry over the connections Denham makes between poetry and petition.

In November 1641, Parliament had been drafting the Grand Remonstrance — the litany of the failures of Charles' government, spearheaded by John Pym. The eruption of rebellion in Ireland also forced Parliament into new constitutional waters. Charles could not suppress the rebellion without money from Parliament, and certain members were unwilling to trust Charles. John Pym forged a solution: that Parliament would give Charles the money on the condition that they approved the officers Charles appointed to lead the operation. This was perceived to encroach

[179] Tanner (2016): 107.
[180] Tanner (2016): 113.

on royal prerogative: 'the right to appoint great officers was a hereditary flower of the Crown, and… if the House had any respect for the constitution, it should not take the power from him'.[181] Pym's modified proposal won by 150 votes to 110.[182] Russell argues that this period was characterised by 'the division…between those who would bend the constitution in order to preserve it and those who would not, and between those who were willing to trust the king and those who could not.'[183] The house almost descended into riot over the heated dispute about printing the Grand Remonstrance for public circulation.[184] The Remonstrance was also accompanied with a petition.[185] In the rising tensions, in January 1642 Charles attempted the unsuccessful arrest of the Five Members: John Pym, John Hampden, Arthur Haselrig, Denzil Holles and William Strode.[186] As Tanner summarises, 'The operation was met with widespread condemnation as a breach of parliamentary privilege.'[187]

Like 'Alderman Wiseacre', 'The Humble Peticion of the Poets' is presented as part of the local petitioning campaign:

> After soe many concurring Peticions
> From all ages all sexes & all Condicions
> We come in the arreare to p'sent our follyes
> To Pym, Stroud, Haselrigg, Hampden & Hollies
> And we hope for our labour we shall not be shent
> For this comes from Christendome, not from Kent;
> (ll.1-6)

[181] Russell (1971): 337.
[182] Russell (1971): 337.
[183] Russell (1971): 337.
[184] Russell (1971): 338.
[185] Fletcher (1981): p.165; p.167.
[186] Russell (1971): 338.
[187] Tanner (2016): 114.

There is a similar sense of scale to 'Alderman Wiseacre'. 'Alderman Wiseacre' focuses on the staggering number of subscribers to the Root and Branch petition. 'The Humble Peticion of the Poets', in the wake of the national petitioning campaign, makes petition hyperbolically ubiquitous: 'from all ages all sexes & all Condicons', referring also to the notable petitions from women. The local level of petition is explicitly referenced in 'this comes from Christendome, not from Kent'. The 'concurring Petitions' might also be a reference to the shared phrasing of Root and Branch petitions — an accusation which will return later. A textual variant in Bodleian Rawlinson MS poet. 62 makes the opening even more politically dismissive: 'after so many *complying* Petitions' [emphasis mine], as if local petitions were merely kowtowing to popular opinion rather than offering legitimate concerns.[188]

Like 'Alderman Wiseacre', the poet evokes the processions which accompanied petitions to parliament. If 'arreare' is understood in the sense 'the hinder part of anything, especially of a train or procession', then the poet figures the combined mass of local petitions as a large procession.[189] The poem claims to be a national petition from the 'Poets'. The poets seem to languish at the back of the figurative crowd of petitioners; not so desperately urged to petition as to be pushing at front, but nevertheless deigning to drop in their two pennies' worth on the situation. Denham's reference to Thomas Wyatt's 'here I am in Kent and Christendom/ Among the Muses where I read and rhyme' (ll.100-101) - 'this comes from Christendome, not from Kent' (l.6)- divides the poets from the rest of the

[188] Bodleian Rawlinson MS poet. 62: Fol.51[r].
[189] *Arrears*, n., sense 5a. www.oed.com [date accessed 20/08/2021].

nation.[190] No longer is the creative output from Kent courtly poetry inspired by 'the Muses', but a local petition. The poets initially divide Kent from Christendom, and petition from poetry. The poet's position on petition is clear from its opening: petitions are 'follyes'. Tanner's focus on the poem as a commentary on poetry rather than petition is revealed by the neglect of this opening, which he summarily paraphrases.[191]

Having suggested the nation is super-saturated in petition, Denham then lays bare the formulas of petition, walking through them in a comically reduced, and detached tone: 'We thanke you' (l.12); 'Next by Course we Complaine' (l.15); 'Next our old Customes' (l.25). The emotive resonance of 'complaine' both as a literary mode, and an emotional outpouring, is bathetically undercut by 'by Course' — reduced to an identifiable and repeatable formula. One of the formulas Denham burlesques is the rhetorical overlap between petition and prayer:

> Though set forme of Prayers be abhominacon
> Set formes of Peticions finde greate approbacon
> Therefore as others from the bottom of their Soules,
> Soe from the debth & bottome of our boules,
> According to that blessed forme you haue taught vs
> We thanke you for all the Evills you haue brought vs
> For the goods we receiue we thanke him that gaue it,
> (ll.7-13)

The root of the comparison is the dual sense of petition as text and as prayer: there is a discrepancy between the 'set forme of Prayers' local petitions attack in the Book of

[190] Thomas Wyatt, 'Mine own John Poynz'.
[191] 'In keeping with its imagined speaker, "The Humble Petition of the Poets" suggests at its outset that poems are more suitable than traditional petitions as expressions of public opinion. Denham laments in the poem's opening section that "although set phrases be abhomination/set forms of petition find great approbation". His answer instead is to offer a petition in verse.' Tanner (2016): 114.

Common Prayer, and the often-identical phrasing of so-called 'parrot petitions'.[192] Denham neatly underlines this contrast with the triple threat of an alliterative, assonant rhyming couplet which ties the 'abhominacon' of the 'set forme of Prayers' with the 'approbacon' that the 'set formes of Peticions' receive.[193] The religious rhetoric is undermined by a scatological image similar to 'Alderman Wiseacre': 'Therefore as others from the bottom of their Soules,/Soe from the debth & bottome of our boules'. This moment is made more striking, however, by its use of the Book of Common Prayer – just like this project's first petitioner John Appleyard, but for a very different purpose. Developing the ironic contrast between local parrot petitions, and their opposition to the Book of Common Prayer, the poet echoes the introduction to the Lord's Prayer in the service of Baptism: 'Let us faithfully and devoutly geve thankes unto him, and say the praier, which the Lord himselfe taught'.[194] The poet not only uses liturgical reference to replicate and expose the use of liturgical and scriptural reference for rhetorical effect, but to enforce a further political point. Just as Christ gives Christians the Lord's prayer, Denham implies that Pym gave the local petitioners the 'set form' of their secular petition, perhaps by providing them with the concept of parliamentary privilege which 'the rest of our Nacon' (l.16) complain about. When the poets sarcastically 'thanke' the Five Members for 'for all the skills you have brought vs', petition itself may be one of the skills they are bitterly credited having provided the nation with. This sense of blame

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[192] David Underdown, *Revel, riot and rebellion: popular politics and culture in England 1603-1660,* Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985: 138.
[193] The poet Abraham Cowley made the same joke: 'Petitions next for every *Towne* they frame,/To be restor'd to those from whom they came./The same stile all and the same sense doe pen/Alas they'allow set *formes* of *Prayer* to *men*'. Quoted Maltby (1998): 87.
[194] *Book of Common Prayer* (1559): 148.

is reinforced in the inflammatory title of a print copy of the poem: 'To those suppressors of learning and propagators of ignorance.'[195]

Having exposed the performative nature of petition, Denham then compares and contrast the activities of Parliament and of Poets, suggesting that parliament is beginning to infringe on the rights of poets:

> Next by Course we Complaine of the greate violacon
> Of Priviledges like the rest of our Nacon
> But tis none of you of which we have spoken
> Which neuer had being vntill they were broken
> But our is a Priviledge auncient & natiue
> Hangs not on an Ordinance or power Legislatiue…
> (ll.15-20)

Denham plays on the controversy over parliamentary privilege - 'Next by Course we Complaine of the greate violacon/Of Priviledges like the rest of our Nacon' (ll.15-16) – before unexpectedly turning this language back onto the Five Members. They have encroached upon the 'Privileges' of poets. Denham playfully distinguishes between between the privilege of parliament which Charles' arrests encroached upon, and the poets' 'Priviledge auncient and natiue' (l.19). Also, with a scathing blow, Denham suggests parliamentary privilege is Pym's fabrication: 'which neuer had being vntill' Pym decided it had been 'broken'. Denham's description of the poet's 'auncient and natiue' privilege might also particularly sting, mockingly evoking the search for precedence in ancient British history. The disparaging reference to Parliament's privilege being based on 'Ordinance' - which is of a 'less permanent nature, or less constitutional character than a law or statute such as the decree of a sovereign' – also

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[195] Donald Goddard Wing, *Short-title catalogue of books printed in England, Scotland, Ireland, Wales, and British America, and of English books printed in other countries, 1641-170 (Vol.III)*, New York: Modern Language Association of America, 1998: MS T17S1D.

reflects the anxiety about tensions between the relative power of the parliament versus the monarch, which were exposed by such events as the Irish Rebellion.[196]

Denham then elaborates on how Parliament encroaches upon poetry's privilege:

> Next our old Customes our fathers did name it
> Poeticall lycence, & alwayes did clayme it;
> By this we had power to change age to youth
> Turne sense to nonsense & falshood to truth.
> In breife to make good what euer is falty,
> This arte some Poet or divell hath taught yee
> And this same property you haue invaded
> And a Priviledge of both houses haue made it
> But that trust aboue in Poets reposed
> That Kings by them are made & deposed,
> This though you cannot doe yet you are willing,
> (ll.25-35)

Denham connects the creativity and elasticity required to navigate these hurdles to the imaginative power of poetry. The speaker rolls out the classical suspicion about poetry as a mimetic act; the transformative powers of poetry take on politically subversive power as negative qualities are spun into positive ones 'turne sense to nonsense & falshood to truth', 'to make good what euer is falty'. 'Falty' particularly betrays the same sense of instability as authority balancing on 'Ordinance'. Mirroring the dangerous flexibility of poetic and petitionary language, Denham delights in transforming his metaphor of property. Poetic license is a 'property' Parliament has 'invaded' as if a home; Denham then playfully switches 'house' back to its parliamentary sense, 'And a Priviledge of both houses haue made it'. The potential outcome of this subversive transformative power is explicitly spelt out: parliament has encroached upon the 'trust… reposed' in poets, 'that Kings by them

[196] *Ordinance,* n., sense 2. www.oed.com [date accessed 20/08/2021].

made & deposed'. The King deposed by poets feels like the worst nightmares of 'The Wiper's speaker come true. In a demonic inversion of the Christ-like members teaching the country how to petition, like Christ teaching Christians the Lord's Prayer – 'according to that blessed forme you haue taught vs' (l.11) - the speaker now imagines Parliament themselves receiving infernal instruction: 'This arte some Poet or divell have taught yee'.

And yet, whereas as Tanner argues the 'description of the claimants strengthens connections between MPs and poets, inasmuch as they prove antagonists to the king', he does not acknowledge that Denham in fact goes on to make a careful and powerful distinction between the two.[197] Denham's shocking assertion that poets can 'depose' Kings in verse, is quickly qualified by moral commentary:

> But when we vndertake deposing or killing,
> They are Tyrants & Monsters and yet then the Poet
> Takes full revenge on them that doe it
>
> (ll.36-40)

Whilst Denham undeniably throws the subversive political power of poetry into the air, he quickly withdraws it. Although poets can depict the deposing of kings, that 'deposing or killing' is enacted by 'Tyrants & Monsters' who then receive moral censure from 'the Poet' who 'takes full revenge on them that doe it'. In stark contrast, Denham makes the Grand Remonstrance into an attempt to depose Charles without the safety net of fiction or a morally guiding narrator.

Finally, Denham make a direct and damning comparison between poetry and parliamentary petition:

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[197] Tanner (2016): 114.

> But ist not psumpcon to write verses to yow
> Whoe make the better Poems of the two
> For all the pretty knacks you compose
> Alas what are they but poems in prose
> And betwixt theis & ours there's noe difference
> But that yours want the Rhyme the witt & the sence
>
> (ll.41-46)

Denham sarcastically blushes with the false modesty topos 'But ist not psumpcon to write verses to yow/Whoe make the better Poems of the two'. He now explicitly connects parliamentary legislation and poetry as imaginative acts. The poem's double-edged sword of literary metaphor derisively diminishes parliamentary legislation to 'pretty knacks' — as if trivial and unsubstantial literary scribbling. And yet, as the previous discussion of the 'deposing' of Kings demonstrates, the consequences of such compositions are much more extreme, creating a striking contrast between the light tone of literary rivalry, and the world-changing consequences of 'the pretty knacks you compose'.

For Tanner, while poets and politicians are connected in these lines, the weight of Denham's critique falls on political verse-satirists:

> the appeal in the poem to the higher possibilities of poetry – "a privilege ancient and native" – is overshadowed by the reality of poets who speak too freely. Such complaints were often made in poetic satires against the MPs gathered during the political uncertainty at Westminster, and Denham turns that association to account here.[198]

It is difficult to imagine these lines being directed at other 'poets who speak too freely', when Denham so brutally undermines the rhetorical and logical cohesion of parliamentary 'poems in prose' in comparison to true poetry: 'And betwixt theis & ours there's noe difference/But that yours want the Rhyme the witt & the sence'.

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[198] Tanner (2016): 114.

Denham re-enforcing his point formally: his damning triplet of insults worthy of a diss track - 'yours want the Rhyme the witt & the sence' - is neatly tied up with the final emphatic anapest '& the sence'. On the one hand Denham makes poetry and petition interchangeable as imaginative acts; on the other he clearly morally and aesthetically delineates between the two. In the first half of the poem Denham exposed the rhetorical mechanics of the petition. This final meditation of the dangerous powers of political rhetoric adds devasting significance to the representation of petition as empty rhetorical performance, as imagination and creativity turns to lies: 'But for lying the most noble parte of a Poett/You haue it abundantly & yor selues know it' (ll.47-48).

Mock-petitions, by their very existence, underline the performative nature of petition: the rhetoric of petition this project has traced can be playfully recalled and performed in such poems as 'The Nurse's Petition'. The more critical mock-petitions begin to gnaw at the credibility of petition itself. 'The Commons Petition' invites us not to take petition itself too seriously. The petitioners declare the validity of their suit, 'carry our just complaints since just they are' (l.17), and the poem's grievance with James does appear to be strongly and earnestly felt. Nevertheless, the playful framing device mocks petition and its conventions, adding to the poem's over-riding sense that petition has become a redundant means of approaching the monarch. Similarly, in 'Alderman Wiseacre' the petitioners' self-assurance that their 'sutes' are 'soe reasonable and iust wee know' (l.118) suggests, in fact, how unreasonable they are. 'The humble Peticion of the house of Commons' similarly parodically insists upon its own reasonableness. The demands become increasingly extreme, and in

some cases impossible - from returning Prynne and Burton their lost ears, to installing John Pym as head of state. These contrast with the repeated declaration that the demands are simple and moderate - 'weele aske noe more'.[199] Denham's concern that petition can be not only unreasonable but feigned for personal advantage, is echoed in a Jacobean poem on the fall of Francis Bacon which directly precedes 'The Commons Petition' in MS Eng Poet f.10. In a diatribe against the justice system, 'monopoli[e]s gott by false complaint' is identified as one of the many problems.[200] '*False* complaint' highlights the dangers of the performative nature, and affective power, of petition.

This collection of mock-petitions, spaced over twenty years of changing political crises, attack different areas of the petitionary process, reflecting their local concerns: from the role of James as an inaccessible and unyielding recipient of petition in 'The Commons Petition' and 'The Wiper'; to attacking the legitimacy of petitioners in 'Alderman Wiseacre'; and finally petition itself in 'The Humble Peticion of the Poets'. Nevertheless, collectively when read in tandem - in such manuscripts as Ashmole 36,7 - the individual critique of each poem collectively destabilises petition. By the time we reach 'The Humble Petition of the Poets' the imaginative possibilities of petitionary discourse - which are at the core of this project – are precisely what makes petition so politically suspect and devastating in Denham's eyes. Furthermore, in the heightened petitionary climate of the early

[199] 'Let Pryn and Burton haue their Eares/ weele aske noe more', Ashmole 36,37: Fol. 96r. 'Next for the State we thinke it fit/That Mr Pym should govne it' Ashmole 36,37: Fol. 96v.
[200] Bellany and McRae, *Early Stuart Libels*: Mii8, l.134. The Great Chancellor of Heaven also derides 'monopoly mongers' (l.176).

1640s, despite the significant results of petition, for Denham petitionary discourse was too readily accessible — so ubiquitous that it had lost its rhetorical power.

CONCLUSION

In Bodleian MS Rawlinson Poet 62, just a page before a copy of Denham's 'Humble Peticion of the Poets', is a copy of the royalist poem 'To the Lady Falkland vpon occasion of her building a Closett to secure the booke of Common Prayer'.[1] The poem deploys several of the techniques seen so often in this thesis:

> Since it hath pleased our wise and new borne State
> The Common Prayer-books t'excommunicate, …
> Since in our Churches tis by them forbid
> To say such prayers as our Fathers did
> So that Gods house must now be call'd no more
> The house of Prayer (so ever call'd before) …
> Since that of Christ, may now of prayer bee said
> It wants a place whereon to lay his head.
> I cannot choose but think it was your care
> To build your closet for distressed Prayer
> Which here in Mourning clad presents itselfe
> Begging some little corner in your shelfe,
> For since tis banisht from all Publique view
> There's none dare entertaine the same but you.[2]

As the title suggests, the poet celebrates the construction of the Lady's new prayer closet, imagining that the newly outlawed Book of Common Prayer will be found on its shelves — or indeed that the closet was designed solely for this purpose. The poet takes this as an occasion to lament the 'excommunication' of the Book of Common Prayer in 1645.[3] The poet recalls and inverts the tactical use of liturgy in secular petition – as exemplified by John Appleyard, and parodied by John Denham - by making the Book of Common Prayer itself the subject of a petition.[4] Throughout this

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[1] Rawlinson Poet 62: Fols.49^{v}-50^{r}. An inkblot obliterates the words between 'Closet' and 'the' in Rawlinson Poet 62, so 'to secure' has been supplied from Additional MS 58215: Fol. 104.
[2] Rawlinson Poet 62: Fol.49^{v}.
[3] On the abolition of the Book of Common Prayer see Cummings (2011): xl-xli.
[4] See Chapter One: p.35; p.42; pp.48-50; Chapter Four: 270S.

project, poems have been imagined as personified intercessors, travelling between the speaker and poem's addressee — as in *Amoretti* I and II; 'To Mr Thomas Woodward/Hast thee, harsh verse'; 'To Mr Ingram Lister/ Blest are your North parts'; or 'The Nurse's Petition'.[5] Here, the poet again recalls this familiar personification, but uses his poem to petition on the behalf of the personified Book of Common Prayer. The poet extends the architectural metaphor of the church as 'the *house* of Prayer' [emphasis mine] to transform the Parliamentarian prohibition of the Book of Common Prayer into an eviction: with striking pathos, the personified prayer book 'wants a place whereon to lay his head'. This explicit scriptural allusion to Christ – 'Jesus saith unto him, The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head' (Matthew 8.20, AV) – even more dramatically makes the Parliamentarians seem to have cast Christ himself into exile. This personification of the Book of Common Prayer appropriately mirrors Christ's humanity and divinity: making the text both Christ, and a vulnerable human. The poet presents the text as a poor petitioner seeking shelter in Lady Falkland's estate: 'Which here in Mourning clad presents itself/ Begging some little corner in your shelfe'. The Poet in turn intercedes on its behalf, assuming, and thus impelling, that she accepts its request: 'There's none dare entertaine the same but you.' Given the enigmatic marginal note in Rawlinson Poet 62 'Dr — sent these verses to her with' it is tempting to imagine the poem was sent 'with' a copy of the Book of Common Prayer, rather like the inviting paratext for 'The Commons Petition' in Malone MS 23; this would thus enable her to house the Book of Common

[5] See Chapter Two: pp.62-65; pp.68-71. Chapter Three: pp.129-132. Chapter Four: p.219-221.

Prayer in her closet. The poem reverses the comparisons we have predominantly seen in this project, in which secular petition is compared to spiritual petition, by in turn representing the liturgy itself, a storehouse of set petitions, into a secular petitioner. The recollection and reversal of familiar tropes from this project, once again demonstrates their cultural prevalence.

Most of the texts in this thesis exploit the secular and spiritual meanings of petition to draw attention to the differences between 'suing for grace' from secular and divine powers. John Appleyard is the exception whose life depended on using the ideology of divinely authorised justice to persuade. This is not, however, a simple distinction between fiction and non-fiction. Francis Phillips also highlights the differences between ideal Protestant petition and the courtly mediation for persuasive effect. Spenser and Donne make particularly clear a fundamental difference between secular and spiritual petition. Just as the speaker of the *Amoretti* must forsake the 'weary chace' and 'rest' in order to find grace, Donne's retreat from the world and his submission to sickness enables him to realise that he must 'inwrap' all petitions in 'thy will be done'.[6] In both texts there is, therefore, a submission, and a decided introspection, which characterises the Protestant petition for spiritual grace in contrast to secular petition. This is why the two forms of petition often move in different directions. In Spenser, the differences between secular and spiritual petition allow him to critique and parody his Petrarchan speaker, but it also leads to an awkwardness and complexity when we put the *Amoretti* into conversation with moments of secular petition and submission in his

[6] Spenser, *Amoretti* LXVII, l.5, l.3. Donne, *Devotions*: 29.

political writing. While the double yielding of speaker and mistress works in Sonnet LXVII, he struggles to maintain this parallel dynamic in *A View* where such yielding can only be achieved by brutality. In this way, petition allows us to better understand the political and colonial resonance of the *Amoretti*. In the *Devotions* the contradiction between secular and spiritual petition allows Donne to have his cake and eat it too. The introspection and submission of spiritual petition allows Donne to dissolve the issues of physical access which characterise his negotiations with secular power. Simultaneously, he uses the mode of deprecation to panegyrically praise, and implicitly petition, King James and Prince Charles for further favour.

Across the texts, both points of connection and difference between secular and spiritual petition allow writers to voice political critique. The fear present in both secular and spiritual petition that petition will not be heard is embodied in the powerful recurrent phrase: suing in vain. Just as Spenser represents the potential cruelty of secular petition – 'In vaine I seeke and sew to her for grace' (l.1) – the Commons plead 'Lett us noe longer begg and sue in vaine' (l.79), and Francis Phillips laments how 'a Right Loyall Subiect may powre out his soule in vaine' (ll.6-7). This concern critiques unreceptive and unmerciful secular powers — a particularly live point of contention in the mock-petitions of Chapter 4. The fear of suing in vain to an unyielding power is underlined in 'The Wiper', by the fictional James berating his subjects for '[crying] as Babes doe all in vaine' (l.2) Donne's contrast in the *Devotions* between secular rulers who will not be endlessely importuned as God is, echoes the conventional phrasing used by Phillips in his own petition to James: 'I am the more bold to Importune your Majestie in this point' (l.87).

Whilst ideologically the comparison between divine and earthly justice served to reinforce royal authority, often these texts contrast the mercy of God with the cruelty of secular power.

Donne and Phillips exemplify another important theme of the project: the theme of courtly mediation. Donne, Phillips, 'The Nurse's Petition', and 'The Commons Petition' reinforces the critical importance of access in the Jacobean court. Petition was a crucial means of either making use of such networks, or of seeking access. Although Donne's acute awareness of proximity and distance is sublimated in the spiritual lessons of the *Devotions,* his verse letters to Bedford undeniably both revolve around themes of access and demonstrate its critical importance. Similarly, whilst Phillips' petition in theory seeks to circumvent courtly mediation, the opening *narratio* throws a spotlight on the helplessness of precisely those who felt unconnected to court.[7] This helplessness takes on even greater political significance in 'The Commons Petition' where even Parliament itself feels like James is inaccessible. Paying heed to the rhetoric of petition therefore provides a greater understanding of the language with which courtiers sought to navigate social hierarchy and reveals when the system of courtly mediation is being criticised.

Images of intercession in Donne, Phillips and 'The Commons Petition' demonstrate an important stylistic pattern to emerge from the project. All wittily draw on the language of Catholicism, and a variety of confessional identities in Donne's verse letters to his patrons, not as an expression of identity but for strategic effect. The Catholic metaphor of 'The Commons Petition' represents the failure of

[7] See Chapter 4: 223.

James's court, in which it feels more achievable to petition a dead queen for intercession than to communicate with the living king. Likewise, Phillips uses comparisons between Catholic and Protestant theology tactically to justify his departure from courtly convention. Confessional identity is similarly performed for strategic effect in John Appleyard's petition, drawing on Protestant theology and liturgy in order to affirm his loyalties despite his ill-judged involvement with the Norfolk faction. In a less sophisticated way, confessional identity is also performed and parodied in 'Alderman Wiseacre' when the poet ventriloquises his Puritan targets. Finally in Donne's theologically chameleon-like 'Madam, You have refined me' and 'Madam, Here where by all all saints invoked are', he picks up and holds theology to the light like a prism: angling it to whichever facet best serves his current purposes. As we have seen in his verse letters, this serves a pragmatic purpose as well as an imaginative one: he offers his theological intellect as a point of compatibility with his patrons.

Donne's verse letters to his patrons, and indeed his panegyric material in the *Devotions,* demonstrate another stylistic pattern: the importance, and pitfalls, of the implicit request. Donne petitions at a remove: he embeds his petitions for employment within his vehicles in the 'Made you have refined me' and utilises his praise strategically in the *Devotions.* Each text also rhetorically displays his skillset as a worthy candidate for godly debate, a discreet courtier, and, in the case of the *Devotions,* a preacher. Appleyard in his first petition also embeds his pleas for mercy in his strategic quotation from liturgy, and use of religious metaphor, rather than explicitly stating his request. Appleyard, however, demonstrates the pitfalls of such

courtly manoeuvres as he was forced to petition more urgently and openly a week later. This reinforces Phillip's evocation of the courtly balancing act of petition.[8] Despite these potential pitfalls, the rhetoric of Appleyard and Donne was successful. Donne did secure the patronage of Bedford and was chosen to deliver the first sermon before the new king Charles. Appleyard's first petition successfully gained him the outcome of the inquest, and it would appear he was eventually released — freeing him up for more trouble in 1570. I am not suggesting that petition alone was entirely responsible for these respective outcomes, but to a certain extent it clearly fulfilled it aims.

The critical history both of Donne's verse letters, and John Appleyard's minor historical treatment, reveals a critical discomfort with petition even from those who seek to draw our attention to it. In Whigham's clarion-call to study petition, he uses tellingly derisive language: 'The clamor and desperation and oiliness of these letters reveal social conditions of pressure and anxiety'.[9] Similarly, while Schoenfeldt argues that Donne's dependence on courtly relationships should shape how we read his poetry, he also describes how 'through having to cringe before his superiors, Donne developed a rhetoric of supplication'.[10] Without the status of canonical literary authorship, in the nineteenth century John Appleyard's petitionary efforts were dismissively summarised as 'he proceeds to beg for mercy'.[11] Despite Appleyard's gentry status, Gairdner's characterisation of Appleyard as 'a catspaw' and 'a pitiful creature', and Rye's colourful description of him as a 'blackguard',

[8] See Chapter Four, pp.226-228.
[9] Whigham (1981): 866.
[10] Schoenfeldt (1994): 86.
[11] Rye (1885): 68.

have decidedly classist undertones.[12] Petitioning was a ubiquitous early modern activity, which spanned across the social spectrum; this is one of the traits which makes it so exciting, and potentially democratising, to study. Rather than writing about petition with a smirk of condescension, this project has sought to accept it at face value as an instrumental part of early modern society, and demonstrate that it is a rhetorically rich and politically complex mode.

Finally, this project attests to the increasing political power of petition during the period, and its ubiquitous rhetoric. The mock-petitions of Chapter 4 reveal petition as a significant testing ground for the changing relationships between monarch, subjects and Parliament in the period. The mock petition targets different stages of the process, and even voices different political critique to those seen in previous chapters. Mock petitions like 'The Commons Petition' and 'The Wiper' focus on the monarch, corresponding to the anxieties about petitioning unreceptive secular powers voiced in Spenser and Donne. Yet, with the increasing power and number of local petitions in 1640s, poets like the author of 'Alderman Wiseacre' begin to use the mock-petition to attack petitioners themselves, questioning who is truly qualified to have a voice on the public stage.[13] John Denham then destabilises petition itself. Rhetorically, these mock-petitions demonstrate the availability of the

[12] Gairdner (1886): 249; Rye (1885): 23.

[13] 'To Lady Falkland' similarly laments the increasing power of 'the meaner sort of men':

> 'Kings must bee Subiects, & Subiects Kings.
> The meaner sort of men haue all the power
> The upper end is now beneath the lower
> The head below the feete. People weare the crowne
> who wold not thinke the worlds turn'd upside downe
> Learning must now giue place to ignorance.'

Rawlinson Poet 62: Fol.50[r].

rhetoric of 'suing for grace', which for some elitist writers was becoming far too ubiquitous.

The mock-petition makes explicit the connection between petition and poetry which this thesis has sought to explore. Spenser and Donne imagine their poems as material intercessors, negotiating distance and forging connections. The sonnets of Spenser's sequence are the speaker's petitions to his mistress, and Donne's verse letters are petitions for patronage. Donne's assertion that 'These are petitions, and not hymns' embodies the strong cultural connection between petition and poetry, which allows Denham to make his shocking connection between political petition and poetry as imaginative acts: 'Alas what are they but poems in prose'. Mock petitions as a poetical form underline a key finding of this thesis: that poetry was recognised to be a petitionary art.

APPENDIX I

JOHN APPLEYARD TO THE COUNCIL, 31ST MAY 1567

CECIL PAPERS 155/54

[Fol.78r] Most honorable, when I consyder the greatnes of my falte, moste heynouslye comyttyd, I bothe blusshe and feare to write. I blusshe, as asshamed of my facte; and feare, as on condemnyng my selfe unworthye of grace at yor handes/ But the noble clemencye I yisterday receyved doth sumwhat abandon from me dyspayre; although shame dothe still remayne; for yt can not be covered, my falte being trewlye confesed by my owen mouth in so honorable a presence; So that where before I stoode in hope by your honorable meanes to hir Majestie to have happened of sumwhat in my realese, I nowe wishe rather a mounteyne to overwhelme me & hyde me from yor sighte, then ons to dar shewe my spotted face, in yr honorable presences; for (unworthy of yt) I have hertofore had place and conntynaunce of credyt and better lyked of by all yor honours then I coulde decerve; which nowe ys so justlye bleamyshed, as I se in my selfe ^in^ no possibelytye, whereby I can haue comforte in my lyfe ever to Recover yor good oppynnyons; so that when I fynd some hope by forgiveness, the feare of shame, and losse of credyt with such personages dothe altogither drench me in dispeyer:/ My falte my lordes, which I commyttyd, ar agaynst ij noble gentilemen, such as yf they had enymyes yet theyr enymyes coulde no wayes in honour detect them:/ And I a caytyf (:in many respects bound to them bothe:) haue attemptyd agaynst dewtye, Love & trothe, yea evin agaynst nature, to provoke Iustelye theyr yers./ the borden whereof, ys so yntollerable (the greatnes of theyr estats considered) as not only in this worlde, they terryfye me, but also the accompt that must further towardes god be made; dothe evin in consience fore me: by which my senses, be wholye benummed, wherby as wisdom ys in me utterlye quayled, so further I consider of my selfe that my decerts in bothe worldes gives me summons of a reaprobate /: I stand so plunged in sorrowes, as yet I see small hope that can comfort me:/ for as myne acquaintannce, hathe in most partes of this realme, bread great knowledge of me, so (being where I am) me thinks I se in my selfe what inquyery, and what whisperings ar in judging of

myne offences; which ons knowen when yt shall pleace god to move in yor honours/ my delyveraunce, then shall I stand in worse case; for evin as on[e] ashamed of light, shall eyther wishe all absence of daye, or else for feare of wonderment, must lyke the back [bat] afrayed to be sene of the byrdes, shrowde my selfe in sum decert . / for I shall see no man looke towards me, whom I shall not feare, dothe behold me, to gaze of my shames comytted. / so the more I consyder of my selfe, the deper causes I fynd to synke in dispayer./

And for the matter of my sister, wherin lyke most noble councelers, you haue in all Iustice offered me yor honorable ayde for examynacyon of all such parsons, as I shall give in name to yor honours; (layeing reasonable or lykely cause why I present them / . I fynd under correctyon of [Fol.78^{v}] your noble favours, my next way ys; to desyer a copye of the verdyt presentyd by the crowener; wherby, I may se what the Iwrye haue founde; And that consydered (having yor Lordships Favours) to take sum lerned advice in what sort I may best procede, or rather howe to begin the triall of the cause; for working without lerned councell, I may wrap my selfe in such errowers, as whereof such dayngers of lawe may towards my selfe ensue as I in rasshenes forsee not./ And possible the sight of the vardyt shall fully satisfye me; So as I most humbly besech yor good Lordships (yf my sute be not unlawfull I may fyrst se that verdyt, and then to stand at lybertye (by advice of councell lerned to procede, or not./ yf my lords in any parte of this letter I offend, I most humbly besech yor favourable Pardons; for yt ys not eyther of will or arrogancye, but only of simplysitye for as in the former parte of my letter I haue confeste myne ynfermytye of wytt, so I knowe the whole will shew the same. /

My good Lords, I besech yow; evin in the Name of Christ to be mediatours for me to those nobel gentilemen, agaynst whom I have so heinously trespassed. / For these offences by them pardoned, I shall ever apply my selfe to do & saye, that appertyneth to nobelytye; and never herafter, to enter in Any case that may offende. / And yf yt may pleace theyr honowers to give me leave to write to eyther of them

on privaat letter. / I shalbe most bounden to theyr honours. /

As my helth, my good Lords, ys very Evill, so ar my Charges great for I have nothing to fede on but that I send ryddy money for into the towen, and surely my lords I have verye lyttle, And I may not speak with any frynds to helpe me, so that I must verye shortly take what of almes the house will give me . / the consideracyon wherof I leave to yor noble & pittiful wisedoms. / And so with remembraunce of my most bounden dewetye, I do pray to almighty god for the happy preservacon of your honorable estats longe to yndewer: / from the flete this present satterday, the last of may Anno 1567 /

your honours most humble prisoner

John Applyarde

APPENDIX II

Note on transcriptions. *The following transcriptions are conservatively modernised to present an accurate but easily readable texts of key unpublished poems discussed in Chapter 5: all original spelling and punctuation is retained; conventional scribal contractions, y-thorn for 'th', and superscriptions have been expanded/lowered; i/j, and u/v are retained; 'ff' is given as 'F'; overstrike deletions, and interlinear additions and corrections have been silently accepted.*

IIA: 'ENGLAND & FRAUNCE VNHAPILY ATT WARRS'

MS ENG. POET. F.10: Fol.118r Englande & France vnhappily att warrs

Heauen sent an Angell to end all iarrs
For entertainement whilst he staide; what roome
So fitt as chast and bless'd Mari~~a~~es woombe.
A peace was mediated by the child
Maria then (a name for euer blest)
The princes was that entertain'd that gueste.
Maria then vnto the temple hies
There paies her vowes there offers sacrifize
What did our bless'd Maria less; she goes
And in the temple paies the vowes she owes
She offers there the priest Te Deum singes
In each religion in each holy thinge
She imitats that Virgin who is stil'd
The blessed mother of a blessed childe
The peace concluded & proclaimed: what then
Had gods embassidores to doe with men
He left our earth & vp to heauen ascended
For peace beinge made there his commission ended
The time consider'd little was the odds
Betwixte hir sonns ascension day & gods.
Be not abusd good reader then with tales

22 This childe and angell was & prince of wales

IIB: 'THE NURSE'S PETITION

MS ASHMOLE 36,37: Fol.173r

A Peticion to the Kinge put into the Younge Princes
hand, by one of the Nurses, who had lost her place

Reade royall father Mighty King
What my little hands doe bringe
I, whose happy Byrth Imparts
Ioy to all good Subjects hearts
Though an Infant, doe not breake
The lawes of Nature whyle I speake
By this Interpreter, for One
Whose Face doth blush, whose hearte doth Groane
For her knowledged offence
To gayne her Mercy: Though thus bold
Yet may it some proporcion hold
That to the Father she doth run
By mediacion of the Sonn.
If therefor now ô Royall Sir
My first request may purchase her
Restoring into Grace, To me
Though Prince, it shall an honor be
That in my Cradle wilbe said,
I Master of Requests was made./

IIC: The Petition of Francis Phillips to the King

Additional MS 25707

Note: *lineation (and line numbering) of this prose text is that of my transcription, not of copy; hyphenation of words broken by line-breaks is silently omitted; recto and verso page breaks are shown by signatures inserted in square brackets. Readings of letters invisible in the tightly-bound gutter have been supplied from SP 16/524 (Fols 216^{r} -218^{v}) and are placed in square brackets.*

[139^{r}] To the Kinges Most Excellent Maiestie / Most Dread Soueraigne, /

If the thrones of Heauen and Earth were to be sollicyted one and the same way, I should haue learned by my often prayinge to God for your Maiestie, how to pray to your Maiestie for others. But the liturgies of the Church and Courte are different as in many other points, soe especially in this, that in the one, there is not soe poore a Sinner but may offer his Vowes immediately to the almightie, whereas in the other, a right Loyall Subiect may powre out his soule in vaine, without *Ora pro nobis*; now such is the obscure Condicion of your humble suppliant as I know noe saint about your sacred person, to whome I can addresse my orizons, or on whose mediacion I dare repose the least assurance, let yt therefore bee lawfull for me in this extraordinary occasion, to passe the ordinary formes, and rayseinge my spiritt aboue vncertainties, fix my Intire faith vpon your Maiesties supreame goodnes which is, and euer ought to be, esteemed both the best tribunall, and best Sanctuary, for a goode Cause. but how good soeuer my Cause be, itt would be heigh presumption in me to stand vpon ytt, I haue therefore rather chosen to cast my selfe att your Maiesties foote, from whence I would not willingely ryse, but there Remaine a monument of sorrow and humility, till I had obtained some gracious answer, to my peticion./ for though your Maiesties thoughts cannot discend soe low, as to concieue how much it imports a distressed subiect, to be relieued or neglected, yett you may be pleased to beleeue, that wee are as heighly affected, and as much anguished, with the extremities that passe our little fortunes, as Princes are with theirs. I speake not out of anie pride I take in Compareinge small thinges with greate, but onely to dispose your Maiestie to a fauorable construcion of my words, yf they seeme

ouercharged with zeale and affection, or to expresse more earnestnes then (perhapps) your Maiestie thinkes the business merritts for as my selfe Valewes itt, the suite I am to make to your Maiestie is no slight one, yett may safely be graunted without the trouble of Referrees,/ for as I dare assure your Maiestie vppon my life, itt is neither against the Lawe of your Kingdome nor will diminish anie of your Royall treasures, either that in your Cofers or that of your peoples hearts, itt beinge onely an acte of Clemencye or rather a Word, for euen that will suffice, to Create in your poore distressed Subiect a new heart, and send him away as full of Contentmente as he is now of greife and dispaire, nor is itt for my selfe that I thus Importune your Maiesties grace but for one that is farr more worthie and in whome all that I am Consists, my deare and onely brother, who (I know not by what [139v] Misfortune) hath fallen, or rather beene pusht into your heigh displeasure, not in darke and Crooked wayes, (such Ill affected, and Corrupt Subiects, vse to walke, and were wont to breake theire necks in) but euen in that great Road, which both him selfe, and all good English men (that know not the priuy path of the Courte) would haue sworne had lead most safely and most direct[ly] to your Maiesties seruice, from your Maiesties displeasure (then which there needs noe other Inuencion to Crucifie a generous and honest minded Subiect) hath Issued an[d] beene deriued upon him a whole torrent of Exempla[rie] punishments, wherein his Reputac*i*on, his person, and Estate hath greiuously Suffred, for haueinge vpon the last recease of Parlamente retired him selfe to his poore home in the Country, with hope to haue breathed a while, after the troublesome affayres, and still breathinge nothinge but your Mai[esties] Seruice, he was sent for ere he had finished his Christma[s] by a Sergeant att armes, who arrested him in his ow[n] howse, with as much terror, as belongs to the apprehendinge o[f] Treason it selfe, but thanks be to God his Conscience neuer started, and for his obedience he well showed, it was not in the power of any authority to surprise itt, for att the Instant without askeinge soe much as a minute[s] time of Resolucion, he rendred himselfe to the Officers discrecion, who accordinge to his direcion, brought him vp a Captiue, and presented him to the Counsaile Table as a delinquent, from whence he was as soone Committed to the Towre, where he hath beene euer since kept close prisoner, and that with soe strict a hand, as his beloued

Wyfe, and my selfe, haueinge sometimes since, an urg[ent] & Vnfaigned occasion to speake with him, about some priuate businesse of his family, and theruppon mak[ing] an humble suite vnto the Lords of your Maiesties most hon[orable] priuy Counsaile, for the fauour of accesse, wee we[re](to our great discomforte) denied, by reason (as theire Worshipps were then pleased to declare vnto vs) that h[ee] had not then fully satisfied your Maiestie in some points which is soe farr from beinge his Fault, as I dare say itt is the greatest parte of his affliction, that he sees hims[elfe] debar'd from the meanes of dooinge itt./ The Lords Commissioners that were appointed by your Maiestie to Examine his offence, since the first weeke of his Impr[ison]ment haue not done him the honour to be with him, by which meanes not onely his body, but the best parte of his minde (namely his humble Intencions) are kept in restraint, May ytt there fore please your Most Excelle[nt] Maiestie, now att the length, after three Moneths extrea[me en] [140r] durance to ordaine some such Course of Expedicion in his Cause as may stand with your Iustice, and yet not auert your mercy, either of them will serue our turnes, but that which is most agreeable to your Royall and pracious Inclinacion will best accomplish our desires, to Liue still in close prison, is all one to be buryed aliue, and for a man that hath anie hope of Saluacion, ytt were better to pray for the day of Iudgement then to lye languishinge in such wakeinge misery, yet not ours but your Maiesties will be done, for yf in your princely Wisdome, you shall not thinke it season to restore him to his former Condicion, or to accept of the fruites of his Correcion, an humble, an penitent Submission for his unhappynes in offendinge your Maiestie which I assure my selfe is longe since ripe & growen to full proportion, in soe forward an affecion, and soe proper for all manner of loyall duties, as he hath euer beene, yf I say yt be not yet time to showe mercy), but that he must still remaine with in the Walls of bondage, to expiate, what he did within the house of priuilidge, my hope is that he who will dye att anie time for your Maiesties seruice, will finde pacience to liue anie where for your Maiesties pleasure./Onely lett me beseech your Maiestie againe and againe, not to deny your most humble and obedient Subiect, your mittigacion of the Rigor of his sufferinge, soe farr as to graunt him now, the Libertie of the Towre, & that he may noe longer groane Vnder the burthen of these Incommodities, which dayly preuidice

his health and fortune, in a heigher degree (I beleeue) then your Maiestie either knowes or Intends. I am the more bold to Importune your Maiestie in this point of fauour because ytt concernes my owne good and preseruacion, for your Maiestie shall daine to Vnderstand, that I haue noe meanes to liue your Subiect but what proceeds from his brotherly loue and bountie soe as yf I may not be suffered to goe vnto him, and Receiue order for my maintenance, I know none but *Our Father which art in Heauen* of whome I can begge my dayly bread He that was my Father Vpon earth is longe since departed, and If I haue not beene misinformed, who was then beyond seas, (*pormhes pecathos*) your Maiesties anger was to him little better then the messenger of Death, though I perswade my selfe, itt was Rather sent in your Maiesties name then on your warrant: for what Use Could your Maiestie haue of his beinge noe more, who neuer was nor euer could be but your faithfull and affectionate Seruant who in his soule adored your Royall person as much as any mortall man did a mortall God, and lastly whose heart was soe bent to please your Maiestie that the very sound of your displeasure, was enough to breake itt, more perfect obedience then this can noe Subiect show, to make his Soueraignes fauor or disfauour equall to Life and Death. pardon me dread Soueraigne, yf in this occasion I cannot hinder my Fathers Ghost from appearinge, [140^{v}] For how can it possibly be att rest as longe as your fatall Displeasure raignes in his poore family, and makes it the howse of Continuall mourneinge, Remoue then yf it be your blessed will, the Clouds that haue soe longe hung ouer our heads, and let not the p'sent storme that wants matter to produce extort a thunder bolte. For what is *Phillips* or sonnes of *Phillips* that your Maiestie should destroy them we are Unworthie of Caesars anger as well in regard of meanes as our Innocencye. To conclude my prayer, I humbly beseech your Maiestie to forgiue them, lett my Ignore[nce] of the *stile and ceremonies* vsed in Court bee Imputed to your humble and well meaneinge suppliant, as a wilfull want of Reuerence. for there liues not in your Maiesties Dominions, a Subiect in whose breast the two Loyall qualities of Loue and feare, doe more religiously meete, or who woul[d] more willingely parte with his own Essence, to add the least acquisition, to the greatnes and Maiestie of his Soueraigne, True ytt is that the Subiect that imployed the facultieof my soule att this present, was of such a Nature,

as could not denye it the Vttermost of my affecion, and he who thinkes he can neuer speak enough, may easily lye too much, my Comfort is, that neither my brother, nor my selfe can be said, to haue failed, or exceeded in anie thinge but in words, but what will that availe us, vn[lesse] your Maiestie will pardon, without that all Crimes are Equall and as much danger lies, in an humble peticion as in a plot of heigh treason, be pleased then most dread and gracious Soueraigne, to giue vs backe our questionable words, and keepe our Vndoubted hearts, att least sho[w] us soe much mercy, as to Iudge Vs according to your owne goodnes, for yf we had not libertie to appeale thither, we should be in danger, of looseinge the happiest parts of o[wre] birthright, and instead of beinge your Maiesties Subjects, become other mens Slaues, from your Maiestie therefore yo[r] faithfull Subiect craues and expects the Ioyfull word grace, which yf I may bee soe happie as to Carrie my poore brother, before he growes any elder in misery, I shall fill m[any] an honest heart with praise and thankesgiueinge, and fo[r] my partciular, your Maiesties greatest fauours and liberalit[ie] shall not more oblige and better affect others, then this your Royall Clemencie shall me. [141^{r}] In memory whereof I shall dayly pray that your Maiestie may obtaine all your desires in heauen, and be obeyed in all your Commaunds vpon earth that you may liue to see your holy Intencions take effect, for the good of Christendome and soe honor the age we liue in, with the miracles of your wisdome, finally that your felicitie in this world, may ouertake that in the next, and make you weare a perpetuall Crowne, to Gods glory and your owne./

your Maiesties most humble loyall and true hearted Subiect./

Frauncis Phillips./

IID: 'ALDERMAN WISEACRE'S SPEECH'

MS ASHMOLE 36,37

[79r] Alderman Wiseacres ^Penningtons^ ^Wollaston^ speech vpon that discreete Peticion against: Bishops & Church Goverment: subscribed by him & Alderman

Woodcoke ^Warner^ together with some i500 ingenious & understanding

Craftsmen & by them either without feare or witting faintheartednes presented to the House of Commons

You may suppose he hath made his Legg &

thus the speaker

To you grand speaker & the rest beside
Grace from above & peace bee multiply'd,
What doe you lacke, peticions wee have brought
one worth the notice, plentifully fraught.
With Carectarres of vnderstanding hands
whose consciences are all at your Comands
Or if some Could not write yett I dare pr'mise
they make an S For Iohn or C For Thomas
As for my selfe there foreman & there speaker
I would not be mistaken for a Sneaker
If I my place & dignity may vent I
Am one o'th'honourable foure and twenty,
Tis knowne I stroke my beard & weare my gowne
Soe vnderstandingly that all the towne
Admires my grauety, & ther's my brother
Woodcocke for all the world iust such another
but hee ere longe, I feare will change his name
because a Bishopp lately bore the same
That Anty christian callinge tis dooth greiue vs
From which wee pray yor goodnesse to releaue vs

for since theise are the greate abomination
the froggs and locusts in the Revilacion
Sound each of them, yould finde a Pope in's belley
as plaine as one may smell a turd from Ielly
This holy cause hath moud vs rayse an Army
of Supplyants whose prayers I hope will charme ye
to yield yor helps Oh tis a pious werke
to bringe the English to the Scottish kirke
or now or neuer lend your ayde to hoyst
out of there throunes these Impes of Antechrist
It glads my harte to thinke our sage aduice
hath stickeled first to breake this holy ice
obserue as well the leaders as retineue
or if you haue or witt, or Judgement in you
you can conceaue noe less but that the P'elates
must haue a cracke from vs true Scottish zealots
for my pticuler the Cheife Combyner
I am and't please your worship a Refyner
And hope yould not condeme mee for a wigeon
Whoe take vpon mee to refyne Religion
My Brother Alderman hee trades in druggs
And can assure you that these Romish Buggs
[79^{v}] Trickt vp in Rochetts of such good diuises
Smell verye strongly of Italyan spyces
Guesse at a troope where wee that goe before 'em
May for our vnderstandinge bee o'th Quorum
The first that march i'th vantgard of Complayners,
are Shoemakers sty'de otherwise Cordwayners
whoe allbeit bat of indifferent fashon

yet shure they're men of vpright Conuersacon
may they haue liberty they'le tell you playne
they hould the Bishopps Papist knaues in grayne
There's neare a man in all the zealous Bunch
But faine would haue there Lordships feele his punch
how ever matters heretofore haue past
they hope Religion will tredd right at last
the next subscribers to our learn'd epistle
Though lower yett, are yeomen or the bristle
Coblers inspir'd a crew that dayly mends
& trusts ere longe to bringe about their endes
they'le have nor will their zeale an ace bee bated
The Prelates vnderlayde or else translated
next though reporte p'clames them all deceauers
wee haue a band of honest handed weavers
nor can wee deeme them shuttle headed fellowes
who for the lord are soe exceeding zealous
theise from the bottome of theire hearts defy
those massey beames which hide the Churches eye
of those which you see coupled, three, & thee,
soe straight at harte, though ioyned at the knee
they're Taylors all & sweare its not gods pleasure
his Church bee tormented with hard measare
there knockles shew you what a mighty itch
They haue to gather vp the Clergies stitch
I neede not tell you whose those bee that follow
your nose informes you that they smell of tallow
& chandlers though they bee they're quicke enough
to take such foule Indignityes in snuff

they pray that e're the parliament bee ended
these blincking lights o'th Church may bee amended
& things may Cotton soe that they in peace
hence forth on holy dayes may melt there grease
[80r] And that you'ld nimble bee they doe not doubt itt
nor cast away tow many weekes about it
Please you to view the following ptakers
three sundry dozens of our two eard bakers
'mongst whom are some who never spring from Iolthed
whoe sweare tis fit the Church should bee new boulted
though some sift cattalogues of musty Rolls
i'th prelates cause their but vnlearned soules
whose welth & state like Crust must not bee spared
but by authority bee chipt & pared
these Rowes you see stick there like silly sinners
next on the paper are sharpe pointed pinners
their prickt to'th harte that some now bould & dradlesse
are not like theire cast wayres, bow'd & made headeles
close ioyn'd to theise in this our pious labor
You may behold a Candid troope of Haber
dashers who, iust as wise as all the rest
doe humbly pray the Church may bee new drest
& trust to see the prelates, those foule lymbes
of Antichrist cutt narow in the brimmes,
in briefe the very Porters and the draymen,
doe sweare that thinges will neere bee well till Laymen
are ioyned to'th Church, nay moore the Broomemen see some
necessity of a reforming Beesome
to sweepe gods house & Combe men they determine

the teeth of Iustice must scratch out there vermyne,
heres i5000 handes a goodly noumber
which wee could double but weare loath to cumber
ourselves withall theise Tinckers, Tanners, Carriers,
vphoulsters, Sadlers, Cutlers, Bakers, Farriers,
Perfewmers, turners, gouldsmiths, Butchers, Ropemen,
Fishmongers, Joynters, Fullers, Dyers, Sopemen,
& Millions more of such good soules as last weeke
attended on St Burton, Pryn & bastweeke
our sutes soe reasonable & iust wee knowe
youle quickely yeild & never say vs noe,
first downe with Byshops that vngodly fry
you may at leasure yeild the reason why,
then fall vpon Cathedralls & there Deanes,
that honest Courtiers may ingrosse theire meanes
This feate once done, youle finde the Junior Clergie
soone forct with ease to singe a dolefulle dergie.
[81v] Greate liuinges are not fitt for men of letter
to weilde, fyne pretty pensions would doe better
in one thinge more wee crave yor reformacon
to disanull all needeleese consecracon
for point of holynesse wee are not able
to see greate difference twixt a Church & Stable
the word of gods all one, nor can wee learne
more pfitt in a Church then in a Barne
& much more fruite=fully doe wee receive itt
when some well tutor'd xxtij Nobles Levitt
shall mounted on a stoole divinely vtter
smooth pleasinge truths as soft as oyle or Butter

then if some rough=hewd fellows not beehouldinge
to our benevolence shall fall a scouldinge
the open Church, & readily inveigh
'gainst Crymes which though familiar in our way
& such as wee may winke at for a profitt
yet 'tis not fitt that they should toss vs of itt
theires pper libertie indeede much fitter I
Conceaue Genevas Reverend Presbittery
when some of them whome they may thinke Churchy[elders]
Shall rule the reste & bee appoynted Elders
& though if busy fellows bee soe Idle
to take theire will wele helpe them to a bridle
beesides this discipline w'ele worke a wonder
neere knowne since Popes went out twill keepe Kings
in safety

IID: 'THE HUMBLE PETICION OF THE POETS'

MS ASHMOLE 36,37

The Humble Peticion of the

Poets to the 5 Members. /

Note: *The copy of this poem in Ashmole 36,37 is incomplete. The page finishes at l.47, with a comma, so it would appear there is a missing page. The rest of this transcription is taken from Bodleian MS Rawlinson D398: Fol.233^{v}. The transcription is taken from Ashmole 36,37 because of my focus on the circulation of 'The Commons Petition in manuscript: Ashmole 36,36 contains both 'The Commons Petition' and 'The Humble Peticion of the Poets'*

[97^{r}] After soe many concurring Peticions
From all ages all sexes & all Condicions
We come in the arreare to p'sent our follyes
To Pym, Stroud, Haselrigg, Hampden & Hollies
And we hope for our labour we shall not be shent
For this comes from Christendome & not from Kent;
Though set forme of Prayers be abhominacon
Set formes of Peticions finde greate approbacon
Therefore as others from the bottom of their Soules,
Soe from the debth & bottome of our boules,
According to that blessed forme you haue taught vs
We thanke you for all the Evills you haue brought vs
For the goods we receiue we thanke him that gaue it,
And you for the Confidence only to craue it
Next by Course we Complaine of the greate violacon
Of Priviledges like the rest of our Nacon
But tis none of you of which we have spoken
Which neuer had being vntill they were broken
But ours is a Priviledge auncient & natiue
Hangs not on an Ordinance or power Legislatiue
But first tis to speake whatsoeuer we please
Without feare of Prison or Pursivants fees

Next that we only may lye by Authority
But in this alsoe we haue gott the Priority
Next our old Customes our fathers did name it
Poeticall lycence, & alwayes did clayme it;
By this we had power to change age to youth
Turne sense to nonsense & falshood to truth.
In breife to make good what euer is falty,
This arte some Poet or divell hath taught yee
And this same property you haue invaded
And a Priviledge of both houses haue made it
But that trust aboue in Poets reposed
That Kings by them are made & deposed,
This though you cannot doe yet you are willing,
But when we vndertake deposing or killing,
They are Tyrants & Monsters and yet then the Poet
Takes full revenge on them that doe it
But when we resume a Septer or Crowne,
We are modest & seeke not to make it our owne,
But ist not psumpcon to write verses to yow
Whoe make the better Poems of the two
For all the pretty knacks you compose
Alas what are they but poems in prose
And betwixt theis & ours there's noe difference
But that yours want the Rhyme the witt & the sence
But for lying the most noble parte of a Poett,
You haue it abundantly & yor selues know it,
[Bodleian MS Rawlinson D398]
And though you are modest & seeme to abhor itt
It has done you good service & thank god for it
Yet the old maxim remaynes still in force
A sanctified Cause must haue a sanctified Course

If poverty be a part of our trade
Soe farr ye whole Kingdome poets ye haue made
Nay euen as vndoing will doe it
Ye haue K Charles himselfe a Poet
But proke not his muse for all the world knowes
Already you haue had too much of his prose./

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