PERMISSIBLE DEVOTION: DISCOVERING TRANSITIONS IN THE MATERIALITY AND EMBODIMENT OF WOMEN'S FAITH EXPRESSIONS DURING THE ENGLISH REFORMATION

A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE SCHOOL

IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE

REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE

MASTER OF ARTS BY

CATHERINE KERTON-JOHNSON

DR. ABEL ALVES

DR. JENNIFER DESILVA

DR.ROBERT HALL

ADVISORS

BALL STATE UNIVERSITY

MUNCIE, INDIANA

MAY 2022

Table of Contents

Introduction 5

Chapter 1: Women and the Stripping of the Altars 11

Chapter 2: Women's Faith and Literacy 24

Chapter 3: Analysis 49

Conclusion 97

Primary Sources 107

Secondary Sources 110

Introduction

Great socio-political and economic upheaval framed the early modern period in England. The reign of Henry VIII (1509-1547) coincided with the rise of Protestantism in Europe, and the church in England eventually separated from the authority of the Catholic Church in Rome. Throughout subsequent years and monarchical reigns, religion in England was increasingly influenced by Puritanism, culminating in the civil wars and the Commonwealth, after which Charles II was restored to the throne. During this time of overt public unrest, the private structures of society were also radically transformed. Women, as overseers of family and home, were critical agents in the way households responded to changing social requirements and expectations. How women navigated their role within patriarchal and class structures, as well as their management of domestic religious practice and orthodoxy, had economic, political and spiritual implications for their entire household, and wider ramifications in their local communities.

Medieval spirituality was characterized by pervasive materiality that also manifested itself in domestic religious practice, and the personal piety of women. Female experiences within family and community life such as childbirth, marriage, sickbed care, domestic management, and so on, were defined by particularly physical actions. These rituals, which were critical to the framing of spiritual meaning within the lifecycle, also demarcated the sanctioned zones of women's agency within society. Certain ritual practices were the sole domain of women, and feminine spirituality held a critical position in community life. Although women's religious roles were carefully defined within the limitations of traditional family or institutional structures, medieval religion as a whole had pervasively feminine aspects. Interactions with the Virgin Mary and female Saints were intrinsic to the daily spiritual life of both men and women.

Caroline Walker Bynum has written extensively on the importance of the body in late medieval spiritual experience; "…wherever we turn in the later Middle Ages we seem to find the theme of body - and of body in all its aspects, pleasure as well as pain."[1] The relationship between body and holiness was fraught, however, with a constant struggle between the doctrines of the Incarnation and the Resurrection of the Body (suggesting the inherent goodness of the body), with "the law of sin that is in [the] members."[2]

Medieval and early modern gender experience was clearly demarcated by social norms that were strongly understood as masculine or feminine. The medieval feminine experience was particularly embodied. In her essay "The Girl and the Hourglass," Silvana Seidel Menchi writes that "the woman's life story coincide[d] with the parabola of her body; woman's work [was] the management of her corporeality in its various phases."[4] As an example, evidence has demonstrated that food as symbol was more important in women's lives than men's lives, due to the ubiquity of food preparation in their daily lives. Food was a central symbol in medieval religious expression, with the community's calendar being structured around feast and fast days ordained and regulated by the church.[5] Prayer was saturated with references to food and the sensory aspects of hunger, thirst and taste.

Overseeing the lifecycle of her family members as well as her own, was a critical role that had been a woman's purview for time immemorial. While men took much responsibility in

---

[1] Caroline Walker Bynum, *Holy Feast and Holy Fast:the Religious Significance of Food to Medieval Women* (Berkeley, CA: Univ. of California Press, 2010), 253.
[2] Bynum, *Holy Feast and Holy Fast*, 253.
[4] Silvana Seidel Menchi, "The Girl and the Hourglass," Essay in Anne Jacobson Schutte, Thomas Kuehn, and Silvana Seidel Menchi, *Time, Space, and Women's Lives in Early Modern Europe* (Kirksville, MO: Truman State University Press, 2001), 44.
[5] Bynum, *Holy Feast,* 74.

aspects of lifecycle such as marriage, many other rites of passage took place within the intimacy of the home, where the skills of hospitality and childrearing were firmly within the woman's domain.[6]

Because ritual activity circumscribed everyday life at the beginning of the early modern period, the conduct of routine rites of passage became a central area of politicized disagreement as the conflicts that characterized the Reformation and Revolution in England progressed. For this reason, women, although only involved to a limited extent in these conflicts in the public square, were drawn into very sharp disputes, especially at a parochial level, about how these lifecycle rituals should be reformed to fit with new social and political expectations of behavior and belief.[7] As England's religious and political culture was shaken by the Henrician reforms and the rise of Protestantism, the particularly material and embodied expressions of women's personal devotion and domestic spirituality shifted gradually to reflect new theological understandings of femininity and the body as well as the redrawn boundaries of acceptable religious practice. Women also had to negotiate the changing nature of their influence and leadership within the home, as the Church began to redefine the role of the feminine within religious practice.

The Elizabethan period was a time of relative political peace when compared with the early Henrician reforms, the Edwardine iconoclasm, and later, the Stuart reigns, which descended into civil war. However, this superficial stability in sanctioned religious expression hid an underlying tectonic shift within domestic and communal piety. The Puritan influence was growing dramatically, especially in certain upper-middle-class circles. On the other end of the

[6] David Cressy, *Birth, Marriage, and Death: Ritual, Religion, and the Life-Cycle in Tudor and Stuart England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 7.
[7] Cressy, *Birth, Marriage and Death*, 1.

spectrum, Catholic recusants were designing their faith practices in such a way as to become a powerful underground network of influence. In one sense, the Elizabethan era was the period of the English Reformation when top-down, political heavy-handedness as the driving factor of change, gave way to a tug-of-war within local communities to determine who would gain ascendancy in the new religious order.

Much study has been made of the nature of feminine spirituality before and after the Reformation. However, discussions of the transitional period have focused on changes made within church and communal religious practice and has not shed as much light on what was happening in private devotional life – particularly that of women. Using evidence of changing domestic material culture as a backdrop, an examination of a sample of devotional literature written during the Elizabethan period, for and by women, sheds light on the ways in which they navigated the transition of feminine religious spirituality from an embodied and material expression, to a textual and moral expression. This analysis, using theories of embodiment applied to spiritual literature, will show that while women were at times enthusiastically engaged in new Protestant expressions of devotion, they did not entirely abandon their past practices, but instead used subtle shifts in language and behavior to hold on to traditions and understandings that would have been fundamental to their personal, social and religious identity, as well as to their religious agency within the home and community.

While study of the material culture of the Reformation period can give an idea of the changing modes of physical representation and self-fashioning within the church and domestic life, it is more difficult to interpret physical objects for conceptual shifts that were taking place in understandings of self and the divine that were the root cause of these changes. The way language was being used in devotional literature can give us a more complete picture of the

transforming modes of knowledge that formed the backdrop of personal piety. Fortunately, there are a number of devotional works that were published specifically for the use of women during the Elizabethan period, which form a sample literature that reveals the changing meanings and ways of relating that shaped women's religious lives. Suzanne Hull published a survey of printed books that were directed, at least in part, to English-speaking women in the period 1475 to 1640.[8] Of these books, nine were classified as devotional books specifically written for or by women, and five were books of prayers.

These prayer books provide a unique view into the devotional lives of literate women during this period. While we cannot conclude that they accurately mirror the piety of women themselves, because published works are always written through a filter of social expectations and norms, as well as adopting the political or religious agenda of the author, they can be examined to find reflections of these expectations, norms and agendas which will help us in understanding some of the changing perspectives of piety, modes of self-knowledge, and social religious pressures during the Elizabethan period. This particular period of English history provides a window of historical analysis through which the overt political pressures were not as critical or inflammatory as the period before (during the reigns of Henry, Edward and Mary I), and after it (during the reign of the Stuarts, the civil wars and the Commonwealth). For this reason, the devotional works can be interpreted from a more personal perspective, as they are less likely to have been used as political statements, and are more likely to be a reflection of changing domestic and social mores and practices. The five texts that have been chosen for analysis here are Thomas Bentley's *Monument of Matrones* (1582), Anne Wheathill's *A*

[8] Suzanne Hull, *Chaste, Silent and Obedient: English Books for Women 1475-1640* (San Marino, CA: Huntington Library, 1982).

Handfull of Holesome (though Homelie) Hearbs (1584), Nicholas Breton's *Auspicante Jehova, Maries Exercise* (1597), Richard Broughton's *A Manual of Praiers Used by the Fathers of the Primative Church* (1618), and *A Tablet for Gentlewomen* (1574). Bentley, Wheathill and Breton's works, as well as the Tablet for Gentlewomen, have been chosen for particular analysis at the recommendation of these works by Atkinson and Atkinson as "rich sources for the study of attitudes to women in general, and to their spiritual life in particular, in the late sixteenth century." [9] These four works are written by Protestant authors explicitly for the use of women in their devotions. In addition, Broughton's work has been added as a Catholic example of a woman's devotional, in order to provide a comparison of how those who remained Catholic were responding to the ways in which women's devotional practice was changing.

[9] Colin B. Atkinson, and Jo B. Atkinson, "Four Prayer Books Addressed to Women during the Reign of Elizabeth I," *Huntington Library Quarterly* 60, no. 4 (1997): 407–23, https://doi.org/10.2307/3817787, 407-8.

Chapter 1: Women and the Stripping of the Altars

Eamon Duffy, in his master work *The Stripping of the Altars* (1992), gives a detailed analysis of how the late medieval framework of religious practice was dismantled over the period of the English Reformation.[10] Edward Muir follows on from Duffy's focus on the late medieval period, and studies how the early modern European reformed church redefined ritual practice to suit its new Protestant agenda.[11] Despite the temptation to understand the narrative of these processes as linear, it is clear from the evidence that there was a protracted and very complex process of both conformity and rebellion to the Reformation. Duffy argued that "historical enquiry in the English Reformation has therefore shifted now from consideration of the reluctances and resistances to reformation which "revisionism" highlighted, to the *processes* by which in the course of those three generations the assimilation of Protestant practice and belief took place."[12] The trajectory of change in the spiritual expressions of women over this period can best be described by a protracted push and pull of medieval spirituality (expressed through material objects, and the body) with Protestant spirituality (expressed through textual literacy and moral didacticism), until the latter gained the ascendency in mainstream communal and personal religious practices.

A study of women (and gender, which widens the scope to the ways in which men and women's lives are specifically circumscribed and defined by their male- or femaleness within their culture) often begins with the ways that women have been excluded from past historiography. Merry Wiesner-Hanks suggests that the "add women and stir" method was the

---

[10] Eamon Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars: Traditional Religion in England, C.1400-C.1580*, 2nd ed. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005).
[11] Edward Muir, *Ritual in Early Modern Europe*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009).
[12] Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars,* xxxiii.

beginning of an historiographical trend where the whole of society, including the daily lives of the majority of people, became of interest to the historian.[13] In her book *Women and Gender in Early Modern Europe* (2008), Wiesner-Hanks describes how, once the life of the noble woman had been studied in depth, the shift in emphasis to the life of the ordinary women in the home and family provided momentum towards study of the daily lives of all people at a grass-roots level. From the late 1960s to 1970s, there was an explosion of historiographical innovation as the blinkered historical view of a nation's trajectory through the lives of its monarchs, generals and politicians, widened to include ever-growing facets of life in the past, encouraged by the growth of interdisciplinary co-operation as well as technology, that allowed the depth and breadth of understanding of past society to develop.[14] Wiesner-Hanks describes a broadening of historiographical scope from the narrow focus on the predominantly male domain before the second half of the twentieth century, and posits that the chronological method of historical expression is problematic when one is describing the everyday lives of women, which are often better understood in terms of cycles or seasons.[15] She chooses, therefore, to divide her study into the tripartite expressions of self in Western philosophy - Body, Mind and Spirit - which better describe the different spheres in which women had influence and experience in the early modern period.

Ideas about women have always been expressed most practically in the way society dealt with women legally, which then circumscribed their lives from birth to death in the way they related to their family, their husbands and the economic and political world. The historical laws

[13] Merry E. Wiesner-Hanks, *Women and Gender in Early Modern Europe*, 3rd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 4.
[14] Wiesner-Hanks, *Women and Gender*, 2.
[15] Wiesner-Hanks, *Women and Gender*, 3.

that Wiesner-Hanks summarizes during the early modern period demonstrate the continuing understanding of a women as inferior to men in both body and mind. In addition, ecclesiastical tradition passed down from the early Church Fathers built an argument from Genesis for the spiritual weakness of women and their responsibility for the sin in the world. Hence, women were always under the watchful eye of church authority, and their agency within religious tradition was carefully defined.[16]

The spheres in which women had agency were not as clearly demarcated along religious/secular lines as the religious and scientific worlds are today. Before the Enlightenment period, the practices of cooking and medicine, herbalism, witchcraft, astrology and astronomy, alchemy, chemistry, farming and natural philosophy, were not understood as dichotomies of belief that could be placed on a spectrum. Rather they formed a crisscross of practices not easily defined, sometimes blurred into one another; often influencing and creating, within each other's practices, new directions and new experimentation. The social structures that defined the boundaries of sanctioned power were shifting, and the positions of authority were in some cases tenuous, and in others enduring. The modern world of science was in its embryonic form and the principle of empirical experimentation was at once novel but, at the same time, within the age-old realm of the village wise woman. A closer look at the healing practices in early modern English households brings into sharp relief the complexity of the transition from medieval concepts of the universe and our place in it, to our worldview today. Magic and science, now seen as polar opposites, were once two sides of the same coin; and women, far from being outsiders in the Enlightenment, had been practicing its basic principles in their kitchens for generations.

[16] Wiesner-Hanks, *Women and Gender*, 14.

The subject of women’s daily household practice rose in prominence in historical study during the post-war period of the twentieth century, with social and feminist history becoming a driving force in the scrutiny of the daily life of ordinary people. Out of this data-driven research, the analysis of larger patterns within social groups came to the fore. Feminist historians such as Merry Wiesner-Hanks focused on the role of women within the home and the community, as well as gender power relations within society as a whole. The spheres of religion, politics and economy were now scrutinized through the lens of family, village, manor farm or local church. Building on this, and with an increasing collaboration of the social sciences with history and archaeology, specific areas of practice and experience were studied in detail, as well as the realm of lived physical experience in material history.

David Cressy’s book *Birth, Marriage and Death: Ritual, Religion, and the Life-Cycle in Tudor and Stuart England* (1997), combined this focus on daily life with a complex study of the rituals accompanying three particular rites of passage over a period of rapid social, political and religious change. His work is, firstly, a sourcebook for ritual practice, with extensive discussion of not only practical considerations such a medical treatment during pregnancy or the decorations used at the marriage celebration, but also of the metaphysical thinking that underpinned the rituals. Thus, we not only have a collection of historical information carefully extracted from the judicious use of documentary evidence, but we also have a survey of the ways that the early modern English people were navigating changes in expectation and regulation over these practices that had been unquestioned and part of everyday life for centuries. Cressy uses a wide range of documentary evidence including prayer books, proposals for liturgical revision, church laws, visitation books and ecclesiastical records as well as sermons and pamphlets and

private correspondence.[17] However, it is his use of source material documenting the negotiation and challenge of liturgical practices that provides an insight into how rites of passage were providing a sounding board for the social tensions of the period: "every time a child was baptized, a couple married, or a body buried in Elizabethan and Stuart England… the religion of protestants was both taught and tested."[18] There was constant controversy over the conduct of sacraments such as baptism. Every detail was questioned and the seemingly more trivial physical aspects of religious representation became the sounding board for tensions within the community about religious and political change. William Clay, a nineteenth century historian of the Elizabethan era noted that "the authors of the Book of Common Prayer insisted, 'the keeping or omitting of a ceremony, in itself considered, is a simple thing; yet the wilful and contemptuous transgression and breaking of a common order and discipline is no small offence before God'."[19]

Materiality

Caroline Walker Bynum, Roberta Gilchrist, Tara Hamling and Antony Buxton have made detailed studies of late medieval to early modern English religious ritual, objects and architecture. These archaeological and ethnographic studies of ritual practice, in addition to examinations of domestic culture, provide a detailed analysis of the uses of domestic objects and artwork, the *habitus*, that defined women's use of objects everyday. The "material" turn – a focus on the materiality and embodiment of experience in the social sciences and humanities – brings a welcome convergence of the disciplines of anthropology, archaeology, sociology and

[17] Cressy, *Birth, Marriage, and Death,* 7.
[18] Cressy, *Birth, Marriage, and Death*, 2.
[19] William Keatinge Clay, *Liturgies and Occasional Forms of Common Prayer Set Forth in the Reign of Queen Elizabeth* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1847), 36.

history to bear on particular aspects of historical culture that may be more difficult to understand from a modern worldview.

The development of material culture studies has paralleled the extraordinary broadening of focus in the historical, archaeological and anthropological fields that occurred from the 1950s. The Annales School, and the rise of Marxist economic theory, gender studies and postmodern philosophy all contributed to a growing academic interest in the lives and cultures of social groups beyond the elite. Both the *Routledge Handbook of Material Culture in Early Modern Europe* (2017), and *Everyday Objects: Medieval and Early Modern Material Culture and its Meanings* (2016) discuss in their opening pages how the study of material culture has blossomed since the mid twentieth century.[20] The desire to understand the 'consumer revolution' that began in the eighteenth century naturally required not only archival documents, but also material evidence. At the same time, understandings of historical notions of culture or identity were broadening beyond the 'fine arts' to the way everyday objects played a role in the self-expression of individuals and communities.[21] Going beyond interpreting material objects as merely symbolic of economic status, a more nuanced and complex perspective is being developed of material culture as "the ephemeral, the imaginary, the biological, the theoretical; all that which would have been external to the simple definition of an artifact."[22]

The development of the *Everyday Objects* collection of essays from the 2007 conference of the same name at the University of Birmingham Shakespeare Institute, spearheaded this new

[20] Catherine Richardson, Tara Hamling, and David Gaimster, eds, *Routledge Handbook of Material Culture in Early Modern Europe* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2017); Tara Hamling and Catherine Richardson, *Everyday Objects: Medieval and Early Modern Material Culture and Its Meanings* (London: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2016).
[21] Richardson, *et al.*, *Routledge Handbook*, 5.
[22] Daniel Miller, *Materiality* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2005), 4.

widening of material culture studies within the field of early modern European history. The intention with this conference was to expand the field of material culture studies in this period to include not only objects themselves, but the way they moved in space and time, the way people interacted physically with objects, and the way material goods were used to reflect and influence power relationships and identity within domestic, community and religious spaces. While the role of economics was not excluded, it was interpreted through the lens of the increasing expansion of the domestic cultural environment, from fashion, art and decorative goods to a value for aesthetic expression in the functional items of the home.[23]

Material culture can help us understand aspects of historical life on which the textual record is silent. In this vein, Miller's assertion that "much of what we are exists not through our consciousness or body, but as an exterior environment that habituates and prompts us," is critical to understanding why material culture is so important in the deepening of our understanding of past societies.[24]

The widening perspectives that typify the new approaches to material culture require the construction of methodologies that allow for interdisciplinary collaboration. Sara Pennell gently challenges traditional views of archaeological objects by encouraging us to see, for example, broken or cracked ceramics as not only evidence of their existence at a certain place and time in the past, as whole specimens, but also as signposts of the values held by their owners represented by the damaged state of the evidence itself. This included the growing desire for semi-durable products in the home, the fashion for brittle china being synonymous with feminine genteel taste, and indeed what might be interpreted about the importance of memory, identity and even

[23] Hamling, *et al*, *Everyday Objects*, 6.
[24] Miller, *Materiality*, 5.

sentimentality from a cup that has been mended for display, without any longer being functional. Material realities such as mended china raise many questions and provide some answers about their owners' values. Their acquisition of new types of tableware was marked by a less urgent requirement for durability, and the desire for unique and sophisticated aesthetic decoration.[25] When examining objects used for ritual practice within the home, it is important to keep in mind these more nuanced understandings of the meanings of objects, reading beyond the face-value of religious or cultural meaning to the values the owner expressed in the way the object was displayed (was it prominent in the home or hidden?), how it was maintained, whether it was static or moved through space, discarded when broken or passed down through the generations. The concept of physical space as a 'material' may seem counterintuitive, given that it is the area *between* objects, the so called 'negative space' where we are engaging with movement as well as the three-dimensional place that is occupied by the body or object. This aspect of materiality is particularly important in the analysis of religious ritual. In pre-Reformation faith practices, the movement of bodies and objects through space reified the community and the individual's understandings of their relationships with each other and with God.

Understanding the relationship an object or body has with the space it inhabits is an area of research that has, in the past, been superseded by more static interpretations. Giorgio Riello has created valuable new methodologies in his work on the act of movement, and his essay on "The Material Culture of Walking" is a useful example of how material studies can go beyond

[25] Sara Pennell, "'For a Crack or Flaw Despis'd': Thinking about Ceramic Durability and the 'Everyday' in Late Seventeenth- and Early Eighteenth-Century England," in *Everyday Objects: Medieval and Early Modern Material Culture and Its Meanings*, eds., Tara Hamling and Catherine Richardson (London: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2016), 27-40, 35.

the physical object itself to the movement of the object through space.[26] Riello uses consumption studies, which have traditionally been focused on the analysis of economic trends and the development of global trade networks, to give us insights into the wider meanings of the global movements of objects.[27] He approaches his development of methodological typologies relating to space by proposing four different ways that historians have traditionally approached space: single spaces (such as a house, city or nation) influenced by the infiltration of objects from other spaces (the 'foreign'); objects that are static within a space representing certain ideas and influences; objects that are created within "mixed" spaces (such as colonial cultures, for example Latin America) which represent a hybrid of ideas and influences; and finally objects that were common to a number of very different spaces (such as cotton textiles that became ubiquitous in Europe and across the globe.)[28] He adds the comparison of different objects within one space as a further way in which historians have investigated "similitudes and dissimilarities, the importance of context, of cultural and economic differences and of trajectories in time and space."[29] Although Riello concludes his analysis of these methodologies by showing their value in providing depth and nuance in our understanding of global connection, he proposes in his essay on walking that the act of moving in itself can be as important as the object or the space in which it is contextualized, and challenges us to look beyond the movement as it relates to the

---

[26] Giorgio Riello, "The Material Culture of Walking: Spaces of Methodologies in the Long Eighteenth Century," in *Everyday Objects: Medieval and Early Modern Material Culture and Its Meanings*, eds. Tara Hamling and Catherine Richardson (London: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2016), 41-56.
[27] Giorgio Riello, "Global Things: Europe's Early Modern Material Transformation," in *The Routledge Handbook of Material Culture in Early Modern Europe*, eds. Catherine Richardson, Tara Hamling, and David Gaimster (London: Routledge/Taylor & Francis Group, 2017), 29-45, 29.
[28] Riello, "Global Things," 34-38.
[29] Riello, "Global Things," 40.

physical context in which it happens (the environment), to the actual act of moving itself, and what it can tell us about the cultural, political and economic values of the time. He tackles this first by looking at the ways the movement of the body through space (in this case the act of walking) is imbued with social information for the historian. Attitudes to the act of walking, spaces that made walking dangerous (particularly for women) or unhygienic, the act of moving from the private to the public space through the street, the ways walking had consequences for the health of the body depending on one's social class (mainly due to one's foot attire), are all aspects of the act of walking that Riello uses to argue that analyzing movement in itself within the context of the period holds a wealth of information that can lead to new connections and discoveries.[30]

This idea of movement through space as a repository of diverse meaning is taken up by a number of essayists in the *Routledge Handbook*. Andrew Gordon's analysis of the street life of the early modern city includes a summary of changes in transportation and social circulation from the sixteenth into the seventeenth centuries in London.[31]

The distinction between spaces as signifiers of status or zones of acceptable behavior was a fundamental delineator of communal life, and continues to this day. A reflection of social status through movement between zones of acceptability, was exemplified within the Royal Court in what Glenn Richardson calls "'political community' where access to the monarch was choreographed spatially in relation to different zones whose status was defined by royal

[30] Riello, "The Material Culture of Walking," 45-46.
[31] Andrew Gordon, "Materiality and the Streetlife of the Early Modern City," in *The Routledge Handbook of Material Culture in Early Modern Europe*, eds. Catherine Richardson, Tara Hamling, and David Gaimster (London: Routledge/Taylor & Francis Group, 2017), 130-140, 136.

proximity and reflected in their decoration and furnishing."[32] Civic buildings played a similar role in dividing certain members of the public ("the wrong sort") from the governing elite, and providing a space for the growing participation of the bourgeois in debate and discourse, giving rise to the new concept of the 'public sphere,'[33] and of course within the church, space was carefully divided into the sacred and the profane. The use of buildings and the rooms within them to separate people into their social or religious categories, and to mediate the interaction of the inferior classes with the superior, increasingly spread to domestic spaces in the early modern period, with a growing emphasis on private spaces for the family members of homes, separate from their servants. Chris King argues that the increasing specialization of domestic spaces to "parlours and chambers, kitchens and service areas…advertised social status through division."[34]

These divisions were connected to another characteristic trend of the early modern period: changing attitudes to identity. People were beginning to realize that identity could in some ways be malleable. Stephen Greenblatt, in his seminal work *Renaissance Self-Fashioning* (year?), stated that "there is in the early modern period a change in the intellectual, social, psychological, and aesthetic structures that govern the generation of identities." This was characterized by a self-conscious fashioning of identity through a process of manipulating one's personal cultural environment in order to represent oneself as part of specific social groups.[35] It is important to keep these understandings of space in mind when studying the way women's identities changed over the period of the Reformation, and how the spaces they inhabited were used to redefine, refashion and reassert their new self-understanding within the changing *status*

---

[32] AJ, 13.
[33] AJ, 14.
[34] *ibid*
[35] Stephen J. Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning: from More to Shakespeare* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980), 1.

quo. As the sacred nature of the physical space of the church was de-emphasized through the iconoclasm of the Edwardine reforms, and consumer items such as embroidery patterns, furniture and paintings became more affordable towards the end of the sixteenth century, women increasingly moved sacred art and decoration into the domestic space. While religious imagery was now seen as temptation to idolatry, there was a neutrality in the domestic sphere that allowed religious images to be displayed as a reflection of the piety of the household rather than as objects of direct worship as they had been in the church. Although iconoclasm is associated with the Puritan movement, Tara Hamling has argued effectively that most Protestants were not opposed to illustrating religious ideas or stories through images in their homes.[36] Gilt plates, wall tapestries, murals and cushions dating from the 1570s to the 1650s have been discovered displaying scenes from the Old and New Testaments.[37] However the most noticeable change in home decoration from the 1570s in England is the appearance of scriptural texts on walls and objects, as decoration, reflecting that change that had taken place in the church, described by Duffy: "In Edward's reign the screen was purged of the carved crucifix which surmounted it, and the lower panels, with their rows of painted Saints, were whitewashed over. On the blank surface thus secured, handsome black letter passages were copied from the First Epistle of Peter and the Epistle of St Paul."[38]

Figure 1: Section of a wall painting dated 1603, in the first-floor chamber at Paramour Grange, Ash, Kent from Hamling, *A Day at Home*, 20.

[36] Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning*, 203-206.
[37] Illustrated examples can be found in Hamling, *Decorating the 'Godly' Household*, 201, 203, 206, 209, 214; and Marshall, *Oxford Illustrated History of the Reformation*, 254.
[38] Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars,* xxxvi.

The materiality of religion is a particular area in which the broader application of interdisciplinary studies can bring new insight into the eruptions of change in Europe during the Reformation. Hamling describes how, because of the importance of physical objects and decoration in Catholic faith expressions, and the shift to textuality and didactic communication in Protestantism, the study of material culture in this area can provide an insight into the particular personal and communal transitions from Catholic to Protestant religion which, outside of secondary accounts or personal writings, may be the only way to measure these changes in the social contexts of the home and community.[39] Hamling and Richardson dedicate an entire section to religion in their collection of essays *Everyday Objects*, and the 'materialities of belief' cover the full range of material studies beginning with religious objects and broadening to church spaces and decoration; food rituals; embodied practices of piety; sensory experiences of smell, sound, and touch (incense, music, chanting, praying rosary beads and so on).[40] These studies provide theological, social, cultural and political interpretations of the period through the application of the new methodologies being pioneered in materials studies to bring a more nuanced understanding of such complex concepts as the sacred and the profane. In one sense, religion is the ultimate subject for the application of these new methods, not only benefiting from an interdisciplinary approach, but also a way of describing the interplay of the dynamics between manifold and widely differing expressions and experiences of reality – the spiritual, mental, emotional, physical all working together in the religious life of the believer and the believing community.

[39] Hamling *et al.*, *Everyday Objects*, 7.
[40] Hamling *et al.*, *Everyday Objects*, 231-286.

Chapter 2: Women's Faith and Literacy

Although it is widely assumed that only the most wealthy people could read in the medieval period, the use of primers was widespread and connected with lay piety.[41] The textuality of piety before the Reformation was in the form of the "Pater Noster, Ave Maria, Crede" and "more elaborate programme for the laity which had been…formulated…in 1281" which was "expounded in the vernacular to parishioners four times in the year."[42] A preface to a number of inexpensive Latin primers from 1529 onwards instructed its readers: "When ye have arayed you / say in your chambre or lodgyng:matyns / pryme & houres."[43] Primers pre-Reformation were "both more and less than texts."[44] They were firstly sacred objects, identified by their illumination and woodcuts of religious scenes and they were often understood as channels of sacred power, independent of the texts they accompanied.[45] Written in Latin, which made them even more illegible to the common person, "…this very element of mystery gave legitimacy to the sacred character of Latin itself, as higher and holier than the vernacular."[46] The power of the words in these devotional books was often conveyed in the written text itself, not necessarily in the meaning or understanding of the text. The words were used as prayers and charms to "avail" God's grace.[47] The Latin primer was used, therefore, as a series of cues to remind the owner of the beginning of prayers they would have learned by heart from hearing and recitation in church

---

[41] Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars*, 212.
[42] Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars*, 54.
[43] Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars,* 213.
[44] *ibid*
[45] Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars,* 214.
[46] Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars,* 218.
[47] *ibid*

settings. They knew which prayers were to be said at which hours, and even though they did not understand the meanings of the words themselves, they knew what the prayer would be effective for, in meeting their spiritual or physical needs.[48] A woman of means like Margery Kempe (dates?) had available to her a large number of devotional materials, devotional classics, clerical and religious guidance.[49] Thus not only liturgical works, but spiritual writings of Saints and mystics had an influence on the religious life of the men and women who owned them: "…the visionary writings of St. Bridget [of Sweden], herself a married woman and a courtier, had exercised a profound influence over the spirituality of men and women engaged in secular affairs."[50] As the growth of print transformed literate society, religious primers were used to try to influence the populace one way or the other towards a political religious standpoint: "Most primers were the product not of government commission but of free enterprise, and most remained largely traditional in character, though [with the Reformation] English became the dominant language."[51] This became a problem for English ecclesiastical authorities, who attempted to regulate reformed religious practice. In 1545 *The King's Primer* was published and no other was permitted to be used either publicly or privately.[52] At first glance, this primer still appears traditional, but with closer examination it is clear that the calendar had been dramatically reduced of its Saints days, many prayers have been omitted, and there are no traditional direct prayers to the Virgin, the Saints or the Blessed Sacrament.[53] Didactic poems brought religious instruction out of the church into the household and the guildhall, as a growing number of

[48] Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars,* 221.
[49] Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars,* 62-3.
[50] Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars,* 86.
[51] Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars,* 445.
[52] Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars,* 444.
[53] Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars,* 446-7.

laymen were able to read.[54] Duffy explains, "though most of this material was in Latin, much was in English, and printing gave an enormous impetus to the movement for vernacular religious instruction."[55] Protestant devotional guides such as Richard Daye's authorized prayer book, *Christian Prayers and Meditations* (1569) gave a regulatory structure to the day. Works such as *The Practice of Pietie* by Bishop Lewis Bayly (1613) "provide a strong sense of the wider discourse that created expectations around 'approved' habits of devotional doing and thinking."[56]

Women's Books

John Aubrey, busy saving the memories of the past in the seventeenth century, once remarked that history was handed down from mother to daughter, "when they sat up late by the fire telling tales "of the old time." But that was "before women could read".[57]

From the 1500s to the 1700s, the variety of reading material available for women increased, but they were mostly encouraged to read devotional or prescriptive literature and this literature was mostly written by men. As the humanist movement gained momentum during the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries in England, the emphasis on learning was not extended to women – education was seen as necessary for a life in the public sphere, but not for domestic contentment.[58] Because the early modern period in Europe was notable for an increase in intellectual questioning, and a drive to understand the workings of the natural world, the growth of literacy and learning amongst women was to be expected. Yet Wiesner-Hanks

[54] Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars,* 69.
[55] Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars,* 79.
[56] Tara Hamling and Catherine Richardson, *A Day at Home in Early Modern England: Material Culture and Domestic Life, 1500-1700* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2017), 18.
[57] Norman Leslie Jones, *The English Reformation: Religion and Cultural Adaptation* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2002), 41.
[58] Wiesner-Hanks, *Women and Gender,* 127.

emphasizes that this was only possible as long as they were not stepping out of bounds of what society considered seemly. In this respect, it was only wealthy women of who could spend time on scholarly pursuits without shirking the responsibilities of home and family that took up most women's time and energy.[59] The majority of women, though not uneducated (for they were often highly skilled in practical pursuits), did not learn from books, but through oral tradition and informal apprenticeship under older women. As the Reformation spread across Europe, the necessity of reading scripture in the vernacular encouraged parents to ensure that both their male and female children could read. The growing role of the mother as the leader of home life meant that women needed to have enough learning to instruct their children in moral virtue and religious knowledge. However these skills, for girls, were still seen of less importance than being able to sew and perform domestic duties. Their education, therefore, was limited to basic literacy and did not move beyond that to the study of Hebrew or Latin and so on, which was only accessible to boys, and usually only in schools outside the home. In fact, often women were not encouraged to learn to write. Being able to express and share one's ideas was not seen as a necessary or even desirable skill in women.[60]

Growing literacy opened up for women an avenue of connection and expression, in the collection of recipes and advice in commonplace books, where information was shared and written down by the owner of personal notebooks, as well as other women's submissions annotated and edited as experience dictated – all kept for personal consultation as required in the home, and often passed down to future generations. Janet Theophano has described the importance of these books in *Eat My Words: Reading Women's Lives Through the Cookbooks*

[59] Wiesner-Hanks, *Women and Gender,* 118.
[60] Wiesner-Hanks, *Women and Gender,* 123.

They Wrote (2003).[61] Examining cookbooks as firstly a reflection of a woman's community connection, Theophano explains how the source of each recipe or note of advice, as well as the accompanying letters which may have been left between the pages, can give a broad sense of the book owner's position within a social network.[62] Going deeper, the nature of the entries in the book can shed light on the class position of the owner – cleaning instructions for maids would indicate the presence of servants within the book owner's home – and the nature of the recipes reflected the religious convictions of the family as traditional foods were very specific to different religious communities on different holidays. Thus both memory and identity were reflected and passed on from one generation to the next through the recipes for wedding cakes, and Sabbath meals.[63] The woman's role within the home became particularly powerful in the transition to Reformation social mores. Theophano writes that "[c]ooking and housewifery manuals, […] assumed specialisation and social and moral power (sometimes epitomised by religious texts cast into the metalware) through competent management of the domestic domain."[64] The household was seen as the microcosm of the state, and the wife's place therein was to bring order and peace through moral example and spiritual guidance. Popular culture proliferated material supporting this view.

A particular object of study that epitomized this complexity was the commonplace book or "paper book." Widely owned blank manuscripts, written in by literate women as a means of recording important and useful information for their management of the household, as well as a

[61] Janet Theophano, *Eat My Words: Reading Women's Lives through the Cookbooks They Wrote* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003).
[62] Janet Theophano, *Eat My Words, 29.*
[63] Janet Theophano, *Eat My Words,* 47.
[64] Antony Buxton, *Domestic Culture in Early Modern England* (Woodbridge, UK: The Boydell Press, 2015), 133.

type of journal and account book, these gave a glimpse into the physical, emotional and spiritual world of the housewife and her household.[65] These books almost always contained recipes, not only for cooking meals, but for medicinal preparations, as well as instructions for their administration. Passed down through generations, eventually these books were taken up as a marketable resource by printing houses, and several Lady's Manuals, derived from the commonplace recipes of respected women, were printed by men and sold to the general public. Ultimately, women themselves would begin to publish their own Lady's Manuals and this form of advice book for women became ubiquitous and popular.

Elizabeth Freke, a gentlewoman born of an elite family in 1641 and a longtime resident of rural Norfolk, kept a series of commonplace books which were handwritten journals of her family life and relationships, but which also contain detailed medical recipes and treatments, with accounts of ingredients and detailed explanations of ailments and their cures.[66] Freke's books give a clear picture of how cooking and the art of "physick" were combined in the heart of the home – the kitchen.[67] That medical knowledge was considered essential to the housewife, as she was responsible for much of the basic health care of not only her family, but her servants and, as a charitable service considered virtuous in a Christian woman, her wider neighborhood.[68] Sources of medical knowledge which had been passed down by tradition through the monasteries of the medieval period, which were repositories of the ancient medicinal texts of Galen,

[65] James Daybell and Peter Hinds, *Material Readings of Early Modern Culture: Texts and Social Practices, 1580-1730* (Houndmills, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 210.
[66] Elaine Leong, "Making Medicines in the Early Modern Household," *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* 82, no. 1 (2008): 145–68, https://doi.org/10.1353/bhm.2008.0042, 145-6.
[67] Katherine Knight, "A Precious Medicine: Tradition and Magic in Some Seventeenth-Century Household Remedies," *Folklore* 113, no. 2 (2002): 237-47, 238.
[68] Leong, "Making Medicines," 147.

Hippocrates and Paracelsus, influenced the healing practices of the home by perpetuating beliefs in humoral theory and plant signatures.[69] Freke had also read some of the well-known scientific and medical treatises of the time such as that of John Colbatch and John Gerard, for she makes "abstracts" of them in her own commonplace notes.[70] Elaine Leong has shown that literate women read widely and were marketed to heavily by booksellers, so that their knowledge of health and household management was not only built upon oral and family tradition but on contemporary literature and practice.[71] Recipes were shared socially, as many exact replicas appear in various personal commonplace books, particularly for general "cure-alls" such as *aqua miribolus* which was considered a tonic for a wide variety of ailments.[72] In addition, professional physicians, after being consulted for specific illnesses, would sell the recipes for their prescribed remedies to the housewife for her to concoct at home, out of her own store of ingredients.[73]

The first female publisher of English household manuals was Hannah Woolley, born in 1622. Little is known of her early life other than that her mother and elder sisters "were very well skilled in Physick and Chirurgery."[74] She was later taken on as a servant by a local noble woman, who evidently added further training to Hannah's medical skills, and she was eventually allowed to treat the sick and injured in the local village as a type of "unofficial doctor."[75] After

[69] Knight, "A Precious Medicine," 240.
[70] Elaine Leong, "'Herbals She Peruseth': Reading Medicine in Early Modern England," *Renaissance Studies* 28, no. 4 (2014): 556–78, https://doi.org/10.1111/rest.12079, 565, 575.
[71] Leong, "'Herbals She Peruseth'," 558.
[72] Leong, "Making Medicines," 154.
[73] Leong, "Making Medicines," 152.
[74] Hannah Woolley, *A Supplement to The Queen-like Closet, or A Little of Everything.: Presented to All Ingenious Ladies, and Gentlewomen. By Hannah Woolley* (London: printed for R. Chiswel at the Rose and Crown in St. Paul's Church-Yard, and T. Sawbridge at the Three Flower-de-Luces in Little-Britain, 1684), 10.
[75] L.F. Newman, "Some Notes on Folk Medicine in the Eastern Counties," *Folklore* 56, no. 4 (1945): 351-2.

her marriage to a local grammar school teacher, she continued to practice medicine in the local area with the sanction of her noble patron,[76] and after seven years published a ladies' manual at her own expense called *The Ladies Directory* (1661). In addition to recipes for meals and cakes, it included medicinal treatments. Evidently a success, she published further works and became internationally known after her publication of *The Queen-Like Closet* in 1670, as two German translations of this work were made. Although not a noblewoman, Hannah Woolley had progressive views and believed in the importance of education for all women.[77] She was evidently confident in her ability to function in the male-dominated world of book publishing, as well as in consulting unofficially in medicine. An exception to the rule, she did however make an example for other women to follow, and the publication of ladies' manuals by other women became much more common after her first foray into the field.

The traditional use of herbs in homes, as well as the embodied and material nature of much of the Catholic Church's spirituality (for example in the miracle of transubstantiation, or in the use of Saints' bones and body parts to effect healing) made it difficult to draw clear lines between sanctioned and unsanctioned supernatural practice.[78] Much of the Catholic Church's traditional practice was swept away with the Reformation, and anything superstitious, whether Christian or otherwise, became frowned upon by those in authority.[79] The rise in witchcraft trials in Europe and Scotland, and the interest of James I in witchcraft definitions, as well as the rise of

---

[76] Woolley, *A Supplement to The Queen-like Closet*, 12.
[77] John B. Blake, "The Compleat Housewife," *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* 49, no. 1, (1975): 30-42, accessed November 4, 2020, http://www.jstor.org/stable/44450201, 31.
[78] Judith Bonzol, "The Death of the Fifth Earl of Derby: Cunning Folk and Medicine in Early Modern England," *Renaissance and Reformation / Renaissance et Réforme* 33, no. 4 (2011): 73–100, https://doi.org/10.33137/rr.v33i4.15972, 79.
[79] Bonzol, "The Death of the Fifth Earl of Derby," 74.

the Puritanical strain of Protestantism, the distinction between "white" and "black" magic was removed in cultural consciousness, and instead all types of witchcraft were attributed to the protagonist having made a pact with the Devil.[80] At this point, magic was defined as "any unauthorised meddling with the supernatural."[81]

In the light of this new view of magical practices, it is interesting to note in Hannah Woolley's books that recipes based on clearly pre-Christian traditional cures are still included. For example, a certain recipe for a general tonic requires the practitioner to "take the skull of a woman or man", grind it up and boil it into a jelly which is then added to other ingredients.[82] Blake gives a number of examples where the properties of the ingredients are expected to have supernatural powers to effect a cure, including: "nine roots of maiden weed put in a bag and hung about the neck nine days, "then burn the bagge and roots"."[83]

At the same time that educated women were concerned with making and applying herbal remedies for physical health, they were also responsible for cultivating their household's spiritual health. The broadside ballad sheet, and other so-called "conduct literature" was printed for use as entertainment in the home, for example *The Carefull Wife's Good Counsel,* a broadside engraving distributed from 1683-96. Gervaise Markham, a writer of Household Manuals with a particularly Puritan outlook, describes the housewife as needing "above all

---

[80] Karen Jones, and Michael Zell, "'The Divels Speciall Instruments': Women and Witchcraft before the 'Great Witch-Hunt,'" *Social History* 30, no. 1 (2005): 45–63, https://doi.org/10.1080/0307102042000337288, 49.
[81] *ibid*
[82] Wendy Wall, "Shakespearean Jell-O: Mortality and Malleability in the Kitchen," *Gastronomica* 6, no. 1 (2006): 45.
[83] Blake, "The Compleat Housewife," 38.

things, to be of an upright and a sincere religion, and in the same both zealous and constant."[85] She should live virtuously, "learning from the worthy preacher and her husband" and she should pass on this way of living to her servants and household "in the daily exercises of religion" with "a small time morning and evening bestowed in prayers."[86]

Gervase Markham's book *Countrey Contentments or, the English Huswife,* published in 1623. Born in 1568, Markham was a gentleman soldier as well as a poet, and a prolific author on a wide range of unrelated topics. His pretext for writing this housewife's manual was the patronage of a Lady Frances, Countess Dowager of Exeter, compiled mostly from the manuscript of a commonplace he received from an unnamed Countess years before.[87] In addition to the usual medicinal and cooking recipes listed together, Markham brings to bear a noticeably moral tone to this work, adding his own descriptions of what makes a good housewife – "pleasant, amiable and delightful" – as well as underlining the religious expectations that had now become the norm in middle-class households.[88] Markham says, in addition to being religious and of virtuous mind, and "learning from the worthy Preacher, and her husband those good examples which she shall with all carefull diligence see exercised amongst her servants", housewives should not attempt to preach, or interpret scripture themselves but should be "hearers and believers."[89] Despite this Puritanical leaning, Markham still includes in his book recipes drawn from magical traditions, for example: "take a grey Eele with a white belly, and put her into a

[85] G. Markham, and Michael R. Best, *The English Housewife* (Montréal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2014), 5.
[86] Markham and Best*, The English Housewife,* 7.
[87] Gervase Markham, *Countrey Contentments or, the English Huswife: Containing the Inward and Outward Vertues Which Ought to Be in a Compleate Woman…* (London: Printed for R. Jackson, 1623), A2.
[88] Markham, *Countrey Contentments*, 3.
[89] Markham, *Countrey Contentments*, 2.

sweet earthen pot quick,…then dig a deep hole in a horse dunghill and set it therein…and drop it into the imperfect ear."[90] He also mentions the importance of taking certain medicines during the wane of the moon, and that when using a dried powdered mole to help an illness, it must be of the same sex as the patient.[91]

The combination of belief systems expressed in this work is a glimpse of the complexity that existed in this period, where the church on the one hand was overseeing a powerful change in religious practice and culture, while many household remedies reflected ancient traditional pagan practice. This tension is reflected at a most basic level in the physical space of the kitchen. Not only were Bibles and painted or embroidered Bible verses ubiquitous in post-Reformation kitchens, but so were hexafoils, "Virgin" marks and witch bottles.[92] There is a sense that contemporaries were trying to cover all their bases, in a time that had seen England swing between Catholicism, Anglicanism, Puritanism and back again so many times, and seen so much bloody conflict. Perhaps an absolute confidence in a particular worldview was a reality for only a few most confident people.

Women were increasingly encouraged to learn to read so that they could study the Scriptures for themselves, as well as read the many books of advice that were becoming ubiquitous for home management.[93] Women recognized that they were given respect in Puritan households because they were seen as "moral guides", finding a way to exert their influence within the bounds of the patriarchal norms.[94] They were also, increasingly, given economic

[90] Markham, *Countrey Contentments*, 13.
[91] *ibid*
[92] Sara Pennell, *The Birth of the English Kitchen: 1600-1850* (London: Bloomsbury, 2017), 144.
[93] Anne Southwell, Henry Sibthorpe, and Jean Klene, *The Southwell-Sibthorpe Commonplace Book: Folger Ms. V.b. 198* (Tempe, AZ: Medieval & Renaissance Texts & Studies, 1997).
[94] Buxton, *Domestic Culture,* 80.

responsibility over their household.[95] Women, therefore, adjusted the way they expressed their religious agency within their home. Now, instead of taking part in ritualistic practices with sacred objects in order to protect and heal, women used books and writing as a way to express religious power. Not only acquiring didactic literature for her home, she also would write confessional diaries which contained accounts of her personal prayer and devotional life as well as moral self-examination. Margaret Hoby, a Lady of Puritan leanings in her diary written from 1599-1605, included almost every day a list of her hours of personal prayer.[96] Primers that had once been sacred and powerful objects in their own right, now became powerful only in their *instruction* in how to "pray without ceasing" – in other words, lists of prayers to be used at every moment of a daily routine.[97] At this point in the Reformation, the place of hagiographies or mystical autobiographies written by holy women was replaced in the Protestant woman's library by prayer books that extolled the virtues of Biblical women. While the material place of the feminine in institutional religion through the worship of the Virgin Mary and female Saints had been removed, the moral examples of women from Scripture had taken their place in the daily devotions of women.

Most intimately, the place of the rosary beads was now taken by the small Book of Psalms or Bible that was designed to be carried about the house by the mistress, during her daily

[95] Buxton, *Domestic Culture,* 81.
[96] Margaret Hoby, and Joanna Moody, *The Private Life of an Elizabethan Lady: the Diary of Lady Margaret Hoby, 1599-1605* (Stroud: Sutton, 2001).
[97] Richard Day, b.1552, *A Booke of Christian Prayers, Collected Out of the Auncie[n]t Writers, and Best Learned in our Tyme, Worthy to be Read with an Earnest Mynde of all Christians, in these Daungerous and Troublesome Dayes, that God for Christes Sake Will Yet Still be Mercyfull Vnto Vs* (London, Printed by Iohn Daye, dwellyng ouer Aldersgate, 1581), https://search.proquest.com/books/booke-christian-prayers-collected-out-auncie-n-t/docview/2240904412/se-2?accountid=8483 (accessed April 14, 2021).

tasks. Many of these books had covers that the wife had carefully embroidered with personally relevant Bible scenes, such as Adam and Eve, which was often a symbol of marriage.[99] Sometimes called Tablets, these small books contained prayers in English that were designed to be used at particular hours of the day. While the Catholic liturgical structure of the monastic hours and the ringing of the Angelus bells to remind women to recite their rosary had been forbidden, Protestant women redesigned their practice to retain the rhythms of spiritual devotion throughout the domestic day. As Hamling explains, "[The pattern of a day] is…a familiar early modern way of thinking through experience…it is linked to Protestant advice about the structuring of a prayerful day, each shift or episode punctuated by an expression of praise or contrition."[100]

Knight *et al* have attempted to provide a greater sense of women's literary practices during the early modern period in her collection of essays entitled *Women's Bookscapes* (2018). This work is prefaced by an explanation of the theoretical premises on which her collection of essays was created. Moving away from the traditional analysis of literacy as 'what women read' and 'what women wrote,' although it includes this to some degree, Knight's collection has been influenced by material culture studies in that it describes the project as "reconceptualizing and remapping literary landscapes."[102] Seeing the movement of information, communication and knowledge through the distribution of books as an aspect of literacy that is just as important as the act of reading, Knight *et al* envision literacy as having spatial form and temporality as well as

---

[99] Tara Hamling, *Decorating the 'Godly' Household: Religious Art in Post-Reformation Britain* (New Haven: Published for the Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art by Yale University Press, 2010), 214.
[100] Hamling and Richardson, *A Day at Home*, 6.
[102] Leah Knight, Micheline White, and Elizabeth Sauer, eds., *Women's Bookscapes in Early Modern Britain: Reading, Ownership, Circulation* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2018), 5.

value. Adopting the term 'bookscape,' they explain their use of concepts from landscape studies applied to the networks of people, places and practices involved in the use of books. They use the word 'prospect' – a prominent eighteenth-century construct used in topographical studies – to apply in the literary world to "a configuration…of different deconstructed mental mappings – a cultural topography."[103] Three essential aspects of the concept of the landscape are invoked in the study of the bookscape: the imagined, the remembered and the actual. This notion of the landscape is developed further into the more nuanced iteration of 'scape', a term that was placed by Gerard Manly Hopkins at the center of his metaphysical expression. 'Scape' is defined by the Oxford English Dictionary as a "reflection or impression of the individual quality of the thing or action."[104] For this reason, Knight *et al*'s compilation is not so much about the content of the books discussed, but about discovering how their owners used them to impress themselves in the cultural and social world around them. In this sense, the material aspect of literacy – where and how the books were used, how women wrote in them, how and why they were constructed or collected – is as, if not even more, important to the understanding of their use as instruments of power in their owners' lives. Using the physical *situation* of the book as a theoretical tool, can be applied to the most humble of settings in the farmhouse, as it can to the court or throne room: "It is better to think of textual experience as located in a distinctly domestic context - as it was for Alice Thornton, who was pecked in the eye by a chicken while she wrote her diary - than simply

---

[103] James Raven, "Memorializing a London Bookscape: The Mapping and Reading of Paternoster Row and St. Paul's Churchyard, 1695 - 1814," in *Order and Connexion: Studies in Bibliography and Book History: Selected Papers from the Munby Seminar, Cambridge, July 1994,* ed. R. C. Alston (Cambridge: Boydell & Brewer, 1997), 178.
[104] OED, s.v. "scape," sense n.4.

in the abstract world of ideas so often described by historians".[105] At the other end of the social continuum, Katherine Parr (1512-1548) wrote and published devotional literature, and was a force for change during the Reformation thanks to the sanction of Henry VIII.[106] Letter writing also became an important way for women to transmit what, at times, were radical ideas. Margaret Fell (1614-1702), a prolific Quaker communicator, was an example of a woman who exerted a much wider influence on the religious sentiments of the Protestant movement than could possibly have been used by any ordinary woman a century before. The initial Quaker movement was essentially a letter-writing network, organized first in England and then throughout the Atlantic world.[107]

Wiesner-Hanks describes a few learned women who went beyond the domestic sphere of influence, who stood out in society and were praised for their "virtue, which is essentially male" but these women recognized that they could not combine their learning with the responsibility of marriage or family.[108] Hence it was the women of noble status who had the freedom to develop their intellectual capacity and had some encouragement from their male peers. They could entertain their intellects through the patronage of architects, artists and musicians, as well as later on, scientists and philosophers. In this way women, at least at this level of society, could be involved in the creation of the most avant-garde culture. Women themselves did not have socially acceptable ways of using their artistic, musical or literary skills that many had developed

---

[105] Andrew Cambers, *Godly Reading: Print, Manuscript and Puritanism in England, 1580-1720* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 93.
[106] Kimberly Anne Coles, *Religion, Reform, and Women's Writing in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 47.
[107] Marjon Ames, "Quaker Correspondence: Religious Identity and Communication Networks in the Interregnum Atlantic World," in *Women and Epistolary Agency in Early Modern Culture, 1450 1690*, edited by James Daybell and Andrew Gordon (Place: Routledge, 2019), 207.
[108] Wiesner-Hanks, *Women and Gender,* 128.

over years of tutoring. There were some opportunities for female musicians in the convents, but the type of music they could produce was limited by the Church. The avenues for women to express their artistic, scientific or literary talent were limited not only by the external pressure from society or family, but from their own internal sense of propriety. Keeping to moral or religious themes helped women to feel that their efforts were acceptable, and within the scope of their mandate within family and community life.[109]

Edward Muir calls the Reformation a "revolution in ritual theory."[110] Debates about Christian ritual practice were as old as the New Testament, but it was the rise of the humanist movement in the fifteenth century, and the increased emphasis on rational thought, that ushered in a great questioning of all aspects of Christian worship. The initiative in scriptural hermeneutics, spearheaded by Erasmus, Reuchlin and others in the early sixteenth century, questioned all Christian ritual and judged it by one criterion: did the rite appear in the Bible?[111] This era of discourse trickled down into the local church where semantics became all important.[112] The power of the Christian life was now understood as coming from how one personally interpreted and responded to the teachings of Scripture. Sacred experience, and ultimately salvation, for the Christian believer was no longer formed over a lifetime through one's interaction with God and others through the use of objects, actions, words, sounds and journeys, to construct a rich tapestry of one's spiritual and devotional story up to and beyond death. It was now being reduced to a once-off decision of faith, and a lifetime of cerebral self-examination in the light of didactic moral teaching. Although Muir argues that "English

[109] Wiesner-Hanks, *Women and Gender,* 128.
[110] Muir, *Ritual in Early Modern Europe,* 177.
[111] Muir, *Ritual in Early Modern Europe,* 178.
[112] Muir, *Ritual in Early Modern Europe*, 181.

communities…had already begun to express themselves in diverging ritual languages before Henry VIII,"[113] it has also been shown that the cultural shift of the religious norm in middling households in England took place over the span of just one or two generations.[114]

In churches throughout England, iconography and religious art was being destroyed and replaced with whitewashed walls. In the space provided, black lettering displayed passages in English from the New Testament, or the Ten Commandments.[115] Ann Kibbey has summarized the theological arguments that underpinned this iconoclasm: "The complete separation of words and things in Luther's theory denigrated the material object more profoundly than Calvin's idea of the fetishistic empty token, because the material object was unrecognized in the consecrating words that Luther accepted as definitive of reality."[116] The use of the vernacular in spiritual texts was the first step in converting worship from a material and embodied sacred performance, to an act of the will and the mind. In addition, the Puritan sects relied heavily on a return to rhetoric, speaking of the "sacred tropes" of Scripture and the "waies [sic] of expounding" the text that would bring spiritual growth.[117]

Knight and White argue that book ownership was a material occupation "that took place in specific sociopolitical spaces," and argue that women's reading was not only personal and private but also "performative, outward-looking, and action-oriented."[118] For example, they compare Katherine Parr's marginalia in the sermon of St. Chrysostom by Thomas Lupset (1542),

---

[113] Muir, *Ritual in Early Modern Europe*, 214.
[114] Jones, *The English Reformation*, 136.
[115] Jones, *The English Reformation, xxxvi.*
[116] Ann Kibbey, *The Interpretation of Material Shapes in Puritanism: a Study of Rhetoric, Prejudice, and Violence* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 75.
[117] Kibbey, *The Interpretation of Material Shapes,* 67.
[118] Leah Knight and Micheline White, "The Bookscape" in *Women's Bookscapes in Early Modern Britain: Reading, Ownership, Circulation*, eds. Leah Knight, Micheline White, and Elizabeth Sauer (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2018), 1-18, 10.

with marginalia written by Henry VIII, showing that Katherine was actively using her apparently private musings to engage with a resurgence of John of Chrysostom's writings in the Henrician court. Her act of signing the book near her marginalia, they argue, was an act of identifying herself as the writer of the marginalia, and thus demonstrates her expectation that others in the court would read them. She is actively self-identifying as an intellectual agent within court life.[119] Her signature is an 'invisible marker that announces her commitment to humanist ideals and that identifies her as part of a community of cutting-edge, forward-thinking, reformist readers."[120]

It was not only individual women who used books to promulgate the ideologies they professed. Elizabeth Patton studies the example of women in a Catholic network who were illegally distributing devotional books to sustain the community of Catholic recusants.[121] Women's reading groups created what Patton calls 'apostolic communities,' where Catholic teaching was shared through the group reading of books, which were then sent out secretly to other communities. The distribution of the books paved the way for the ritual practice of the Catholic Church to be reintroduced into groups throughout the wider community. As this was an illegal activity, these women were acting explicitly and taking a significant personal risk in expressing their personal convictions through the distribution of reading materials.[122]

---

[119] Micheline White, "Katherine Parr's Marginalia: Putting the Wisdom of Chrysostom and Solomon into Practice," in *Women's Bookscapes in Early Modern Britain: Reading, Ownership, Circulation*, eds. Leah Knight, Micheline White, and Elizabeth Sauer (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2018), 21-42, 31.
[120] White, "Katherine Parr's Marginalia," 26.
[121] Elizabeth Patton, "Women, Books, and the Lay Apostolate: A Catholic Literary Network in Late Sixteenth-Century England," in *Women's Bookscapes in Early Modern Britain: Reading, Ownership, Circulation*, eds. Leah Knight, Micheline White, and Elizabeth Sauer (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2018), 117-134.
[122] Patton, "Women, Books, and the Lay Apostolate," 134.

Although these examples of active and sometime outspoken involvement in social conflicts are compelling, it was through a more 'soft' expression of their agency that women most often engaged with the pressures placed on them by social change. By taking the opportunity to act in ways that were disapproved of, but not necessarily punishable, women stepped into the realm of conflict without inviting direct repercussions. Englishwomen were not only influencing their parochial social culture. Women who were emigrating to the Americas had an opportunity to make changes to the new communities that they became a part of. This transatlantic dynamic is examined in Elizabeth Sauer's study of writings by Anne Bradstreet (1612-1672), whose library in New England contained more than 800 volumes. Unfortunately, her library was destroyed in a fire, but attempts to reconstruct the holdings in this library have been made by reviewing letters and inventories which referred to destroyed holdings.[124] Reconstruction of Bradstreet's New England library offers an example of how women used the movement of books and the knowledge they contained, as a way to negotiate the new cultural landscape they were entering. Bringing their literary life and pursuits from the Old World with them into the New World, they were able to retain and distribute the touchstones of their personal convictions.[125]

Edith Snook's study of Elizabeth Isham's book inventory (1638) that was written in the margins of an unrelated letter she had retained, examines how the recording of ownership of books was not merely about keeping track of personal property, but also about representing one's

---

[124] Elizabeth Sauer, "Book Passages and the Reconstruction of the Bradstreets' New England Library," in *Women's Bookscapes in Early Modern Britain: Reading, Ownership, Circulation*, eds. Leah Knight, Micheline White, and Elizabeth Sauer (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2018), 59-76.
[125] Sauer, "Book Passages," 76.

identity.[126] Isham situates herself within the context of her family responsibility and connections, as well as within religious expectations and allegiances. As Knight and White argue, this list "amounts to a defense of her property as well as an act of devotion: an inventory that organizes her devout self and recalls the teaching provided to her by God and kin."[127] Here again, it is the materiality of recording ownership of the physical books, and not just their content, that makes a clear point to others about what Isham's priorities were in terms of life and godliness.

This shift towards textuality in spiritual practice is critical in our understanding of how women were adjusting their religious practice to conform to new requirements within the household and the community. Not only did Scriptural text physically replace the religious imagery, statues and objects in the churches, but within the home as well. The religious power of blessed objects such as candles, or apotropaic objects such as witch bottles, were not only being questioned in their efficacy, but were outlawed by the authorities starting with the Henrician reforms in 1536. The continued use of rosary beads, as a symbol of the 'old religion,' made a political statement that none but the most committed person wanted to risk in late sixteenth-century England's social climate. A wife's role within the home as protector and healer shifted to that of teacher and guide, encouraged by the teaching of from the pulpit, and the publications in the marketplace.

[126] Edith Snook, "Elizabeth Isham's "own Bookes": Property, Propriety, and the Self as Library," in *Women's Bookscapes in Early Modern Britain: Reading, Ownership, Circulation*, eds. Leah Knight, Micheline White, and Elizabeth Sauer (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2018), 77-93.
[127] Knight, *et al.*, "The Bookscape," 12.

Books and Embodiment

The study of books and textuality in terms of the tactile experience of making and using them, as well as using comparative methods to track changes in inks and materials, the shapes of fonts, watermarks as well as methods of woodcut engraving and even the functions of the white space on the page, are all ways in which the material physicality of the bookmaking, writing, drawing and printing processes can be analyzed in the 'act of creating' to chart dynamics of change and influence across communities and societies.[130] Books are one example of how developments of the act of making (manufacture) can be studied through the products of that process, by examining the physical properties of the product and the tools used to make it – how the hands and body would have worked together with material objects to create another object imbued with the cognitive and manual skills, thoughts and identity, and cultural expectations of its maker; as well as how the ways in which it was made changed with the desires and demands of the consumer of that product. In a 'made' item, the mind and body of the maker come together with the cultural environment in which it is made, and reflects the practical needs as well as the aspirations of the people of that society, sometimes at a micro level and at other times (such as in mass produced items like aglets and pins) on a scale that transcends social boundaries.[131] The physical properties of the object, how it is decorated, how it used, the resources consumed in its manufacture and the skill required to manufacture it; all tell a complex story of individuals as well as the society they inhabit.

[130] Frances Maguire and Helen Smith, "Material Texts," in *The Routledge Handbook of Material Culture in Early Modern Europe*, eds. Catherine Richardson, Tara Hamling, and David Gaimster (London: Routledge, 2021), 206-215.
[131] Jenny Tiramani, "Pins and Aglets," in *Everyday Objects: Medieval and Early Modern Material Culture and Its Meanings*, Tara Hamling and Catherine Richardson, eds. (New York, NY: Routledge, 2016), 85-94.

The practices of owning, reading and writing in books are all embodied practices, whereas the cognitive act of reading is the connection through the neurological body between the material structure of the book and its writing, and the identity and self of the person reading. As women became more literate during the early modern period, books became a critical junction of the transformation of women's religious identity from a material and embodied model to a moral and textual expression of the spiritual self. Helen Smith argues that "the connection between a woman's reading and a woman's tears is an excellent illustration of the fungibility of body and book: the text enacts a physiological change."[132] Bible reading was seen to be a method of allowing God to work directly on the passions through his Word. The eye, as the window of the mind, was the physical portal through which that would take place. The reaction of the emotions would cause tears to flow from that same portal: tears, which are, according to Crooke, "the excrements of the Braine."[133] Hearing or reading the Word of God was considered by Protestants to be a supernatural, or mystical experience in itself.[134] For this reason, reading became another area of conflict for women within patriarchal society. As "the lines between physical hunger, an appetite for sex, and spiritual desire were frequently blurred," men became concerned about women's consumption of lighter reading material as the seventeenth century progressed, connecting this kind of leisure reading with having an overindulgent appetite, and a lack of self-control in all areas of desire.[135]

---

[132] Helen Smith, "'More Swete Vnto the Eare / than Holsome for Ye Mynde': Embodying Early Modern Women's Reading," *Huntington Library Quarterly* 73, no. 3 (2010): 413–32, https://doi.org/10.1525/hlq.2010.73.3.413, 419.
[133] Smith, "More Swete Vnto the Eare," 419.
[134] Walsham, "The Reformation," 509.
[135] Smith, "More Swete Vnto the Eare," 425.

Language and Identity in Devotional Writing

Nancy Warren, in *The Embodied Word* (2010), has worked to reinterpret the binaries of medieval and early modern, Catholic and Protestant, worldviews that have often defined the study of the Reformation period. She points out that, framed by the polemics that emerged due to the intense conflicts at their root, "contested orthodoxies" still exist in modern academic understandings of the period.[136] Warren uses a detailed examination of the modes of piety of Carmelite nuns in Antwerp in the very late early modern period to show how there was not a clear demarcation in the modes of knowledge and selfhood between the medieval and the early modern periods. Instead, ways of understanding oneself and God that were exhibited in, and were often used as an example of early modern piety and identity (based on the concept of the individual as separate from the communal, the interior from the exterior) were present and perceptible in medieval culture, and merely emerged to a greater extent over the transformation to the early modern worldview.

The risks of reading and interpretation as acts that could desacralize Scripture caused anxiety within conservative Reformed circles. Up until the Reformation, Scripture had held intrinsic power in the physical manuscripts and textual markings themselves, quite apart from the meanings of the texts. The act of reading Scripture was increasingly no longer an embodied act, but a purely intellectual and moral appropriation of meaning. Elizabeth Skerpan-Wheeler discusses the philosophy of reading in terms of the vulnerability of the self in connection with other voices in the text. She insists that reading can restore the self but only if it is done without reference to the body: "Right reading is reading with the disembodied mind's eye, the eye that,

[136] Nancy Bradley Warren, *The Embodied Word* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2010), 8.

being purely intuitive, is synonymous with spirit. Right reading frees the spirit from the body. Because it is incorporeal, its actions do not alter but restore form."[137] This modern philosophy of reading is directly connected to Reformed ideas of the power of sacred text, which was not believed by Protestants to hold apotropaic qualities, but was only spiritually powerful in its disembodied, intellectual influence. However, Nancy Warren holds the opposite, pre-Reformed view that "texts provide a vehicle through which others' lives can be re-embodied, brought to life again in the reader's life."[138] It is important to remember, therefore, that the *philosophy* or theory applied by the researcher to the original Reformation texts can have a significant influence on the conclusions that are drawn about the meanings the words may have held for contemporary readers. In many respects, it is impossible to read the texts from one point of view (the *disembodied* philosophy of Wheeler) or the other (the *embodied* view of Warren), because during this period of such tumultuous religious change, the understanding that the individual, community or church had of their own identity often reflected both philosophies. This tension manifested not only in conflict between communities and individuals, but even within themselves.

Warren uses a methodology of categorization of language in order to demonstrate shifting understandings of self and God in the writings of the religious. Therefore, Warren's work provides a framework that can be applied to other types of religious writing in order to analyze transformations that may be reflecting subtly changing modes of knowledge due to external social forces. Using a categorization of language to analyze the primary source material of women's devotional works, it is possible to compare and contrast the ways in which the

---

[137] Elizabeth Skerpan-Wheeler, "Early Political Prose," in *A New Companion to Milton*, ed. Thomas N. Corns (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2001), 263-278, 267.
[138] Warren, *The Embodied Word*, 3.

expression of spirituality for women was changing from one that was embodied, material and incarnational in its language, to one that was textual, moral and intellectual.

The five primary works chosen for analysis and discussed below, are not treated in chronological order. This is because the progression in devotional works from the language of late medieval religious expression to that of Protestant writing is not linear, just as the cultural and social progression during England's Reformation was not linear.

I have presented the works in an order that begins with a devotional written by an openly Roman Catholic author, moving on to a book that has more important material interpretations than textual, and then to two transitional works which present the clear mixing of both late medieval and early modern concepts and experiences of devotional piety. I end with a book by a woman who identifies herself as staunchly Protestant through her use of Calvinist doctrinal language. I hope that by presenting these works as a progression of ideas, rather than chronology, it will elucidate the ways in which the language of devotion was reflecting a spectrum of differing religious beliefs and practices, that enjoyed some ascendancy during different periods of the English Reformation.

Broughton's* A Manual of Praiers Used by the Fathers of the Primatiue Church…Wherin by the Very Praiers of the Apostles, and Their Successors, (Here Related without Anie Word or Sillable, Added or Altered) Al the Cheifest Questions Now in Controuersie, Are Inuincible Proued for the Holy Doctrine of the Present Roman Church; by Which We Are Instructed How to Beleeue, and What to Practise in Deuotion *(1618).

An English Catholic who studied towards ordination in Reims, France in the late sixteenth century, Richard Broughton returned to England and became a missionary priest. He was also a well-known antiquary, and wrote a number of works including religious apologetics, and

histories of the church in England. This manual of prayers was dedicated to Queen Anne of Denmark, and is a Catholic treatise in the main part, with the expressed titular purpose of instructing Catholic women in the best prayers to use in their devotions. For this reason, and despite the fact that it was published in the early seventeenth century, it can act as a type of litmus test on what type of language Catholic women were being encouraged to use in their personal devotional life. Particular themes will be identified which, as concepts of religious practice connected with the "old religion" in England (in other words religious practice before Henry's beginning reforms in 1536), are markers of a traditional spirituality that did not disappear overnight with the reform of the English church.

The use of his women's prayer book to underline important points of traditional Catholic teaching in opposition to new Protestant theology, is central to Broughton's purposes, and the title of the first chapter is a direct rebuttal of Luther's principle of salvation by faith alone:

> "How Man is or may be iustified: but not by Faith onely.
>
> Chapter 1.
>
> Whosoeuer wil be saued; before al thinges it is needeful that he hold the Catholick Faith. Which except euerie one shal keepe whole and inuiolate; without doubt, he shal perish for euer. And the Catholicke Faith is this, that we worship one God in Trinitie, and Trinitie in vnitie &c. But it is necessarie to eternal saluation, that he also beleue faithfully, the Incarnation of our Lord Iesus Christ &c. At whose coming, al men must rise with their bodies; and render accompt of their owne deedes. And they which haue done good things shal go into life eternal: & they which haue done euil thinges, into euerlasting fire. This is the Catholick faith, which except euerie man faithfully and firmly beleue, he can not be saued."[363]

---

[363] Broughton, *A Manual of Praiers*, 13.

A focal point of contention in the Reformation struggle over theology was the body of Christ, crucified. The Catholic church expressed faith in the salvific nature of the human body of God - tortured and dying - through complex ritual practices, culminating in the Mass in which the bread and wine of the Eucharist were believed to become the real substance of Christ's flesh and blood, to be consumed by the believer for the forgiveness of sins.

It makes sense, therefore, that the language of Catholic devotion reflected the physicality of Catholic ritual practice, in its embodied, material and sensuous expressions. In Broughton's prayers that follow this is clearly demonstrated:

> O you holie prophets, who foretold the coming of God in our flesh: & you Martyrs, who with the slaughter of your bodies, & shedding of your bloud, haue geuen testimonie to the Lambe that was killed, and is aliue.[364]

> Passion was celebrated for vs. Thou didest drinke gaule for vs, that al bitternes of the aduersary might dye in vs. Also for vs thou didest drinke vineger, that our wearines might be comforted. Thou wert spitted vpō for vs, that thou mightest sprincle vs with immortal dew. Thou wast stricken with a brittle reede, to make firme our brittlenes to euerlasting life & eternitie. Thou wast crounned with thornes, to croune those which beleue in thee with the euerflorishing Laurel of thy loue. Further thou wast wrapped in a Syndon, to inuest vs with a certaine enwrapping of thy vertue. Thon wouldest be put in a new Sepulchre, to reforme new grace, a new world vnto vs. I desire this Eucharist be vnto vs to life, & the bowels of mercie, and grace of saluation, & health of our soules. Amen.[365]

> When wil that day be, that it may be lawful for vs to enter into the Sepulchre of our Sauiour? to wepe in the Sepulchre of our Lord, and then to licke the wood of the Crosse; and in mount Oliuet with our Lord ascending, to be lifted in desire and mind.[366]

---

[364] Broughton, *A Manual of Praiers*, 54.
[365] Broughton, *A Manual of Praiers,* 93.
[366] Broughton, *A Manual of Praiers,* 75.

> I doe not ioy in corruptible nourishment, nor in the pleasures of this life; I desire the bread of God, the bread celestial, which is the flesh of Christ, the Soune of God; and drink I desire his bloud, which is life euerlasting.[367]

The language of animal sacrifice, torture and death are connected directly to the bodily experience of the believer, to the point of licking the wood of the cross. The correlation of the Eucharist with a heavenly banquet that can be experienced in the earthly realm, as well as the body of Christ literally entering the believer's body as if Christ were entering a house (a theme that is echoed in later devotional works), reflects the Catholic belief that the spiritual experience of the divine was not separate from the experiences of the body. It was necessary to physically consume the body of Christ through the Host in order to produce the inner healing of body and mind.

> When thou receiuest the holy meate, and that incorrupted banquet, when thou dost enioy the bread and cuppe of life; thou dost eate and drinke the bodie and bloud of our Lord: Then our Lord entreth Vnder thy roofe, and thou therfore humbling thy self, imitate the Centurion and say, O lord I am not worthie that thou shouldest enter vnder my roofe.[368]
>
> O holy bread, o liuely bread, bread bewtiful, pure bread which did descend frō heauen, and geuest life to the world, come into my heart, and cleanse me frō al vncleannes of bodie and soule: enter into my soule, heale it within, and without. Be thou a perpetual saluation of my bodie and soule.[369]

The embodied nature of the church rituals which included movement of the body through space in a reflection of the spiritual realities occurring in the soul of the believer, is further reflected in the language of Broughton's prayers:

---

[367] Broughton, *A Manual of Praiers,* 84.
[368] Broughton, *A Manual of Praiers,* 85.
[369] Broughton, *A Manual of Praiers,* 88.

> I wil begin to throw downe my self vpon my knees, and pray vnto al Saincts, to succour me, who dare not aske God for the exceding greatnes of my sinne, O ye Sainctes of God, with exceding sorow, teares, and weping, I besech you, that you wil fal downe before his mercies for me a wretch. Amen.[370]

> O thrice and four times, o 7. times happie, that Citizen who celebrateth thee, & nearhād the seate of thy bones, who may lay himself downe neare them who sprincleth the place with teares, who presseth his brest vpon the earth, who offereth vowes in secret.[371]

> O who wil graunt vnto me to be rolled about the bodie of Paule, to be fastened to his sepulchre, to see the dust of that bodie, fulfilling the thinges, which as yet were wanting in Christ, bearing the signes of his woundes.[372]

These prayers are also examples of another key theme in Catholic ritual practice: the veneration of Saints, and the belief in the power of relics to perform miracles. Perhaps an ultimate expression of the Catholic belief in the possibility of a mortal body being sanctified to the point where it holds the power of God within its earthly form, the veneration of relics in devotional, as well as healing practices formed an important part of life rituals that were especially the woman's domain, such as childbirth and healing practices. These prayers therefore underscore the importance of holy bodies in Catholic women's devotional practices, and the way that even the physical touch of a sepulchre or the dust in which a saint was buried, could have sacral consequences for the pious worshiper:

> We honour the vessels of the bodies of Sainctes, and repay vnto them memory, as it were reward and wages of their vertue & magnanimitie of mind."[373]

A final aspect of Broughton's work that makes it an excellent example of Catholic devotional practice is the centrality of the Virgin Mary and her mothering of God to the Catholic understanding of how God interacts with humanity. Here, Broughton offers a prayer to the Virgin which signifies her importance in the care, and representation to the throne of God, of the

---

[370] Broughton, *A Manual of Praiers*, 51.
[371] Broughton, *A Manual of Praiers,* 73.
[372] Broughton, *A Manual of Praiers,* 74.
[373] Broughton, *A Manual of Praiers,* 72.

poor, the vulnerable and the outcast. She is expressed as having a mother's gentleness, which is in contrast to the awesome, and often terrifying, power and majesty of the masculine Trinity of the Godhead.

> O immaculate, vnspotted, vncorrupted, chast Virgin, Spouse of God, our Ladie, only hope of the dispaired, help of the oppressed, and most speedie aide of those that runne vnto thee, and refuge of al Christians: admitte my praier, most vile, & vttered with vncleane lippes; and also intreate thy Sonne my Lord and God, with thy motherly gentlenes, that he may also open vnto me, those most merciful bowels, of his pietie: and setting aside mine innumerable sinnes, conuert me to penance, and graunt me truly to fulfil his commandementes.[374]

> Haile o Queene, Mother of mercie, life, sweetenes, and our hope al haille. We that are the banished children of Eue do crie vnto thee. To thee we sigh groaning and weping, in this vale of teares.[375]

The Virgin Mary was the vessel through which motherhood became, for all women, a role that could sanctify and glorify her own mortal body. Aspects of the concept of divine motherhood will be explored in later chapters, but here I refer to Broughton's use of the Virgin Mary as Mother in his encouragement of women in their most important of roles – the bearing and nurturing of children:

> Haile magnificent Temple of Diuine glory. Haile consecrated Palace of the King. Haile bride chamber, in which humanitie was espoused to Christ. Haile elected to God before thou wert borne. Haile Goddes Reconciliation with men. Haile treasure of life which neuer fadeth. Haile heauen celestial, Tabernacle of the sunne of glory. Haile most ample field of God, whom none other place but thou alone, could comprehend. Haile holie

[374] Broughton, *A Manual of Praiers,* 26.
[375] Broughton, *A Manual of Praiers,* 27.

> virginal earth, of which the new Adam by an vnspeakable framing, was formed; which should restoare the old Adam to saluation."[376]

> "O haphie Marie, and worthie of al praise. O Virgin, o glorious Mother of God, o high child-bearer, to whose bowels, the maker of heauen and earth is committed."[377]

> "Thou the vnquenchable lampe, crowne of virginitie, Scepter of true faith, indissoluble Temple containing him, who can no where be contained: A Mother and Virgin."[378]

The body of Mary, in her housing of the body of God, became Temple, Palace, and Bride Chamber. In the act of conception and pregnancy, Mary's body made glory possible for all women's bodies, and so she was the ultimate icon of womenhood. While Broughton does not include female sexuality in the expression of devotion he suggests to women, the belief in the innate holiness of the female virgin's body, and especially those betrothed to Christ through conventual vows, echoes the passionate embodied holiness of the celebrated female mysticism of medieval religion.

The language of space and time is used often in prayers of devotion, and in the passages above Mary's body is described in terms of a temple, a royal palace, a bridal chamber, the sky, a field, and the earth, as well as her role having been planned before eternity. These spaces had specific meanings not only in terms of their practical purposes, but also the status they conferred upon the object or person within them. The reference to each space connects the meaning of that space to the person's status within it – Christ as foetus is at once God, King, Bridegroom, celestial being, the seed of God, and the replacement for Adam who was formed from earth.

---

[376] Broughton, *A Manual of Praiers,* 31.
[377] Broughton, *A Manual of Praiers,* 34-5.
[378] Broughton, *A Manual of Praiers,* 42.

A Tablet for Gentlewomen *(1574)*

The *Tablet for Gentlewomen* is the earliest known published work of devotion specifically for women in England and is of peculiar interest not only for its brief text, but especially for its material qualities. A tiny book, about one by one-and-a-half inches square, it was originally designed to be worn around the waist on a girdle. These types of books were often highly decorated and jeweled, and provided a physical reminder of prayer that could be touched and held throughout the day during the course of normal activities, much like the rosary beads had been before they were outlawed during the Edwardine reforms. The material existence of this little book, then, already gives us a glimpse into the ways that women were transferring their embodied devotions onto the textual forms required by Protestant religious practice. While reading and reciting vernacular prayers, based on scripture, a woman could at the same time hold the object in her hand as a focus of her devotion. In a later chapter I will discuss how the use of material objects, even books, in worship practices was problematic to the Protestant authorities as it smacked of the idolatry of the "old" religion. However, in the early days of Protestantism, this crossover of Catholic materiality with the textuality of Protestant piety was one example of how women were holding on to some of their most dear sacred rituals, while bending to the new religious status quo.

The texts within the *Tablet* are written specifically for a wife who is overseeing the home, again underscoring the use of this object in the daily prayers of the woman going about her domestic duties:

> …graunt mee also that I may humbly reverence and faithfully love mine husbande, and be obedient to all his honest, lawfull, and godlye requests.[379]

The dangers of childbirth are covered in the following prayers:

> …thy fatherlye pittie to strengthen me in this my daungerous laboure and travell, and so sustayne mee that I may paciently beare all my throwes and pangs, and according to thy promise, suffer me not to be tempted above my strength, but in the middest of my tempta- tion, make a waye to come out, that I may beare it.[380]

> O My Lord god I thanke thee wyth all my heart, witte, under- standing and power, for that thou hast vouchsafed to deliver mee out of this moste daungerous traveyle, and hast sent into this world oute of my wofull wombe this chylde, a creature of thyne owne fashionynge, forming and shape, like unto the rest of the children of thy creation, for which I am not able worthily inough of mine owne frayle nature, to give to thee condigne thanks, praise, honor and glorie, for thy so great benefits shewed unto mee, in pulling me out from the pittes brincke of death, easing and relieving all my wofull sorrowes, laboryous Pangues, and moste grievous throwes, bitter anguishes, and unspeakable paynes, which I coulde never have escaped without thy moste singular ayde, helpe, reliefe and succour.[381]

While other prayers in the book are generic passages asking for protection over family members, and could be prayed by parents of both genders, the following prayer is directed specifically at unmarried women (maids):

---

[379] *Tablet for Gentlewomen,* Sig. D5r-v, quoted in Atkinson and Atkinsons, "Four Prayer Books", 410.
[380] *Tablet for Gentlewomen,* Sig. D7v, quoted in Atkinson and Atkinsons, "Four Prayer Books," 409.
[381] *Tablet for Gentlewomen,* Sigs. E2v-E4r, quoted in Atkinson and Atkinsons, "Four Prayer Books," 411.

> There is nothing that becommeth a maid better than silence, shamefastnesse and chastitie, both of bodye and mind, for these thinges being once lost, shee is no more a mayde but a strumpet in the sight of god.[382]

It is interesting that this prayer is included in a book that is mostly aimed at married women, however it is a possibility that this book could have been given as a gift to a betrothed woman, who would be warned by the prayer for maids to maintain her chastity and good character before she is wed. This theory is made more likely by the inclusion of the following prayer:

> …if it be thy good pleasure hereafter to call me unto the honorable state of matrimonye, that I may bring also unto my husbande a pure and undefiled bodye.[383]

***Thomas Bentley's* The Monument of Matrones: Conteining Seuen Seuerall Lamps of Virginitie, or Distinct Treatises; Whereof the First Fiue Concerne Praier and Meditation: the Other Two Last, Precepts and Examples, as the Woorthie Works Partlie of Men, Partlie of Women; Compiled for the Necessarie Vse of Both Sexes out of the Sacred Scriptures, and Other Approoued Authors, by Thomas Bentley of Graies Inne Student (*1582*).**

Thomas Bentley published this massive work of over 1,500 pages with the successful London publisher Henry Denham in 1582, as ostensibly the first comprehensive devotional prayer book for women.[384] Not much is known about Bentley, save that he was a scholar at Gray's Inn, and, it

[382] *Tablet for Gentlewomen,* Sigs. F2v-F3r, quoted in Atkinson and Atkinsons, "Four Prayer Books," 411.
[383] *Tablet for Gentlewomen,* Sigs. F5v-F6r, quoted in Atkinson and Atkinsons, "Four Prayer Books," 412.
[384] Colin B. Atkinson, and Jo B. Atkinson, "The Identity and Life of Thomas Bentley, Compiler of The Monument of Matrones (1582)," *The Sixteenth Century Journal* 31, no. 2 (2000): 323–48, https://doi.org/10.2307/2671614, 323.

is argued, was church warden at St Andrew's Holburn, which was an influential church in the City of London. He was also an antiquarian and published other books on a variety of subjects.

The book was designed for the needs of a female audience, and includes prayers and devotional material, biblical extracts and, Bentley claimed, writings by such exceptional women as Queen Elizabeth, Katherine Parr, Margaret of Navarre and Anne Askew, along with works by anonymous women. In this light, it is clearly a work aimed at the pious Protestant woman of some social standing, or at least with social aspirations. There has been much discussion of the evidence for growing female readership during this period, and Patricia Crawford argued from her study of women's diaries of this period that, for women, "[r]eading godly books was important, and women's rate of literacy increased faster during this period than that of men, albeit a smaller proportion of the female population could read."[385] While it is difficult to come to certain conclusions about why this book was published, some arguments include that it was an attempt by the Anglican Church to encourage domestic devotion by women, that it was an appeal for court patronage by Bentley, or that it was a reaction to a very real growth in the market for women's devotional literature.[386] Although the book does not appear in any bibliographies of women's libraries that survive, several copies of the manuscript exist today, suggesting that it was widely owned.

The Monument of Matrones is divided into seven sections, each called "lampes of virginitie," using the biblical imagery from Matt 25:1-13 of the wise and foolish virgins with their lamps waiting for the bridegroom to return, combined with the seven lampstands of

---

[385] Patricia Crawford, Women and Religion in England 1500-1720 (London:Routledge, 1993), 80.
[386] Atkinson and Atkinson, "The Identity and Life of Thomas Bentley," 330-1.

Revelation.[387] Bentley's use of the Geneva Bible (1560) for his scriptural references, rather than the Great Bible (1539) or the Bishop's Bible (1568) suggests that he had Puritan leanings.[388] The first "lampe" is a collection of biblical stories concerning women. Interestingly, Old Testament women receive the most attention, and the Virgin Mary only receives four pages, reflecting her "demotion" in the eyes of the Protestant church.[389] Lamp 2 contains prayers and devotions written by women of influence such as Margaret of Navarre and Katherine Parr. Lamp 3 focuses on Queen Elizabeth herself, providing prayers pertaining to Her Majesty, as well as for use on her accession day. Lamps 4 through 6 contain prayers for use during the different stages of a woman's life from girlhood to widowhood, and for different times of the day. These sections provide the bulk of material that is particularly pertinent to women's experiences such as being wooed for marriage, childbirth, prayers for one's husband, and so on. Lamp 7 completes the work with a return to scriptural accounts of biblical women.

The Monument of Matrones is a transitional text. A number of themes that characterized the religion practices of the time are used in the prayers, and there exists a real tension between pre-Reformation and Protestant expressions of faith through the body, and particularly feminine expressions of embodied spirituality. A close examination of the work provides a microcosm of the ways that the new practices of personal and community devotion were at times replacing the old expressions, but at other times unable to overtake the traditional ways that women saw themselves in relationship with the divine.

[387] Rev. 1:20-2:1. (NIV); for a discussion of Bentley's use of this iconography see Elaine Beilin, *Redeeming Eve: Women Writers of the English Renaissance* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987), 64ff., and John N. King, *Tudor Royal Iconography: Literature and Art in an Age of Religious Crisis* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989), 243-56, 243-4.
[388] Atkinson and Atkinson, "The Identity and Life of Thomas Bentley," 328.
[389] Atkinson and Atkinson, "The Identity and Life of Thomas Bentley," 328.

The body of Christ and the Word

Food has always been a powerful symbol in religious life: "Like body, food must be broken and spilled forth in order to give life…Women's bodies, in the acts of lactation and of giving birth, were analogous both to ordinary food and to the body of Christ, as it died on the Cross and gave birth to salvation."[390]

References to food are made often in Elizabethan women's devotionals. The language used to describe the body and blood of Christ taken at the Eucharist, prior to reforms in church practice that denied transubstantiation, was sensuous and graphic in its descriptions, as in this prayer to be said before Communion:

> …but onlie and in truth to nourish and feed our inward man to immortalitie, and life euerlasting: namelie, that as our outward man is nourished by letting in this bodilie meat into the stomach, that is helthsome and sound to be digested; so our inward man may be spirituallie fed and satisfied, by receiuing the meate thereof into our soule and hart, sound and whole in faith. And therfore we shall not need now at this present time, in dooing these things, to whet our teeth, O my soule; but (as S. Cyprian saith) with sincere faith to breake and diuide this holie bread.[391]

However, due to its transitional nature, some descriptions of eating the flesh and drinking the blood of Christ in *The Monument of Matrones* are more moderate in describing the digestion of the elements:

> Come, sweet Lord, and giue me the meate of eternall health. Come, O vnspotted sacrifice, deliuer me from euerlasting death. Come thou Physician of the weake and diseased. Come thou food of the hungrie. Come Lord, visit this house dedicated and

[390] Bynum, *Holy Feast*, 30.
[391] MM, 572.

> consecrated in thy name. And behold I come to thee, whome with all my hart I couet and desire, towards whome with all earnest consideration of mind, I aspire, and studie to attaine; whome with all mine entrailes I hartilie loue and embrace; whose blessed bodie and bloud in these holie mysteries I earnestlie desire to receiue; that thou maist alwaies abide in me, and neuer forsake me, or depart from me, O most sweet father:[392]

The theological tension that must have been present in the minds of all when they approached the altar for the Eucharist - the assertion of the Catholic church that the bread and wine became the real body and blood of Christ at the elevation of the Host, and the Protestant argument that these were merely a symbol of remembrance – was reflected in the choice of Bentley's language which seems to prevaricate:

> the refection and meate which we must in verie deede seeke for onelie in this sacred supper, are no vaine ceremonies, no bare signe, no vntrue figure of a thing absent, no earthlie bodie, no carnall meate, nor anie fleshlie substance; but as the sacred Scripture saith, and other holie men doo rightlie tearme and call them, The bread and Cup of the Lord; a heauenlie refection; the sweet deinties of our sauiour; the nourishment of our soules; an inuisible meate; a spirituall foode; a ghostlie substance: which all are heere now most mercifullie offered, and exhibited vnto vs, and all other faithfull soules, as the soueraigne preseruatiue against death; the conseruatorie to euerlasting life; the comfortable medicine of the soule; the salue of immortalitie; the pledge of eternall health; the defence of faith; the hope of the resurrection; the memorie of Christ; the annuntiation of his death: finallie, the communion of the bodie and bloud of the Lord Iesus, in a maruellous incorporation.[393]

This passage seems to refer directly to Protestant objections to the theology of transubstantiation that asserted that Christ's body become substance in the bread in real physical terms, and rebuffs them with the words "no earthlie bodie, no carnall meate, nor anie fleshlie substance," but then

[392] MM, 586.
[393] MM, 569.

also asserts that the bread of the Eucharist is not just a symbolic gesture, but has spiritual substance and power: “no vaine ceremonies, no bare signe, no vntrue figure of a thing absent.” In the same prayer, the two extremes of a key Reformation theological tension are placed together in an assertion of belief that the Eucharist is “an inuisible meate; a spirituall foode; a ghostlie substance.” There is clearly a desire to retain the belief in the act of communion as a supernatural transaction, without going so far as to say that the bread and wine were miraculously transformed into physical elements of Christ’s body.

In the following passages, the experience of taking communion is expressed in sensuous, embodied terms. Words that describe physical manifestations such as “wearied”, “seeking about for releefe”, “fall downe”, and “withered” invoke the central place of the body in expressing spiritual need. Poetic descriptions of sensuous spiritual experiences like “sweet”, “precious nectar”, “glorious table” and “deinties” give an impression of a luxurious and expensive banquet which is quite different from the demure, plain and stripped-back worship of the Protestant churches, that had had all artistic and sensuous paraphernalia of worship removed.

> “O Lord haue mercie vpon me. For behold, I am vnto thee euen as the little whelpe nigh famished for lacke of meate and drinke, wearied with seeking about for releefe; and almost dead. I fall downe before thy glorious table, where the sweet ypocrasse, and pretious nectar of immortalitie is tasted. The Fathers & Prophets, Confessors and Virgins, most excellent lights of thy Church, sit alreadie at thine heauenlie table: they feede vpon the meate of eternall glorie. O suffer me to eate of the crums. Thou art the bread of life, repell my hunger, satisfie my desire with thy presence; fill me with thy comfort & spirituall deinties. Make my faith strong to beleeue thy word and promises, that being made holie, as thou art holie, I may now holilie taste and see how sweet thou art in this life by inchoation.”[394]

[394] MM, 589.

The next prayer relishes the “drunkenness” which comes from the feast at the communion table, again a word here associated positively with bounty and physical overindulgence.

> O my God, my life, thou didst saie with thy holie and blessed mouth; If anie man thirst, let him come vnto me and drinke. O well of life, grant vnto my thirstie soule alwaie to drinke of thee, that according to thy holie and true promise, waters of life may flowe out of my bellie. O well of life, replenish and fill my mind full of the riuer of thy pleasures; make my hart to be drunken as it were in thy loue: that after the maner of them that be drunken with wine, which forget all things saue the cup; so I may forget all vaine and earthlie things, and continuallie haue nothing else in my remembrance, but thee onelie; thy bitter death, thy painfull passion, and pretious bloud-shedding. Come I praie thee, into my hart, and make it drunken with the abundance of thy plentifulnesse, so that I may forget all temporall things; make me, I saie, throughlie drunken with thy cup, that I may forget euen my selfe, and vtterlie renounce all mine owne vngodlinesse & sinne.[395]
>
> …and for the mispending of them, pouertie hath taken me, and hath withered me awaie, euen as haie, and yeelded my spirit dead for hunger, compelling me to eate the reliefe of swine: but in such meates I found verie little sauour.[396]

Sexual language is at the forefront in the following prayers invoked with parallels to the Song of Solomon, where Christ is the Bridegroom. Here the “Virgin” or bride is the woman’s soul which prepares to receive the communion as a bride receives her bridegroom “through the desire which thou breathest into it”. This type of sexually charged language was prevalent in pre-Reformation mystical spirituality and is discussed more fully in a later chapter.

---

[395] MM, 593.
[396] MM, 10.

> O sweet loue, O louing sweetnesse, let my bellie eate thee, and my soule be refreshed by thee the heauenlie Bridegrome. For thou art the bread and fountaine of life, yea all things indeede whereby the righteous liue, which loue thee. Thee doo I couet, loue and woorship, with whome I shall dwell, reigne, and be blessed. Upon thee doo I call for my soule, which thou preparest to receiue thee, through the desire which thou breathest into it. Come therefore, O purger of sinnes, thou which art the curer of wounds, the strength of the feeble, the comforter of the sorowfull, the worship and honour of all them that liue, and the onelie health of the dead. Come I saie, O blessed Trinitie, and enter into my soule.[397]

The fear of idolatry permeated the religious atmosphere of the Reformation. The very public acts of iconoclasm during Henry and Edward's reigns – where monasteries were physically dismantled, and the interiors of local churches were strewn with the rubble of statues demolished by local people of a reforming bent – would have had imbued the idea of idolatry with consequential importance in the minds of all citizens, no matter what their position on the religious spectrum. While embodied worship is still clearly an acceptable expression of spiritual experience in Bentley's book, there is reference to the influence of Protestant teaching against superstition and idolatry, and, as in the following verses, particularly the use of the sanctified bread of the Eucharist being used in ritual practices outside of the context of the Communion service, as it had been ubiquitously in medieval practice:

> Let vs not be oppressed with idolatrous darknesse, approouing horrible abuses; in carrieng about, in laieng vp, in offring the halowed bread without any vse: not so much as one sillable of all these things can be seene in thy first institution. Wherefore, represse the diuell, blasphemouslie dealing with this thine ordinance. And first consume this world

[397] MM, 590.

> vtterlie with fire, before we be wrapped againe in such horrible darknesse of idolatrie and superstition. Mitigate the punishments, sicknesse, infections, warre and miseries, which for the prophaning of this Supper, the whole world doth endure.[398]

The following prayer uses Protestant language, referring to the Eucharist as the Lord's Supper, with the diligent reading of the prayers being the most emphasized aspect of personal engagement in the ceremony. Thus, the embodied experience of consuming "meat", "bread", etc. and it descending into the belly or bowels is omitted completely, and replaced with a reference to reading and words.

> Christian praiers to be said before, at, and after ye receiue the holie Communion, and first: An effectuall meditation of the right Christian beleefe in the holie Sacrament of the Lords supper, and of the woorthie and fruitefull receiuing the same, to our comfort and saluation; to be diligentlie read before you receiue.[399]

The Catholic theology of transubstantiation was a point of contention with Protestants, and as the Reformation was rooted in the reading, understanding and interpretation of Scripture in the vernacular as the fundamental spiritual practice of every Christian, there was a gradual shift to teaching of the Word of God (or Scripture) as the "bread of life." Reading and "consuming" the Bible was now encouraged as the ultimate edification, not only of the spirit but of body and mind.

Helen Smith says: "Reading…was understood to be both a bodily and an embodied practice: an act of consumption that was productive and reproductive in physical as well as

[398] MM, 580.
[399] MM, 568.

intellectual terms."[400] Understanding the act of reading as "consuming God's word," within the female domain, we can see that the physical intimacy that was expressed in the pre-Reformation prayer life of a woman in private and public space, was transferred to the bodily experience of reading – literally taking in the physical word of God with "not only the eyes but also the ears and stomach could be central to the act of textual engagement."[401]

With this is mind, Thomas Bentley found it critical to make it clear that even the "consumption" of words through his book of prayer was not to replace the worship with the community under the oversight of the local preacher:

> …you should not mistake me, I saie, and iudge that my purpose is in anie respect to hinder common praier, or interrupt the ministration of the word and sacraments in the church, where & at what time I knowe we ought all to glorifie God together with one hart, spirit, and mouth, and to be no otherwise occupied, either in reading or in praieng, than the publike minister is, vnlesse we would be deemed meere superstitious, and vnder the pretense of seuerall deuotion to commit manifest vngodlinesse.[402]

The minister here is held up as the bastion of "reading and praying", these now being the central actions of the ordained priest, rather than the sanctification of the Host and other vicarious sacral practices. In this prayer, while we have reference to the sweet smell of ointment which would invoke memories of the smell of incense in church worship, it is here connected immediately to the publishing and preaching of the Gospel. Again, textual expression is placed front and center as the locus of spiritual power behind religious practice:

---

[400] Helen Smith, "'More Swete Vnto the Eare / than Holsome for Ye Mynde': Embodying Early Modern Women's Reading," *Huntington Library Quarterly* 73, no. 3 (2010): 413–32, https://doi.org/10.1525/hlq.2010.73.3.413, 414.
[401] Smith, "'More Swete Vnto the Eare," 415.
[402] MM, L1, unnumbered page

> Thy name [O Christ] is as a sweet smelling ointment when it is powred out and shed foorth: [thy mercie is set foorth and published by preaching thy Gospell,] therefore the Uirgins [euen they that are pure in hart and conuersation] doo loue thee."[403]

Once more we see how Bentley is bridging the gap between the pre-Reformation religious world and that of the new Protestant-leaning Elizabethan Anglican church.

Fasting continued to be critical to a woman's management of her spiritual life. Edward Rainbowe, a seventeenth century Anglican priest, described Susanna Howard's reading of the Bible as "the daily bread and food of her soul," while in his translation of Luis de Granada's *Devotions*, Francis Meres reports: "this is that Saint Hierome perswadeth vnto a certaine Virgin, saying; Let the fare of a Virgin be a few hearbes, and sometimes a few small fishes. Let her so eate, that she may alwaies be hungry, that foorthwith after meate [that is, eating] she may bee able to read, and pray."[404] Hunger is expressed as being for words, taken in through reading and expressed through praying, rather than for the body of Christ consumed in the Mass with the result physically expressed as embodied and sensuous feasting. While in Bentley's work, there is still some tension between the two concepts, the focus on the Word of God as sustenance replacing the physicality of Christ's body becomes more evident in the manuscripts below which become more overtly Protestant in their language.

The body as temple vs the body as corrupt

---

[403] MM, L1, 9.

[404] Smith, "'More Swete Vnto the Eare," 425; Edward Rainbowe, *A Sermon Preached at Walden in Essex* (London, 1649), D3r; Luis de Granada, *Granados Deuotion*, trans. Francis Meres (London, 1598), M2r.

The theology of the incarnation of Christ, which informed much of medieval understanding of the human body is expressed in the following prayers from *The Monument of Matrones*:

> ...that thy holie sonne hath taken on him the bodie of a man, & hath mingled himselfe with our ashes, which thing we may not vnderstand, without a most true faith.[405]
>
> …he did ioine himselfe to our flesh.[406]
>
> Thou art the good shepheard, that camest to seeke vs wandering & lost sheepe; and to bring vs to thy fold againe. And more than that, thou art our brother; flesh of our flesh, and bone of our bones; which hast tasted of our infirmities, felt our temptations, & borne the burden of our sinnes.[407]

This understanding of the human body as having been chosen and inhabited by God, gave a sense of it being possible for the human body to reflect or contain holiness, and this aspect of medieval religion reflected the acceptance of bodies (alive and dead) as having sacral properties when combined with divine power through ritual practices or holy living.

However, disorder and chaos in the cosmos were considered the consequences of sin, and the Elizabethans were constantly on their guard against the intrusion of sin into the world. The orthodox scheme of salvation, therefore, was pervasive in culture, and held as the antidote to 'cosmic anarchy.'[408] However, the doctrine of the Fall was, in the medieval Church, interpreted beyond purely Biblical understandings, and took on aspects of Platonist philosophy that had been passed on to Christian theologians in the early church. Plato's influence on Elizabethan thought went beyond his philosophy of archetypes, where Adam's fall was seen as the distance between the created things and their Platonic ideals. The concept of sin took on a deeply embodied

---

[405] MM, L2, 6.
[406] MM, L2, 6.
[407] MM, L2, 498.
[408] *ibid*

understanding, with the Fall seen as the beginning of the ultimate corruption of all creation, and particularly of humankind. The language of death and putrefaction was used widely to describe man's sinful nature. Prayers in women's devotionals referenced the rotten nature of humanity: "Wo is me carefull carcase and filthie defiled flesh, conceiued and borne in sinne, depriued of originall iustice, compared to a beast, in Adam fallen as a rotten apple from a liuing tree."[409]

While this language of decay was used in late medieval devotions, the distrust of the physical body as carnal, was a preoccupation of the Reformed believer.[410] The *Monument of Matrones* is, again, a transitional work in terms of reflecting of the possibility of holiness residing within the human body, as against the corrupt and fallen nature of the "flesh":

> "I am but dust and ashes, I am but a dead and stinking dog, I am but woormes and rottennesse. I! what am I to praise thee, O most mightie Lord God? How can the breath of no better than flesh praise thee, which dwellest in euerlastingnesse?"[411]
>
> "Consider the miserable state of the bodie, by the excrements that issue out of the eies, nose, mouth, eares, hands, arme-pits, fundament, féete, and other parts thereof: and thinke that no Bocardo, no little ease, no dungeon, no prison, no sinke, no pit is so irkesome, lothsome, and euill a prison for the bodie, as the bodie is for and of the soule; by reason of sinne and filthie affections that haue their dwelling therein. Thinke also what madnesse it is, thus to pamper our bodies with delicate meats, to obeie the lusts therof, prouoking to euill: and desire continuallie, with S. Paule, the dissolution thereof, and to be out of this stinking prison."[412]
>
> Beholding your nakednesse, praie thus: Lord how wretched, miserable, poore, blind and naked am I! I am naked, O Lord, yea euen starke naked, for that thou seest me in my bloud and corruption. Open mine eies also, I beseech thee, that I may more and more see

409 MM, L2, 128.
410 Bynum, *Holy Feast*, 245.
411 MM, L2, 672.
412 MM, L2, 376.

> my nakednesse; feele my miserie, and confesse my wretchednes; that thou of verie pitie and compassion maist cloath me with thine innocencie, and holie vertues; and so couer my filthinesse, that mine enimies neuer behold the same to my reproch.[413]
>
> Who made of mould do liue in paine, And sicke in soule, my flesh is thrall.[414]
>
> I am but dust and ashes, I am but a dead and stinking dog, I am but woormes and rottennesse. I! what am I to praise thee, O most mightie Lord God? How can the breath of no better than flesh praise thee, which dwellest in euerlastingnesse?[415]

In medieval religion it was the suffering and death of Christ on the cross that had won this battle over the corruption and death of the body. The crucifix with the tortured body of Christ was at the center of every rood screen in the sight of all within the church and played a central role in many sacral rituals during the church year. While it was Christ's incarnation in the human body that made it possible for the body to be holy, it was also his suffering and death within that body that reflected the full nature of his humanity and therefore his ultimate sacrifice of death for the sake of humanity. Echoes of Christ's suffering are heard in prayers such as the following:

> …greeuouslie tormented with the long imprisonment of this vile masse of claie, my sinfull bodie and bloud.[416]
>
> A stinking carrion, woormes meate, foode for fire, dust and claie, doong and forsaken, rotten & consumed, blind, poore and naked, troden vnder the feete of my posteritie, and forgotten of all men, not knowing where my bodie is, which shall vanish like a shadowe, and my life shall wither like a leafe, and fade as a flower.[417]

---

[413] MM, L2, 370.
[414] MM, L2, 114.
[415] MM, L2, 672.
[416] MM, L2, 98.
[417] MM, L2, 128.

> Good Lord deliuer vs. By thine agonie and bloudie sweat, by thy crosse and passion, by thy pretious death and buriall, by thy glorious resurrection and ascension, and by the comming of the holie Ghost.[418]
>
> Strike my backe and my bones as it shall please thee; and make me to bow my crooked will to thy will.[419]
>
> By this his painefull affliction, were all the Patriarches, Prophets, Martyrs, and euerie beleeuing bodie saued, that euer was, or shall be; without which all flesh is damned and accursed.[420]

As crucifixes on church rood screens were dismantled during Edwardine reforms and ceremonies such as creeping to the cross on Easter day were abandoned because of accusations of idolatry, there was a shift from the central image of Christ hanging on the cross in suffering to the "empty" cross, a Protestant symbol of Christ's resurrection.

A preoccupation with death was natural in an age of such danger of physical harm and short life expectancy; ("Call oft to thy mind the houre of thy death".[421]) Medieval religion included many rituals that included remembrance of, and interaction with, the dead in everyday life, including prayers for the souls of the dead at meals during grace, rituals at the death bed that encouraged the purging of evil spirits and sped the dying person's soul through Purgatory, gifts made to the church to pay for indulgences (days in Purgatory reduced according to the value of the gift), and of course prayers to the Saints for their intercession. With the Reformation, many of these rituals were outlawed, and this dramatic shift away from the communal act of ushering

---

[418] MM, L2, 465.
[419] MM, L2, 96.
[420] MM, L2, 111.
[421] MM, L2, 366.

the dying into an afterlife in which the living still had a role to play, to the Protestant death which focused on the salvation of the living through scriptural engagement and intellectual discourse, resulted in what Muir called "the terrifying, unspeakable [experience of] death of the modern era."[422] Bentley's prayers include constant references to death. However, these examples are particularly interesting as they combine the preoccupation with the death of the body, with the language of redemption and resurrection that was emphasized by the "empty cross" of the Protestant theology.

> Death hath giuen vnto life a quickning, yf through death I being dead, may receiue life; and by death, I am rauished with him which is aliue.[423]
>
> A praier to be said of the sicke, at the houre of death:
>
> …thou hast tasted death, and with thy flesh thou hast touched the graue, and earth, wherby it is sanctified and made light to the godlie, so that it can not keepe them in etternall death.[424]
>
> With eies, hart, and hands lifted vp, O blessed God, and glorious Trinitie, I most entirelie thanke thee for all thy bountifull benefits bestowed vpon me, and all mankind: especiallie for that it hath pleased thee now in mercie to awake my bodie, to inlighten mine eies, to quicken my senses; and to reuiue and renew me whole againe, as it were from the death of sleepe.[425]

This last prayer typifies the attitude most prevalent in Bentley's work towards the bodily experience of the senses: that they are given by God to be used while on the earth with enlightenment, focus, strength and determination, as though having been resurrected with Christ anew every day. The sensuousness of medieval worship and devotion involved a heightening of

[422] Muir, *Ritual in Early Modern Europe,* 59.
[423] MM, L2, 21.
[424] MM, 615.
[425] MM, L2, 364.

the senses that was in itself a spiritual experience. Bentley's prayer above marks the shifting role of the senses in spiritual life to one that is almost mechanistic – the senses are used as tools to engage with the world, and more fully with God's purposes within it, rather than to experience God himself.

Contemporary ideas about the sin and heaven were deeply influence by Plato: "[B]oth Plato and the orthodox Christian believed that man could rise above his imperfections and reach towards heavenly perfection."[426] The idea of rising above one's carnality was a great shift from the medieval understanding of living with sin. The late medieval Christian was resigned to the fact that sin was a fact of life on earth, and that certain actions would have to be performed throughout, and after, one's earthly life in order to pay the price for their fallen nature. Protestant teaching, on the other hand, particularly the Calvinist branches of the Reformed church, saw the living of a pure life as a sign of one's election and therefore salvation. Thus, the practice of self-examination through diaries became a common practice of Reformed believers who hoped that they might become sure of their salvation through a record of their victory over their carnality.

> I am the fruit of Adams hands, through sin lockt in satans bands, Destined to deth, the child of ire, a flaming brand of infernall fire: Borne I was naked & bare, and spend my time in sorowe & care, And shall returne vnto the dust, and be depriued of carnall lust.[427]

While Christ's death had paid the price for sin, the Protestant believed that the process of sanctification through a godly life, particularly one where carnal lusts were managed and defeated, was the sign of one's chosen status as a member of the elect. The process of sanctification was accomplished through reading of Scripture and prayer, and while medieval

[426] Tillyard, *The Elizabethan World Picture*, 19.
[427] MM, L2, 129.

religion was experienced through all the senses, it is the idea of light as an illumination of the mind and soul through reading truth, that is a key expression that is prevalent in Bentley's manuscript, particularly expressed in language relating to the dawning of light in darkness:

> …sanctified and made light to the godlie, so that it can not keepe them in etternall death.[428]

> O light which lightest euerie man that commeth into this world: without whome, all is most horrible darkenesse. How is light giuen to them that are in miserie? and life to a wretch that hath a heauie hart? I looked for light, and behold, I haue found it: I wished for daie, and lo, the starres of the twy-light doo appeere; and I see (I thanke thee) the dawning of the daie. Darkenesse dooth no longer possesse the night, nor the shadowe of death staine the daie.[429]

> …sparke of the loue of God, that he hath all the world therewith: euen as we see the Sunne, with one onlie sparke of his light, doth blinde the eie, and yet doth he withhold from it his great light. If then you should aske the eie, what it hath seene, he would saie, that it hath beholden the whole brightnes of the same.[430]

> …thou art light, and I am blind;[431]

> O euerlasting light, far passing all things, send downe the beames of thy brightnesse from aboue, and purifie and lighten the inward parts of my hart.[432]

> O light which lightest euerie man that commeth into this world: without whome, all is most horrible darkenesse. How is light giuen to them that are in miserie? and life to a wretch that hath a heauie hart? I looked for light, and behold, I haue found it: I wished for daie, and lo, the starres of the twy-light doo appeere; and I see (I thanke thee) the dawning of the daie. Darkenesse dooth no longer possesse the night, nor the shadowe of death staine the daie.[433]

---

[428] MM, L2, 615.
[429] MM, L2, 366.
[430] MM, L2, 32.
[431] MM, L2, 113.
[432] MM, L2, 89.
[433] MM, L2, 366.

While there was much complexity in the expression in prayer of the human body as fallen and corrupt, Bentley's prayers also include an important theme of the body as a temple. We return to the concept of the body as capable of containing or reflecting divine holiness, not only by association through Christ's act of incarnation, but also because of the scriptural concept of the body as a temple of the Holy Spirit.[434] The idea of the body as the repository of the spirit was central to both medieval and early modern faith expression. The medieval understandings of holy bodies, which was expressed mainly in the veneration of relics, has in Bentley's work transformed into the concept of the human body being sanctified by welcoming the light of Christ's Spirit into the "house" of the body. As the central arena of women's agency in late medieval and early modern England, the home would have had particular resonance as the place where God was meeting his people. Whereas the temple, and then the church, had been the focal point of a person's connection with God's holy presence, it was now moving away from these places of institutional, and often political, power to the place in which women occupied the heart. It is tempting to attribute too much meaning to the inclusion of prayers such as the following in Bentley's work, but one also cannot deny the importance these references would have had to women who were finding their religious agency and expression within community ritual practice more and more curtailed.

> Wherefore, O most sweet and welcome ghest, seeing through thy goodnesse thou hast vouchsafed this daie to enter into my poore cottage, send downe withall thy holie blessings thereon; by meanes whereof, I may woorthilie answer vnto this thine incomparable mercie. Cleanse and fine this house, Lord, from all the filth thou seest in it. Repaire and doo some cost on it, least it decaie and fall to ruine; driue out the darkenesse in it, with the glistering beames of thy light; adorne and decke it vp with the vertues and graces of the holie Ghost;

[434] 1Cor. 6:19-20. (NIV)

> that being thus cleansed, repaired, adorned, and illuminated, it may please thee to dwell therein, and neuer to depart…"[435]

References to the act of cleaning and maintaining a "cottage" as an analogy of the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit in a woman's body would have been immediately resonant to all women, even those wealthy enough never to perform domestic chores with their own hands. Connecting the work of the Holy Spirit to what was traditionally women's work, imbued the woman's role in the home with a sacred purpose. While the spirituality of domesticity through the material functions of apotropaic objects such as blessed candles or holy water had been abolished, here Bentley is again filling a gap for women by emphasizing the continuing sacredness of their domestic roles. In the following prayer, reference is again made to the "house", and adds further mentions of aspects of a woman's role within the home: healing, and hospitality.

> Come, sweet Lord, and giue me the meate of eternall health. Come, O vnspotted sacrifice, deliuer me from euerlasting death. Come thou Physician of the weake and diseased. Come thou food of the hungrie. Come Lord, visit this house dedicated and consecrated in thy name.[436]

In contrast to welcoming God into the "home" of her own body, women are also encouraged to seek solace in Christ as a shelter and place of sustenance, a picture which comes from biblical symbolism, but which also would have spoken with resonance to the homemaking woman as a comfort which she could avail herself of after having served others in her own home, then being prepared and strengthened to "ascend unto the more high things":

> Behold Lord, I stand at the doore and knocke; I beseech thee, by the bowels of thy mercie, wherewith thou being the daie-spring from an high hast visited vs; open the hand of thy pitie to a wretch that knocketh, and vouchsafe mercifullie to bid me enter into thee; that I

---

[435] MM, L2, 607.
[436] MM, 586.

> may rest with thee; dwell with thee, and sup with thee, and thou with me, and that I may be refreshed to the full of thee, which art the liuing sweet white-bread and heauenlie repast: wherewith when I am once fed; and that my strength is come perfectlie vnto me againe, I may ascend vnto the more high things, & neuer from hencefoorth hunger or thirst anie more so greatlie after vanities.[437]

However, even in these reflections of intimacy through the welcoming by the woman of God's Spirit within herself, there exists the tension so prevalent in Bentley's work, between the holiness seen as possible in bodily expressions of spirituality, and the carnal nature of the flesh that was the scourge of the Puritans when it came to human body:

> I am the trespasser, which am not woorthie to come neere the doore of thy right high place, to aske bread, where thy dwelling is.[438]
>
> O Miserable wretched woman that I am, how may I be compared to any of thy saints that shall dwell in thy Tabernacle or holie hill?[439]
>
> Finallie, make vs verie carefullie to keepe this castle of our soules and temple of the holie Ghost (our bodies I meane) pure, holie, and vndefiled.[440]

Thus the woman, through her prayers, is underlining the shifting attitudes to the body's role in spiritual life within wider society. While her body is fallen and corrupt, heaven waits for her as her ultimate home. In addition, Christ is her home where she can meet with the Holy Spirit and thereby shun earthly desires. In the meantime, she is called homeward to her earthly house, from worship in the church, and is thus reminded of her life's work that she must do within her earthly home.

---

[437] MM, 591.
[438] MM, L2, 5.
[439] MM, L2, 113.
[440] MM, L1, 2.

> Going homeward from the Church, meditate and praie as followeth. Behold me, O Lord, I praie thee, a poore seelie woorme here creeping & walking bodilie on earth for a time in this life, (which is our pilgrimage and passage to our home) and make me more mindfull of mine euerlasting home, and very desirous to returne to the house of the liuing: that hauing mine affections inflamed by thy holie spirit, I may vtterlie contemne all earthlie things, and couet euermore to be present with thee."[441]

The act of walking in community rituals such as the beating of the bounds on Rogation Day, or movement such as creeping to the cross on Good Friday, are examples of the importance of movement through space in creating not only religious meaning, but in the believed genuine change of status that this movement brought about (the marking of territory, or the change from a sinner to a repentant) - "The Palm Sunday procession…was also a celebration of the redeeming presence of the divine within the community, made visible and concrete as the Host was carried around the churchyard."[442]

In this prayer, the walk from church to home in reality, is described as an echo of the "pilgrimage" of life, which the believer takes to their death where they finally arrive "home", in Heaven. Pilgrimage is the ultimate act of movement conferring new spiritual status, and while pilgrimage to shrines was outlawed in the Henrician reforms, the importance of the spiritual journey as part of faith expression was never lost to English Christians. Nicholas Breton includes this prayer in *Auspicante Jehova*: "This life is a pilgrimage, and a iorneie for vs to trauell in. Thou art the end of our waie, O God. Thou art the marke that we shoote at, when we come to our iornies end, in thée Lord we hope to haue rest."[443] The "marke" of the journey here has shifted from the shrine of a Saint to God himself, but the act of pilgrimage is still as important, and the

[441] MM, L2, 626.
[442] Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars,* 26.
[443] AJ, 38

narrative of life itself being a pilgrimage would appear in much Puritan literature of later generations. Here is another example of embodied medieval faith practice being appropriated by Protestants and given new meanings. Retaining the physicality of the act (walking through space from one building to another), they change the language to support the new theology that focuses on the spiritual attainment rather than the bodily act, as most important.

Feminine fertility and sexuality

While virginity and celibacy were valued a great deal in the world of the female religious orders, the call of women to childbearing and family was also a theme that the late medieval Church promoted to all women. This tension between virginity and childbearing was held together in the perfection of the Virgin Mary, the ultimate celibate and the ultimate mother. For this reason, the concepts of celibacy and motherhood were fêted in the Catholic Church in a way that is very difficult to reconcile within the modern worldview:

> Thou the vnquenchable lampe, crowne of virginitie, Scepter of true faith, indissoluble Temple containing him, who can no where be contained: A Mother and Virgin.[444]

This difficulty did not disappear with the Reformation, but with the rejection by the Protestant church of the high position given to the Virgin Mary, the icon of perfect motherhood was removed from her pedestal, quite literally, in the Church. Jennifer Hellwarth has argued that "the prayers concerning childbirth in Thomas Bentley's *The Monument of Matrones*... render "the relationship between the pregnant woman and God" a decidedly "privileged" one."[445] There is much reference to childbirth in Bentley's work, and his use of it in written devotions imparts a

[444] Broughton, *A Manual of Praiers*, 42.
[445] Jennifer Wynne Hellwarth, *The Reproductive Unconscious in Late Medieval and Early Modern England* (New York: Routledge, 2002), 76.

particularly unique role to motherhood in religious life, for which no male counterpart exists. Paige Reynolds argues that because of the venerated position of the Virgin Mary in the medieval church, the act of conception in itself could not have been viewed as sinful, since it was an act of God himself.[446] However, it is clear that female sexuality itself was problematic, especially when it was expressed outside of the bounds of marriage. For this reason, it is interesting that sexual expressions of spiritual experience that were recorded by mystics such as St Teresa of Avila were, while controversial, considered to be expressed within the relationship of a nun's marriage to Christ, and therefore in one sense, legitimate. Bentley's prayers are sometimes overtly sexual in their language, and celebrate female sexuality and fecundity.

> Euen so the soule, which through faith doth feele one sparke of the loue of God, doth finde therewith the heate so great and maruellous, so sweet and delicious, that it is impossible to hit to declare what thing the same loue is. For the little thereof, that she hath felt, doth yeeld hir mind satisfied, and yet desiring more, where of she hath ynough: thus doth she liue, languishing and sighing in hir selfe.[447]
>
> Send foorth the hot flames of thy loue, to burne and consume the cloudie fantasies of my mind.[448]
>
> Oh Lord, bring to passe that I may burne in the desire of thy lawe.[449]
>
> Death hath giuen vnto life a quickning, yt through death I being dead, may receiue life; and by death, I am rauished with him which is aliue.[450]
>
> …and againe lifting vp our hand vnto thee, we may laie hold on thee, and embrace thee as she did. Kisse thou vs with thine holie kisse, and by thy spirit powred into vs, stirre vp in

[446] Paige Martin Reynolds, "Sin, Sacredness, and Childbirth in Early Modern Drama," *Medieval & Renaissance Drama in England,* 2015, Vol. 28 (2015), 30-48, 31.
[447] MM, 32.
[448] MM, L2, 93.
[449] MM, L2, 108.
[450] MM, L2, 21.

> vs a new life, which may annoint thee by true confessing of thy goodnesse, and delight thee with the sweet sauour of true inuocation and new obedience.[451]

This kind of description of mystical longing for God mirrors those found in mystical writings such as by St Teresa of Avila,[452] which have often been described as openly erotic. In Catholic devotion, this type of sexually charged language was not necessarily out of place, although some in the church were shocked by it coming from a chaste nun. Devotional works that were more Reformist in their leaning tend to express any type of feminine connection with God in terms of conception or fertility, rather than sexual desire, because they believed that childbearing was the only purpose of female sexuality, and the main feminine vocation.

Throughout the religious upheavals of early modern Europe, as well as the philosophical Enlightenment, the need for women to remain "pure" or "chaste" was expressed in different ways. The Catholic Church raised virginity above marriage in its sanctity, and many women chose religious orders as a commitment to God and as a way to live an honorable life without the burden of husband and family. The Protestants, however, beginning with writings by Luther, looked down on virginity as a way for women to choose a life of ease in the cloister instead of following her calling to go forth and multiply.[453] They saw the chastity of the cloistered life as women avoiding their main vocation in life which was to have children, and to nurture a family. Luther wrote to his wife, "Dear Grete, remember that you are a woman, and that this work of God in you is pleasing to him… Work with all your might to bring forth the child. Should it mean your death, then depart happily, for you will die in a noble deed and in subservience to

[451] MM, L2, 588.
[452] James V. Mirollo, "The Lives of Saints Teresa of Avila and Benvenuto of Florence," *Texas Studies in Literature and Language* 29, no. 1 (1987): 54–73, http://www.jstor.org/stable/40754816, 63.
[453] Amy Leonard, "Martin Luther," 29.

God."[454] The tension between traditional views of female expressions of sexuality in devotion, and those of the Protestant church which promoted the idea of female sexuality as only for the purpose of having children. Bentley includes many references to the shame brought about by female sexuality expressed outside of marriage or childbearing:

> The praier of Iudith, which she made with fasting and teares, for the deliuerance of hir people the Bethulians, out of the hands of Holophernes, and the Assyrians host that besieged their citie…that rauished the virgine, and discouered the thigh with shame, and polluted the wombe to hir reproch & confusion.[455]
>
> The fourth Chapter, Of the entier affection and loue of God towards the sinfull soule of man... Thou hast made a separation betweene thy bed and mine, saith he vnto me, and placed forren louers in my roome, committing with them fornication: yet for all this, thou maist returne to me againe, for I will not alwaies be angrie against thee…Thou hast not put me backe with thy hand: but with both thine armes, and with a sweet and manlie hart, thou didst meete with me by the waie, and not once reprouing my faults, embracedst me.[456]
>
> …that I neuer had desire vnto man, and that I haue kept my soule cleane from all vncleanlie lusts. Thou knowest, O Lord, [I say,] that I am pure from all sinne with man, and that I haue neuer polluted my name.[457]

While having children was considered a "work of God", the Protestant church did not trust the traditional ways in which women managed this life cycle event. "The childbirth experience was not only restricted to women and characterized by their excess, but also fraught with female ritual, making it particularly suspicious theological terrain for reformers in early modern

---

[454] Martin Luther, *Luther's Works*, ed. Walther I. Brandt, vol. 45 (Philadelphia, PA: Muhlenberg Press, 1962), 40.
[455] MM, L1, 41.
[456] MM, L2, 15-20.
[457] MM, L1, 39.

England."[458] So while there is much that is positive in Bentley's work surrounding childbirth, there are aspects of this particularly embodied event in a woman's life that are not as positive.

Prayers such as the following suggest motherhood as close to divinity itself:

> Thine owne image & likenesse, in guiding Angels and all creatures, is pregnant; and cannot deuaile in them, bearing rule in earth ouer the children of men.[459]
>
> O sweete rest of the mother, and the sonne together, my sweete child, my God.[460]

Yet, Bentley includes the following prayer which references the story of Solomon and the two mothers, where Christ is spoken to as if the child of the woman which has been stolen from her through her own carelessness, and "Sensualitie" been allowed to give her sin as a dead child instead:[461]

> But heere is the woorst, what maner of mother haue I beene? For, after that I by faith had receiued the name of a true mother, I became verie rude vnto thee my Sonne: because that after I had conceiued and brought thee foorth, I left reason, and being subiect to my will, not taking heed vnto thee, I fell asleepe, and gaue place to my great enimie, the which, in the night of ignorance, I being asleepe, did steale thee from me craftilie, and in thy place she did put hir child, which was dead, and so I did loose thee, which was a sorowfull remorse for me. Thus did I loose thee my sonne, by mine owne fault, because I tooke no heed to keepe thee. Sensualitie my neighbour, I beeing in my beastlie sleepe, did steale thee from me, and gaue to me hir child, which had no life in him, named sinne, whome I said I would not haue, but vtterlie did forsake him.[462]

---

[458] Reynolds, "Sin Sacredness and Childbirth," 30.
[459] MM, L2, 692.
[460] MM, L2, 12.
[461] 1Kings 3:16-28. (NIV)
[462] MM, L2, 11.

Holding together the positive aspects of the purity of the virgin bride, with childbearing and nurturing, along with the negative connotations of sexual desire and concupiscence, as well as references to the sexual language used by female mystics in their ecstatic experiences (e.g., 'ravished by love') makes it difficult to have a clear picture of how women in this period would have felt about their physical femininity. However, this interplay of conflicts and tensions is at least clearly evident in the language of prayer used by women as they transitioned from the late medieval to Protestant forms of faith expression and is something which remains consistent even as other understandings of feminine identity change.

Nicholas Breton's* Auspicante Jehova Maries Exercise *(1597)

Nicholas Breton published this short book of thirteen prayers for his patroness, the Countess of Pembroke as some kind of apology for an offense caused her.[463] Breton was born into considerable wealth and was a popular poet and author in his generation. Other than these details, all that is known about his life is inferred from his prolific writing, which results in sometimes conflicting assumptions about his political leanings and religious affiliation. Although some have suggested that he was Roman Catholic because of his references to the Virgin Mary, his work contains much that is clearly Protestant in character. *Auspicante Jehova* is therefore another excellent study in how the traditional practices of the pre-Reformation era were transitioning into a more textual expression of spirituality. It is important to keep in mind that this work was written by a wealthy man for an aristocratic woman. For this reason, aspects of

[463] Atkinson and Atkinson, "Four Prayer Books", 421.

domestic life that would have been a natural reference in a book such as Wheathill's, would not have been relevant to Breton's reader.

This is clearly illustrated in the prayers that refer to communion as a meal at the Lord's table:

> I am not worthy to feede of the fruict of thy fauour, Lord I cōfesse it that while dogs waite one their masters trenchers, I haue not attended on the table of thy mercy.[464]
>
> I haue by mine absence from attending on thy table, deserued not onely to bee famished.[465]

These passages bring to mind the feasting tables of the great aristocratic houses, rather than a humble family table, where guests are invited to attend the Lord of the Manor, and dogs wait hungrily for the trenchers at the end (it is unlikely that dogs would have been fed trenchers in any except the wealthiest houses – they were usually used to fatten pigs, thus making the most of all possible nutrition for the family).

> "…by the light of thy holy word, and seeing the gates of thy grace open to the passage of the Repentaunt emong the hopes of the faithfull, I beg an almes of thy mercy."[466]

Here there is a clear picture of the gates of the great house being opened to the poor to give alms, as was the custom.

References to communion in this text do not contain any aspect of embodied language; instead hunger and thirst are expressed for God's word – a clear indication that Protestant doctrine was what was socially acceptable among non-recusants:

[464] AJ, 17.
[465] AJ, 18.
[466] AJ, 26.

> "…that I haue rather lost my selfe in a wildernesse, then once set a steppe into thy Temple: I haue feasted my flesh with the pleasures of the world, & almost famished my soule with the lack of thy holy word,"[467]

However, embodied language plays an important role in Breton's prayers, written for a woman who would have had access to the greatest comfort and pleasure that aristocratic life had to offer. Breton uses references to the woman's body in connection with her piety in much the same way as Bentley in the *Monument of Matrones*, by suggesting scenes that may have come directly from her life. In the next passage, we see how the woman's soul and the body are referred to as two of Christ's disciples who requested to be at Christ's right and left hand in heaven - but then the scene suddenly shifts to the picture of her soul and body being two cushions, that are placed under Christ's feet for his comfort.

> "…not for my two sonnes [James and John], but the two parts of my selfe, my soule, & my body, yf it will please thy gratious goodnesse, so farre to take them to thy mercy, as not to set them either at thy right hand, or thy left, but in one looke of thy comfort, to make thē but cushins for thy feet"[468]

This is a poignant snapshot of what could have an intimate moment, in which the Lady's feet were placed on cushions for her repose.

Most interesting are the references to feminine sexuality that are redolent of the late medieval expressions of passion in feminine mysticism. Here we see a more open attitude to expressions of female desire within spiritual experience:

> …that being rauished with the sweetnes of thy brightnes, I might make my poore soule, a tabernacle for thy dwelling, that beeing clensed from my sinne, by the onely merite of thy

[467] AJ, 22.
[468] AJ, 21.

> mercy, & sweeted in my soule, by the oile of thy grace, in the fruicts, of thancks giueing, I may Glorifye thy holly name.[469]
>
> …I feele the sweetnes of thy loue, though I can not beeholde thy presence, I tast of thy goodnes though I see not thy persō, & drinck of thy vertue though I know not thine essence; for had not the medicine of thy mercy cured my soul of hir sorow."[470]
>
> …let my soule euer conceiue thee & neuer part frō thee.[471]

This embodied language continues in the use of healing and medicine as a picture of God's ministrations, with references to the body as corrupt, diseased or wounded echoing those in Bentley's prayers:

> …how shall I, clodde of claye, slime of the earth, dust and Ashes, wretched worme, & wicked creature, presume to the happinesse.[472]
>
> …sinne is but an infection.[473]
>
> …the Surgion of the heart, the Phisition of the minde, & the medicine of the soule.[474]
>
> Peereles loue, and purest life of thy beloued, pardon I beeseech thee the presūption of thy poore wounded creature, wounded with sinne, and cureles of hir sore, but onely in the merite of thy MERCY, in the oile of thy grace, & wounds of thy loue.[475]

Yet other references to the body in Breton's prayers are more in the vein of Wheathill's expressions of connection to God through his working upon her in sovereign power:

> …open mine eares, that I may heare thee call: and open mine eies, that I may see thy goodnesse: open my hart, that I may with teares attend thee, and open thy handes, to take mee wholy vnto thee: mortify my flesh, that my soule may liue, shut me not from the

[469] AJ, 25.
[470] AJ, 15.
[471] AJ, 12
[472] AJ, 28.
[473] AJ, 17.
[474] AJ, 15.
[475] AJ, 13.

> gates of thy grace, but keep mee vnder the shadow of thy wings: lead mee through the darknes of sinne, into the day light of thy loue.[476]
>
> …when in my soule I behold but one beame of thy bright loue, I can say to my self, it is good being with thee LORD.[477]

Breton's work forms an interesting foil to the creations of Bentley and Wheathill. While it is written for a more limited audience, Breton's work underscores some of the ways in which embodied language in women's devotional works was shifting and changing, as well as how prayer was being made personal to women by using the language of their everyday lives, whether of a middling gentlewoman or a noble lady.

Anne Wheathill's **A Handfull of Holesome (Though Homelie) Hearbs: Gathered out of the Goodlie Garden of Gods Most Holie Word; for the Common Benefit and Comfortable Exercise of All Such as Are Deuoutlie Disposed. Collected and Dedicated to All Religious Ladies, Gentlewomen, and Others; by Anne Wheathill, Gentlewoman** ***(1584).***

Anne Wheathill's small book of devotions for women (a *duodecimo* book containing 144 leaves of text) was not the first written of its kind, but it is the first known of that was written by a woman, directly to women. Wheathill identifies herself as a gentlewoman on the title leaf, which suggests that she was of gentle birth and not aristocracy. Other than that she had some education, we know very little else about Wheathill's own life.[478] Her book, however, is written in the form of many prayer books that were becoming popular at the time, due to the Protestant church's

---

[476] AJ, 27.
[477] AJ, 25.
[478] Colin B. Atkinson and Jo B. Atkinson, "Numerical Patterning in Anne Wheathill's A Handfull of Holesome (Though Homelie) Hearbs (1584)," *Texas Studies in Literature and Language* 40, no. 1 (1998): 1–25, http://www.jstor.org/stable/40755137, 2.

emphasis on the personal responsibility of each individual to address God. It contains the themes of awareness of sin, penitence and the joy at redemption. However, the structure is not that of a conversion narrative. There are four prayers at the beginning of the book that are marked as being written for certain times of the day, including upon waking and going to bed. However, there are no prayers marking other occasions within the church year, or within the family lifecycle. In this, it is decidedly different from Bentley's work which provided prayers for specific rites of passage in a woman's life. While Wheathill's prayers contain some interesting thematic references, in the context of this study the fact that she was a pioneer in a field that had up until this point been very much in the masculine, provides us with some clues on how women were navigating their changing arenas of agency as their religious roles shifted. Wheathill produced a book that, with its reference to herbs in the title, was supposed to replace or at least mirror the commonplace herbals that late medieval women kept for reference in their kitchens. For this reason, it provides evidence of the way women's domestic literature was being transformed according to the social and religious pressures of the Reformation.

Wheathill was clearly staunchly Protestant. Her prayers, she claims, have been gathered out of the "garden of Gods most holy word," and they are full of scriptural references and quotations, producing what one would expect of a devout Protestant: an excellent knowledge of both the Old and New Testaments.[479] In her preface, she repeats her assurance that her abilities are limited because she is a woman. However, she is acting publicly within the religious sphere, and this was crossing the boundaries set for women by the status quo. Women teaching on any kind of religious matters were thoroughly objectionable in Elizabethan England, and so

[479] Colin B. Atkinson, and Jo B. Atkinson,"Anne Wheathill's A Handfull of Holesome (Though Homelie) Hearbs (1584): The First English Gentlewoman's Prayer Book," *The Sixteenth Century Journal* 27, no. 3 (1996): 659–72, https://doi.org/10.2307/2544010, 662.

Wheathill knew she must put her audience's minds at rest. She attempts in her preface to present herself as someone who is acceptable to humbly offer suggested devotions to other women. Thus, she is clearly aware that what she is doing is bold and may be offensive. She describes her "herbs" as not the "fragrant floures of others, gathered with more vnderstanding," but rather "grose hearbs, holesome in operation and working." This reference to the practicality of the prayers again suggests that Wheathill is hoping the book will be considered as falling in the category of women's household manuals rather than a book of instruction or scholarship. However, it is important to note that despite Wheathill's statements of humility and submission to those more learned than herself, she has nevertheless chosen to make her voice heard on religious matters in the public sphere. Hers is an early example of the growing movement of women who realized that they could have great influence through their writing. While these early forays into publishing were mainly limited to domestic matters, women were gaining confidence to step into areas of agency that had once been denied to them. In this way, while they were losing influence in areas of traditional ritual practice within the community, they were finding new ways to expand their influence outside of their homes and families.

Wheathill's prayers give us a real sense of how the embodied and sensory nature of prayer language was changing. Compared to Bentley's work, her references are almost all directly from Scripture. The following prayers are those that make mention of some kind of interaction with Christ's body, or of the woman's own body being connected to the divine.

> I will not couer from thée my sinnes, neither yet excuse them; but I praie thée Lord hide them in the bloodie woonds of thy sonne Christ.[480]

[480] Wheathill, *A Handfull of Holesome Hearbs*, 22.

> O Lord I am the woonded man, and thou art the good Samaritane: powre oile into my wounds, and bind them vp. Lord heale thou me, and I shall be whole: for thou art my God and Sauiour.[481]

Mention of Christ's crucifixion here is perfunctory, and where the praying woman refes to herself the wounded Samaritan, she does not use the kind of bodily descriptions that were characteristic in Bentley's work. In fact, it is the lack of embodied language in describing her interactions with God that is the striking contrast to the transitional work of *A Monument of Matrones*. Wheathill is writing in a new Protestant tradition that is separating experiences of the body from spiritual interactions. The following prayer is the brief reference we find in Wheathill's work to childbirth and nurturing, which is surprising given it is a book aimed at women's personal devotions:

> Thou hast béene our protectour, euen from our mothers wombe; and our trust is that thou wilt so continue all the daies of our life, and speciallie at the houre of our death, that we may ascend to the heauenlie Ierusalem, where we shall reast in the bosome of our father Abraham, the father of all faithfull beléeuers, there to praise thée, and thy louing Sonne, and the holie Ghost, world without end, Amen.[482]

In fact, the "bosome" she speaks of being nurtured at is pointedly that of a father. While this may be a small piece of evidence, there is a hint here that the feminine references in late medieval devotion (at their height in the veneration of the Virgin Mary) are being pushed aside by the patriarchal tendencies of Protestantism.

The closest Wheathill comes to the sexually charged language of Bentley's prayers is the following brief expression of desire:

---

[481] Wheathill, *A Handfull of Holesome Hearbs*, 9.
[482] Wheathill, *A Handfull of Holesome Hearbs*, 53.

> …when I consider the greatnes of thy mightie Maiestie, I am so rapt with the desire thereof, that my hart and my flesh reioiceth in nothing but in thée alone, that art the liuing God.[483]

There is no mention of any intimacy in this prayer, but a rather distanced experience of joy in contemplation of the greatness of God. Far from being "ravished" by God's love, the woman is here experiencing an almost intellectual delight that then is felt by her whole being. This sense of a distance needing to be crossed by gestures of God's protection or conviction is a theme that continues through Wheathill's prayers:

> For I commit my bodie and soule, this night and euermore, into his most holie hands;[484]
>
> O thou, which art the finger of Gods hand, touch my hart, and vnlose the same from all blindnesse and hardnesse, that I may heare the voice of Gods heauenlie word, and bring foorth much fruit, vntill I be come vnto my full perfection, that I may be worthie to be placed among thy chosen and elect people.[485]

However, there remains echoes of the sensuous experience of God that was central to medieval religion. Including expressions of touch, emotion, sight, hearing and taste, this passage encompasses the sensuousness of the medieval spiritual experience with the language of the Protestant, and is a perfect example of how women's devotional literature is, even perhaps subconsciously, holding on to traditions of faith expression while adjusting the theological framework to match sanctioned religious practice. Critical, too, to our understanding of Wheathill as a staunchly Protestant writer is the specific reference made here to her desire to be part of the elect – a direct mention of the doctrine of Predestination that was central to Calvinist thought.

---

[483] Wheathill, *A Handfull of Holesome Hearbs*, 31.
[484] Wheathill, *A Handfull of Holesome Hearbs*, 8.
[485] Wheathill, *A Handfull of Holesome Hearbs*, 136-7.

There are some continuities in Wheathill with tropes used by Bentley, such as the description of the body as a "house", life as a "pilgrimage" and world pleasures as "deinties":

> The house of our bodies is enuironed with enimies, but thy prouidence will defend vs out of all dangers.[486]
>
> This life is a pilgrimage, and a iorneie for vs to trauell in. Thou art the end of our waie, O God. Thou art the marke that we shoote at, when we come to our iornies end, in thée Lord we hope to haue rest.[487]
>
> Grant me alwaies to séeke thée in singlenes of heart: for the remembrance of thy fauor is more swéete vnto me, than all the pleasures and deinties of the world.[488]

There are, here, echoes of the language of the body that Bentley used to describe a spiritual relationship with God. But these references are brief in comparison to the overarching theme in Wheathill's prayers of the importance of mental understanding and assent to the truths of Scripture in the pious life. This careful consideration of God's truth is what brings the "vile worme" that is the sinful being into the knowledge of God's goodness, holiness and power.

> O God giue me the excellent féeling of thine aboundant mercie, for thou art my whole goodnes. Who am I, that I dare be so bold to speake vnto thée? I am thy most poore sinfull seruant, a vile worme, and much more poore and miserable, than I either know my selfe, or dare tell vnto thée: for my sinnes sticke so fast to me, that I haue nothing, nor worthie anie thing. Thou onelie art good, thou iust, thou holie, and able to doo all things, and doost.[489]
>
> And now, O Lord, worke thy will in me, and command my spirit to be receiued in peace, that I may be dissolued of this fowle fleshie masse, thorough the which I doo nothing but offend thée my Lord God."[490]

---

[486] Wheathill, *A Handfull of Holesome Hearbs*, 38.
[487] Wheathill, *A Handfull of Holesome Hearbs*, 38.
[488] Wheathill, *A Handfull of Holesome Hearbs*, 7.
[489] Wheathill, *A Handfull of Holesome Hearbs*, 6.
[490] Wheathill, *A Handfull of Holesome Hearbs*, 43-4.

> The most pleasant thing that I can offer vnto thy maiestie, O Lord, is to giue thée a thankfull heart for all thy benefits, and to be inwardlie sorie that euer I did anie thing which should offend thée; then, to mortifie the concupiscence of the flesh, to put off the old Adam, and put on Christ; to leaue to be carnall, and to become spirituall."[491]

Through God's will and command in the believer's life, and gratitude for forgiveness of all offenses, the woman here becomes transformed from a "carnall" to a "spirituall" believer. The carnal here is ultimately separated from the spiritual nature and the two cannot exist together. We see that the expressions of the body's senses and physical pleasures are now no longer appropriate in the experience of the divine, but only the expression of moral virtues. This godly life, then, is pursued through the personal reading and understanding of scripture –

> and being fullie persuaded by thy holie scripture, I beléeue in thée my most mightie God, thrée persons in one essence, and in all things conteined in thy holie word; and the same faith I will not let to confesse before all the world[492] –

the ministrations and example of godly preachers in the church –

> Thy Ministers speake for thée thy secreats, but thou vnlockest the vnderstanding of the things pronounced; they rehearse to vs thy commandements, but it is thy aid and helpe that giueth strength to walke ouer the same, and giuest light vnto the minds. Wherefore, bicause thou art the euerlasting truth, speake thou Lord my God vnto me, least I die, and be made vnfruitfull: for thou hast the words of euerlasting life[493] –

and finally, by the light of God's revelation that comes personally to the believer to bring a full renunciation of the world and all its temptations:

> Lighten the eie of my hart and vnderstanding, with the light of thy grace and comfort, thereby expelling the darknes of ignorance. Lighten also one other eie of my soule, which is the eie of the affection. The sight of this eie is so dimme, that it hath no perfect and true

[491] Wheathill, *A Handfull of Holesome Hearbs*, 56.
[492] Wheathill, *A Handfull of Holesome Hearbs*, 62.
[493] Wheathill, *A Handfull of Holesome Hearbs*, 81.

iudgement; yea it is so blinded with the vanities of this world, that one thing in appearance séemeth to be twentie; like the sight of the deceitfull eies of glasse. I beséech thée saue my said eie, that it be not put out by our enimie the diuell; and send me the light of grace, while I haue here time, & space of repentance, that at my latter end, mine enimies saie not with ioie.[494]

[494] Wheathill, *A Handfull of Holesome Hearbs*, 4.

Conclusion

Caroline Walker Bynum wrote: “Historians, like the fishes of the sea, regurgitate fragments.” The topic of women’s faith practices over the period of the Reformation is as wide as it is deep. This study has only touched on many facets of the changing nature of these practices in the light of the social and political changes that were wrought by the religious cataclysm of the Protestant movement in England. The domestic, communal and spiritual practices of women in the Middle Ages followed a well-defined cultural seasonality, reflecting the complete integration of religious ritual symbolism into daily practices of hospitality and housekeeping. As the religious culture changed over the period of the English Reformation, traditions that had been passed down through the centuries were questioned, and sometimes became dangerous because of their implication of a particular political allegiance. External pressures to conform to new Protestant, and sometimes Puritan, practices placed women in a uniquely central role of adjusting the religious conformity of the home, and personal piety, to the new requirements of society.

J.C. Scott suggests that “in situations of ideological dominance ways will be found by the subordinate to challenge and circumvent authority without directly confronting its principles, by creating physical, social and cultural spaces beyond its control.”[623] Women’s agency within domestic and community life had relied on deeply embodied and material expressions of faith and culture. This was reflected particularly in the use of religious objects in the church and home, the handing down of traditional knowledge of treatments for ailments, ritual practices for

[622] Caroline Walker-Bynum, *Fragmentation and Redemption: Essays on Gender and the Human Body in Medieval Religion* (New York: Zone Books, 2012), 14.
[623] J. C. Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts* (Yale Univ. Press, 2009), 108-24*)* as quoted in Buxton, *Domestic Culture,* 79.

the safe passage of the household through the lifecycle, and an understanding of the spiritual world that had intrinsically feminine, embodied manifestations in understanding and practice. Time and space was structured according religious and cosmic meaning that was derived from ancient church and pagan traditions, as well as social norms. As the Henrician reforms took hold in England, so did the demystification of the material nature of the sacred. As Walsham explains: "To watch, or to collaborate in, the physical dissolution of monasteries and chantry chapels and the iconoclastic destruction of statues and crucifixes in churches was to have personal experience of the desacralization of the physical world."[624] Protestant churches rejected the notion of words, prayers or material objects as conduits of sacral power. Any implication that images of Saints or the deity held intrinsic sacredness was equated to idolatry, and caused the fall of the worshiper into sin. Above all, reformists denied any possibility of access to the supernatural, whether holy or evil, through the mediation of the physical world. As the English nation moved towards unrest, religious affiliation became a political statement and "Protestants denounced reports of thaumaturgic cures and apparitions of the Saints as instances of popish deceit and duplicity."[625] Physical manifestations of the supernatural were now blamed on human trickery used to manipulate the innocent by papal and Catholic powers. This eschatological urgency underscored the rise of the anti-Christ in Protestant end-of-world narratives.[626]

Not only were physical manifestations of spirituality now taboo, but practices of *imitatio*, where men and women stepped into embodied expressions of the practices of Christ, the Virgin Mary or the Saints in order to identify with their earthly experiences and bring corresponding spiritual rewards, were seen as idolatry of the imagination. John Cotton wrote about prayer that:

---

[624] Walsham, "The Reformation," 507.
[625] *ibid*
[626] Walsham, "The Reformation," 508.

> The second *Commandement,* in forbidding Images, forbiddeth not onely bodily Images, (graven or molten, or painted) but all spirituall Images also; which are the imaginations and inventions of men.[627]

We can see this taboo against "spiritual images" having a impact on the writing of Anne Wheathill whose language contrasts powerfully with that of Bentley's in her devotional metaphor. She had moved away from the florid descriptions of natural phenomena, and bodily functions which Bentley relies upon to express spiritual ecstasy, and instead presents a more restrained language of prayer which is influenced in the main part by scriptural vocabulary.

The great social upheavals of the time had cast doubt on the traditional social structures that had been part of English life for centuries. The church became an agent of the Protestant moral ethic, replacing the much more complex institution of the Catholic Church that had ordered life through ancient tradition, ceremony, symbol and community structure. This placed a new emphasis on a virtuous lifestyle and patriarchal authority structures within the family and social life. Stepping outside of that sanction could have dangerous consequences, especially for the more vulnerable members of society such as women or the elderly. While any kind of supernatural practices that were not sanctioned directly by the church (which were now much more narrowly defined), were not only seen as rebellious but distinctly demonic by the religious authorities, many practices from magical traditions as well as the practice of astrology and prognostications, were still popular. Prayer according to Christian scripture was sometimes combined with an amulet or used as a healing charm.[628] This reluctance to let go of practices that

[627] John Cotton, and John Ball, *A Modest and Cleare Answer to Mr. Balls Discourse of Set Formes of Prayer: Set Forth in a Most Seasonable Time, When This Kingdome Is Now in Consultation about Matters of That Nature, and so Many Godly Long after the Resolution in That Point* (London: Printed by R.O. and G.D. for Henry Overton, in Popes Head-Alley, 1642), (AB17).
[628] Jones and Zell, 51.

had been part of deeply personal routines for centuries, was reflected in other areas of devotional life. While expression of spirituality in daily life was changing, the structure of daily life was retained. The structures of Catholicism that gave shape to time, space and personal piety were not entirely discarded, but rather integrated into the new religion.[629]

Hamling describes how "The voluminous prescriptive and devotional literature of the Elizabethan and Jacobean periods described how routine activities in the early morning, from first waking until after dressing, were supposed to be accompanied and punctuated by a series of pious meditations as well as formal prayer."[630] Very detailed prescriptions of meditations for all aspects of daily life were given in devotional manuals written by Protestant authors for men and women, and "profane" actions (such as walking back home from church) were imbued with sacredness by the act of prayer. Richard Daye's "set prayer to be said 'at the putting on of our Clothes'" echoes the prayers from the devotionals analyzed above which are designed for waking, sleeping, childbirth and so on.[631] Thus the pattern of daily prayer that had given a framework to the ordinary day for centuries was no so much as retained, but transformed.

Raymond Mentzer argues that women were by no means passive recipients of the Reformation. Mentzer writes that "[w]omen in western Christianity…had a long and substantial involvement in the sacral realm. They valued and sustained in various ways traditional medieval religious customs and the world of folk systems."[632] Noblewomen who had the resources and

---

[629] Kimberly Anne Coles, *Religion, Reform, and Women's Writing in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 46.
[630] Hamling, *A Day at Home*, 44.
[631] Hamling, *A Day at Home*, 49.
[632] Raymond A. Mentzer, "Sacral Systems," in Amy Leonard and David M. Whitford (eds), *Embodiment, Identity, and Gender in the Early Modern Age*, (Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2021), 133.

education to write activist literature challenged male domination in theological thinking and proposed innovative theological perspectives on women. Many ordinary unlettered women were wary of the new theology and held on to traditional practices. "Even as they accepted the new, they retained something of the past."[633] Through a careful assessment of what they could gain or lose within the new status quo, they developed hybrid theologies and practices. Some aspects of female sacral agency that women fought to retain included baptism of infants at birth - (almost one half of infants were baptized by midwives in the late medieval period in France).[634] Reformed leaders expressly forbade this practice, but the frailty of infants was a deeply pressing concern for parents and they often compromised by convincing church leaders to baptize their babies in the home instead of in the church service.[635] Women often held onto their comforting learned prayers such as the Ave Maria, which would have been taught them from early childhood and were verbal expressions of faith they would have prayed throughout every day of their whole life.[636] Some prayed in both vernacular and Latin languages to cover their bases. When marital infertility was blamed on sorcery, the Reformed church did not recognize the rituals traditionally used by the Catholic Church to break the "curse." Thus, some women would visit and pay undercover Catholic priests to perform the ritual for them, even though the woman was an outwardly professing member of the Protestant church.[637] Women were the arbiters of their family's traditions. When pressure to change came from the outside, it was the women who tried to maintain constancy for their family at home. Hamling explains that the early modern period is

[633] Mentzer, "Sacral Systems," 137.
[634] Mentzer, "Sacral Systems," 138.
[635] *ibid*
[636] Mentzer, "Sacral Systems," 139.
[637] Mentzer, "Sacral Systems," 140.

"key to understanding those broader shifts in materiality and identity that impacted most strongly on domestic life, production and consumption, ideas of patriarchal authority and the consequent development of middling-status identities."[638] While women were focused on retaining as much of their influence over family practices and religious well-being as possible, they were inadvertently negotiating and sculpting a cultural transformation, beginning in the home and local community, that would eventually result in the way the modern world understands itself.

In what had been, in the past, a clearly demarcated world for different gender roles, this period saw growing tensions in these demarcations. Women's behavior was increasingly proscribed by religious moral codes, particularly within the role as a wife, mother and household manager. However, women of some means were able to have significant influence within traditionally male-dominated spheres, Hannah Woolley's publishing being a case in point.[639]

Depending on the reigning monarch's religious convictions, the common English person had to move from one extreme to another of sanctioned practice not only in the church, but in the community and home. This fracturing of what had been centuries-old customary practice must have caused no little distress to most people. Women, in particular, were not afforded the opportunity to engage politically in the conflicts of the time.

The scale, focus and perspective that is enriched by interdisciplinary studies is critical to navigating the complexity of early modern life, with its rapidly changing social environment. The broadening and variation of class structures, that had been relatively static for centuries, was reflected in a growing relationship between status and consumption (not just of objects but of space, modes of transport, textual communication, modes of self-representation and so on). In

---

[638] Hamling, *A Day at Home*, 12.
[639] Weber, "Women's Early Modern Medical Almanacs," 362.

addition, this social stratification was realized increasingly in the divisions of space, the way one moved between spaces, and the decoration of that space. This growing expression of social change in the flow and use of material goods was manifested in increasingly complex processes of manufacture, and reflected a new level of global cultural exchange. In turn, confessional identities transitioned rapidly from the *status quo* of the Catholic Church to the multi-faceted expressions of Protestantism, and religion shifted from being a part of the elementary structure of daily life to a way for the bourgeois classes to communicate social position and political allegiances, levels of pious commitment, economic standing and so on. Trends in fashion saw a breakdown in the strict sumptuary laws that had characterized earlier periods, and the global exchange of textiles brought a variety of materials for creative expression in clothing. The explosion of the print marketplace and a growth in general literacy saw new genres emerging, as well as modes of self-representation such as street signage and portraiture which ushered in an age of the consumption of self-conscious expressions of identity, that had previously perhaps been available only to the elite.

The complexity of the early modern period thus requires historical approaches that can flex and transform in their methodologies to cope with the incredible quantity of information produced by the rapid cultural, political and economic transitions that characterize this era. Studies of particular historical subjects have, in the past, been divided up by the proprietary distinctions in each field and have consequently lost some of the perspective of the interconnectedness of life and experience. The new endeavors in historical material studies aim to solve some of these divisions and integrate the specialized approaches that each field brings to its research. Scholars are also on the lookout for the areas that have been ignored because of these divisions – the ‘negative’ space, the in-between, the dynamic and cognitive, the spatial and

essential. No longer do we look only at the object, but the way it was made and used and moved and cared for and disposed of, and what that can tell us about the people who interacted with it, and whose lives it represented. Joining together with other disciplines in the study of the material early modern world allows us to study not only the physical evidence itself, but the changes and continuities it represents.

The changing beliefs of different generations over the period of the English Reformation (depending on what theology was ascendant during their influential years) meant that traditions that were passed down were transformed by subsequent generations into practices that fit with their theology, while still retaining the importance of generational traditions within culture.[640] The Elizabethan devotional works that have been sampled in this study reflect the fragmenting concepts of spiritual identity that women were negotiating in their own devotional lives. These concepts were not only coming from internal changes in conviction, but from external social pressures (often from the men writing the devotional works) that required a different language of faith expression in the lives of women in order to ensure they conformed to the ascendant religious powers. While women were gaining diverse avenues of influence through the encouragement of literacy brought by the Protestant movement, and the proliferation of printed materials, she was also losing a way of life that had fostered many areas of communal life where women had power to manage critical aspects of her own, and her neighbors' lives. She had to find ways to retain some of the strategic structure of life that afforded her that agency while maintaining public acceptability. As Cole wrote: "her religious thought was changing, but it could be expressed in a way that was consonant with her lifetime of practice."[641]

---

[640] Walsham, "The Reformation," 517.
[641] Coles, *Religion, Reform, and Women's Writing,* 46.

An excellent case study that sums up this type of fracturing in the ways women experienced agency can be found in Paul Dyck's study of the women of Little Gidding.[642] The community was made up of members of a wealthy London family that left London for Cambridge to pursue a holy life. They produced handmade books that they called "Gospel Concordances" which blended the four gospels for use in communal worship. They also read other spiritual books together in their community activities, which were recorded in dialogues that we are recorded in books called "Conversations."[643]

The aspect of their work that reflects most clearly the fractured nature of the culture in wider society, was the manner in which they created these books. They would take physical fragments of the Gospels, as well as clippings from the books they would read aloud to each other. As such, they were not writing anything original themselves, but in their compilation and arrangement of fragments of scripture and spiritual writings, they expressed their own personal priorities and convictions. Even more interesting is that much of the original source material they used was from the Old Religion – Latin works translated into English – combined with newer Protestant works. Together they were used as the fabric from which a new story was created, using a pattern made in the women's own hearts and minds, and from there sent out to the community. However, Dyck insists that the pattern in their minds was not one merely received from others, or created as a once-off decision by their little community: "[T]here [was] no simple pattern to be simply enacted, nor a lack of pattern calling for innovation, but rather a profound and mysterious pattern, to be discovered and worked out moment-by-moment, with every breath,

---

[642] Paul Dyck, "The Discovery of Pattern at Little Gidding," in *Women's Bookscapes in Early Modern Britain: Reading, Ownership, Circulation*, eds. Leah Knight, Micheline White, and Elizabeth Sauer (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2018), 135-152.
[643] Knight and White, "Bookscapes," 14.

in countless small and interconnected actions."[644] And in this sense the process taking place within every home and community within the nation can be understood – as the pendulum of religion and politics swung from one extreme to the other – trying to find some happy equilibrium between their own convictions and the insistence of the authorities in power. Each person had to work out their own pattern of life, moment-by-moment, action-by-action and women found ways to do this within their own understanding of the parameters they were willing to bear.

[644] Dyck, "The Discovery of Pattern," 142.

Primary Sources

A Jewel for Gentlewomen. Containing Divers Godly Prayers, Fit to Comfort the Wounded Consciences of All Penitent Sinners. Reade, Meditate & Pray, and You Shall Find Comfort to Your Soules. London: Printed by John Beale, 1624. http://estc.bl.uk/F/RJ99KHVBS5H73KSH45V9DBPRNVE5QBF94INUNG2E6SRTLL25R8-47413?func=service&doc_library=BLL06&doc_number=006178201&line_number=0001&func_code=WEB-FULL&service_type=MEDIA%22 EEBO

A Tablet for Gentlewomen. (Here Foloweth the Letanie, Wyth Certayne Other Godly Prayers.) B.L. London: Printed by William Seres, 1574. http://estc.bl.uk/S95458

Bentley, Thomas, Frances Nevill Abergavenny, Elizabeth Tyrwhit, Marguerite, and Catharine Parr. *The Monument of Matrones: Conteining Seuen Seuerall Lamps of Virginitie, or Distinct Treatises; Whereof the First Fiue Concerne Praier and Meditation: the Other Two Last, Precepts and Examples, as the Woorthie Works Partlie of Men, Partlie of Women; Compiled for the Necessarie Vse of Both Sexes out of the Sacred Scriptures, and Other Approoued Authors, by Thomas Bentley of Graies Inne Student*. London: Printed by H. Denham, 1582.

Blake, John B. "The Compleat Housewife." *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* 49, no. 1, (1975): 30-42. Accessed November 4, 2020. http://www.jstor.org/stable/44450201.

Breton, Nicholas. *Auspicante Jehova Maries Exercise*. London: Printed by Thomas Este, 1597. BL and EEBO

Broughton, Richard. *A Manual of Praiers Used by the Fathers of the Primatiue Church…Wherin by the Very Praiers of the Apostles, and Their Successors, (Here Related without Anie Word or Sillable, Added or Altered) Al the Cheifest Questions Now in Controuersie, Are Inuincible Proued for the Holy Doctrine of the Present Roman Church; by Which We Are Instructed How to Beleeue, and What to Practise in Deuotion.* Lancashire: Birchley Hall Press, 1618. EEBO and BL

Butler-Bowden, trans. *The Book of Margery Kempe*, *1436*. London: Cape, 1936.

Cotton, John, and John Ball. A Modest and Cleare Answer to Mr. Balls Discourse of Set Formes of Prayer.: Set Forth in a Most Seasonable Time, When This Kingdome Is Now in Consultation about Matters of That Nature, and so Many Godly Long after the Resolution in That Point. London: Printed by R.O. and G.D. for Henry Overton, in Popes Head-Alley, 1642.

Cranmer, Thomas, and Henry Jenkyns. *The Remains of Thomas Cranmer, D.D. Archbishop of Canterbury*. Oxford: At the University Press, 1833.

Day, Richard, b.1552. *A Booke of Christian Prayers, Collected Out of the Auncient Writers, and Best Learned in our Tyme, Worthy to be Read with an Earnest Mynde of all Christians, in these Daungerous and Troublesome Dayes, that God for Christes Sake Will Yet Still be Mercyfull Unto Us* London, Printed by John Daye, dwellyng over Aldersgate, 1581,

https://search.proquest.com/books/booke-christian-prayers-collected-out-auncie-n-t/docview/2240904412/se-2?accountid=8483 (accessed April 14, 2021).

de Granada, Luis. *Granados Deuotion*, trans. Francis Meres. London, 1598.

Fortescue, John. *The Works of Sir John Fortescue, Knight*, ed. Thomas Fortescue Clermont, trans. Chichester Fortescue, I. London: Printed for private distribution, 1869.

Freke, Elizabeth, and Raymond A. Anselment. *The Remembrances of Elizabeth Freke, 1671-1714*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001.

Gairdner, James, R. H. Brodie, and John S. Brewer. *Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic, of the Reign of Henry VIII Preserved in the Public Record Office, the British Museum, and Elsewhere*. London: Her Majesty's Stationary Office, 1965.

Herbert, Pembroke Anne Clifford, and Clifford D J H. *The Diaries of Lady Anne Clifford*. Stroud: The History Press, 2015.

Hoby, Margaret, and Joanna Moody. *The Private Life of an Elizabethan Lady: the Diary of Lady Margaret Hoby, 1599-1605*. Stroud: Sutton, 2001.

Hooke, Christopher. *The Child-Birth or Woman's Lecture: That Is: A Lecture Upon Chap. 1. Ver. 57, 58. of the Holie Gospell According to Luke: Very Necessarie to Bee Read and Knowne of All Young Married and Teeming Women, and Not Unprofitable for Men of All Sortes*. London: Printed by Thomas Orwin, for Henry Hooke, and are to be sold in Paules Churchyard, by Raphe Jackson, at the signe of the Swanne, 1590.

Kempe, Margery, and W. Butler-Bowdon. *The Book of Margery Kempe, 1436: A Modern Version*. London: J. Cape, 1940.

Kempe, Margery, Hope Emily Allen, and Sanford Brown Meech. *The Book of Margery Kempe: the Text from the Unique Ms. Owned by Colonel W. Butler-Bowdon*. London, UK: Oxford Univ. Press, 1997.

Manuale et Usum Percelebris Ecclesie Sarisburiensis, ed. A Jefferies Collins, Henry Bradshaw Society, XCI, 1960

Markham, G., and Michael R. Best, *The English Housewife*. Montréal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2014.

Markham, Gervase. *Countrey Contentments or, the English Huswife: Containing the Inward and Outward Vertues Which Ought to Be in a Compleate Woman ...* London: Printed for R. Jackson, 1623.

Peachey, Stuart. *The Good Huswifes Handmaide for the Kitchin*. Bristol: Stuart Press, 1992.

Plowden, Edmund. *Commentaries or Reports*. London, 1816.

Rainbowe, Edward. *A Sermon Preached at Walden in Essex.* London, 1649.

Rowlands, Richard. *Odes in Imitation of the Seaven Penitential Psalmes: With Sundry Other Poemes and Ditties Tending to Devotion and Pietie*. Antwerp: R. Bruney, 1601.

Ruthven, Thomas. *The Ladies Cabinet Enlarged and Opened.* London: Bedell and Collins, 1654.

Shakespeare, William. *Richard II*. ed Anthony Bedford Steel and George Macaulay Trevelyan. Cambridge England: Cambridge University Press, 2013.

Southwell, Anne, Henry Sibthorpe, and Jean Klene. *The Southwell-Sibthorpe Commonplace Book: Folger Ms. V.b. 198*. Tempe, AZ: Medieval & Renaissance Texts & Studies, 1997.

The Lexis of Cloth and Clothing in Britain c. 700-1450: Origins, Identification, Contexts and Change. Research Outline : - Lexis Project - The University of Manchester. Accessed March 17, 2022. http://lexisproject.arts.manchester.ac.uk/research/index.html.

Visitation Articles and Injunctions of the Period of the Reformation, ed. W. H. Frere and W. M. Kennedy, 1908-10.

Vowell, John alias Hooker, *The Description of the Citie of Excester*, 1919, part II. 62-3.

Wheathill, Anne. *A Handfull of Holesome (Though Homelie) Hearbs: Gathered out of the Goodlie Garden of Gods Most Holie Word; for the Common Benefit and Comfortable Exercise of All Such as Are Deuoutlie Disposed. Collected and Dedicated to All Religious Ladies, Gentlewomen, and Others; by Anne Wheathill, Gentlewoman*. London: Printed by Henrie Denham, 1584.

Wilkins, David. *Concilia Magnae Britanniae Et Hiberniae: a Synodo Verolamiensi A.D. CCCC XLVI. Ad Londinensem A.D.M DCCXVII. Accedunt Constitutiones Et Alia Ad Historiam Ecclesiae Anglicanae Spectantia: a Davide Wilkins.* Londini: Sumptibus R. Gosling, 1737.

Wolfe, Don M. *The Complete Prose Works of John Milton, Volume One*. New Haven: Yale UP, 1953.

Woolley, Hannah. “The Gentlewoman's Companion: or, A Guide to the Female Sex, an Electronic Edition.” *Emory Women Writers Resource Project*, 1675. http://womenwriters.digitalscholarship.emory.edu/content.php?level=div.

Secondary Sources

Ames, Marjon. “Quaker Correspondence: Religious Identity and Communication Networks in the Interregnum Atlantic World.” Essay. In *Women and Epistolary Agency in Early Modern Culture, 1450 1690*, edited by James Daybell and Andrew Gordon, 207–20. Routledge, 2019.

Atkinson, Colin B., and Jo B. Atkinson. “Anne Wheathill’s A Handfull of Holesome (Though Homelie) Hearbs (1584): The First English Gentlewoman’s Prayer Book.” *The Sixteenth Century Journal* 27, no. 3 (1996): 659–72. https://doi.org/10.2307/2544010.

Atkinson, Colin B., and Jo B. Atkinson. “Four Prayer Books Addressed to Women during the Reign of Elizabeth I.” *Huntington Library Quarterly* 60, no. 4 (1997): 407–23. https://doi.org/10.2307/3817787.

Atkinson, Colin B., and Jo B. Atkinson. “Numerical Patterning in Anne Wheathill’s A Handfull of Holesome (Though Homelie) Heaths (1584).” *Texas Studies in Literature and Language* 40, no. 1 (1998): 1–25. http://www.jstor.org/stable/40755137.

Atkinson, Colin B., and Jo B. Atkinson. “The Identity and Life of Thomas Bentley, Compiler of The Monument of Matrones (1582).” *The Sixteenth Century Journal* 31, no. 2 (2000): 323–48. https://doi.org/10.2307/2671614.

Barr, Beth Allison. *The Pastoral Care of Women in Late Medieval England*. Woodbridge, UK: Boydell Press, 2008.

Bayard, Tania. *A Medieval Home Companion: Housekeeping in the Fourteenth Century*. New York, NY: Harper Perennial, 1992.

Boyle, Deborah. “Margaret Cavendish on Gender, Nature, and Freedom.” *Hypatia* 28, no. 3 (2013): 516-32.

Brown, Sylvia. *Women, Gender and Radical Religion in Early Modern Europe*. Leiden: Brill, 2007.

Burnet, Gilbert, and Nicholas Pocock. *The History of the Reformation of the Church of England*. Farnborough, Hants: Gregg, 1969.

Buxton, Antony. *Domestic Culture in Early Modern England*. Woodbridge, UK: The Boydell Press, 2015.

Bynum, Caroline Walker. *Fragmentation and Redemption: Essays on Gender and the Human Body in Medieval Religion*. New York: Zone Books, 2012.

Bynum, Caroline Walker. *Holy Feast and Holy Fast: the Religious Significance of Food to Medieval Women*. Berkeley, CA: Univ. of California Press, 2010.

Bynum, Caroline. *Dissimilar Similitudes: Devotional Objects in Late Medieval Europe*. Brooklyn, NY: Zone Books, 2020.

Cambers, Andrew. *Godly Reading: Print, Manuscript and Puritanism in England, 1580-1720*. Cambridge University Press, 2011.

Chappell, Julie, and Kaley A. Kramer. *Women during the English Reformations: Renegotiating Gender* and Religious Identity. New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014.

Clair, Colin. *Kitchen & Table: A Bedside History of Eating in the Western World.* London: Abelard-Schuman, 1965.

Coles, Kimberly Anne. *Religion, Reform, and Women's Writing in Early Modern England*. Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2010.

Coster, Will. *Sacred Space in Early Modern Europe*. Cambridge: Cambridge Univ Press, 2011.

Cranmer, Thomas, and Henry Jenkyns. *The Remains of Thomas Cranmer, D.D. Archbishop of Canterbury*. Oxford: At the University Press, 1833.

Crawford, Patricia. *Women and Religion in England 1500-1720*. London:Routledge, 1993.

Cressy, David. *Birth, Marriage, and Death: Ritual, Religion, and the Life-Cycle in Tudor and Stuart England*. Oxford England: Oxford University Press, 1997.

Daybell, James, and Peter Hinds. *Material Readings of Early Modern Culture: Texts and Social Practices, 1580-1730*. Houndmills, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010.

Duffy, Eamon. *The Stripping of the Altars: Traditional Religion in England, C.1400-C.1580*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005.

Dugan, Holly.*The Ephemeral History of Perfume: Scent and Sense in Early Modern England*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2011.

Ehrenreich, Barbara, and Deirdre English. *Witches, Midwives, and Nurses: a History of Women Healers.* Place of publication not identified: Last Work Press, 2016.

Fitzhenry, William. "The Poetics of Embodiment in Milton's *Of Reformation*." *Rocky Mountain Review* 72, no. 2 (2018): 262–79.

Fletcher, Anthony. *Tudor Rebellions.* 2nd Ed. London: Longman, 1973.

Gilbert, Paul. "The Embodiment of Cultural Identity." *Cultural Identity and Political Ethics*, 2010, 95–122. https://doi.org/10.3366/edinburgh/9780748623877.003.0005.

Gilchrist, Roberta. *Gender and Material Culture: the Archaeology of Religious Women*. London: Routledge, 2008.

Goodrich, Jaime. *Faithful Translators: Authorship, Gender, and Religion in Early Modern England*. Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2014.

Gordon, Andrew. "Materiality and the Streetlife of the Early Modern City." Essay. In *The Routledge Handbook of Material Culture in Early Modern Europe*, edited by Catherine Richardson, Tara Hamling, and Gaimster David R M., 130–40. London: Routledge/Taylor & Francis Group, 2017.

Greenblatt, Stephen J. *Renaissance Self-Fashioning: from More to Shakespeare*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980.

Hallett, Nicky, *Lives of Spirit*. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007.

Hamling, Tara, and Catherine Richardson. *Everyday Objects: Medieval and Early Modern Material Culture and Its Meanings*. New York: Routledge, Taylor et Francis Group, 2016.

Hamling, Tara. *A Day at Home in Early Modern England: Material Culture and Domestic Life, 1500-1700*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2017.

Hamling, Tara. *Decorating the 'Godly' Household: Religious Art in Post-Reformation Britain*. New Haven: Published for the Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art by Yale University Press, 2010.

Harris, Jonathan Gil. *Untimely Matter in the Time of Shakespeare*. Philadelphia: U of Pennsylvania P, 2009.

Haude, Sigrun. "Female Religious Communities during the Thirty Years' War." Essay. In *Embodiment, Identity, and Gender in the Early Modern Age*, edited by Amy Leonard and David M. Whitford. Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2021.

Hellwarth, Jennifer Wynne. *The Reproductive Unconscious in Late Medieval and Early Modern England.* New York: Routledge, 2002.

Hole, Christina. *The English Housewife in the Seventeenth Century. With Plates, Including Portraits, Illustrations and a Bibliography.* London, 1953.

Hooker, Richard. *Of the Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity*. Eugene, Or.: Wipf & Stock, 2003.

Hull, Suzanne W. *Chaste, Silent and Obedient: English Books for Women 1475-1640*. San Marino: Huntington Library, 1988.

Hutchins, Edwin. "Cognitive Ecology." *Topics in Cognitive Science* 2, no. 4 (January 2010): 705-715. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1756-8765.2010.01089.x.

Jacob, Margaret C. "The Enlightenment Redefined: The Formation of Modern Civil Society." *Social Research* 58, no. 2 (1991): 475–95.

Jenner, Mark S. R., and Patrick Wallis. *Medicine and the Market in England and Its Colonies, C.1450-C.1850*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007.

Jones, Karen, and Michael Zell. "'The Divels Speciall Instruments': Women and Witchcraft before the 'Great Witch-Hunt.'" *Social History* 30, no. 1 (2005): 45–63. https://doi.org/10.1080/0307102042000337288 .

Jones, Norman. *The English Reformation: Religion and Cultural Adaptation*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2002.

Kane, Bronach Christina, and Fiona Williamson. *Women, Agency and the Law, 1300-1700*. London: Routledge, 2016.

Kantorowicz, Ernst. *The King's Two Bodies: a Study in Medieval Political Theology*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2016.

Kibbey, Ann. *The Interpretation of Material Shapes in Puritanism: a Study of Rhetoric, Prejudice, and Violence*. Cambridge Cambridgeshire: Cambridge University Press, 1986.

Knight, Katherine. "A Precious Medicine: Tradition and Magic in Some Seventeenth-Century Household Remedies." *Folklore* 113, no. 2 (2002): 237-47.

Knight, Leah, Micheline White, and Elizabeth Sauer, eds. *Women's Bookscapes in Early Modern Britain: Reading, Ownership, Circulation*. Ann Arbor Michigan: University of Michigan Press, 2018.

Leonard, Amy, and David M. Whitford. *Embodiment, Identity, and Gender in the Early Modern Age*. London: Routledge, 2021.

Leong, Elaine. "'Herbals She Peruseth': Reading Medicine in Early Modern England." *Renaissance Studies* 28, no. 4 (2014): 556–78. https://doi.org/10.1111/rest.12079.

Leong, Elaine. "Making Medicines in the Early Modern Household." *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* 82, no. 1 (2008): 145–68. https://doi.org/10.1353/bhm.2008.0042.

Luther, Martin. *Luther's Works*, ed. Walther I. Brandt, vol. 45 (Philadelphia, PA: Muhlenberg Press, 1962).

Maguire, Frances, and Helen Smith. "Material Texts." Essay. In *The Routledge Handbook of Material Culture in Early Modern Europe*, edited by Catherine Richardson, Tara Hamling, and Gaimster David R M., 206–15. London: Routledge/Taylor & Francis Group, 2021.

Marshall, Peter. *Oxford Illustrated History of the Reformation*. Oxford University Press, 2017.

Miller, Daniel. *Materiality*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2005.

Mirollo, James V. "The Lives of Saints Teresa of Avila and Benvenuto of Florence." *Texas Studies in Literature and Language* 29, no. 1 (1987): 54–73. http://www.jstor.org/stable/40754816.

Muir, Edward. *Ritual in Early Modern Europe*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009.

Newman, L. F. "Some Notes on Folk Medicine in the Eastern Counties." *Folklore* 56, no. 4 (1945): 349-60.

Orlin, Lena Cowen. *Elizabethan Households: an Anthology: in Conjunction with the Exhibition Elizabethan Households, Presented at the Folger Library, Washington, DC, from February 13 through May 20, 1995*. Washington, D.C.: Folger Shakespeare Library, 1995.

Pennell, Sara. "Getting Down from the Table: Early Modern Foldaways and Material Culture." Essay. In *The Routledge Handbook of Material Culture in Early Modern Europe*, edited by Catherine Richardson, Tara Hamling, and Gaimster David R M., 185–95. London: Routledge/Taylor & Francis Group, 2021.

Pennell, Sara. *The Birth of the English Kitchen: 1600-1850.* London: Bloomsbury, 2017.

Rankin, Alisha. *Secrets and Knowledge in Medicine and Science, 1500–1800*, 2016. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315608006.

Raven, James. "Memorializing a London Bookscape: The Mapping and Reading of Paternoster Row and St. Paul's Churchyard, 1695 - 1814," in *Order and Connexion: Studies in Bibliography and Book History: Selected Papers from the Munby Seminar, Cambridge, July 1994,* ed. R. C. Alston. Cambridge: Boydell & Brewer, 1997.

Reynolds, Paige Martin Reynolds. "Sin, Sacredness, and Childbirth in Early Modern Drama." *Medieval & Renaissance Drama in England.* 2015, Vol. 28 (2015), 30-48.

Richardson, Catherine, Tara Hamling, and David Gaimster, eds. *Routledge Handbook of Material Culture in Early Modern Europe*. New York, NY: Routledge, 2017.

Riches, Samantha J.E., and Sarah Salih, eds. *Gender and Holiness Men, Women and Saints in Late Medieval Europe*. Routledge, 2013.

Rublack, Ulinka. *The Astronomer and the Witch: Johannes Kepler's Fight for His Mother*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017.

Schutte, Anne Jacobson, Thomas Kuehn, and Seidel Silvana Menchi. *Time, Space, and Women's Lives in Early Modern Europe*. Kirksville, MO: Truman State University Press, 2001.

Scott, James C. *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts*. New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 2009.

Shryock, Andrew, and Daniel Lord Smail. "Body." Essay. In *Deep History: The Architecture of Past and* Present, 55–77. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2012.

Skerpan-Wheeler, Elizabeth. "Early Political Prose," in *A New Companion to Milton*. ed.

Thomas N. Corns. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2001. 263-278.

Smith, Helen. "'More Swete Vnto the Eare / than Holsome for Ye Mynde': Embodying Early Modern Women's Reading." *Huntington Library Quarterly* 73, no. 3 (2010): 413–32. https://doi.org/ 10.1525/hlq.2010.73.3.413.

Sutton, John, and Nicholas Keene. "Cognitive History and Material Culture." Essay. In *The Routledge Handbook of Material Culture in Early Modern Europe*, edited by Catherine Richardson, Tara Hamling, and Gaimster David R M., 46–58. London: Routledge/Taylor & Francis Group, 2017.

Theophano, Janet. *Eat My Words: Reading Women's Lives through the Cookbooks They Wrote*. New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003.

Thomas, Keith. *Religion and the Decline of Magic: Studies in Popular Beliefs in Sixteenth- and Seventeenth-Century England.* Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1978.

Thompson, John L. "Anna Maria Van Schurman: Poetry as Exegesis." Essay. In *Embodiment, Identity, and Gender in the Early Modern Age*, edited by Amy Leonard and David M. Whitford. Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2021.

Tillyard, Eustace M. W. *The Elizabethan World Picture*. New York: Macmillan, 1944.

Trimmer, Eric J. "Medical Folklore and Quackery." *Folklore* 76, no. 3 (1965): 161-75.

Ulrich, Laurel Thatcher. *Tangible Things: Making History through Objects*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2015.

Wall, Wendy. "Literacy and the Domestic Arts." *Huntington Library Quarterly* 73, no. 3 (2010): 383-412.

Wall, Wendy. "Shakespearean Jell-O: Mortality and Malleability in the Kitchen." *Gastronomica* 6, no. 1 (2006): 41-50.

Walsham, Alexandra. "The Reformation and 'The Disenchantment of the World' Reassessed." *The Historical Journal* 51, no. 2 (2008): 497-528. Accessed January 9, 2021. http://www.jstor.org/stable/20175171.

Warren, Nancy Bradley. *The Embodied Word*. Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 2010.

Weber, A. S. "Women's Early Modern Medical Almanacs in Historical Context." *English Literary Renaissance* 33, no. 3 (2003): 358-402.

Weisser, O. "Grieved and Disordered: Gender and Emotion in Early Modern Patient Narratives." *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 43, no. 2 (2013): 247–73. https://doi.org/10.1215/10829636-2081969.

Wetenhall, Tillyard Eustace Mandeville. *The Elizabethan World Picture*. New York: Macmillan, 1944.

Wheeler, Elizabeth Skerpan. "Early Political Prose." *A Companion to Milton*. Ed. Thomas N. Corns. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers 2001, 263-78.

Wiesner-Hanks, Merry E. *Women and Gender in Early Modern Europe*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008.

Wiesner, Merry E. "Beyond Women and the Family: Towards a Gender Analysis of the Reformation." *Sixteenth Century Journal* 18, no. 3 (1987): 311. https://doi.org/10.2307/2540718.

Wolputte, Steven Van. "Hang on to Your Self: Of Bodies, Embodiment, and Selves." *Annual Review of Anthropology* 33, no. 1 (2004): 251–69. https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.anthro.33.0702