

2012

Who Rules the Waves? Reading the Sea in Late Medieval and Early Modern English Literature

Kurt Eric Douglass
Lehigh University

Follow this and additional works at: <http://preserve.lehigh.edu/etd>

Recommended Citation

Douglass, Kurt Eric, "Who Rules the Waves? Reading the Sea in Late Medieval and Early Modern English Literature" (2012). *Theses and Dissertations*. Paper 1389.

This Dissertation is brought to you for free and open access by Lehigh Preserve. It has been accepted for inclusion in Theses and Dissertations by an authorized administrator of Lehigh Preserve. For more information, please contact preserve@lehigh.edu.

Who Rules the Waves? Reading the Sea in Late Medieval and Early Modern English
Literature

by

Kurt E. Douglass

A Dissertation

Presented to the Graduate and Research Committee

of Lehigh University

in Candidacy for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in

English

Lehigh University

January 2012

Copyright
Kurt E. Douglass
2012

Approved and recommended for acceptance as a dissertation in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

Kurt E. Douglass

Who Rules the Waves? Reading the Sea in Late Medieval and Early Modern English Literature

Dr. Barbara H. Traister
Dissertation Director

Approved Date

Committee Members:

Dr. Katherine Crassons

Dr. Scott Paul Gordon

Dr. Benjamin G. Wright, III

Acknowledgements

I am profoundly grateful to the members of my dissertation committee for the time, effort, and care that each one of them devoted to this project. I have benefited enormously from Dr. Barbara Traister's consistent readiness to provide critical feedback on not only numerous drafts of chapters but also sections of chapters, to meet regularly with me to discuss ideas and plans and life in general, to help me through difficult periods of writing, and to provide guidance in professional development beyond the dissertation. Her steady encouragement, patience, and support were indispensable in keeping me oriented, refreshed, and chugging along towards completion. I truly could not have had a better dissertation director. Dr. Kate Crassons gave me a deep awareness of and respect for the intellectual complexity and nuances of late medieval texts and religious culture, while her formidable knowledge of medieval and Reformation theology has been an inspiration to me; it was vital to the genesis, direction, and completion of this project. The intellectual curiosity and rigor of Dr. Scott Gordon has also been a consistent inspiration. His enthusiastic, challenging, and keenly insightful responses to my writing always awakened me to new possibilities in my ideas, showed me how they fit into broader intellectual contexts, and never failed to make me excited to get back to work. My work has profited greatly, too, from Dr. Ben Wright's steady attention to scholarly thoroughness and his helping me to see just how much the texts this dissertation examines are shaped by and respond to the Bible.

Making it to this point would not have been possible without my family. I will always be thankful for the enduring encouragement and understanding of my mother and

father—even in the most difficult times. I love you both, and I miss you every day, Dad. Squiggy deserves thanks as well, for his company on late nights and for helping me to focus by letting me watch as he went about housekeeping in his gerbilarium. Thanks also to Nick and Helen for putting up with my constant working. Finally, nobody has sacrificed more, put up with more, and supported me more during this process than Dawn. My love for you defies expression; you are everything.

Contents

Abstract	1
Introduction	3
Chapter 1. A Church Not Made with Hands: Salvation by the Sea in the <i>Man of Law's Tale</i> and the <i>Book of Margery Kempe</i>	26
Chapter 2. Ships, the Sea, and the Supernatural in the Digby <i>Mary Magdalene</i> and Shakespeare's <i>Pericles, Prince of Tyre</i>	89
Chapter 3. Agnostic Voyages in Wyatt, Spenser, and Marvell	133
Chapter 4. Piratical Seas: Providence Unmoored in <i>A Christian Turned Turk</i> , <i>Fortune by Land and Sea</i> , and <i>Hamlet</i>	197
Conclusion	269
Works Cited	277
Curriculum Vitae	297

Abstract

By the later Middle Ages, the sea provided a long-established reservoir of symbolic material in Christian culture for representing God's providential governance of human affairs, exemplified by the common figure of the ship of the Church carrying the faithful through the dangerously unstable sea of the world towards salvation. This tradition of maritime religious imagery made the sea a potent representational space in English culture during the late medieval and early modern periods for working through theological and existential questions given new urgency by religious reform and the growing importance of seafaring, with its many perils, uncertainties, and awe-inspiring experiences. Which religious practices and theological doctrines truly coincided with God's providence? How did salvation work? How was one to know if one was counted among the saved? What causal forces shaped human lives? Was history moving forward teleologically, according to a carefully plotted divine plan and towards a final end in which the destiny of each human soul matched his or her true worth? Or did human lives and history merely proceed haphazardly, towards no particular end and in a world without a divine overseer who governed according to ultimately just motives?

This dissertation contributes to recent scholarship on the cultural significance of the sea in pre-modern Britain by examining how writers from Chaucer to Marvell marshaled historically specific representations of seafaring to explore the intricacies of a basic problem that underlay such questions and that was becoming increasingly complicated by the momentum of religious reform, that of how and whether it was even possible to discern a divine reality that structured human existence. Moreover, during

what might be called the “long” era of reform from the later Middle Ages to the seventeenth century, sea imagery gradually reveals the emergence of skepticism out of the theological controversies of that era—skepticism ranging from doubts about the medieval Church’s claim to be the uniquely authentic representative of God on earth to anxiety that, rather than being organized by a beneficent divine providence, human life was a matter of weathering or navigating the vagaries of fortune in an indifferent cosmos.

Introduction

During the late medieval and early modern periods, the sea and ship travel assumed ever more prominence in the cultural life of England. That this should be so is not surprising given that England as a political entity came to be defined to a greater extent by Britain as a geographical entity, that is, as an island, separated from the Continent by the North Sea and the Channel. Central to this association between the English identity and insularity was the Hundred Years War. “The loss of the country’s possessions on the Continent during the close of the Hundred Years War,” Sebastian Sobocki observes, fostered “the realisation [. . .] that that which geographically and culturally *defines* Britain and a large part of England is above all the sea” (3). The greater significance of the sea in England’s geopolitical demarcation built on the sea’s already established importance in England’s economic, cultural, and religious life. For example, the “cloth industry of Italy relied” on wool from both England and Scotland (G. Hutchinson 84). It was delivered to overland routes on the Continent by ships plying the Channel; by the end of the thirteenth century, it went along sea routes between Britain and Italy, running through the Bay of Biscay and the Straits of Gibraltar (84). The wine trade in England also depended upon the ships that imported wine from the Continent, making “it possible for wine to become a regular item of consumption for more and more of the population of a country which produced little wine itself” (1). Fishing fleets were necessary for the maintenance of the “medieval diet,” given that the Church “forbade meat consumption on at least two days a week as well as on certain other holy days and during the six weeks of Lent” (129). By the early fifteenth century, English fleets were

routinely hauling large catches of cod from the waters around Iceland (Fagan 75-76). Pilgrims to the Holy Land and to shrines on the Continent inevitably relied on ships to carry them from ports such as Bristol, Plymouth, and Dover to their various destinations. Pilgrims' reliance on ships going from England to Santiago de Compostela became even greater in the late fourteenth and the fifteenth centuries when the ravages of the Hundred Years War made any overland travel through France an especially "long and dangerous trip" (Labarge 85). Similarly, the Ottoman presence in Asia Minor and the Balkans made pilgrims who traveled from the Channel across the Continent more likely to avoid those Ottoman lands and, instead, board pilgrim ships again in Venice or Genoa and cross the Mediterranean to the Holy Land (72).

In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, English maritime activity became more global in scale and drove the initial growth of the British Empire. After 1570, London became a "rapidly expanding super-port" that was at the center of an international commercial network that encompassed "Russia, the Baltic, the Mediterranean, the Americas and the Far East" (Vitkus, *Turning* 26; Clay 200). Christopher Clay points out that the tonnage of "shipping owned in London" increased from "12,300 tons in 1582, to 35,300 tons in 1629, and to about 150,000 tons by 1686" (202). Clay estimates, moreover, that during these years "the number of seamen required [in London] must have risen ten fold or more, and cannot have been less than 12,000 by the last of these dates," while "tens of thousands more people were involved" in "the provision of port services" (202). To promote overseas commerce and to establish trading colonies, "new trading companies" were set up in the later sixteenth and the early seventeenth centuries, including the Muscovy Company, the Levant Company, the Virginia Company, the

Massachusetts Bay Company, and the East India Company (Herman 96). Beginning in the second half of the sixteenth century, England's entrance onto the imperial stage was also marked by the voyages of exploration and conquest made by seamen such as Martin Frobisher, Francis Drake, John Hawkins, Humphrey Gilbert, and Walter Raleigh, the kinds of expansionist voyages celebrated and promoted by Richard Hakluyt in his *Principal Navigations of the English Nation* (Helgerson 151-52). Although it was not until the midpoint of the sixteenth century that England started to become a significant player in the imperial scramble of the Age of Discovery, there nonetheless had been incipient movements in that direction during the late fifteenth and the early sixteenth centuries, for instance, the Cabots' voyages from England across the Atlantic, "which resulted in the discovery of Newfoundland," the expeditions out of Bristol in search of the legendary "island of Brasil," and "the first opening of the English trade to the Levant" (Burwash xi; Rose 60).

Ships and the sea also had well-established symbolic or representational significance in pre-modern Christianity. The notion of the sea of the world, traceable to patristic writing, had become commonplace by the Middle Ages (Sobecki 36). In this moral and existential formulation, the fallen, changeable world is similar in nature to the unstable, unpredictable, often tumultuous, and therefore potentially deadly, waters of the sea. That is, worldly temptations to sin and the numerous sufferings generated by the mutable nature of earthly existence correspond to the "perils, tempests, and [. . .] risk of drowning" that face sailors at sea (Kolve 335). Sobecki shows how the "influential image of the sea as the world" derived to a large degree from "a conception of the sea [in patristic sources] as the seat of demonic and hostile forces" (36). The connection

between the sea and evil was derived, in turn, from the connection in Genesis between the abyss, or the deep, and the primordial, chaotic matter which existed prior to creation and which was given form by creation. In the Vulgate, there are “three principal terms for the sea: *aqua* [water], *abyssus* [the deep] and *mare* [sea]” (34). Both “aqua” and “abyssus” are “older than creation”: darkness is covering the “face of the deep” when the spirit of God moves “over the waters” and begins the process of creation (34). The sea is what results when God “bind[s] the waters together and mould[s] them into form” (35). Thus the sea contains within it “an echo of uncreated primeval chaos”; it contains the substance of evil insofar as evil is defined fundamentally as disorder, or moral chaos (34-35). “From the fourth century onwards,” the idea of the sea merged increasingly with that of the abyss, the profound depths of “primeval disorder,” in the thought of the Church Fathers (34, 37-38). Gregory the Great, for example, conceived of the sea as damnation, “the depths of everlasting death,” while Hilary of Poitiers described the “bottom of the sea” as “the seat of Hell” (38).

Sobecki’s analysis of how the primordial waters in the Genesis account of creation—which were, on one hand, the very material through which God expressed His divine will in the creative act—figured, on the other hand, into Christian conceptions of the evil, chaotic sea is helpful in illuminating the larger contradictory significance of the sea in pre-modern Christian culture. Insofar as these waters apparently existed in a state of unstructured disorder and confusion prior to God’s creative act, the sea took on overtones of a world or a state of being that was not structured by the presence of God but was, instead, determined by random contingency. But insofar as the primordial waters in Genesis were the “stuff” that God molded into creation, the sea came to be

associated with beneficent providence, signifying a world overseen by a just God's governing hand, a teleological world in which all things, however haphazard they might have appeared to be, nonetheless moved towards their divinely appointed and justified ends (Brayton 181-82).

This providential view of the sea had additional scriptural grounds, such as the story of Noah and the Flood, which Augustine interpreted in a way that contributed to the ubiquitous image in medieval Christianity of the Church as a ship. In *The City of God*, Augustine reads the ark as the Church, constructed from the wood of Christ's cross, and its voyage through the Flood as a journey through the world towards salvation: "this is certainly a figure of the city of God sojourning in this world; that is to say, of the church, which is rescued by the wood on which hung the Mediator of God and men, the man Christ Jesus" (*City*, Dods 98; bk. 15, ch. 26). In the Middle Ages, visual depictions of Noah's ark often showed it as "a kind of church built on a ship's base" (Kolve 315). The construction of medieval churches themselves gave architectural expression to the metaphor of the ship of the Church:

the very word 'nave,' used to identify the largest space in a cathedral, the space where the laity hears the mass, comes from the Latin *navis*, meaning 'ship,' and the 'ship's keel' roof that characterizes certain church naves—a roof that looks like the inside of an upturned boat, and depends upon construction techniques related to boat building—may represent a translation of that symbolism into architectural fact. (315-16)

In other words, when the community of worshippers is in a church being guided towards salvation by witnessing the mass, they are also in a ship guided by Christ through the sea

of the world to the haven of heaven. Not surprisingly, the image tended to appear in medieval sermons as well, for instance, in a twelfth-century sermon by Achard of St. Victor that proclaims, “To cross that sea [of the world] we must have a ship, mast, sail, etc. The ship signifies the faith; the sentences of Holy Scripture are its planks, and the authorities of the Holy Doctors its rudder” (qtd. in Owst 68). Medieval Church/ship metaphors such as that employed by Achard expressed the orthodox view that the institutional Catholic Church, with its ecclesiastical hierarchy and claims to sacramental power, was a function of providence. It was the earthly representative and visible manifestation of divine power, of God as the structural principle in the universe who directs every soul to its ultimate end in the divine scheme of things.

The popularity of the metaphor of the ship of the church also meant that it became a common figure through which medieval reformers and, later, Protestant writers censured the Catholic Church or expressed an alternative vision of the true church.¹ A Wycliffite sermon on the account in Matthew of Christ’s walking on the water, towards the storm-tossed boat that carries His terrified disciples on the Sea of Galilee, uses the metaphor in this way. The sermon takes issue with those who interpret the story to mean that the disciples in the boat signify the ecclesiastical hierarchy of the medieval Church, making that hierarchy “Cristis Chirche,” and that Christ’s calming of the storm lashing the boat signifies that the clergy will be saved simply because they are the clergy. Rather, the sermonist argues, the materialism that is rampant among the clergy, their

¹ Throughout the dissertation, I do not capitalize “reformers,” “reformist,” etc. when referring to late medieval and early modern religious reform combined (that is, from the fourteenth century forward) or to late medieval reform in particular. When referring specifically to the ideas of the Reformation “proper,” however, I do capitalize “Reformers,” “Reformist,” etc.

pursuit of “worldli goodis,” makes many of them unfit to be members of the true church; the real ship of the church contains only those Christians who live virtuously in “poverté and mekenesse,” following the example of Christ’s life and placing their faith in Him alone (Arnold 375). In the 1530s, William Tyndale provided a Protestant Reformer’s perspective on the ship of the church, emphasizing faith grounded in Scripture but leaving aside any ecclesiastical hierarchy: “Tie to thy [his reader’s] ship this anchor of faith in Christ’s blood, with the cable of love, to cast it out against all tempests; and so set thy sail, and get thee to the main sea of God’s word” (245). Later in the sixteenth century, the ninth book John Foxe’s *Acts and Monuments* was prefaced by an illustration depicting English Protestants zealously purging an English church of papists and the idolatrous paraphernalia of their worship. A bonfire consumes the offending “Images,” such as crucifixes and statues of holy personages, while the papists, laden with other idolatrous “trinkets” and “Paltry,” are packed onto the “Ship of the Romish Church” and presumably banished from the Reformed shores of Britain. They leave behind them a “Temple well purged” of their idolatry, in which “the godly assemble [. . .], beneath the communion table and baptismal font,” to listen to the preaching of Scripture without the distracting accoutrements of Roman Catholic ritual (Foxe 1521; Heal 264). The metaphor of the ship of the church thus proved useful in late medieval and Reformation controversies about which forms of religion were truly in harmony with God’s providential will and faithfully expressed His salvific power.

The sea also figured more generally in the providential discourses of early modern Protestantism, in which the sea was commonly understood, according to James Conlan, as a place where it was especially likely that God would disclose “both the immutable

laws of His Providence and the identity of [H]is predestined saints” (44). Conlan points, for example, to the glosses to Psalm 107 in the Geneva Bible of 1583 (“They that go downe to the sea in ships, [and] occupy by the great waters, They see the works of the Lord, and his wonders in the deepe. [. . .] They are tossed to and fro [. . .] and al their cunning is gone. They cry unto the Lord in their trouble, [&] he bringeth them out of their distresse”). The glosses interpret the Psalm as showing “by the sea what care God hath over men, for in that he delivereth from great dangers of the sea, he delivereth them, as it were, from a thousand deathes. [. . .] When their art and meanes fayle them, they are compelled to confesse that only Gods providence doth preserve them” (qtd. in Conlan 42-43). Perhaps the most famous instance of nautical providentialism, or what Conlan calls “nautical piety,” in sixteenth-century England was the reaction to the destruction of the Spanish Armada in 1588, which was largely credited to the stormy winds that scattered and disabled the Spanish ships, a victory that the English government commemorated with a medal bearing the “inscription ‘Afflavit Deus et dissipati sunt’ (God blew and they were scattered)” (Conlan vii; Bucholz and Key 144). Popular opinion held that the scattering of the Armada by God’s winds showed that Protestant England, not Catholic Spain, was among the elect, “a chosen nation” (Bucholz and Key 143).

Protestant writers, furthermore, called on sea imagery to resist what they saw as the slippery slope towards unbelief in people’s tendency to forget that God was a fully interventionist creator or to attribute the vicissitudes of human existence to the random fluctuations of fortune, which also had a longstanding association with the sea (Calvin 1.16.1-3; Kiefer 17). For Calvin, what would become known as deism—the belief that God merely pushed the world into motion at creation and then sat back to let it run

according to its own devices—was no different from atheism, because a universe in which God took a hands-off approach to creation would be for all practical purposes no different from a godless universe. Calvin claims that “ungodly men,” those who “have become hardened in insolent and habitual sinning,” behave as if God did not exercise His “judgment and providence,” as if He had instead become “blind to the wicked deeds of men,” leaving those deeds unpunished, and “cast off the government of the universe and abandon[ed] it to fortune” (*Institutes* 1.4.2). To act as if God did not intervene in human affairs and judge people according to their merits was in effect to “[deny] that there is a God” (1.4.2). Roger Hutchinson’s 1550 *Image of God* refers to Scripture to defend the belief in an interventionist God against such “ungodly men,” those for whom God is like a “shipwright” who, after constructing a ship, “leaveth it to the mariners, and meddleth no more therewith,” that is, a God who does not “[rule] the world after his providence” but “[leaves] all his creatures to their own governance, or to the governance of the stars” (69). Thomas Norton’s mid-sixteenth-century English translation of Calvin’s *Institutes* refers to God as a ship’s pilot who actively steers the ship of the world rather than watching from afar as events unfold on their own: “Providence is called that, not wherwith God idly beholdeth from heaven what is done in the world, but wherwith as guiding the sterne he sitteth and ordreth al thinges that come to passe” (bk. 1, fol. 56; 1.16.4).

The classical pagan discourse of fortune had persisted in varying degrees of popularity throughout the Middle Ages and the Renaissance as a kind of counter-tradition to Christian providentialism. Fortune gave expression to the nagging fear that people were, as Frederick Kiefer puts it, “subject to irrational forces, that what befell [them]

might be the consequence of chance rather than design, that despite [their] best efforts [they] could be foiled by circumstance, that not even the possession of wisdom could fend off the most horrendous adversity” (xvii). Fortune’s persistence in medieval and Renaissance Europe demonstrates “the profound doubts and fears of a culture whose faith in providential design was at times precarious” (Kiefer xvii). The volatile nature of the sea combined with Scripture’s assertion of God’s control over it gave Protestant Reformers a ready rhetorical tool for arguing that the discourse of fortune represented, at bottom, a failure of perception, a failure to recognize the incredibly complex, deep structure in apparently happenstance events. Thus Calvin argues that if a “sudden gale” rises at sea and causes a sailor to be “shipwrecked” or if another sailor, “having been tossed by the waves,” unexpectedly “reaches harbor” and “miraculously escapes death by a finger’s breadth,” “carnal reason ascribes all such happenings [. . .] to fortune.” But Scripture (the authoritative supplement to “carnal reason”) tells us to look more deeply for the underlying cause and discover “that all events are governed by God’s secret plan” (*Institutes* 1.16.2).

When Calvin uses nautical images to assert that providence, not arbitrary fortune, determines the course of things in the world, he is, so to speak, meeting fortune on its own ground. Fortune too was, as Kiefer shows, “customarily associated with the sea in antiquity (she usually held a rudder or prow, symbolic of her capacity to direct the course of [one’s] life) and in the Middle Ages, which continued to find in the sea an apt symbol of Fortune’s mercurial nature” (195). In his *Consolation of Philosophy*, which was enormously influential in the Middle Ages and which recounts his discussions with Lady Philosophy about “man’s relationship to Fortune and to God,” Boethius describes himself

as tossed “on fortune’s tide” (Kiefer 5; Boethius bk. 1, song 5). Lady Philosophy compares fortune to a wind on the sea that sends ships in whichever direction it happens to be blowing: “[If] thou commit thy sails to the winds, thou wouldst voyage not whither thy intention was to go, but whither the winds drave thee” (Boethius 23). The association between fortune and the sea continued into the early modern period, when “the storm-tossed ship as a metaphor for the vicissitudes of human life, and the shipwreck as an ‘image of surrender of self-control, or helplessness before fortune’, were commonplaces in emblem books and elsewhere” (Lindley 6). Calvin’s aforementioned objections to fortune’s popularity demonstrate this ongoing connection between fortune and the sea, as does the repeated linking of fortune and the sea in Renaissance drama, such as when Stephano, one of King Alonso’s sailing party whose ship has been driven to Prospero’s island in *The Tempest*, declares, “all is but fortune” (Shakespeare 5.1.257).

Despite his strenuous objections to fortune, even Calvin concedes that fortune has some reality, its reality in people’s minds:

However all things may be ordained by God’s plan, according to a sure dispensation, for us they are fortuitous. [. . .] Since the order, reason, end, and necessity of those things which happen for the most part lie hidden in God’s purpose, and are not apprehended by human opinion, those things, which it is certain take place by God’s will, are in a sense fortuitous. For they bear on the face of them no other appearance, whether they are considered in their own nature or weighed according to our knowledge and judgment. (*Institutes* 1.16.9)

Because we are fallen creatures, we can never really rationally grasp anything that lies beyond what the restricted knowledge of “carnal reason” allows us to grasp, and this disturbs the distinction between the appearance of fortune and the reality of providence that Calvin upholds overall. Only trust in Scripture tells us that when fortune appears to our rational capacities to be “tumbling all things at random up and down” what we are actually witnessing is providence in motion (*Institutes* 1.16.9). The Book of Jonah, for instance, informs us that “when he would have Jonah cast into the sea, God sent a wind by stirring up a whirlwind.” And the Psalms teach that “whenever the sea boils up with the blast of winds those forces witness to the singular presence of God. ‘He commands and raises the stormy wind which lifts on high the waves of the sea’; ‘then he causes the storm to become calm, so that the waves cease for the sailors’” (*Institutes* 1.16.7). Strictly within the purview of human knowledge, however, there is no way to establish with certainty that what seems to be fortuitous is, in fact, providential, especially given that providence in action can look exactly like fortune in action. Therefore, reason contends that it is entirely possible that the things in life that appear to be caused by the chaotic, indiscriminate fluctuations of fortune seem that way because they are that way.

If the lynchpin in Protestant Reformers’ argument for providence is a commitment to the authority of Scripture, that is also the argument’s potential weakness. There is no guarantee that those who listen to the argument will be able, alongside Calvin and his fellow providentialists, to make the leap from limited knowledge to faith. As Jonathan Dollimore notes, if people were unconvinced by Calvin’s “explanation” of providence, “it may well have been because they found his explanation and others like it woefully inadequate,” particularly when it came to providential rationalizations for

suffering and adversity which seemed to them to be undeserved (104). That not everyone was convinced by the Reformers' attack on fortune is suggested, Kiefer points out, "by the very passion of their attack," which attests to "the persistent vitality of Fortune" (22). Calvin's references to the sea in relation to his consideration of providence and fortune call to mind Steve Mentz's point that "looking closely at the sea [. . .] challenges established habits of thought" ("Blue" 997). It is not difficult to understand how the sea offered pre-modern culture a store of potent images for thinking through the vexed matters of causation and destiny, and how doing so might have led one to skeptical conclusions about providence. For passengers on a weather-beaten ship, the sea's hazardous volatility would represent an immediate existential threat that might make urgently relevant the matter of how much credence to give to traditional authority—Scripture affirmed that the dangerously changeable sea was actually highly structured by God—and how much to give to empirical experience—experience that might have strongly suggested to the passengers that their ship was merely caught in the grip of the chaotic, accidental circumstances their eyes perceived.

The association of sea voyages with the skeptical questioning of established claims to religious truth is found also in European responses to the voyages of discovery to the New World, particularly in Montaigne's *Essays*, which were translated into English in 1603 by John Florio and became "enormously influential in the educated circles of Early Modern Britain" (Hiscock 456). For Montaigne, human reason is hopelessly unable to determine whether certain truth-claims are more legitimate than others and, therefore, is woefully incapable of arriving at genuine knowledge. Richard Popkin helpfully sums up his skeptical stance:

If we could even recognize the appearance of truth, or the greater probability of one judgment than another, then we should be able to reach some general agreement about what a particular thing is like, or probably like. But with each change in ourselves, we change our judgments, and there is always disagreement either with ourselves or each other. [. . .] Our own powers, Montaigne shows, change with our bodily and emotional conditions, so that what we judge true at one moment we see as false or dubious at another. (*History* 52)

Montaigne's awareness of the previously unknown and radically different cultures that the voyagers across the Atlantic had discovered in America contributed to the cultural and ethical relativism that accompanied his skepticism. If the unreliability of reason made it impossible to arrive at fixed, certain conclusions, then how could one decide whether a European culture was any better or worse, any more savage or noble, than one of the recently discovered cultures in America? (Popkin, *History* 55).

In the "Apology for Raymond Sebond," Montaigne touches on this point when describing one of his own cross-cultural encounters that had been made possible by a sea voyage, his encounter with "some men brought by sea from a far country" to France (416). He highlights that the less than positive assessments made of these men by his fellow French subjects were based, in the end, on nothing more than the men's strangeness: "Because we did not understand their language at all, and because their ways, moreover, and their bearing and their clothes were totally remote from ours, which of us did not consider them savages and brutes?" (416). It is simple cultural prejudice, not any real capacity to weigh with objectivity the pros and cons of foreign ways, that

causes these men to be judged unfavorably by their French hosts: “Everything that seems strange to us we condemn, and everything that we do not understand” (416). To Montaigne, the cross-cultural exchanges enabled by sea voyages exemplify how the inevitable failure of knowledge to arrive at clear truth means that we can never make wholly sound, rational judgments that some human practices and customs are more authentic, ethical, or true than others.

The voyages of discovery, furthermore, “cast in doubt the science of cosmography, and the opinions that were accepted about it by one and all” (523). Ptolemaic geography had supposedly “established the limits of our world” and “all the ancient philosophers” thought they knew the planet’s “measure, except for a few remote islands that might escape their knowledge” (523). But the voyages of Columbus and those who followed had shattered this world picture by revealing “not an island or one particular country, but a portion [of terra firma] nearly equal in size to the one we know” (523). The discovery of these vast, new lands confirms for Montaigne that knowledge, including our knowledge of the physical world, is always incomplete and unreliable. “If Ptolemy was once mistaken on the grounds of his reason,” how can we trust “the geographers of the present time” who “do not fail to assure us” that the revelation of these new territories means that “now all is discovered and all is seen?” (523).

Not only do sea voyages contribute to Montaigne’s skepticism; he also expresses that skepticism through maritime images, such as when he quotes Catullus to underscore the variability of his mind: “I do nothing but come and go. My judgment does not always go forward; it floats, it strays, ‘Like a tiny boat, / Caught by a raging wind on the vast sea’” (517). Like a drifting boat, his understanding cannot find and settle on the singular

course of true knowledge and, so, vacillates from one opinion to the next. And he is always convinced that the opinion he presently holds is the truth—“my mind [. . .] attaches me to it so firmly that I can no longer find the reason for my former opinion”—until it abandons this latest opinion and moves onto the next one (517). In the end, Montaigne embraces Pyrrhonism, using “reason to inquire and debate, but not to conclude and choose,” a “very perfect postponement and suspension of judgment” (454).

This Pyrrhonic skepticism has consequences for Montaigne’s religious beliefs, leading him to a fideistic position (Popkin, *History* 52). The very limited scope of human knowledge makes it impossible for us to know if the particular beliefs and opinions to which we subscribe are grounded in reality or not. By the same logic, reason cannot tell us if different beliefs and opinions to those we currently hold are better, more in line with reality and truth. Therefore, it makes no particular sense to abandon our current beliefs in favor of a different set of beliefs; doing so could in no way be said to be an improvement or enlightenment. When it comes to theological matters, this means that it is folly to suppose that there might be some better, more authentic, path to God than the particular religion that makes up the “common observances” of our particular community (Montaigne 455). It is, consequently, best to accept on faith that the religion into which we are born is the true religion, that God has caused us to be born into that religion because it is the true one. In Montaigne’s case, such reasoning “supplied the best defense against the Reformation,” with the result that he accepted Catholicism as the true faith: “I [. . .] stay in the position where God put me. Otherwise I could not keep myself from rolling about incessantly. Thus I have, by the grace of God, kept myself intact, without agitation or disturbance of conscience, in the ancient beliefs of our religion, in the midst

of so many sects and divisions that our century has produced” (Popkin, *History* 51; Montaigne 521).

Again, Montaigne turns to seafaring images to illustrate his point. The Pyrrhonist is permitted to “conform in a number of things that are not understood, or perceived, or accepted” by him, simply in order to get on with life (455). For example, “when he goes to sea, he follows this course [of conformity], not knowing if it will be useful to him, and relies on the vessel being good, the pilot experienced, the season suitable—[all] merely probable circumstances. He is bound to follow them and to let himself be swayed by appearances, provided that they show no express contrariness” (455). To put it another way, if we hope to get where we want to go and we need to sail on a ship to get there, we must take it on faith that the weather conditions are as favorable as they appear to be, that the pilot knows what he or she is doing, and that the ship is seaworthy—despite the fact that we cannot know for certain that these things are true and that the ship will not go down in a storm. Montaigne’s skeptical fideism, that is, offers no final assurance against delusion, against the possibility that one’s particular ship of faith has a rotting hull concealed beneath a fresh, eye-pleasing coat of paint. If reason provides no certain grounds for determining whether the religion that happens to be established in one culture is any more or less of a delusion than a different religion that happens to be established in another culture, then that opens up the possibility that they are all delusions.

In the late medieval and early modern periods, then, the sea was a shifting, fluid, and highly contested cultural space, variously claimed by the medieval Catholic Church, late medieval reformers, Protestant Reformers, those who were prone to subscribe to “atheistic” fortune, and religious skeptics. Associated with wondrous revelations of

providence, the sea was a space into which was read not only the theological correctness of the medieval Church but also the idolatrous illegitimacy of that Church and the purity of reformist visions of the church. Seafaring and the sea, that is, proved useful as rhetorical vehicles for legitimizing certain forms of faith while discrediting others. As a cosmological space in which the supreme order of providence struggled against the supreme randomness and confusion of fortune, the sea was at the center of anxiety in Christian culture about universal causation, about the possibility that human existence was, in the end, conditioned not by the omnipotent and righteous Christian God but by arbitrary chance. And as a historical space through which Europeans discovered what were literally new worlds to them, the sea posed relativistic challenges to the truth-claims of Christianity.

In recent years literary, cultural, and historical scholarship has begun to devote greater attention to mapping out the cultural significance of the pre-modern sea. This “oceanic turn” has often drawn attention to the elusive, contradictory, unstable, fluid, mysterious, and generally ungraspable quality in medieval and early modern representations of the sea. For instance, Dan Brayton’s ecocritical analysis of the sea in Shakespeare “excavate[s] the literary history of the strange ocean as a conceptual realm that destabilizes the notion of an entirely terrestrial human ontology” and argues that Shakespeare’s sea “is a space of invisibility and unknowing, where the limitations of sight undermine epistemological certainty” (178). Steve Mentz’s *At the Bottom of Shakespeare’s Ocean* argues that “Shakespeare’s plays write the sea as opaque, inhospitable, and alluring, a dynamic reservoir of estrangement and enchantment”; Shakespeare’s ocean poses “the basic challenge the ocean always poses: to know an

ungraspable thing” (ix). In *Greenery: Ecocritical Readings of Late Medieval English Literature*, Gillian Rudd finds that the fourteenth-century texts she examines figure the sea in terms of “immensity and boundlessness” so that it “defies the imagination” and is “perpetually disconcerting in its ability to resist our attempts to describe, control or contain it” (135, 160, 161). Conlan’s exploration of English “nautical piety” in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance charts the ways that many English writers came to envision the sea as full of divine signs that God had sanctioned, even predestined, England’s overseas colonial enterprises during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. But Conlan also charts how Shakespeare and others questioned whether God’s control over the seas really did signify His approval of English colonialism. Thus his work suggests that the sea stood as an ambiguous site of divine meaning in pre-modern English culture.

This dissertation contributes to the recent scholarship on the pre-modern sea by illuminating how late medieval and early modern English writers ventured into the ambiguously multivalent, disconcerting, transcendent, or uncontainable space of the sea specifically to work through fundamental religious and existential questions posed by religious reform and the historical reality of European sea travel. Which religious practices and theological doctrines truly coincided with God’s providence? How did salvation work? How was one to know whether one was counted among the saved or among the damned? What, in the end, were the causal forces that shaped human lives? Was human history moving forward teleologically, according to a carefully plotted divine plan and towards a final end in which the destiny of each human soul matched his or her true worth? Or did human lives and history merely proceed haphazardly, towards no

particular end and in a world without a divine overseer who governed according to ultimately just motives? By considering the trope of sea travel as more than a convenient, well-worn commonplace for general assertions about the importance of faith in the “sea of the world,” I demonstrate how a range of late medieval and early modern writers use sea imagery to address such questions. Writers marshaled representations of ships and the sea in order to explore the intricacies of a basic problem that was becoming increasingly complicated by the gathering momentum of religious reform, the problem of whether it was possible to discern a divine reality that structured human existence. Moreover, during what might be called the “long” era of reform from the later Middle Ages to the seventeenth century, sea imagery increasingly reveals the emergence of skepticism out of the theological controversies of that era—skepticism ranging from doubts about the medieval Church’s claim to be the uniquely authentic representative of God on earth to skeptical anxiety that, rather than being organized by a beneficent divine providence, human life was a matter of weathering or navigating the vagaries of fortune in an indifferent cosmos.

Chapter one examines how the *Book of Margery Kempe* and Chaucer’s the *Man of Law’s Tale* depict the sea as a providential force of nature which confirms the legitimacy of forms of piety that bordered on heresy in late medieval England. Custance’s and Margery’s successful sea voyages away from the mediating influence of the Church suggest that the authentic spirituality of God’s chosen souls exists in harmony with a providential natural world and is itself a kind of elemental force within the natural order, that true religion is also a natural religion which does not require the support of the institutional medieval Church. As a consequence, the Church comes to seem as if it is, at

best, irrelevant to God's personal relationships with the saved and, at worst, an impediment to those relationships.

The second chapter considers the connection between sea travel and the marvelous in the Digby *Mary Magdalene*, a late medieval saint play based on the legendary life of Mary Magdalene, and in Shakespeare's *Pericles, Prince of Tyre*, a romance that shares important plot elements with the Magdalene play. Drawing on the Christian tradition that understood the sea to be a zone in which God revealed his will with particular clarity through miracles and wonders, both plays weave depictions of seafaring together with odd or spectacular occurrences to focus attention on wondrous experiences through which humans might come to know religious and divine truth. Sea voyages in *Mary Magdalene* are integral to the play's response to late medieval reformist criticism of orthodox Catholic practices, particularly reformist skepticism about the relationship between the medieval cult of saints and miracles. Insofar as they are miraculous themselves, the play's sea voyages contribute to its concern to answer such skepticism by arguing that, while devotional practices within the saint cults have become corrupt and should be reformed, orthodox doctrine concerning miracles remains sound. *Pericles*, on the other hand, uses images of the sea and ship travel to reconfigure the traditional link between the sea and the miraculous to suit the skeptical Protestant doctrine that the age of miracles had long since passed. More specifically, nautical imagery in the play dramatizes the Protestant tenet that miracles which violated the order of nature, and thus clearly disclosed divine power, no longer occurred, that, instead, providence spoke through wondrous events that coincided with the natural order and could only be seen by the eyes of faith. The sea imagery in *Pericles* represents

identifying providence as an unstable interpretive process that carries with it the opposing risks of seeing in natural events more than there is to see or of seeing nothing at all, each of which involves significant ethical risks. In this way, Shakespeare uses sea travel to explore the ethical stakes involved in both providentialism and skepticism about providentialism.

Chapter three analyzes a selection of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century poetry in relation to early modern navigational practices and Reformed soteriology's vision of an omnipotent God whose inscrutable will alone determines the ultimate fate, the salvation or damnation, of passive human beings. By emphasizing both God's utter transcendence of human reason and, in the doctrines of predestination and justification by faith alone, the fundamental inability of people to earn salvation through their own efforts, Reformist theologies of grace significantly complicated the matter of spiritual orientation, of knowing where one stood in the eyes of God. Similarly, early modern oceangoing enterprises to the New World and elsewhere involved navigational problems—generally, the difficulties presented by using flawed navigational methods to “read” a ship's position and chart a course on the sea—that highlighted the challenge of epistemological orientation, of discovering the truth behind ambiguous appearances. This chapter shows how Thomas Wyatt, Edmund Spenser, and Andrew Marvell use the disorienting possibilities of sea travel to explore the possibility of spiritual disorientation and doubt posed by Reformist theologies of grace.

The final chapter considers the ambiguous religious and ethical significance of the pirate and piratical practices in Robert Daborne's *A Christian Turned Turk*, Thomas Heywood and William Rowley's *Fortune by Land and Sea*, and Shakespeare's *Hamlet*.

In these plays, piracy and the sea are associated with an assortment of competing cultural discourses—Machiavellianism, atheism, fortune, and providentialism—which the plots variously sort through to reveal, on one level, the rule of providence over the destinies of the plays' characters. But closer inspection shows the fortuitous, Machiavellian, and atheistic elements of the plots straining the weak points of such providentialist readings (Dollimore 92). The result is to destabilize those readings, by suggesting that they, at best, uncomfortably accommodate the facts of the plays' dramatic worlds into their narrative logic and that those facts can be explained equally as well by the logic of Machiavellianism, atheism, or fortune.

Chapter One

A Church Not Made with Hands: Salvation by the Sea in the *Man of Law's Tale* and the *Book of Margery Kempe*

Gillian Rudd shows that, while the narrator of Chaucer's *Man of Law's Tale* devotes very little descriptive attention to the sea itself, the sea is nevertheless second only to God as a central shaping force in the development of the life of the heroine, Custance. This latter fact is particularly evident in the two lengthy, wandering voyages Custance endures in a rudderless boat, from Syria to Northumberland in Britain and from Northumberland back to her native Rome, when "she is entirely at the mercy of the winds and waves" (134). Although the sea in itself is, from a descriptive standpoint, the somewhat invisible background to the tale, that background is also the controlling environment that sets the conditions of possibility in Custance's life. The sea plays a similar role in the fifteenth-century, autobiographical *Book of Margery Kempe*, large sections of which recount Margery's Christian travels out of England to the Holy Land and pilgrimage sites on the Continent as well as, later in her life, an expedition to the Baltic coast of Germany and back home on an overland route through northern Europe. Margery's travels require her, of course, to make numerous sea crossings, taking her over the English Channel, through the Adriatic and the Mediterranean, out into the Atlantic and the Bay of Biscay, and into the North Sea and the Baltic. And so, the sea has a prominent position in the *Book*; it is an environment that structures and conditions momentous occasions in her adult life, particularly her spiritual life. Margery describes the considerable anxieties and uncertainties she faces each time she must pass over the sea, so that it figures significantly in her mind as a place of trial and potentially deadly

challenges. Yet she gives only relatively brief descriptions of the sea itself, descriptions that focus solely on the weather conditions her ships encounter.

In this way, the *Man of Law's Tale* and the *Book of Margery Kempe* display common medieval views of the sea: it is both an all-surrounding presence that situates human life and a kind of stark nowhere, an alien and threatening wild place that defies human control (Rudd 150). For instance, in the T-O maps that exemplify “medieval global concepts,” the sea “literally encompass[s] the earth” and is the “element that connects and surrounds all countries, allowing passage from one to another, but defying national boundaries itself” (Rudd 150). Late medieval texts, at the same time, often figure the sea as a version of the desert wilderness, an immense, “untamed and untameable” “expanse” that is “utterly different from human space” and, consequently, unknowable (134; 91-92). It is “a place where humans are not and where it is felt they are not supposed to be [. . .] on any permanent basis,” because humans cannot control it; it controls them (91). It is also a place “in which the mysterious can act as a palpable force, often being embodied in a being who is not necessarily bound by human rules,” a being such as God (92). On this view, to take to the sea is also to place oneself directly in the hands of the untamed wilderness and, through it, God, to take the chance of losing control of oneself and discovering or realizing what one “really” is once the safeguards and restrictions of culture have been stripped away.

This process characterizes Custance's and Margery Kempe's experiences at sea, experiences that demonstrate the elemental forces of nature working in tandem with God to carry towards salvation those who are His chosen souls. Margery Kempe, portrayed as something of a misunderstood saintly figure in her *Book*, and the saintly Custance are, in

different ways, marginalized Christian figures whose repeated survival of exposure to the dangerous sea and more generally charmed maritime experiences lend them an aura of potent sanctity. Both texts characterize the spiritual lives of their heroines in ways that evoke late medieval religious nonconformity, and in Margery's case, her controversial devotional practices make for a tense relationship between her and contemporary religious authorities and often bring her under suspicion of heresy. Margery's and Custance's ultimately favorable encounters with the threatening, elemental power of the sea, therefore, suggest that the religious heterodoxies with which they are associated are authorized by nature and, through nature, providence itself.

The notion of spiritual testing in wilderness spaces, including the sea, was well established in medieval monasticism. The legendary voyages of Irish monks, particularly the voyage of St. Brendan detailed in the *Navigatio Sancti Brendani*, were in a sense reenactments of biblical journeys into the wilderness to encounter God or to undergo spiritual testing, such as when Christ goes into the wilderness for forty days and nights to "be tempted of the devil" (*Bible*, Matt. 4.1). Jacques Le Goff explains that for Celtic and Nordic monks the "sea replaced the Egyptian desert," while Rudd points out that "going to sea, frequently in rudderless boats, in order to display [. . .] trust in God was the northern European equivalent of undertaking a sojourn in the desert" (Le Goff 51; Rudd 134). Following Le Goff, Rudd refers to Adamnan of Iona's sixth-century *Life of St. Columba* as providing a representative example of the "recognized literary trope equating the sea with desert" (134). Adamnan's work includes a chapter on one Baitan who "sailed out with others" in order to "seek a desert in the sea" and another chapter on a Cormac who "tried even a second time to look for a desert in the sea" (26, 99; Le Goff

134). As a version of eremitic exile in the wilderness and, thus, a strand within the larger Christian tradition of monastic spirituality, such seeking the desert in the sea shares with that tradition the emphasis on wilderness as crucial to the anchorite's spiritual closeness to God. Dee Dyas usefully summarizes the importance of this "wilderness motif" in her discussion of "medieval anchoritic spirituality," in which the cloistered anchoritic life was conceived of as another version of exile in the wilderness: "the wilderness, whether external or internal, offers focus: it is the place where human security is stripped away, spiritual experience is intensified and issues become clearer. [. . .] And in the midst of the testing, hardship, uncertainty and spiritual conflict it offers the possibility of an intimacy of experience that will not be found elsewhere" (20, 33).

The *Man of Law's Tale* evokes this desert or "wilderness motif" in its framing of Custance's sea journeys (Woods 97). Uncertainty and the stripping away of human security are powerfully illustrated in the unnavigable vessels into which she is placed by adversarial mothers-in-law who seek to rid their lands of her. Custance's troubles begin when her father, the emperor of Christian Rome, arranges, with the help of the pope and the Church, for her to marry the Muslim Sultan of Syria, who, in return, has pledged that he and "his baronage / And his liges" will convert to Christianity (lines 239-40).² Accordingly, Custance and a large wedding party are shipped off to Syria for the marriage festivities. But awaiting her there is the devious mother of the Sultan, who vigorously objects to her son's wedding plans and arranges for a surprise attack to take place after the nuptials, in which the Sultan and the rest of the newly Christian Syrians

² All line references are to the edition of the *Man of Law's Tale* in *The Riverside Chaucer*, edited by Larry D. Benson.

are massacred. The Sultanness then banishes Custance to sea in a “ship al steerelees” and her co-conspirators mockingly advise Custance to learn how to sail from Syria back to Rome (439-41). Instead, her ship drifts for “thre yeer and moore” westward across the Mediterranean, through the Straits of Gibraltar and eventually to the far north of England, where she is married, this time for love, to another head of state, Alla, the king of Northumberland, who has fallen for her because of her Christian virtue and who converts, along with many of his subjects, from paganism to Christianity (499). But Donegild, Alla’s tyrannical and malicious pagan mother, finds it deeply insulting that he has taken “so strange a creature” for his wife and contrives to have Custance and her newly born son, Mauricius, cast back out to sea to drift away in the same rudderless ship in which she arrived (700, 799-802). This time Custance’s journey lasts “five yeer and moore” before God finally guides her drifting boat back to Rome (902).

Custance’s rudderless, unnavigable ship harks back to the monastic voyagers in the desert-sea of the Brendan legend, in which St. Brendan advises his shipmates in effect to make their craft unsteerable: “take in the oars and helm, keep the sails set, and may God do unto us, His servants and His little vessel, as He willeth” (“Voyage” 120). The *Man of Law’s Tale* also calls to mind the “wilderness motif” through its description of the waters on which the solitary Custance floats as “wilde wawes” and the “wilde see” (468, 506). Finally, the Man of Law implies that Custance’s sea voyages are sojourns in the wilderness when he anticipates and answers the possible incredulity of his audience over the fact that she beats incredibly unfavorable odds not only by being spared from the slaughter of Christians in Syria but by surviving for so many years on dangerous seas, without drowning or starving from a lack of “mete and drynke” (485, 497-98). The Man

of Law's explanation links Custance with precursors in Christian tradition who survived, against all odds, exposure in the wild and to the elements thanks to God's miraculous oversight of them, His "prudent purveiance" (483; Yunck 252-53; Cooney 269-70). He cites Jonah's incredible survival after being thrown overboard into stormy seas and swallowed by a great fish, the miraculous parting of the Red Sea during the Israelites' flight through the desert from Egypt to Mount Sinai, and the equally astounding story of the early Christian St. Mary of Egypt, who survived alone "in the desert for 47 years, subsisting on weeds and grasses, having taken only two and one half loaves of bread into the desert with her" (L. Benson 861, n. 500).

In each of these stories, the sea or the desert—that is, wilderness spaces that epitomize a natural world where the dominion of humankind has not been established—provides refuge and liberation from an adversarial or decadent culture, worldly temptation, or the protagonist's own spiritual waywardness. The sea in the *Man of Law's Tale* fulfills a similar function. To be sure, Custance herself never chooses to flee to sea to escape anything; rather, she is banished there by persecutory mothers-in-law who see her as a threat and who could care less if she dies at sea. And when the Sultanness sets her on her initial rudderless journey, Custance, too, fully expects that she "shal drenchen in the depe" (line 455). Nonetheless the seas preserve Custance as well as, on her second rudderless voyage, her son, eventually delivering them safely back to Rome. What is intended to punish, then, turns out, instead, to deliver, to provide freedom from persecution. In fact, other than in Rome after she returns there, on the water is the only place that she is protected from persecution, as if the natural world typified by the sea, despite its apparent dangers, has a mysterious power to ward off real threats from the

human world. This is apparent in the episode during her second rudderless voyage when her ship drifts ashore “under” a second “hethen castel” in an unnamed land (904). Here she is threatened by a “theef” who has renounced Christianity and who has now come aboard and attempts to rape Custance (915). But Custance displays uncanny “myght and vigour” for a “wayke woman” and succeeds in pushing her attacker overboard, whereupon he drowns “in the see” and her ship drifts away from this latest heathen land (945, 932, 922-23). Although it is Custance who overcomes her attacker in this episode, the scene is set in such a way as to suggest that her unusual display of physical strength in defending herself is a mysterious function of the sea’s, and the natural world’s, role as her protector from human enemies. Given her highly improbable survival of more than three years of banishment from land and civilization in a wandering boat on wild seas, it is perhaps not surprising to find that the sea and its shores are unexpected safe zones where the power of heathens to harm her is immobilized. Thus, when the thief falls overboard and drowns “for vengeance,” it is as if the sea itself is avenging Custance (923).

The *Man of Law’s Tale* more generally associates the sea with fringe territories that provide sanctuary to marginalized people. We learn that the Britain to which Custance drifts is a land in which an older Christian culture has been supplanted by pagan invaders; Alla’s pagan kingdom (pagan, that is, before Custance brings about the conversion of Alla and many of his subjects) presumably has its origins in this pagan, perhaps Viking, invasion. The invaders have conquered the coastal areas, the “plages,” of northern Britain (543). But now the very edges of those coastal areas seem to be where Christianity’s last holdouts in Alla’s kingdom are to be found, where in “privetee”

they “honoured Crist and hethen folk bigiled” (548-49). Three of these “Cristene Britons” dwell and secretly keep their faith right in the shadow of the coastal castle that the Constable oversees on behalf of Alla. It is here by the “see” that one day, after the Constable has discovered Custance washed ashore in her ship and has taken her in to live with him and his wife, Hermengyld, Custance is walking with her new companions and they happen upon one of these three Christians, a “blynde man,” “croked and oold” (554-60). Somehow aware that Hermengyld has recently received Christ’s grace—channeled through Custance’s “orisons, with many a bitter teere”—and secretly converted, this old blind man cries out and begs Hermengyld to work a miracle and restore his sight (537, 561-62). There is an air of danger to this moment, the danger that the underground, marginalized Christian community will be exposed, for the Constable is unaware that his wife has converted and she worries that, once he discovers the truth, he will kill her. As it happens, Custance steps in and explains Christian doctrine so thoroughly and convincingly that the Constable is the next to convert. The facts that the “wilde” sea turns out to be a safe haven for Custance and that geographically fringe, coastal areas are where we encounter clandestine Christians in pagan Northumberland suggest that the *Man of Law’s Tale* identifies Christianity as a natural religion and that natural spaces are liberating spaces for Christianity (Robertson 166-67).

Indeed, the tale’s association of the sea with Custance, the model of Christian virtue—“hir herte is verray chambre of hoolynesse” and “to alle hire werkes vertu is hir gyde”—implies that she exists in a state of oneness with the natural world (lines 167, 164). David Raybin’s observation about Custance’s constant proximity to the sea even while she is on land is helpful in this regard: “When Custance does go ashore, it is to live

on the margins, both spatially and, in spite of her royal birth, socially. Never, not even in her Roman home, is Custance very far inland, very far from the sea that symbolizes her faith” (69). As we have seen, Custance’s “royal birth,” her being the Roman “Emperoures doghter,” does not buy her any favors from the Sultanness in Syria—quite the opposite: she is made, literally, an outcast on the sea (line 151). Neither does her royal lineage get her into the cultural center in Northumberland, Alla’s court, because her pedigree remains unknown there. When the Constable discovers her in her beached ship, she conceals her identity and her past from him: “What she was she wolde no man seye, / For foul ne fair, thogh that she should deye” (524-25). The text suggests, moreover, that Custance may actually have lost her memory at sea: “She seyde she was so mazed in the see / That she forgat hir mynde by hir trouthe” (526-27). In effect, the wilderness of the sea has wiped away, at least for those she meets in Northumberland, her familial and social origins, wiped away the social markers of her identity. It is as though the sea has refined her to her pure Christian essence by liberating her from her family history, and she now emerges or materializes out of the sea, out of nature, from where she truly comes (Raybin 70; Robertson 165, 167). She takes on a mysterious aura of being *of* the sea, a creature in union with the natural world.

Custance’s oneness with nature is also expressed through the parallel the tale establishes between the circularity of her life and the circulating currents of the sea, a parallel that exemplifies what William Woods describes as the tale’s “elemental rhythm of exile and return” (92). Custance’s story is a loop: she begins at Rome, sails across vast stretches of sea to distant lands, and finally ends up back in Rome (Robertson 177-78). Indeed, it is the circulating currents of the sea that directly enact her own circularity.

After the Sultanness has her cast out to sea off the coast of Syria, a westward current picks her up and takes her through the Straits of Gibraltar and then northward through the Atlantic, the English Channel, and the North Sea, where it deposits her safely in Northumberland. On her return journey, she seems to be picked up on that same current again as it turns southward, going back down through the North Sea, the Channel, the Atlantic, and then eastward through the Straits and towards the eastern Mediterranean. Thus the sea captures Custance in a natural cycle, into the seemingly eternal returning of the natural world (Raybin 67-68).

The sea also “captures” Custance in the sense that it takes her into itself, which the text makes apparent through its minimal descriptions of Custance’s long years in her ship on the open sea. For example, although she is at sea for “thre yeer and moore” after the Sultanness sets her adrift, all we learn about what she does during those years on the boat is that

On many a sory meel now may she bayte;
After hir deeth ful often may she wayte,
Er that the wilde wawes wol hire dryve
Unto the place ther she shal arryve. (499, 463-69)

Similarly, the more than five years that she spends drifting on her second rudderless journey, before she has her run-in with the would-be rapist, receives the barest attention:

[Custance] fleteth in the see, in peyne and wo,
Fvye yeer and moore, as liked Cristes sonde,
Er that hir ship approched unto londe. (901-03)

Her more than eight years adrift on the seas around Europe merit but a handful of lines which tell us only that, during that time, she woefully awaits her death and does not eat very well. Such minimal description is realistic in its own way: what would or could one do while adrift on the sea for so many years? Probably not much more than the bare minimum necessary to stay alive and perhaps dwell on the ever-present threat of death. In thus representing Custance's greatly reduced circumstances as she drifts, this description also expresses the flattening out of her life as a distinct, discrete being in relation to the natural world (Raybin 70; Yunck 257). Instead, she seems to merge with, and almost disappear, into nature, becoming but a speck within the immensity of the ocean, lost at sea, in the vastness of natural time and space (Woods 11, 13).

The "loss" of self and integration into natural rhythms is, of course, powerfully emphasized by Custance's rudderless or "steerelees" ship, signifying the passivity of her will, its surrender to or being swept along in the movement of nature (line 439; Yunck 252; Woods 11). In that ship, "she shal arryve" wherever the "wilde wawes wol hire dryve" (lines 468-69). Custance's unsteerable ship driven along in the wild sea is an image of the self given over to nature, making the natural world a shaping force in human destiny. The shaping force of nature is apparent in what feels like the active, purposeful direction of the sea when Custance arrives in Northumberland. Here the sea appears to take special care to leave her exactly where it wants to, sounding almost like a captain guiding a vessel to a dock. The waves "caste" the boat right "under" the castle overseen by the Constable who will be so crucial to the next phase of Custance's life (he will introduce her to the man, Alla, who will become her husband and the father of her child, who goes on eventually to become the next "Emperour / Maad by the Pope") (507-08;

1121-22). “In the sond” at the base of this castle, “hir ship” is lodged “so faste” that it does not budge for “al a tyde [the duration of an entire tide],” indicating that this is the place at which Custance is to disembark (509-10; L. Benson 94, n. 510). Custance in this scene is governed by what seems to be a quite purposeful natural world, and the passage proceeds to dovetail nature’s actions with divine will: it is “the wyl of Crist [. . .] that she sholde abyde” at this spot (line 511). In other words, the rhythm of Custance’s self, figured by the ship, is contained by the rhythm of the sea, which in turn expresses the rhythm of the natural world, a natural world contained by the rhythm of providence.

Through its handling of Custance’s rudderless sailing, the *Man of Law’s Tale* elaborates a Neoplatonic vision of nature as containing and strongly determining human life, to ends set by the Creator. The medieval concept of “Nature or ‘Kynde’” exemplifies the ways “twelfth-century Christian thinking refashioned Neoplatonic ideas and negotiated between classical and Christian philosophies” in reformulating the Platonic relationship between the “world soul” and the “demiurge” in Christian terms (Phillips 162; Borlik 56). In Platonic terms, nature is “both ‘a living being with soul and intelligence’ and a body consisting of the four elements” (Borlik 56). This “world soul,” as Todd Borlik describes it, “owes its existence to the demiurge from which it emanates”; nature is, therefore, “inherently entwined with the demiurge” (56). In the terms of medieval Christian Neoplatonism, “living” nature, which owes its existence to the Creator, takes on the “role of the vicar of God” (Borlik 56). Borlik demonstrates how, in *The Parliament of Fowls* (which refers explicitly to “Nature, the vicaire of the almyghty Lord”), Chaucer’s Neoplatonic vision of nature suggests it is the “force” that “most immediately governs the lives of plants, animals, [and] humans,” but that it gets its

mandate to do so from God (57; *Parliament* 1.379). As Helen Phillips puts it, this medieval concept of “Kynde” “provides a way of imaging divine order ruling the lower, physical realm of creation” and, in this way, it lends “religious,” “ethical,” and “moral force” to nature (162). As a force, then, nature has a directedness that urges the created world towards moral and spiritual ends. Robert Myles shows how such directedness is apparent in the opening of *The Canterbury Tales*’ General Prologue, where with the coming of spring, nature stirs and reawakens vegetable, animal, and human life. One manifestation of this natural stirring in human “folk” is that they “longen [. . .] to goon on pilgrimages” to holy sites in foreign lands or, especially, to the site of Thomas à Becket’s martyrdom in Canterbury (*Tales* 1.12-17). Or, in Myles’ analysis, nature in the General Prologue gives humans “a final directedness to a supernatural realm” (57).

Similarly, Custance’s apparent drifting on the sea, her being “adrift” in the natural world, can be seen as, in fact, her being driven by God’s vicar to closer contact with the divine and more direct involvement in the unfolding of the divine plan. That is, it is the “prudent purveiance” of God that oversees the waves’ handling of Custance, so that she becomes, through the influence of the natural world (God’s earthly vicar) an instrument in which “we” see “his wonderful myracle” and “his myghty werkis” (lines 483, 477-78; Yunck 260). In the *Man of Law’s Tale*, this work is the propagation of Christianity as the true religion, and it progresses through Custance’s “steerelees” ship travel, which leads to the conversion of Alla’s kingdom and the birth of Mauricius, renewing the line of Christian emperors in Rome. And again, the rudderlessness of her ship is of primary importance: just as it puts her literally at the mercy of the natural world, it powerfully emphasizes that she is at the mercy of and—insofar as she not only survives seemingly

hopeless sea journeys and persecution by her enemies but also causes Christianity to flourish—protected and favored by the divine will, by the overlord of nature. In short, the nature of the sea in the tale implies that creation is not merely a kind of static terrarium in which God has placed humanity, providing an inert background against which the teleological drama of human history plays. Rather, the natural world is both the setting of and an instrumental player in that drama.

The idea of nature as God's vicar also has a more particular religious significance when it comes to sea travel in the *Man of Law's Tale*. In medieval Catholicism the pope too was called, as Wyclif puts the conventional view, the "highest vicar that Christ has here in earth" ("Wyclif's" 273). As noted above, the pope plays a role in Custance's voyaging, specifically, her very first journey to Syria as the Sultan's bride-to-be. Through the "mediacioun" of the pope and "al the chirche," Custance, along with a "certain" amount of gold, is handed over "in mariage" to the Sultan in exchange for his conversion from Islam to the Christian faith (lines 234-35, 242). It is hoped, that is, that this marital exchange will be a means by which the "destruccion" of idolatry and the "encrees of Cristes lawe" will be brought about (236-37). Consequently, the wedding party that sails to Syria with Custance includes some "bisshopes" to represent the Church (253). As we know, this wedding voyage is doomed to end in the massacre orchestrated by the Sultanness. What is in essence a commercial trading voyage, mediated by the institutional Church and using Custance as the medium of exchange with which to buy the spread of Christianity, leads, instead, to spectacular failure. This failure stands in sharp contrast to the ultimately successful apostolic, rudderless voyages of Custance that are mediated by the sea, by nature itself. It is not the pope or the institutional Church,

therefore, but nature that seems to be the more authentic vicar of God in the *Man of Law's Tale*.

Furthermore, once Custance sets off on her naturally mediated, rudderless voyages, the tale characterizes her spirituality in a manner that evokes late medieval challenges to orthodox medieval Catholicism. Elizabeth Robertson highlights this aspect of the tale, showing how Chaucer “engage[s] with sensitive, politically charged contemporary religious controversies, especially those raised by Lollardy” (148).

Custance’s trip to Northumberland alludes, for instance, to the debate surrounding the Lollard “commit[ment] to the idea of lay preaching” without the need for authorization from the Church (Ludwig Jansen 273). Robertson notes that “one of Lollardy’s cherished tenets” was that “anyone—even women and the uneducated laity—[could] preach” (169). Lollards claimed precedent for their view in the Gospels, such as Luke 10, in which they found that “Crist sente [His] disciplis to preche comunli to þe peple wipoute letter o[r] axyng of leue of seynt Petir” (Hudson, *Selections* 120). This they took to mean that there was no need for Christians to be licensed by “þe bischop” or “þe pope” in order to preach (120). Rather, the authority of true preachers came from their truly representing and explicating Scripture: “if þei prechen þus truli þe gospel as Crist biddiþ hem, Crist is amyddis hem and þe peple þat þei techen” (120). Not surprisingly, then, “Lollard polemic” against licensing “became more shrill” when there was a “tightening of the requirement to obtain licenses” between the years 1382 and 1407 (Hudson, *Premature* 355). While in Northumberland, Custance essentially acts as a preacher when she converts Alla’s Constable by thoroughly expounding Christian law to him (Robertson 168-70). So extensively “[did] she gan oure laye [Christian law] declare / That she the

constable, er that it was eve / Converteth, and on Crist made hym bileve” (lines 572-74). Custance’s anonymity, her concealed royal lineage, during her time in Northumberland is important in this episode. For all intents and purposes, she is a “nobody” while she is there and, in particular, she has no official mandate from any ecclesiastical body to act in this preacherly, apostolic capacity. Yet her success at bringing pagans into the Christian fold demonstrates her spiritual authority and efficacy, a spiritual power that stands in sharp opposition to the impotence of the official Church’s attempt to spread Christianity by trading her on the marriage market (Robertson 160, 169, 174). The tale, then, shows Custance’s non-institutional, individual spirituality to be purer and more powerful than whatever spiritual authority the Church hierarchy may have.

Custance’s outdoor conversion of the Constable by the sea brings to mind the Lollard insistence that consecrated church buildings had no greater spiritual potency, no greater holiness, than outdoor or open spaces. Anne Hudson recounts Lollard “claims that churches [were] only of use in so far as they help[ed] men hear God’s word and pray to God, but this [was] often better done ‘in þe eire under hevene,’” that “prayers in the field [were] as good as those in the church,” and that “all the world was as well hal[l]owed as the church or churchyard” (*Premature* 322-23). This emphasis on God’s being just as, if not more, accessible in outdoor or exposed spaces as in humanly constructed, sheltered spaces goes back to the biblical and hagiographic accounts, to which the *Man of Law’s Tale* alludes, of God sheltering His chosen people in the wilderness. And the idea is to be found in Custance’s claim, when she learns that she is to be sent off on her second rudderless voyage, that the God who has protected her from false accusations “on the lond” in Northumberland (where she has been wrongly accused

of the murder of Hermengyld) will also keep her “from harm and eek fro shame” in the “salte see” (827-30). Thus Custance’s association with the sea and coastal areas suggests a natural religion that contrasts with the institutionalized religion of the late medieval Church and, moreover, implies that nature is a more authentic vicar of God than is that Church.

Nature, in the form of the sea, also facilitates Custance’s closeness to God through her experience of suffering. C. David Benson describes how this dimension of the tale resonates with late medieval affective piety, for example, in the “elaborate episode” in which Custance “is forced to put to sea from Britain with her infant son” (141-42). Affective piety was “an invitation to seek spiritual insight through compassionate meditation on the sufferings of Christ or the Virgin” (Cooper, “Introduction” xv). It was a means through which many people in Chaucer’s day “sought a more direct access to the spiritual life” by circumventing the mediating “ecclesiastical structures and hierarchies” of the Church, which were often “perceived as a difficulty that needed to be addressed” because they created an “entrenched” feeling of “distance between the individual soul and God” (xv). Affective piety de-emphasized “doctrine” and “formal worship” and, instead, cultivated a “personal, passionate attachment to the human Jesus” and to Mary (Russell 37; Atkinson 129-30). The assumption was that, through emotional or affective “contemplation,” one would be “converted, transformed in the heart” and, so, realize a “mystical reunion between the human and Godly soul” (Russell 37). As Custance goes “toward hir ship” to leave Northumberland with her “litel child [. . .] wepyng in hir arm,” the pity she feels for her “litel sone” as they face the

dangers of the sea causes her to contemplate the even greater suffering endured by Christ and Mary:

“Mooder,” quod she “and mayde bright, Marie,

.

thy child was on a croys yrent.

Thy blisful eyen sawe al his torment;

Thanne is ther no comparison bitwene

Thy wo and any wo man may sustene.

“Thow sawe thy child yslayn before thyne yen,

And yet now lyveth my litel child, parfay!” (823, 834, 841-49)

Benson observes that these lines show Custance’s “recogni[tion] that no human suffering can equal that of Mary at the Cross,” and they “teach us about the relationship of the divine to mankind” (“Poetic” 142). More specifically, meditating on the human suffering of the Passion allows Custance to identify as a mother with that suffering and, so, feel an affective, emotive bond between her own soul and the divine, to feel a direct, unalienated union between herself and God.

Affective piety makes a similar appearance in the initial rudderless voyage that brings her to Britain. Anticipating the hardships that she will endure at sea, Custance’s thoughts turn to Christ’s own suffering and “with ful pitous voys” she offers a prayer “unto the croys of Crist”:

O cleere, o welful auter, hooly croys,

Reed of the Lambes blood ful of pitee,

That wessh the world fro the olde iniquitee,
Me fro the feend and fro his clawes kepe,
That day that I shal drenchen in the depe. (449-455)

Custance's mortal fear of what awaits her during her voyage provides her with an intimate awareness of the humanity she shares with Christ and, as a result, a keen appreciation of the enormously painful sacrifice Christ made of His own flesh to redeem fallen humanity. For Custance, the dangers of the sea are a source of mystical union with the Lord in that they awaken a deep, emotional awareness of her fundamental human vulnerability and remind her of her profound dependence on God as the ultimate source of protection and salvation.

Custance's affective spirituality is also central to her role as an agent of conversion to the Christian faith; and here too, the sea is important as an arena of suffering that inspires spiritual awakening. After discovering Custance in the "wrak" of her ship and learning of her ordeal at sea, the Constable and Hermengyld are filled with such "greet pitee" for her that they succumb to compassionate weeping (528-29). During the period of exile in Northumberland to which this shipwreck leads, Custance's penchant for weeping while at prayer ("orisons, with many a bitter teere") continues to tug at the heartstrings of Hermengyld until "Jhesu" converts her "thurgh his grace" (513, 537-38).

It should be noted that affective piety was not, as it were, "designed" to be a heretical or unorthodox movement. It was, in fact, "an established and respected tradition" within the established Church, one which preaching mendicant orders employed specifically to combat actual or potential heresy by bringing "back into the

fold” of the Church “common” and lay people who had been put off by the “doctrine” and general formality of the “institutional church and the sacraments” (Atkinson 129; Russell 37, 46). Nonetheless, as Laquita Higgs notes, affective piety could have “iconoclastic implications, for it suggested that one did not have to approach God only through the formal mediation of the church” (180). The affective literature of Richard Rolle, for instance, emphasized “Christ and the individual’s direct relationship to Him,” a potentially heretical “approach” attested to by the fact that “the later Lollards were fond of some of Rolle’s writings,” his *English Psalter* in particular (Higgs 180, 185).

While it may be going too far to claim that Custance’s affective piety would mark her definitively as a Lollard or, more generally, a heretic to a late medieval audience, there are certainly “iconoclastic” overtones in the transportation of her spirituality to a far-off, Northumberland context. Once she is put to sea after the slaughter in Syria has brought the marriage alliance of Rome, the Church, and the Syrian state to its disastrous end, Custance is both literally and figuratively lost to the established Church. And when the sea then carries her rudderless ship to Northumberland—a land at what medieval geography conceived of as the edges of the world and a pagan nation where Christianity has been driven underground—that too expresses Custance’s removal from the established Church’s sphere of influence, from its power to structure religious life directly. Yet in this institutional absence, Custance’s marginalized spirituality affords her intimate contact with God and proves to be the pathway to God for those in Northumberland who are converted by her spiritually potent presence (Robertson 167, 168). Again, the sea (and, by extension, nature) proves to be a medium of liberation: in removing her from the hands-on guidance of the institutional Church, the sea reveals the

sufficiency, indeed the superiority, of her individual, autonomous spirituality, unmediated by ecclesiastical hierarchy (Robertson 171-72). Her sea travels point to nature as the authentic vicar of the Lord, while the papacy seems, at best, irrelevant and, at worst, disruptive to her “personal relationship with God.”

If, therefore, the topos of the “Ship of the Church” is, as V. A. Kolve argues, at play in the rudderless voyages of the *Man of Law’s Tale*, those voyages express a vision of the church that is, in late medieval terms, less than orthodox (316). Through its depiction of the virtuous Custance being driven in her ship by nature to where God wants her to go, the tale erects a vision of the true church that is more in conformity with heterodox visions of the church, such as that of Wyclif, than with the medieval Church’s claims to be the true church. Wyclif’s *De Ecclesia* presents his view that the “basis” of the authentic church is “divine election”; “God alone decides who is a member of Christ’s body,” leaving the institutional medieval Church with “no power to determine whether or not one is actually in a genuine relationship with God” (Jeffrey 36). The “*universitas praedestinatorum*, the body of the elect,” comprises “those who ‘shall be saved’ and who ‘cannot be lost even though they sin, for they have the grace of perseverance to the end’” (35-36). For Wyclif, the institutional Church and the papacy are, in contrast, “human inventions and not grounded in Scripture”; thus they are “illegitimate and irrelevant to the work of God on earth” (Meister and Stump 313-14). Wyclif’s “theory” of the “invisible Church composed of true believers predestined to salvation, in contradistinction to the visible authority of the material Church,” was generally in keeping with the increasingly popular emphasis in the later Middle Ages on the Augustinian distinction between the invisible and the visible churches (Burgess 47).

The Franciscan Nicholas of Lyra, for instance, works from this distinction when he claims that the authentic church “does not exist in men by reason of ecclesiastical or secular power or office, for many princes and popes, as well as lower dignitaries, have been found to have apostatized from the faith. Therefore the church exists in those persons in whom there is true knowledge and confession of faith and truth” (qtd. in Kaminsky 27). In his *On Simony*, Wyclif uses the ship metaphor to describe the invisible church of the elect as a ship that is governed by the wind of predestination: “the predestined are driven even in neutral acts by the Spirit of God as a ship on the sea is driven by the wind” (91; Fowler 60).

Similarly, in the *Man of Law's Tale*, the sea is the natural manifestation of God's will in action; it exemplifies the force of nature through which the supernatural force of predestination works. The tale is at pains to make this point clear whenever Custance goes to sea. The claim that her rudderless journeys exemplify God's “prudent purveiance” in action has already been noted. In addition, as Custance drifts away from Syria in her “steerelees” ship, the narrator frames her trip in terms of the Boethian notion of fortune as the handmaiden of providence: “He that is lord of Fortune be thy steere!” (line 448). And the narrator brings in the idea of the natural world as a kind of orchestra conducted by God to bring about His ends:

Who bad the foure spirits of tempest
That power han t'anoyen lond and see,
Bothe north and south, and also west and est,
“Anoyeth neither see, ne land, ne tree”?
Soothly, the comandour of that was he

That fro the tempest ay this woman [Custance] kepte

As wel whan she wook as when she slepte [in her ship]. (491-97)

When Custance's ship lands, by the "wyl of Crist," in Northumberland and she disembarks, she "kneleth doun and thanketh Goddes sonde" (511, 523). The *Riverside* edition of the tale notes that "Goddes sonde" literally translates into Modern English as "God's sending" or "what He sends"; thus Custance gives thanks to "divine providence" for bringing her across the sea to northern Britain (L. Benson 94, n. 523). This moment stresses the overall passivity of Custance in her sea travels. What God sends to her are the various circumstances she encounters in her travels and, more broadly, on her path from cradle to grave. But "what He sends" is also Custance herself. She is the object of God's subjective action as He, working through the elemental forces of the maritime environment, pilots her soul along the route to which He has predestined her (Yunck 259).

The sea, therefore, stands in the *Man of Law's Tale* as the material embodiment of the driving force of predestination; it exemplifies the concept of nature as God's vicar, the mechanics of providence, through which God acts directly on His people, rather than through the mediating structures of the institutional, visible Church. Custance's fate in God's plan is fixed, just as God has fixed the fates of all and written them down "with sterres" in "thilke large book / Which that men clepe the hevene": "For in the sterres, clerer than is glas, / Is writen, God woot, whoso koude it rede, The deeth of every man" (lines 190-92, 194-96). In one sense, such determinism means that Custance is supremely un-free: she cannot escape her ultimate fate; she can never, finally, be anything but what God intends her to be. In another sense, having a set place in God's

plan does provide freedom to her. She is not dependent upon the clerical guidance of the Church for her salvation, which is a private matter between her and God alone, making the visible Church superfluous, unnecessary. The tableau of a solitary soul, Custance, in a rudderless boat being driven by God's vicar (the natural world) and without ecclesiastical mediation to the places where the destiny God has laid out for her unfolds sounds very much in tune with Wyclif's non-institutional vision of the true church. Custance in her ship images a simplified ship of the church, consisting only of the elect and the God who guides them with the help of nature, a church notably unburdened of all of the clerical, hierarchical accoutrements which we can imagine burdening the papally sponsored ship of the Church that she sails in on the doomed voyage from Rome to Syria. The rudderless sea voyages in the *Man of Law's Tale* situate a vision of the true church as a de-institutionalized, invisible church of the predestined within the order of nature, suggesting that the less bureaucratically rigid, less "worldly" form of religion called for by late medieval voices of reform was the more natural religion, one that would flourish within the natural order of things. The tale thus gives rhetorical force to late medieval religious dissent by naturalizing that dissent. Interestingly, then, Chaucer, through the sea, calls upon nature not to present a cultural status quo, the institutional power of the medieval Church, as inevitable but to challenge its claims to inevitability.

As a natural space, the sea in the *Book of Margery Kempe* serves a similar function, to confirm for Margery that she is counted among the predestined, thereby refuting those among both the clergy and the laity who claim or suspect that her spirituality is illegitimate. Throughout her autobiographical *Book*, Kempe's unorthodox displays of piety, especially the bouts of dramatic crying out and weeping that express

her overwhelming compassion for the suffering Christ and that place her firmly within the tradition of affective piety, repeatedly draw the ire of onlookers and open her to suspicion that she is a heretic, deluded, or under the influence of the devil (Helfers 34). As a result, she often finds herself ostracized by others in her community and in the places she visits, or by her fellow pilgrims. For instance, Margery recounts that she has attacks of weeping whenever and wherever God moves her to do so: “sumtyme in the cherch, sumtyme in the strete, sumtym in the chawmbre [her room], sumtyme in the felde whan God wold sendyn hem, for sche knew nevyr tyme ne owyr [hour] whan thei schulde come” (76). When Margery first begins to experience these cries, she tries her best to keep them in check because she knows how much it tends to shock and annoy those who witness their occurrence and leads them to speculate about its cause: “summe seyde it was a wikkyd spirit vexed hir; sum seyde sche had dronkyn to mech wyn; sum bannyd hir; [. . .] sum wolde sche had ben in the se in a bottumles boyt” (76). And some prominent clerics sarcastically suggest that even the hardships endured by the mother of Christ and the saints “in hevyn” must pale in comparison to those of Margery, for even they never cried as much and intensely as she does (76). As with unauthorized preaching, such effusive crying “was by the late fourteenth century thought to be a patent feature of ‘lollard’ heresy” (Cole 160). Not surprisingly, then, Margery’s penchant for preaching as well as her fitful tears bring dangerous accusations that she is a “fals lollare” who should be burned (Kempe 41-42).

Her growing reputation for such unusual displays of religious fervor brings her to the attention of the clergy and Church authorities, who, in a number of instances, express concern that she might have a pernicious influence on the beliefs of her fellow Christians

or examine her to determine if her beliefs are indeed heretical. In the cathedral at Canterbury, she is “gretly despysed and reprevyd” by a succession of “monkys and prestys and [. . .] seculer men” because “sche wept so” (40). A group of monks proceeds to confront her, led by an “eld monk” who, before taking orders, had been a powerful man in secular life, the “tresowrer” of Henry V’s wife, Queen Joanna (41). This intimidating figure lets it be known that he would prefer her to be “closyd in an hows of ston” in order to prevent her from speaking with others (41). A younger monk expresses his concern that “she might be influenced by the devil as he distrusts that she, as an unlearned woman,” could otherwise have the knowledge of “Holy Wrytte” that she displays in her exchange with the group (41; Classen 285). After rebuking the monks for their treatment of her, she flees the scene, only to be followed outside by them, where they denounce her as a Lollard and, joined by a group of onlookers, threaten to burn her. Two young men fortunately intervene and, after she assures them that she is neither a heretic nor a Lollard, escort her safely to her lodgings.

Some years later the mayor in Leicester arrests Margery on suspicion, again, of being a “fals loller, and a fals deceyver of the pepyl” (Kempe 114). She is brought before an ecclesiastical court that tests her on the Articles of Faith and, in particular, whether her beliefs regarding the “blysfyl sacrament of the awter” conform to the official doctrine of transubstantiation (116). Her answers convince the “abbot of Leycetyr,” his canons, the “den of Leicetyr,” and a “Frer Prechowr” that her faith remains within the bounds of orthodoxy (116-17). But the mayor refuses to release her unless she is able to provide a letter from the Bishop of Lincoln, who has “jurisdiccyon” over Leicester, discharging

him of his responsibility for her; Margery is successful in obtaining this letter and goes free (118).

Although Margery survives each of these run-ins with ecclesiastical authority without being officially branded as a heretic, their repeated occurrence speaks to her uneasy, marginal status within the official Church. Moreover, despite the fact that a number of times she herself proclaims her orthodoxy and seeks out clerical figures to authorize or validate her spirituality, there are also occasions, which will be addressed below, when Margery follows the dictates of her own conscience over clerical authority. Her marginal status also carries over to her relationship with her fellow pilgrims as she travels from England to the Holy Land and to sites in Europe, and it is a recurring element in the sea journeys she undertakes during those travels.

Indeed, a primary current that runs through her voyages is how the peculiar nature of her spiritual expression gives rise to controversy regarding whether she is fit to travel with, to be included among, her fellow pilgrims, that is, whether she is fit to be included in a Christian community. The first sea passage on Margery's pilgrimage to the Holy Land and Rome passes more or less uneventfully. She makes offerings at the Cathedral of the Holy Trinity in Norwich and at "an ymage of owyr Lady" in Yarmouth, where she takes a ship across the North Sea and "the next day" lands at Zierikzee in Zeeland (69). This leg of the journey seems to pass quietly because her traveling companions are not yet aware of the dramatic quality of her piety, which does become apparent after the group arrives in Zierikzee. Here, "owyr Lord of hys hey goodnesse vysited" her with "abundawnt teerys of contricyon for hir owyn synnes and sumtyme for other mennys synnes also" (69). She also returns to avoiding meat, in conformity with a revelation four

years prior in which God told her to give it up as penance and in violation of the direction of her confessor in Zeeland that, “be vertu of obediens,” she should now “bothyn etyn flesch and drynkyn wyn” (69). Her vegetarianism greatly displeases both her confessor and others in her company, as does her habit of constant weeping and speaking “of the lofe and goodness of owyr Lord as wel at the tabyl [at meals] as in other place[s]” (69-70). In short, Margery’s idiosyncratic and perhaps overbearing zeal begins to get on the nerves of her more conventionally religious “felawshep,” who “schamfully [. . .] reprevyd hir and alto chedyn [severely chided] hir” (70). They go so far as to take her maidservant from her, claiming that she would only become a “strumpet” in Margery’s company, and force Margery to wear the habit of a “fool” so that people will not take her seriously (70). Such treatment greatly distresses her because those in her party are reputed to be “ryt good men” and she “desyred gretly” their love, if it would be pleasing to God (70). After they all reach the town of Constance, her companions finally abandon her (71). But she is reunited with them in Bologna and given a second chance to travel with them, on the condition that she refrains from speaking “of the Gospel wher we come” and, instead, “syttyn styлле and makyn mery, as we don, bothin at mete and at soper” (73). The group makes its way to Venice, where, inevitably, she breaks this promise and, having had enough of her again, the others banish her from communal meals (74). The difficult relationship Margery has with her companions during this initial stage of her pilgrimage exemplifies a pattern that is repeated time and again as she travels.

It also demonstrates how, fairly or unfairly, she earns a reputation as a nuisance, which often leads to trouble between her and actual or potential shipmates during sea crossings. These sea crossings become moments when Margery’s spirituality is put to the

test: do her private revelations, which inspire her unconventional pietistic practices, provide reliable, accurate insight into God's will? Or is she really just the foolish, troublesome character that her pilgrim group's often dismissive and hostile treatment of her implies she is? In Venice, her group again plans to rid themselves of Margery and sail to the Holy Land without her. They order "a schip" for themselves "to seylyn in" and buy "vesselys" for their "wyn" and "beddyng" for themselves "but nothing for hir" (74). Margery defiantly makes arrangements to sail in the same ship anyway, until God speaks to her and warns her "that sche schuld not seylyn in that schip, and he assyngned hir another schip, a galey, that sche schulde seylyn in" (74). She relays this warning to the other pilgrims, and it apparently strikes a chord, for they are suddenly eager to go in this new ship, even though now, Margery claims, it is against her will that they come with her (74). They sell off the wine vessels they bought for the first ship and set off, instead, in the galley with Margery, "for thei durst non otherwyse don" (74). She lets this sudden reversal on their part pass without further comment and proceeds to recount how during the voyage the party reverts to mistreating her. When they make up their beds, a priest takes a sheet from her and, when she takes God as her witness that it is hers, he swears a "gret othe" that she is "as fals as sche mygth be" and furiously rebukes her (74-75).

Other than her problems with the other passengers, Margery mentions nothing about the actual voyage, which suggests that the sea itself gives the boat no trouble to speak of and that the journey is a safe one. This voyage, therefore, bears out a promise the Lord has made to her in an earlier revelation when He instructs her to undertake pilgrimages to Rome, Jerusalem, and Santiago de Compostela: "I schal go wyth the in every contré and ordeyn [provide] for the; I schal ledyn the thyder and brynge the [home]

ageyn in safté, and noon Englyschman schal deyn [die] in the schyp that thou art in” (44-45). The voice of God repeats this guarantee to her during the return voyage from the Holy Land to Venice, a voyage that is bookended by the continued shunning of Margery by other English pilgrims. Prior to sailing from the Holy Land, her companions are consistently unwilling to include her in or help her during visits to various sacred sites. They refuse, for instance, to allow her to visit the River Jordan with them; another time, as she struggles up Mount Quarentyne near Jericho, where “owyr Lord fastyd fowrty days,” her “felawshep” refuses “to helpyn hir” along (80). After the ship lands in “Venyce in safté,” her “cuntremen forsokyn hir and went away fro hir, levying hir alone” (82). During the ship’s journey through the Mediterranean and the Adriatic, however, her fellowship are the ones in the vulnerable position, as many of them are severely seasick, and Margery is there to help. The Lord reassures Margery that all will be well, telling her not to be afraid because “no man” shall die “in the schip that thou art in” (82). This time, too, she finds “hir felyngys” to be “ryth trewe”; that is, the sea journey ends with no loss of life (82).

Margery’s account of these two voyages makes her into something of a Christ figure. She, her presence in the boat, is the salvation of those who persecute her; in this way, her ship travel, like her “run-ins with [. . .] authorities who interpret her devotional practices as heresy” is part of what Ruth Shklar calls Margery’s “spectacular *Imitatio Christi*” (287). The journey provides real-world proof to Margery that the frequent direct assurances she has from God throughout the *Book* that she is among the elect are authentic divine revelations and that she has a rightful, even privileged, place in the Christian community (Helfers 40-41). On the ships, the real power dynamic between her

and her fellow pilgrims comes to light. Although they lord their worldly, visible authority over her, to such an extent that she becomes a marginal figure in their little traveling community, her invisible, spiritual authority as one of the predestined is what ensures the safety of the ships. In her description of these voyages, the conventional metaphor of the Ship of the Church transforms into a literal reality. But this transformation is also a reconfiguration (Bowers 15). What guides the ship safely through the sea of the world is not the hierarchical authority of the visible, historical church—the cruelty of the priest towards Margery on the first voyage is significant here—but the invisible spiritual potency of the predestined, who in their outward appearances are just as, if not more, likely to be the meek (the social freaks and the “fools”) as they are to be more socially respectable Christians.

Margery’s spiritual authority becomes further pronounced in the *Book’s* description of her return voyage from Middleburg in Zeeland to the English coast, which follows a lengthy stay in Rome on her way back from the Holy Land. She describes the circumstances of this crossing in a way that constructs her as a heterodox priestly figure ordained directly by God, stressing God’s omnipotence and omnipresence to suggest that his power overflows, is not limited to, the channels of the visible, historical Church (Bowers 15). Margery’s priestly credentials are established in the narrative lead-up to this ship journey. As she and her traveling company make their way from Rome to Middleburg, an English priest, who has befriended her in Rome after seeking her out and asking that she receive him as her spiritual son, reveals to her his fear of being killed on the road by bandits (Kempe 100). Margery reassures him, saying, “ye schal far ryth wel and gon saf be the grace of God,” words with which he “was wel comforyd [. . .] for he

trustyd meche in hir felyngys” (104). The priest has good reason to trust in her feelings, given that they are buttressed by a revelation Margery has had in Rome before setting out. “Owr Lord Jhesu Christ” has spoken in her mind, telling her that she and her companions will be safe on the road: “thu and alle that ben in thy cumpany schal gon as safe as yf thei wer in Seynt Petrys Chersch” (104).

Having reached Middleburg, she, the English priest, and some others in her company remain there for almost a week, while the rest immediately set off in a ship to England. She explains her decision to stay on for a few more days to the priest as doing God’s will by keeping to the travel itinerary He has set: “it is not my Lordys wille that I schulde go so [soon]” (104). When the day of their departure finally comes, with a favorable wind for sailing, “it was answeyrd and comawndyd in [Margery’s] sowle that thei schuld gon [their] wey in the name of Jhesu,” despite the fact that the only available means of transport is not quite a ship but a smaller vessel (105). When the English priest expresses his worries about the seaworthiness of this boat, Margery again reassures him that she travels with God’s protection: “Sone, God is as mythy in a lityl schip as in a gret schip, for I wyl go therin be the leve of God” (105). In these exchanges, the conventional religious roles of the medieval Church are reversed. The cleric whose authority is granted by the institutional Church becomes the spiritual dependent of the lay woman whose greater authority comes directly from God Himself, circumventing the “middle man” that is that Church (Bowers 12). In other words, the invisible church takes precedence over the visible Church.

There are interesting and significant thematic connections between this sea crossing from Middleburg to England and the events on land that precede it, connections

which point to the potentially heretical nature of Margery's position as spiritual leader. During the layover in Middleburg, Margery and her companions amuse themselves out in the fields, where Margery takes it upon herself to instruct them "in the lawys of God as wel as sche cowed" and to reprimand them for the "gret othys" they swear, which break "the comawndment of owr Lord God" (104). The religious instruction she gives in this episode would be suggestive of Lollardy to many of her contemporaries because it embodies a number of traits that were associated in the "popular imagination" with Lollardy (Craun 132). She could be easily mistaken for an unlicensed, "wandering" female preacher proclaiming the Word out of doors, rather than within the walls of an official church building, while excoriating her flock for swearing—all practices which were often seen as typical Lollard behavior (Staley, *Dissenting* 5, 7, 147; Craun 132).

This sermonizing is interrupted when God warns Margery, by "revelacyon," that "gret wederyng and perlyows [stormy and perilous weather]" is coming and is about to catch her exposed in the open fields, so that she and the others rush back to their "hostel" just in time to escape the storm (Kempe 104-05). Many other times, "as sche went [by] the wey and in the feldys," Margery encounters "gresely and grevows [ghastly and grievous]" thunder and lightning as well as "many gret reynes [rains]," all of which causes her "gret drede and hevynes" and to fear being smitten "to deth" (105). But, again, "owr Lord Jhesu Crist" is there to comfort her, reminding her that He is with her wherever she may go, that His power is as great beyond the walls of any church building as it is within them: "Why art thow aferd whil I am wyth the? I am as mythy to kepyn the her[e] in the felde as in the strengest chirche in alle this worlde" (105). Thus Margery's claim that God is as mighty in her little ship on the sea, which also runs into

“gret tempestys and [dark] wedyr,” as in any larger ship is grounded in this direct communiqué from God reassuring her that His reach is felt everywhere in creation, not just in the architecture of the Church (105). This insight, in turn, echoes the earlier revelation in Rome that Margery and those who accompany her home from Rome will be as safe in their travels as if they were snug in St. Peter’s Church.

Through a chain of comparative associations, then, the small vessel Margery sails from Middleburg to England is likened to a church; it is another image of the ship as church. But, again, the vision of the church it evokes is one that has dissenting or reformist overtones. As in earlier sea crossings, as in her travels in general, Margery’s presence is crucial to the safety of the journey. When the ship runs into rough weather on the North Sea, Margery and her shipmates cry out to God “for grace and mercy,” and their prayers are answered: “anon the tempestys sesyd, and thei had fayr wedyr and seyled al the nygth on ende and the next day tyl evynsong tyme, and than thei cam to londe” (105). God, that is, comes into the ship, calms the seas, and delivers Margery and her “crew” safely to land, much as the Apostles’ ship is “throwen with wawis” on the Sea of Galilee until Jesus walks across the water and enters the ship, calming the turbulent winds, and brings it safely to “the lond of Genesar” (*Holy*, Matt. 24-35). This journey further validates Margery’s foresight in Rome that she and her companions will be as safe in their travels as they would be in the bosom of “Seynt Petrys Cherch.” This ship-church is guided safely by the power of lay spirituality, as a channel through which God’s grace flows, over and above that of the official clergy, represented by the priest in the ship. Furthermore, insofar as Margery’s pre-voyage preaching in Middleburg bears signs of what was often seen by her contemporaries to be the heretical Lollard “style,” the fact

that her lay spirituality brings the ship safely through turbulent waters suggests that God favors or approves of the marginal, fringe voices of dissent, such as that of Margery herself, who were critical of what they saw as the corruption of the late medieval Church.

A similar pattern emerges in the events of Margery's pilgrimage to the shrine of St. James in Santiago de Compostela, on which she sets out in a ship from Bristol, after spending six weeks in the town trying to book passage and attracting notoriety for her unrestrained displays of religious devotion. The resulting difficulty she encounters in being accepted onto an available ship, which finally arrives from Brittany and is "mad redy" to sail to Santiago, again provides a kind of real-life metaphor for her difficulty being accepted as a member of the Christian community (Kempe 111). In Bristol, she receives the Eucharist every Sunday "wyth plentyuows terys and [violent] sobbyngys, with lowde cryngys and schille schrykyngys" (109-10). Her behavior astonishes many people, who react with condemnation and suspicion. They "wondyrd upon hir, skornyd hir and despised hir, bannyd hir and cursyd hir, seyde meche evyl of hir, slawndryd hir, and [accused her of saying things] wech that sche seyde nevyr" (110).

On Corpus Christi Day, Margery follows the procession of the "Sacrament abowte the town," full of "terys and devocyon, wyth holy thowtys and meditacyon, sor wepyng and boystows sobbyng" (110). Once more, people who witness this display of raw, emotional piety react with dismay: "the pepil wonderyd upon hir, havyng gret merveyll what hir eyled [ailed]" (110). When a friend arranges passage for her with the master of the ship out of Brittany, a "riche man" of Bristol, who seems to have gotten wind of her reputation or perhaps witnessed her crying himself, tries to prevent her from "seylen in that schip, for he held hir no good woman" (111). While there is no specific

mention of Lollardy or heresy by those who take issue with Margery in Bristol, it is not unreasonable to suppose that fears of heresy are behind their suspicion of her. As Alexandra Walsham suggests, much of the “animosity” that “lay people” exhibit towards the “heterodox” Margery can be explained by the tense “context” of the “[threat] of rebellion” against the “status quo” that the “recent Oldcastle Rising” of 1414, inspired by the Lollard sympathizer John Oldcastle, posed in early fifteenth-century England (*Charitable*, 136; Hudson, *Premature* 116).

Margery defends her right to be on the ship from Bristol to Santiago by telling the rich man who opposes her that if he keeps her “owt of the schip, my Lord Jhesu schal put yow owt of hevyn, for [. . .] ovr Lord Jhesu [has not delight in] a ryche man [unless] he wil be a good man and a meke man” (111). She proceeds to say “many scharp wordys onto hym wythowtyn any [glossing or] flaterynge” (111). After she thus admonishes the man, God speaks to her “in hir sowle” to reassure her that she will have her way “and gon to Seynt Jamys at thi desyr” (111). This brief exchange encapsulates some of the persistent concerns of Kempe’s life: her desire to be accepted, on her own spiritual terms, as a legitimate member of the Christian community and her need to be reassured that she is in good standing with the Lord. By bringing salvation into the question of her right to be on the pilgrim ship, Margery shows that she sees her ship journeys as instantiations in her life of the ship-as-church image and in which the true meaning of the church is at stake. In this particular case, she reminds her critic that the outward signs of social, worldly respectability that come with wealth are not reliable indicators of spiritual respectability, while her unorthodox religious practices, which apparently cause him to disapprove of her, should not be taken as necessarily indicating that she is a bad

Christian. In short, she argues that the visible Church does not coincide with the invisible church. And her reassurance from the voice of God “in hir sowle” that she will indeed go “to Seynt Jamys” serves to remind the reader that assurance of salvation can finally be known only by invisible, internal conviction, not by outward, visible signs.

In the interval between this spat with the rich man and her sailing for Santiago, Margery meets with Thomas Peverel, the Bishop of Worcester, who is staying at his manor nearby. She goes to the meeting seemingly expecting it to be another instance in which her piety is scrutinized by the ecclesiastical hierarchy, but she emerges from it not only having proven her worthiness as a member of the true church but also having demonstrated a spiritual leadership that transcends the official leadership of the visible Church. On arriving in the bishop’s “halle,” Margery takes exception to the worldly vanity of the “bischopys men al to raggyd and al to daggyd in her clothys,” that is, who are there posturing in clothes that are “fashionably slashed and pointed” (111; Staley, *Book* 111, n. 2562-63). She expresses her disapproval by lifting “up hir hande” and blessing herself, a gesture that takes the men off guard “since it is ordinarily used to ward off devils rather than to greet the ‘worshipfullest men in town’” (Kempe 111; Lochrie 148). Taking offense at this gesture, the men testily reply, “What devil eyleth [ails] the?” indicating that they too have heard rumors of Margery’s unusually passionate displays of devotion and, like others, suspect that she is possessed by the devil (Kempe 111). Her table-turning riposte that, in fact, they are the ones who are in league with Satan, because their weakness for worldly trends makes them more like “the develys men” than true men of God, only further angers them: “than thei weryn wroth and chedyn hir and spokyn angrily unto hir” (111). Having successfully riled her opponents, Margery slips into the

role of the reasonable interlocutor, suffering their outburst “wel and mekely” (111). She explains their sins and “mysgovernawns” to them so patiently and soberly that, by the time she leaves them, they are won over and thankful to her for the moral correction she has provided (111). Margery is thus a reforming influence on these “ecclesiastical figures,” reminding them of the “devotion that ought to undergird authority” (Staley, *Dissenting* 107).

Once she finishes with these men in the outer hall, she proceeds to the church on the property, where she meets with the bishop himself. This physical move has a symbolic dimension as it suggests her getting closer to the spiritual heart of the place as well as higher up the ladder of the ecclesiastical hierarchy. In other words, she advances closer to the center of power in this outpost of the Church, “like a seasoned general picking the ground for the ensuing encounter” (Parker 55). Here she engages in a showdown of sorts with the bishop, one that effectively establishes her as his equal, if not his superior, in terms of spiritual power. When he enters the church, Margery kneels before him, asking what his “wille” is and why he has “somownde [summoned]” her “to come before hym” (112). According to the *Middle English Dictionary*, one meaning of “somnen” was “to cite [somebody] to appear before a court (either secular or ecclesiastical) or other judicial authority for trial, examination, or punishment.” This seems to be the kind of summoning Margery has in mind because her initial show of deference to the bishop immediately gives way to a more combative, defiant attitude. She informs him that “it was to hir gret noye and hynderawns [annoyance and hindrance]” to come to see him “inasmeche as sche was a pilgryme” in the middle of preparing “be [by] the grace of God” to take ship for the shrine at St. James (112). “Be

the grace of God” is more than a throwaway phrase in this context. It chastises the bishop for interfering, by calling her to his manor, with her preparations for carrying out God’s will by going to sea and, therefore, implies that he, a representative of the Church, keeps her from God, rather than bringing her closer to Him (Bowers 11).

It turns out that he has asked her to come to share a meal with him in order that he can ask a spiritual favor of her. He tries to remove the tension between them, proposing that he will “far fayr [behave properly]” to her if she does the same for him (112). Margery tries to excuse herself from the invitation by citing a prior engagement to dine with “a good man in town” (112). But she relents when the bishop extends his invitation to her friend as well, and so she stays until God sends a good wind “that sche mytn seylen [sail]” and has “gret cher of [the bishop] and hys [household] also” (112). During the visit, she is shriven by the bishop and he, in turn, asks her to put in a good word with God on his behalf. Having recently been told by a prescient “holy man” that he will die within the space of two years, he requests that Margery “prey for hym that he myth [die] in charité” (112). When she leaves, the bishop gives her gold and his “blyssyng” as well as having some of his servants helpfully escort her on her “wey” (112). The overall impression left by Margery’s visit with the bishop and his staff is that of her entering Church precincts as a reforming influence who provides the kind of spiritual guidance that has been lacking there and who has a surplus of grace to spare for Churchmen who are in need of it. While she is shriven and blessed by the bishop, there is no indication that she actively seeks those things from him, whereas the central aim of her visit is apparently so that he can ask for her spiritual assistance. It is as if Margery has charitably, if somewhat cursorily and reluctantly, granted an audience to the bishop in

order to hear his humble petition that she intercede for him with God. In other words, here, the Church needs Margery more than she needs the Church.

Her visit to the Bishop of Worcester's estate provides a thematic prelude to her finally boarding the pilgrim ship and sailing for Spain. Like her time with the Bishop and his household, her voyage demonstrates her importance as a spiritual protector of the Christian community. Again, her reputation for unorthodoxy appears to precede her. Her "felaschip" on the boat warns her that if they "haddyn any tempest" during the journey they "woldyn castyn hyr in the se, for thei seyde it [would be because of] hir, and thei seyde the schip was the [worse] for sche was therin" (112). Olivia Remie Constable notes that Kempe "probably ha[s] the paradigm of Jonah in mind" during this moment; her shipmates probably have it in mind as well (83). Their threat appears to be based on the belief that, "as in the tale of Jonah, storms could [. . .] be a sign of God's anger at some transgression," which suggests that Margery's shipmates, having seen or heard of her unusual religious self-expression in Bristol, suspect her of heretical transgressions (83). Consequently, they believe that her presence in their Christian community aboard the pilgrim ship might "infect" that community as a whole and bring down God's punishment on it, for accommodating her unholy ways (Walsham, *Charitable* 135-36).

In this light, her fellow pilgrims' concern about allowing Margery on the ship is also influenced by the push in the English Church to root out heresy in the early fifteenth century. The 1409 *Constitutions* of Thomas Arundel, the Archbishop of Canterbury, similarly uses images of the Church as a body and a garden to express alarm about the influence of heretical thought on it. Arundel asserts the institutional Church's direct descent from Peter, to whom the Lord "granted [. . .] pre-eminence above the other

apostles,” and, so, its unique, divinely given power to represent God’s will on earth and to expect the obedience of all Christians (187). This sole, absolute authority means that nonconformists “who, trusting to their own wits[,] are so bold to violate, and with contrary doctrine to resist, and in word and deed to contemn, the precepts of laws and canons” of the Church are “deserving quickly to be cut off, as rotten members, from the body of the church militant” (187). The text likewise calls for “rooting out the evil weeds and offendicles” of Lollard heresy “which, by the means of perverse preaching and doctrine, have sprung up” in the “province of Canterbury” (189). Removing the weeds of heresy will restore “the honour of our holy mother church, whereby one uniform holy doctrine may be sown and planted in the church of God” (189). As Margery’s traveling companions fear they may need to throw her out of their pilgrim ship to keep it safe on its way to the shrine at Santiago, so Arundel’s *Constitutions* calls for heresy to be cut or torn away from the communal body of the Church in order to preserve its holiness. The controversy over Margery’s presence on the ship from Bristol to Spain, then, is also a controversy about who is and who is not a legitimate member of the true church.

Kempe’s narrative of the incident, not surprisingly, is concerned to prove her fellow pilgrims’ belief about her false. Before entering the ship, she asks God to bestow His protecting grace upon the ship: “that God schulde kepe hem and preserve hem fro venjawns, tempestys, and perellys in the se that thei myth go and come in safté” (112). And she requests that He save whatever punishment He might have in store for her until she completes the pilgrimage and is back on dry land in England: “yyf thu wilt chastisyn me, spar me tyl I come ageyn into Inglond. And, when I come ageyn, chastyse me ryth as thu wilt” (112). God grants her prayer and “so sche toke hir schip in the name of

Jhesu and seylyd forth wyth hir felaschip, whom God sent fayr wynde and wedyr so that thei comyn to Seynt Jamys on the sevenyth day” (112). Far from being the cause of the ship going down in a storm, Margery proves to be the reason for the smooth sailing the pilgrims need in order to make it to the holy shrine and accrue credit that can be put towards their salvation. The success of the voyage thus establishes Margery’s spiritual worth, and her peculiar, heterodox piety is no longer a problem for her fellowship while they are in Santiago. Rather, it becomes accepted among this traveling Christian community: “thei that weryn [against] hir whan thei wer at Bristowe now thei made hir good cher. And so thei abedyn ther fourteen days in that lond, and ther had sche gret cher, bothyn bodily and gostly, hy devocyon, and many gret cryes in [mind of] owr Lordys Passion, with plentyuows terys of compassyon” (112).

Furthermore, in its rendering of a pilgrim ship brought safely through the sea to a holy place because of Margery’s special relationship with God, Kempe’s account of the successful journey expresses a vision of a Christian community, a church, successfully guided towards salvation by the sort of heterodox, or at least marginal, lay piety that the institutional English Church was so concerned to contain or eliminate. It is important to consider at this point the number of times throughout the *Book* that Margery receives direct, private assurance from the Lord that “she was always to be one of the elect,” that she is predestined (Windeatt 18). Christ tells her “many tymes,” “thow wer a chosyn sowle wythowt begynnyng in my syghte and a peler [pillar] of Holy Cherch” (42). When she worries that her past sins might keep the gate of heaven shut against her, He reassures her, “thu schalt have a synguler grace in hevyn” (60). When, in Rome, Margery first feels the intense mystical sensation of an “inward burning” in her breast, which endures

for sixteen years, and she is “aferd therof,” “owr Lord” calms her fears by explaining that the burning comes from the presence of the Holy Spirit within her (93). And that means that “thu art as sekыр [certain] of the lofe of God as God is God. Thy sowle is mor sekыр of the lofe of God than of thin[e] owyn body, for thi sowle schal partyn fro thy body but God schal nevyр partyn fro thi sowle” (93). Thus if the ship that Margery and her fellowship take to Santiago de Compostela is also a church sailing towards salvation, it is one that is driven by the certain wind of predestination and, implicitly, not one dependent on the visible Church for its navigation. It is, in that sense, an invisible ship of the elect.

The implicit privileging of the authority of Margery’s own private, individual conscience (in the form of God’s direct communication to her soul) over the authority of the corporate medieval Church becomes explicit in Book II, which recounts her final sea travels later in life, when she accompanies her German daughter-in-law on a voyage from Ipswich to Danzig. Margery’s son and his wife have come from their home in Prussia, where they have met and married, to stay with her in Bishop’s Lynn, in East Anglia. During their visit, her son falls ill and dies, followed “a schort tyme aftyr,” by Margery’s husband (210). Her daughter-in-law stays on in Lynn with Margery for another year and a half before her friends in Germany write asking her to come home and she, “desiring” their “benevolens,” feels the time has come to return “to hir owyn cuntre” (210). Margery and she decide that she should make the return voyage in a ship out of Germany, so that she sails in the company of her “owyn cuntremen” (211). A “strawnge man,” perhaps a German, comes to Lynn to retrieve her when the German ship is ready to depart, and Margery accompanies her to the local church where she is shriven by her

confessor (who is also Margery's confessor) before setting out onto the perilous sea (211).

At this point, we see the first "hints" of Margery's "disengagement from ecclesiastical authority" in this episode (Staley, *Dissenting* 115). As her daughter-in-law is "in the schryvyng," Margery paces in the choir of the church considering a thought that has occurred to her, that it may be the Lord's will that she takes leave of her "confessowr" and goes over the sea with her daughter-in-law (211). God answers this thought by assuring her that there is no need to speak with her confessor: "Dowtyr, I wote wel, yf I bode the gon, thu woldist gon al redy. Therfor I wyl that thu speke no word to hym [her confessor] of this mater" (211). Margery takes this answer to mean that God will not require her to set sail after all, which is a great relief to her because she has developed a healthy fear of the sea: "than was sche ryth glad and mery, trustyng sche shulde not gon ovyr the see, for sche had ben in gret perell on the see afor tyme and was in purpose nevyr to comyn theron mor be hir owyn wille" (211). Margery presents this idea about once more going to sea as God's testing her obedience to Him, given that, if it were up to her ("hir owyn wille"), she would never again set foot on a ship (211). By demonstrating her readiness to obey God nonetheless (she "woldist gon al redy"), Margery passes the test without having to go through with the journey, much as Abraham passes God's test without having to go through with sacrificing his son Isaac (*Bible*, Gen. 22.12). But God's answer to her does not actually say that He does not want her to sail with her daughter-in-law. It merely says that God is confident that she would go if He commanded ("bode") her to go, while also indicating that her confessor's blessing would be superfluous to the matter ("Therfor I wyl that thu speke no word to hym of this

mater”). Therefore, contemplating the possibility of going to sea, even though it ends up being a temporarily unrealized possibility in this moment, leads Margery to see the possibility of freedom from her confessor’s authority over her.

Although this anxious moment ends with Margery’s believing she will not have to sail with her daughter-in-law, it nevertheless sets off a chain of events in which Margery appears inevitably driven out to sea and out from under obedience to the clerical hierarchy. As soon as Margery’s daughter-in-law finishes her confession, the confessor expresses his concern that it would be inappropriate and perhaps dangerous for her to travel alone with the young foreign man all the way from Lynn to Ipswich, especially considering that they would be traveling through a country in which they were both “lityl knowyn” (211). Margery immediately offers to accompany her as far as Ipswich, where she will see to it that her daughter-in-law gets on the right ship, one full of her “owyn cuntremen that schal ledyn hir ovyr the see” (211). But her confessor balks at this idea too, claiming that it would also be inappropriate for Margery to go because she has not yet fully recovered from a recent foot injury and because “ye arn an elde woman” (211). To assuage his concerns, Margery hits upon the idea of bringing with them a young male hermit who belongs to the parish. This proposal does the trick: the confessor gives her “leve to brynge hir dowtyr to Yepiswich and than comyn ageyn to Lynne” (211). Margery thus procures official “cover” for her traveling (a religiously safe, locally known male escort and clearly defined parameters to the journey) while at the same time putting some distance between herself and the watchful eye of her confessor.

This outcome at first appears to result from a spur-of-the-moment inspiration and some skilful strategizing on Margery’s part; in retrospect, however, it looks as if it has

been prearranged by God in order to set Margery off on the initial stage of her sea journey without her needing first to seek the approval of her confessor. For “five or six myle” out of Lynn, she and her companions stop in a local church to hear mass. And here she is again beset by the feeling, this time overwhelming, that she ought to get on the boat in Ipswich and sail to Germany with her daughter-in-law: “evyr was [she] comawndyd in hir hert for to gon ovyr the see with hir dowtyr. Sche wolde a putt it owt of hir mende, and evyr it cam ageyn so fast that sche myth not rest ne qwiet han in hir mende but evyr was labowryd and comawndyd to gon ovyr the see” (211). She tries to resist this urge to go to sea by reminding God of her bond of obedience to the Church: “Lord, thu wost wel I have no leve of my gostly fadyr [her spiritual advisor, her confessor], and I am bowndyn to obediens. Therfor I may not do thus wythowtyn hys wil and hys consentyng” (212). “In hir thowt,” the Lord answers this objection by flatly denying that any obedience to the Church should cause her not to do what her inner conscience tells her to do: “I bydde the gon in my name, Jhesu, for I am abovyn thy gostly fadyr and I schal excusyn the and ledyn the and bryngyn the ageyn in safté” (212). Margery makes one last effort to excuse herself from the voyage by appealing to her lack of financial resources for the journey and bringing up the habit her shipmates have of wishing she were not on board. She indicates that her daughter-in-law would rather Margery had stayed at home and speculates that the “schip maistrys” might not permit her to board the ship (212). But the voice within assures her that, as long as she has faith that God watches over her, she will travel safely and securely: “Yf I be wyth the, [who] schal ben ageyns the? I schal purveyin [provide] for the and getyn the frendys to helpyn the. Do as I bydde the, and ther schal no man of the schip sey nay unto the” (212).

This assertion builds on the Lord's previous assertion that His voice should be given priority over that of Margery's spiritual advisor. It tells her that her inner faith should guide her above all other considerations. Margery finally gives in to the divine voice in her head: "ther was non other help but forth sche must at the comawndyng of God" (212). God's calling her to sea in this scene, therefore, is also His calling her to see that her private, individual relationship to Him is paramount, that ultimately her rightful spiritual direction can only be found by looking inward for the voice of God rather than relying on the official voices of the Church for answers. As David Wallace succinctly states, "the Jesus inside Margery's head overrules the father-confessor outside it" (Wallace). It is significant, in this light, that the idea that God wants her to sail to Germany with her "dowtyr" occurs to her when she goes inside actual churches, that is, physical church buildings. At these moments, she is, in a very literal sense, inside, contained, or surrounded by the architecture of the medieval Church. The setting emphasizes that the call of the open sea, in drawing her away from the spiritual guidance of her confessor, is indicative of her spiritual growth away from or beyond the confines of the official, formal structuring of spirituality represented by the Church and towards a less contained, more wide-open, and expansive spiritual experience (Bowers 8, 26). The call of the sea, then, is the call of spiritual freedom for Margery.

Margery's freedom from Church authority in this instance is shown further to be authorized by God through the way that the remainder of her trek from Lynn to the docks at Ipswich unfolds. During this stage of the trip, events occur that confirm the truth of the revelation she has had in the church outside of Lynn (when God promises that He will look after her on the voyage) and demonstrate that the voyage was always going to

happen, whether her confessor approved of it or not, because it is part of God's prearranged plan for her. After Margery resigns herself to going to sea, she decides to stop at Walsingham to make an offering to "owr Lady" at the shrine. On the way there, she hears that a famous friar is giving a sermon in a church "in a lityl village a lityl owt of hir wey," so she makes a detour to hear the sermon (212). The only information we are given about the content of the sermon is that "many tymys he seyde thes wordys, 'Yyf God be wyth us, ho schal be ageyns us'" (212). The words closely echo what, in her recent revelation, God Himself has told Margery: "Yf I be wyth the, [who] schal ben ageyns the? I schal purveyin [provide] for the." This snippet of the sermon thus functions as a divine sign, reassuring Margery that her revelation has truly shown her what God has in store for her, and she responds accordingly: through these words she is "more steryd [stirred] to obeyn the wil of God and parformyn hir intent" (212). Also of note in Margery's response to the sermon is how it aligns her will with that of God. She will perform "hir intent," which is to obey "the wil of God," the same will of God that is "abovyn [her] gostly fadyr" and that Christ has described to Margery, during her stay in Jerusalem earlier in life, as "above al Holy Cherch" (79). By asserting that her own will participates in God's will, she also asserts that her individual agency is "above" that of any clerical power and that the parameters of her spiritual life transcend those within which the Church might seek to contain her.

The scriptural source of the friar's sermon is relevant here. The fragment of the sermon that Margery quotes refers to Paul's Epistle to the Romans 8.31, rendered in the Wycliffite Bible as, "If God [is] for vs, who *is* a□ens vs?" The larger context of this verse is concerned with the absolute nature of predestination: "And thilke that [God]

bifore ordeynede to blis, [t]hem he clepide [called]; and whiche he clepide, hem he iustifiede, and whiche he iustifiede, and hem he glorified. What thanne schulen we seie to these thingis? If God for vs, who *is a□ens vs?*” (*Holy*, Rom. 8.30-31). Margery’s response to the sermon, then, emphasizes that her spiritual autonomy is a function of predestination and, so, “finally obviates the need for obedience to any representative of the earthly priesthood” (Staley, *Dissenting* 113). It also implies that even the Church cannot anticipate or wholly administer the ways of predestination, that is, that providence overflows the sacramental channels of the Church.

Two more episodes occur as Margery makes her way through East Anglia to the sea that confirm that her decision to sail to Germany is also God’s decision, signifying that her spiritual destiny lies beyond the purview of the Church, and that the journey itself is a necessary part of God’s plan for her. In Norwich, she meets with a Grey Friar and reveals to him her anxieties about having decided to sail off without her confessor’s permission, making clear to the friar that she came to the decision only after a good deal of internal struggle and in order to do what God had commanded her in her soul to do (Kempe 212). The friar expresses his approval of her decision, reassuring her that she is indeed obeying God’s will and that her inspiration to go to sea was the result of the “Holy Gost” moving her “spiryt” (213). Margery is “meche comforyd wyth hys wordys” (213). But given that she receives the friar’s blessing only after she has already set her mind to embarking from Ipswich, it cannot be seen as a necessary precondition of the journey. It is more of an after-the-fact endorsement, something that is nice to have, but not necessary. Lynn Staley notes that Margery’s agreeable demeanor towards the friar during the visit is only possible because his “reading” of her “situation agrees with her

own” (*Dissenting* 115). Once she, her daughter-in-law, and the hermit finally arrive in Ipswich and Margery asks the ship’s master if “sche myth seilyn wyth hem into Duchelond,” she finds herself in the, for her, unusual position of being immediately welcomed aboard by all, the sole exception being her grumbling daughter-in-law (213). The shipmaster “goodly receyvyd hir” and the others on board “seyd not” one “no” to her presence (213). These happy experiences with the friar in Norwich and her shipmates, therefore, bear out her earlier revelation in which God has promised, “I schal purveyin [provide] for the and getyn the frendys to helpyn the. Do as I bydde the, and ther schal no man of the schip sey nay unto the.” The experiences, in other words, provide yet more confirmation that she is traveling down a spiritually correct, predestined path and that she ultimately does not require the Church’s guidance to stay on that path.

By the time Margery “and hir felawschip” board the ship “on the Thursday in Passyon Weke” and set sail for Germany, the ship has become quite literally a vehicle by which she drifts away from the Church as the source of salvation (213). It has become symbolic of her travels into freer spiritual territory where her relationship to the divine is less mediated by the governance of the clergy (Roman 159). This emancipation from clerical authority is reinforced by the voyage itself, which gives the clearest picture of all the ship voyages in the *Book* of a ship governed directly by God. After smooth sailing in “fayr wynde and wedyr” for two days, the ship encounters an overpowering storm (Kempe 213). In a demonstration of His absolute power (“turnyng hys hand as hym likyd”) and as a test of Margery’s “faith” and “pacyens,” God sends such “grevows and hedows” “stormys and tempestys” that the crew can no longer “rewlyn ne governe” the ship and all those on board suppose they are about to perish (214). There is nothing for it

but to commend themselves and the ship “to the governawns of owr Lord”; hence, “thei left [their] craft and [their] cunnyng and leet owr Lord dryvyn hem wher he wolde” (214). David Wallace observes that this moment brings together “nautical and religious vocabularies” in a way that puts Margery in the “figurative company” of Chaucer’s Custance: “a *governour* of a ship, in Middle English, is the steersman (as in the Latin *gubernator*); without the ‘craft and . . . cunnyng’ of steersmanship, Margery is,” like Custance, “in a rudderless boat.” Of course, the boat is only rudderless in a strictly material sense, for it is now revealed to be entirely in the hands of the Lord, the ultimate “*governour*” or “steersman” (Wallace). Wallace, furthermore, shows how the *Book* “play[s] here with the reciprocal identification of ships with churches and churches with ships” by drawing on the deep association between the two in medieval religious culture. The physical church building “has a nave, with a wooden-beamed roof sometimes shaped to evoke a navis, or ship” while “medieval paintings of the Ship of the Church or of Noah’s ark may feature a church spire,” implying that, in turn, “a ship, on the high seas, becomes a church” (Wallace). Thus, as the medieval Church claimed to be the way to the salvation of eternal life, so “on the high seas, the frail wooden vessel of your ship [was] your only hope of salvation” from the watery depths (Wallace). But if Margery’s ship from Ipswich to Danzig is a symbolic church, it is a church that is not piloted by the ecclesiastical hierarchy of the medieval Church, which Margery has in effect left behind on land. Rather it is piloted by God alone, and as it is driven through the seas, it becomes clear that it is a manifestation of God’s grace acting without mediation on Margery’s soul, that it is a ship of the predestined elect.

As Margery's drifting ship is battered by the storm, she begins to have second thoughts about the wisdom of her lifelong struggle to be guided by the "inner voice" of her private revelations rather than the dictates of Church authority. She fears that God's longstanding promise to her that she "schulde nevyr perischyn neithyr on londe ne in watyr ne wyth no tempest" will turn out to be a false promise and that she has been a fool to have trusted in God's "mercy" and "goodnesse" (Kempe 214). Now, she laments, all the suffering she has endured for the sake of God at the hands of those who have taken issue with her dramatic emotional piety over the years—those who have "many tyme bannyd me, cursyd me, and wariid me for the grace that thu hast wrowt in me"—will have been for naught (214). It appears that her detractors will now be granted their wish that she "schulde deyin in myschef and gret disese" (214). And she pleads with "Jhesu" to "wythdrawe thes tempestys and schewe us mercy," thereby demonstrating that He is truly "God and non evyl spirit that hast browte me hedyr into the perellys of the see"(214). Responding "in hir minde," the Lord again reassures Margery of His omnipotence: "I am as mythy her in the see as on the londe" (214). He goes on to chastise her for her lack of faith, reminding her that she can have no assurance of salvation without it and that it is the basis of her spiritual power to reassure her shipmates: "Wavyr nowt in thy faith, for wythowtyn faith thu maist nowt plesyn me. Yyf thu woldist verily trostyn in me and no thyng dowyntyn, thu maist han gret comfort in thi self and mythist comforyntyn al thy felaschep where ye ben now alle in gret drede and hevynes" (214).

In its role as vicar of God on earth, the medieval Church's fundamental purpose was to transmit the will of God to His people and instruct them in how to follow it

properly and thereby achieve salvation. Translated into the metaphor of the ship of the church, the ecclesiastical hierarchy's role is to navigate the ship, to plot its course according to God's will, through the sea of the world and into the haven of eternal life. Margery in her storm-tossed ship has usurped the clergy in its role as spiritual navigator, having substituted for it her own subjective interpretation of God's will. She has given priority to her invisible faith over the visible authority of the established Church. Now that she is rattled by the heavy seas battering her ship, she worries that her private faith may have misled her, that, so to speak, her navigational instruments have turned out to be faulty, leading her to become lost at sea. What is at stake, then, in Margery's crisis of faith during this latest storm at sea is whether her private, subjective assurance that she is among God's elect is reliable or not. Proof that it ultimately is comes when the unsteerable ship, now under "the governawns of owr Lord," is "drevyn" to the coast of Norway (215). The voyage, in the end, provides yet more evidence that private conscience is on its own a legitimate basis for spiritual authority.

Furthermore, Christ's reassuring of Margery during the storm is at the center of the vision of a spiritually reformed church at play in Margery's narrative of this sea journey. When the voice of God speaks directly to her on the ship to fortify her faith by reminding her that it is the key to both her and her fellowship's spiritual comfort, He effectively ordains her as a lay priestly figure whose flock is her fellow Christian pilgrims. The ship becomes an image of a church in which priestly authority is granted directly by God to His chosen rather than through a mediating ecclesiastical apparatus. After thus establishing private, lay revelation and election as the "mechanisms" that drive this church, the picture of the church/ship is filled in with images of saints, the Virgin,

and Christ clustering around Margery on the ship. “Holy seyntys” to whom Margery prays come and converse “unto hir sowle be the sufferawns of owr Lord, gevyng hir wordys of gret comfort” (214). The Virgin arrives, too, and provides “good comfort” by confirming that the storm will pass: “I telle the trewly thes wyndys and tempestys schal sone sesyn and ye schal han rith fayr wedyr” (215). After the ship’s layover in Norway, the Lord sends “a fayr wynde” that drives it finally to Danzig (215). And during this time, the shipmaster provides such good care to Margery that it seems as if Christ Himself is on board with her (Wallace). She finds “swech grace” in the “maistyr of the schip” that he provides for her every need: “mete and drynke,” his own clothes to protect her from the cold (for she is “not purveyd” with enough of her own clothes as others in the ship are), even the tenderness of a son towards a mother (215). The text’s identification of the ship’s master with Christ becomes clear through Margery’s use of the word “maistyr” to describe Christ as well: “sche went at the bidding of owr Lord, and therfor hyr maistyr wech bad hir gon purveyid for hir so that sche ferd [fared] as wel as any of hir felawschep” (215). In linking the shipmaster’s providing for Margery with the Lord’s providing for her, this description contributes to the overall impression that the voyage is providential, one that has always been in God’s plan for Margery, that God is “Himself ‘mayster’ of her ship, her church” (Wallace).

Finally, the Norwegian leg of the journey contributes to the representation of Margery’s ship as a kind of re-formed or reborn church. After barely escaping the harrowing storm in which those on board “wendyn [supposed] alle to a ben perischyd,” the ship lands safely on the Norwegian coast on Good Friday, where they remain through the Easter weekend (215). On Easter Monday, the ship sets sail to Germany on the

aforementioned “fayr wind.” The timing of this stop in Norway is significant: the storm at sea coincides with the time of Christ’s suffering in the days before the Crucifixion, while the smooth sailing to Germany coincides with the days immediately following the miracle of the Resurrection. On the intervening Easter Sunday, Margery and many of the other passengers go ashore to participate in the Easter ceremonies. They attend the “servyse at the chirche” on shore and then, “aftyr the use [custom] of the cuntré,” watch the raising of the cross “abowte noon tyme” (215). But on Monday, they are back in the ship and it is “wythinne the schip” that the entire fellowship receives the Eucharist, signifying that the body of Christ goes with the ship, that the resurrected Christ is present in and sanctifies this floating church which has originally come into being, with Margery’s decision to sail on it, prior to the institutional Church’s approval and outside of its reach (215). The concurrence of the ship’s suffering and survival on its passage to Germany with the time of Christ’s suffering and miraculous resurrection images a renewed, reborn church setting forth with confidence through the sea of the world.

In presenting an image of a different kind of church, in which private faith rather than the mediating power of an institutionalized clerical bureaucracy is the surest way to God, Margery’s ship voyage to Germany dramatizes a traveling beyond, a transcending of, the established medieval Church towards a more wide-open, less structured, and liberated form of religion. This sea journey shares with the other sea journeys in the *Book* a sense that intimate contact with the divine is to be found “out there,” in places, situations, or experiences where one might not expect to find it, that is, beyond the doctrinal confines of orthodoxy. While Margery is often eager to be granted the Church’s blessing for her spirituality, she does not, as her voyage to Germany

demonstrates, allow the lack of that blessing to prevent her from exploring new or different spiritual “territories” to which God calls her. In this way, her sea journeys express an understanding of the true church as one that spills over the boundaries laid down by the visible medieval Church, an understanding grounded in Margery’s experience of God as an omnipresent, omnipotent force whose saving grace reaches her through the power of nature itself.

The assertions that crop up throughout the *Book* in the context of Margery’s voyages that no one will die in the ships in which she sails and that God is as mighty in one place as in the next link her sea travels to the *Book*’s larger theme of Margery’s exposure to the forces of nature, particularly rough weather. These experiences situate Margery in the context of the natural order and suggest that God has molded the forces of nature around her in such a way that they highlight her chosen status and push her along towards her predestined end. That is, there is a narrative or teleological thrust immanent in her experiences with inclement weather. For example, God’s promise to her during the tempestuous portion of the voyage to Germany that He is as mighty on the sea as on the land echoes Margery’s own promise to the abovementioned English priest who years earlier voices his concern about the small size of the ship they are about to sail in from Middleburg back to England: “God is as mythy in a lityl schip as in a gret schip.” While it is Margery who, in that instance, reassures another who fears heavy seas, she is able to do so, in part, because God has just soothed her own profound anxiety in the face of frightening storms. As I’ve noted earlier, when days before setting out from Middleburg she is caught in dramatic, stormy weather out in the fields and along paths on the

outskirts of the town, God calms her fears, telling her, “I am as mythy to kepyn the her[e] in the felde as in the strengest chirche in alle this worlde.”

Along with each of her other harrowing voyages through stormy seas, these encounters with the potentially deadly force of the elements, which Margery finds deeply unsettling, function as trials by nature, or ordeals. They prove, by virtue of the fact that she comes through unscathed, her “authenticity” as one of God’s chosen, that “she has access to a higher authority” than that of the clergy or the other more conformist Christians throughout the *Book* who accuse her of heresy or of being in league with Satan (Mitchell 139). They also bear out the pledge Christ makes to Margery that, because she is saved, she will never be harmed by the elements: “ne fyer [shall burn] the, ne watyr drynch the, ne wynd deryn [harm] the, for I may not forgetyn the how thow art wretyn in myn handys and my fete; it lykyn me wel the peynes that I have sufferyd for the” (43).

At other times, foul weather signifies Margery’s spiritual authenticity by threatening those who persecute her or by responding to her prayers. After she returns from her pilgrimage to Santiago, she continues her pious travels in England, which include her troubling visit with two companions, a Thomas Marchale and a “man of Wisbeche” (in Cambridgeshire), to a “fayr cherch” in Leicester (115, 113). When she is arrested there on suspicion of heresy, her companions are also arrested and held at a separate location from her. During her captivity, the Steward of Leicester threatens her with rape, but afterwards she seems less concerned for her own safety than for the plight of her companions and prays to God for their “delyverawns” (115). God replies that for her sake he shall “so disposyn for” them that the townspeople will be happy to release them before long (115). The next day He sends such stormy weather, complete with

thunder, lightning, and relentless rain, that the people fear God is punishing the town for jailing the pilgrims. The “governorys of the town,” therefore, arrange a hasty examination of the two men, during which they swear that Margery is “clene and chaste” and “a woman of the ryth feyth and ryth believe” (115-16). They are promptly released and “anon the tempest [ceased] and it was fayr wedir, worschepyd be owre Lord God” (116). Back in Bishop’s Lynn, a large fire breaks out in the town and threatens the parish church of St. Margaret. In something resembling a no-atheists-in-foxholes moment, the parishioners who normally cannot tolerate Margery’s cries and weeping “for the plentyuows grace that owr Lord wrowt in hir” now suddenly encourage her “to cryen and wepyn” as much as she can, “ful trustyng and belevyng that [through] hir crying and wepyng owr Lord wolde” show them mercy (158). Even her confessor rushes to her for ritual advice, wondering if he should bear the Blessed Sacrament towards the fire in the hope that it wil miraculously quench the flames. Margery answers that he should do so, “for owr Lord Jhesu Crist telde me it schal be ryth wel” (158). In this moment of crisis, even the clergy depend on Margery, a lay intermediary of God whose seniority is greater than their own. Seeing the “sparkys of the fyer fleyn abowte the church” and coming into the choir, Margery cries “ful lowde ageyn for grace and mercy wyth gret plenté of terys” (158). This “triggers a celestial answer in kind, a sudden snowstorm that quenches the flames,” sparing the church through “myrakl and special grace” (Cohen 180; Kempe 158). The coordination of Margery’s spiritual difference and the forces of nature thus not only marks her as special to God. It also emphasizes her spiritual authority by revealing her to be a savior of the Church, the same Church that at various points throughout the *Book* shows itself to be tainted by worldly corruption and liable to misrecognize and

mistreat the predestined souls within its flock. Overall, the way the elements handle and respond to Margery on sea and on land adds up to a description of nature as an agent of God that carries out God's plans for Margery more faithfully and more exactly than the medieval Church does; nature has greater and more reliable authority than the Church when it comes to deciding the status of Margery's spiritual condition.

The *Book*, moreover, uses weather imagery to describe Margery herself as an elemental force of nature managed by providence. It leads into this point when, after Margery first begins to have her "wondirful cryis," she asks Christ to restrict these astonishing outbursts of pietistic emotion to times when she is "alone in my chambyr" rather than when she is among other people (174). She asks particularly that He "take thes cryingys fro me in the tyme of sermownys that I cry not at thin holy prechyng and of thin holy wordys" (174). She fears that if she continues to cry out during church services she will continue to be banned from them ("putt fro heryng of thin holy prechyng and of thin holy wordys") and continue to be denounced as someone in great spiritual peril, who thereby threatens to infect others with sin (174). This is one request that Christ refuses to grant, telling her, "I schal make the buxom [obedient] to my wil that thu schalt criyn whan I wil, and wher I wil, bothyn lowde and stille, for I teld the, dowtyr, thu art myn and I am thyn, and so schalt thu be wythowtyn ende" (174). He proceeds to compare this omnipotent authority over Margery's predestined soul to His absolute control of the natural world's behavior. That too is "buxom to my wil," and Christ lists a few examples (174). For instance, He sometimes sends "gret thundirkrakkys" that "makyn the pepil ful sor afeerd." Sometimes He sends "gret levenys [lightning bolts]" which burn churches and houses. At other times, He opts for "gret wyndys that blowyn down [steeple],

houses,] and trees owt of the [earth] and doth mech harm in many placys, and yet may not the wynd be seyn but it may wel be felt” (174).

Storms thus, as Jeffrey Jerome Cohen describes this passage, “figure [. . .] the movement of divine power through the world” (181). The passage drives the point home by alluding to the famous image in the Gospels of the Holy Spirit as a wind: “The spirit brethith wher it wole, and thou heerist his vois, but thou wost not, fro whennis he cometh, or whidir he goth; so is ech man that is borun of the spirit” (*Holy*, Jn. 3.8-9). In assuring Margery, “yet may not the wynd be seyn but it may wel be felt,” Christ reminds her that God’s presence, “the myth of my Godhead,” in the world is invisible yet at the same time tangible, empirically demonstrable. While God in Himself may not be visible, the effects of His commanding presence are available to be experienced everywhere, in the very fabric of nature; in other words, nature is providence in action (Roman 163).

The “divine voice” similarly speaks through the corresponding geology and atmospheric conditions of Margery’s soul, which accounts for the turbulent character of her devotion. Just as Christ sends sudden lightning “fro hevyn,” so He “sodeynly” illuminates her soul with “the light of grace and of undirstandyng” and sets it “on fyr wyth” love for God to “purgyn it” of worldly “filth” (Kempe 174-75). Just as He causes earthquakes in order that people “dredyn me,” so He sometimes turns the “erthe” upside down with spiritual earthquakes in the hearts of “chosyn sowlys that schal ben savyd,” such as Margery, in order that they fear His vengeance and turn away from sin (175). As He drenches the earth at times with “many gret reynys and scharp schowerys,” so He gives Margery the grace of “gret cryis and roryngys” in order that through her, as a kind of surrogate mother of Christ, people come to know and have compassion for the

enormous sorrow that the Virgin endured on behalf of Christ in His Passion (175). Finally, just as the wind may not be seen but may be felt, so the “myth of my Godhead” may not “be seyn wyth mannys eye” but it is nonetheless “felt in a sympil sowle,” such as Margery, where it “werkyn grace” (174). Through these analogies, Margery becomes a microcosm of the natural world, an environment “inhabit[ed]” by the “divine presence” and administered by it to predestined ends (Cohen 181). And given the suspicion and disapproval she repeatedly faces from mainstream religious culture, Christ’s declaration that Margery is one of the chosen souls who are blown by the invisible wind of the Holy Spirit is particularly significant. It is a private revelation echoing scriptural revelation (“the spirit brethith wher it wole . . .”), which, in turn, vouches for the legitimacy of private revelation. That is, it proves, for Margery, that an inner, subjective experience of invisible, salvific grace is a surer sign that one is in good standing with God than are any outward, visible marks of conformity to the conventions of safely orthodox religion. This correspondence between the “environmental” conditions that shape Margery from within and those natural forces in the external world that shape her life from without implies that Margery’s particular spiritual difference is a product of a providential natural world. By naturalizing Margery’s devotional style, the *Book*’s elemental imagery contributes to the text’s overall project of legitimizing Margery’s peculiar piety.

Insofar as her sea voyages combine an emphasis on the validity of Margery’s private inspiration, and the manner in which she expresses it, with her repeated survival of exposure to the elements (specifically, the awesome power of the sea), they epitomize that naturalizing process. It is worth noting, in this regard, that when Margery goes to sea she does not discuss the human work of navigation that brings her ships from one place to

another. The only time she does refer to it is during the terrifying, stormy voyage to Germany when the ship's crew abandons its navigational "cunnyng" and lets God, through the sea, do with the ship what He will. She only mentions navigation in order to point out its uselessness. Going to sea, then, amounts to giving herself over to the elements, putting herself in the hands of nature and allowing it to do with her what God wants done. It is thus another manifestation in the external environment, in the macrocosm, of what takes place in her internal environment, in the microcosm, where she submits herself to the guidance of the natural, elemental force of private revelation, of the grace of the Holy Spirit moving within her.

Thus Margery's sea crossings are like the wandering voyages of Custance. However tumultuous and distressful they may be, their journeys are the result of and display the harmonious union of these two women with God through the natural world. They express the controlling immanence of the divine within elemental forces in creation, forces that include the human soul. That Margery and Custance are not only favored or "graced" by nature in their travels through the external world but also driven by the "natural" force of grace in their internal world suggests that each one of them must travel on her course through life and into the afterlife—whether the institutional Church is involved or not—because that is what each is predestined to do. Their sea voyages crystallize the coming together of the material and the spiritual, the natural and supernatural: they are the revelation in the created world of the truth that the soul is a ship driven by the wind of predestination. What ultimately emerges from their sea travels is an understanding of the soul's "personal relationship with God" as providentially situated within the natural order, which means that what is of primary importance in the question

of salvation is subjective communion with God, whatever outward form that may take and wherever it may happen. The image of the true ship of the church that the *Man of Law's Tale* and the *Book of Margery Kempe* present is that of the invisible church in which God alone directly controls the individual destinies of each of the elect through so many private lines of communication from Himself to each particular soul. It is a decentralized, more "free range" church in which the top-down flow of authority within an ecclesiastical hierarchy is de-emphasized and the predestined are afforded greater freedom to flourish in their natural conditions, to assume the rightful positions which God has preordained for them within the larger natural order of providence.

Chapter Two

Ships, the Sea, and the Supernatural in the Digby *Mary Magdalene* and Shakespeare's *Pericles, Prince of Tyre*

In his “Shakespeare and the Sea of Stories,” Peter Womack points out that “the main action” of Shakespeare’s *Pericles, Prince of Tyre* “oddly resembles the King of Marcyll [Marseilles] episode in the fifteenth-century East Anglian play *Mary Magdalene*” (170).³ Key scenes in *Pericles* and the “King of Marcyll episode” of *Mary Magdalene* involve the apparent or actual death during childbirth of a king’s queen on a storm-tossed “ship at sea,” his subsequent loss of the newborn child, and, by miraculous or at least very strange means, the eventual restoration to him of his living wife and child (170). Womack traces the complicated literary genealogy that accounts for how these similar plot elements oddly show up in both the *Magdalene* play, an example of late medieval Catholic theatre, and *Pericles*, written after the English Reformation’s “decatholicizing of theater” (184). One element that seems particularly oddly placed in *Pericles* is what Womack sees as the miraculous resurrection of the king’s queen. The Reformation had condemned the on-stage representation of miracles, one of the central “formal structures” of medieval Catholic miracle plays (Womack 184; Tricomi 8, 13). For Womack, this “miracle” in *Pericles* is evidence not that Shakespeare was a “crypto-Catholic,” but that the Reformation’s “decatholicizing of theater” was “only ever partly feasible, because the codes of [Catholic] miracle playing were carried into Protestant English drama in the formal structures of plays and their performances” (172, 184).

³ Theresa Coletti notes that the “unique version (c. 1490s-1525)” of *Mary Magdalene* “survives in Bodleian Library MS Digby 133” (337). At times, I refer to *Mary Magdalene* as the “Digby *Magdalene*” or the “Digby play.”

But is this “miracle” in *Pericles* in fact meant to be a miracle? And if so, what kind of miracle is it? I make the case here that looking more closely at this and other apparently or actually miraculous events in *Pericles* and *Mary Magdalene* illuminates the quite different theological “infrastructures” that inform the two plays. If Shakespeare’s play retains the same “code” of miracles as the *Magdalene* play, it nonetheless subtly “decatholiciz[es]” that code and reconfigures it to suit a more Protestant and more skeptical attitude in matters of religion. Furthermore, I consider the issue of miracles in conjunction with how both plays represent seafaring. Ships and the sea figure prominently in those shared pivotal moments in *Pericles* and *Mary Magdalene* that Womack mentions. Both plays, moreover, contain additional episodes centered on or closely related to the sea and sailing. *Mary Magdalene* includes one other sea voyage, Mary’s apostolic voyage to convert the land of Marseilles, while travel by ship is fundamental to the unfolding of the plot of Shakespeare’s play, as *Pericles* repeatedly moves across the sea from one adventure to the next in various Mediterranean locales. In each play, the maritime elements of the plot are informed by a deeply ingrained Christian tradition of seeing the sea as a place where divine revelation through miracles and wonders is particularly forceful, a tradition most famously expressed by Psalm 107’s assertion that those who “go down to the sea in ships [. . .] see the works of the Lord, and his wonders in the deep” (*Bible*, Ps. 107.23-24). Both plays exploit this tradition to work through questions of religious reform and of what might be called supernatural epistemology, that is, how and to what extent humans can know God’s presence in the world. *Mary Magdalene* uses sea voyages to address late medieval reformist criticism of the cult of saints within the medieval Church. In doing so, the play engages the kinds of

questions about miracles that arose out of that criticism, such as how miracles happen, how to distinguish between true and false miracles, and whether miracles were even still possible in the later Middle Ages. Insofar as it subscribes to the longstanding belief in the link between seafaring and the miraculous in Christian culture, the sea imagery in *Mary Magdalene* is integral to the way the Digby dramatist responds to late medieval controversy about miracles by clarifying and reaffirming the orthodox position on miracles and their importance as a means of divine revelation. *Pericles*, for its part, uses images of the sea and ship travel to challenge the traditional link between the sea and the miraculous and to explore the epistemological and ethical ramifications of the Reformation doctrine that the age of miracles, by which God revealed his will to the world, had long since passed. Taken together, the Digby play and Shakespeare's *Pericles* demonstrate how literary images of sea travel in the late medieval and early modern periods reveal religious skepticism emerging out of reformist challenges to the orthodoxies of the medieval Church.

The Digby play's dramatization of Mary Magdalene's life consists of five main sections: her "fall from virtue" at the hands of the Seven Deadly Sins; her spiritual regeneration as a Christian and her witnessing Lazarus' and Christ's resurrections; the sea voyage to Marseilles which she undertakes at Christ's command in order to convert the King and Queen of that land; the King and Queen's voyage to the Holy Land and back as pilgrims; and Mary's retirement to the wilderness, where she lives as a contemplative for thirty years before ascending to heaven (Bevington 687). My examination of the play's sea journeys will focus first on Mary's voyage to Marseilles. There are at least two

peculiar features of this trip: the route that her ship follows and the sort of religion that she encounters once she arrives in Marseilles.

The ship Mary takes from the Holy Land to “Marcyll” apparently travels along the Mediterranean coast, as the shipmaster Nauta suggests when he points out to her the lands they are passing:

Yondyr is the lond of Torké;

I wer full loth for to lie.

.

Of this cors we thar nat abasse.

Yender is the lond of Satyllye. (lines 1430, 1435-41) ⁴

While this piece of geographical information tells us that the ship is sailing a coastal route, what is more telling is just what it includes and what it leaves out. A ship sailing along the coast from the Holy Land to the south of France would, of course, pass numerous lands. Yet the dramatist only sees fit to mention, other than Marseilles (“Marcyll”), Turkey (“Torké”) and Asia Minor (“the lond of Satyllye”), place names that would have had particular resonance for a late medieval audience (Bevington 733). They would have served to connote the perceived military, political, and religious dangers of Ottoman, and thus Islamic, power and expansion. Diarmaid MacCulloch remarks, “The biggest fear for western Christendom around 1500 was the prospect that it might disappear altogether” (53). A major reason for this fear was what Archibald R. Lewis calls a “revival of both Islamic strength and confidence” beginning around 1350 and leading to the Ottoman Turks’ “control of most of the Balkans” and finally their

⁴ All *Mary Magdalene* references are to the edition in David Bevington’s *Medieval Drama*.

“conquest of Byzantine Constantinople” in 1453 (834). In the words of Lewis, “A new Islamic military state had suddenly appeared in control of the Balkans and Asia Minor and posed a serious threat to Latin Europe on both land and sea” (834). The “advance of the Ottomans alarmed Western Europe” enough that “popes and others attempted to revive the crusades to deal with this menace” (Lewis 835). In England, anxiety about Islamic power was such that, when Fernando and Isabel captured the “Islamic Kingdom of Granada” in 1492, Henry VII “celebrated” this “rare reversal of Muslim advance” by “[ordering] a service of thanksgiving in St. Paul’s Cathedral” (MacCulloch 58). By alluding to the center of Ottoman power while failing to mention other Mediterranean locales that Mary’s ship might pass on the way to Marseilles, *Mary Magdalene* gives the journey topical relevance for a late medieval audience, craftily and economically establishing the Turks as the dominant power in the Mediterranean.

Furthermore, the passage alluding to “Torke” and “Satyllye” employs a geographical inaccuracy and images of prudent, careful sailing to represent the Ottoman center as something treacherous and threatening which is to be carefully avoided. David Bevington’s edition of the Digby play renders the lines “I wer full loth for to lie. / [. . .] / Of this cors we thar nat abasse” in Modern English as “I would be very loath to tell you a lie (i.e., I’m telling you the truth). We needn’t be concerned about this navigational course (i.e., we’re on course)” (733, n. 1436-37). And surprisingly, beginning with the line immediately following Nauta’s announcement that the ship is passing the “lond of Satyllye,” we learn that it is coming safely into Marseilles: “Strik[e]! Beware of sond! / Cast a led, and in us g[u]ide! / Of Marcyll this is the Kingges lond” (1439-41). Why would Nauta, after stressing that he is not lying, that the ship really is sailing off the coast

of Turkey, feel it necessary to reassure his passenger, Mary, and the audience that the ship is nevertheless on course and that that course should not cause any worry? These lines would perhaps play on the audience's unease about the Ottoman threat while suggesting that the threat could be avoided. Underscoring that threat is the poetic license of locating Marseilles next door to Asia Minor: the proximity of Marseilles to Turkey accentuates the imminence of the Ottoman threat, that the "Turk" is on the doorstep of the European home.

From this perspective, the orders Nauta issues to guide the ship safely to port—to strike the sails, to beware of running aground in sandy shallows, and to "cast" a lead to sound the water's depth—do more than add to the salty flavor of the nautical scene; they also take on politically symbolic overtones. They work together with the visual image of the ship bypassing the "lond of Satyllye" to arrive in Marseilles and Nauta's reassurance that the ship is on the right "cors" to create a tableau of sorts, in which we read the message that, by careful navigation and staying the course in the face of the Ottoman peril, the European ship will sail free of the clutches of the Turk. The tableau has religious significance as well. The passenger on this ship sailing from the Holy Land, past Ottoman lands, and to Marseilles is, after all, Mary Magdalene, to whom the angel Raphael has appeared with instructions from Jesus to convert the "lond of Marcyll" to "Goddes lawys" (1371, 1383). After being visited by Raphael, Mary goes to the seaside to seek "sum shepping" to Marseilles and describes herself as one driven forth across the sea on a mission from God: "Now spede me, Lord in eternall glory! / Now be my spede, allmyty Trenité!" (1392, 1393-94). In other words, what ultimately guarantees that this ship makes it safely through the "enemy waters" off Islamic Ottoman lands is that it is

powered by and carries the Word of God on board. Mary's skillfully navigated ship is emblematic of the power of the "true" Christian faith to resist the corrupting influence of the "false" religion of Islam which advances into Christendom with the Ottoman advance into Europe.

These allusions to the threatening presence of Islamic power during Mary's voyage help to accentuate the degenerate state of religion in Marseilles, where the religion practiced amounts to a perverted form of Christianity, which has been "infected" by "pagan" Islam. Mary's role as "an holy apostylesse" bearing "Goddes lawys" stands in stark contrast to the "hethenness" of the King and Queen of Marseilles (1381, 935). Before Mary's arrival and conversion of the King and Queen, their religion is a composite of the forms of misbelief which early reformers such as the Lollards saw as wrongly sanctioned by the contemporary Catholic Church and threatening to undermine the integrity of Christianity in late medieval Europe, making it hardly distinguishable from what was widely perceived to be the pagan idolatry of Islam (Hudson, *Selections* 23, 179).⁵ Most notably, the King and his Queen worship "Mahond" (line 1140). And they are attended by what the play's stage directions call "*an hethen prest and his boye,*" a young "*clerk*" (Bevington 725, 736). These two perform a religious service that fuses Islam with the medieval Catholic veneration of saints (Akbari 219). In particular, the priest and his clerk represent a form of venerating saints that slides into saint worship. Mohammed is at once a "sent" and a "god" to whom they "pray" (lines 1205, 1168). They swear by "Mahoundes blod" and advise all "lordes and ladyis" to make offerings to "Sentt Mahownde" in order to receive his "grett pardon" (1175, 1202, 1205-06). They

⁵ Also see McSheffrey, "Heresy" 74; Robinson 43; Armstrong 33-34; Frassetto 76-77; and Akbari 200-47.

also venerate “relikes bright,” such as “Mahowndes own nekke bon” and “Mahowndys own [eyelid]” (1232-33, 1237). This religious service parodies the saint cults within the medieval Church in a way that encapsulates Lollard concerns that such cults diverted worship from its proper object, the Christian God, to the saints themselves, effectively reviving the “delusions” of pagan polytheism within the bounds of Christian orthodoxy. Concerns of this sort can be seen in the heretical opinions with which the accused Lollard Hawisia Moone admitted familiarity in her 1430 confession to the Bishop of Norwich:

no worship ne reuerence [ought to be done] to ony ymages of *þe* [. . .]
seyntes, for all suche ymages be but ydols, [. . .]; but worship and
reuerence shuld be do to *þe* ymage of God [. . .]. Also *þat* al prayer oweth
be maad oonly to God and to noon *oþer* seyntes, for it is doute if *þar* be
ony suche seyntes in heuene as *þese* [chantry priests] aproven and
commaunden to be worsheped and prayed to here in erthe. (Hudson,
Selections 36)

By alluding to the Catholic veneration of saints through this “heathen” “Islamic” worship of saints, the *Magdalene* dramatist warns spectators to take care that their own devotion to saints does not cross the line into idolatry, while suggesting that much of the veneration of saints in orthodox Catholic rites had, in fact, already become idolatrous.

Another aspect of the bastardized Christianity of Marseilles that resonates with reformist critiques of the late medieval Church is sexual misbehavior among the clergy. Shannon McSheffrey observes that the notorious sexual misdemeanors of priests and nuns were blamed in Wycliffite writing on the impossible ideal of chastity imposed on them by the Church (*Gender* 82-83). Wycliffite tracts argue that the vow of chastity is a

trick played by Satan in that it tends to make hypocrites of those in religious orders, because sexual desire is so overwhelming that it is almost impossible to restrain (Matthew 100, 218). Clergy are prevented from quenching their desires within “matrimonye” yet regularly unable to uphold the vow to which they are sworn; as a result, they routinely “defoulen wyues, maidenens, widewis & nunnes in eche manere of lecherie” (100). Wyclif himself felt that “clerks should be allowed to take wives [. . .] because they fornicate if they are not allowed to marry” (*Gender* 82). *Mary Magdalene* appears to refer to medieval controversy about an officially celibate priesthood that was often less than celibate in practice when the Presbyter in Marseilles orders his clerk to array the altar and ring the altar bells in preparation for the “grett solemnité” of their idolatrous ceremony (line 1147). The clerk responds mischievously, pretending the priest has asked him to help prepare for a rendezvous with a lover: “Whatt, master, woldist thou have thy lemman [wench] to thy beddes side?” (1149). He thus insinuates that his master is the kind of priest who routinely breaks his vow of chastity to engage in “eche manere of lecherie.”

The idolatrous religion that the Presbyter and the clerk represent also exhibits the sort of fraudulent claims to miraculous powers targeted by Wycliffite critiques of the medieval Church’s “pretensions to the miraculous” (Kamowski 7). Wyclif held that “miracles [. . .] have ceased today in our bishops, since it is sufficient, in an age after faith in the gospel has been published, to strengthen the impression of that faith through pious encouragements” (qtd. in Kamowski 7). In other words, miracles did not occur in the Middle Ages because they were no longer necessary in the way they had been in the early era of Christianity, when they had helped to substantiate the revolutionary new

claims about divine truth proclaimed by the fledgling Church. Moreover, Wyclif believed that spiritual righteousness was necessary for the operation of miracles, yet the “contemporary Church” had suffered a “fall from righteousness,” largely because of “ecclesiastical materialism” (Kamowski 7-8). He, therefore, “regarded the contemporary Church’s self-ascribed spiritual and miraculous powers as impious frauds” and “denied, in effect, all contemporary miracles, including the popular miracles effected by various shrines through their relics and many saints’ bodies” (8). The Digby play’s Presbyter displays such impious acquisitiveness when, aping the sale of indulgences in the medieval Church while he conducts the parodic mass in the “*heathen temple in Marseilles*,” he encourages the King and Queen to offer a gold coin, “rich and rownd,” in exchange for his blessing and the “grett pardon” of “Sentt Mahownde” (1205-08, 1218; Bevington 725). When Mary Magdalene arrives in Marseilles on her mission of conversion and preaches to the King to persuade him that Christ offers the true “[way] toward sa[l]vation,” he initially resists, claiming that “Sentt Mahownde” and the other “goddes” he worships are the more powerful gods (1456, 1538). To demonstrate their power, he brings Mary to the temple and, after proudly showing her the many idols adorning the place, bows before them and beseeches “Mahownde” to “Speke to this Christeyn that here [seest] thou. / Speke, go[o]ld lord, speke! Se how I do bow!” (1542-43). But despite the King’s desperate pleading, the idol remains silent and impotently unresponsive, while all the Presbyter can do in this moment of painful truth is offer the lame excuse that “Mahownde” will “natt speke while” a Christian is present (1547). This failure of the “pretensions to the miraculous” on the part of Marseilles’ idolatrous hybrid

of paganism and Christianity thus seems to echo Wycliffite skepticism about the institutional Church's claims to miraculous power.

But if *Mary Magdalene* reveals reformist leanings insofar as it contests the miraculous abilities of morally and spiritually compromised practices within the medieval Church, it does not thoroughly reject the possibility of miracles occurring in the Digby dramatist's own era, as we see in the miracles Mary facilitates in the medieval-seeming Marseilles. Mary arrives in a Marseilles that, to the play's original audience, would have looked less like a pagan kingdom from the distant, faraway past and more like a medieval European kingdom on the edge of an expanding Ottoman Empire and in which the Church has been contaminated by clerical decadence and saint-based idolatry. But even in this medieval setting, Mary's theologically correct "saintly *intercession*" brings about authentic miracles (Boehnen 344). After "Mahownde" proves to be a false god by failing to respond to the King's request that he speak, Mary offers "prayors" to the Christian God asking Him to verify His existence and power through "sum merakill" (1549-51). God obliges by causing the idol of "Mahownde" to "*tremill and quake*"; He also sends a "*clowd from heven*" which destroys the "*tempyl*" by setting it ablaze and causes the idolatrous priest and clerk to "*sinke*" away (Bevington 736). This miracle convinces the King that he has been "deludyd" in believing "Mahownde" to be a god and leads to his soon accepting the Christian God as the true God (1563).

The final steps in the King's as well as the Queen's conversion are inspired by two more miracles involving Mary Magdalene. After revealing to her that he and his Queen have been unable through "many yerys" to be "conceivyd with child," the King strikes a deal of sorts with the proselytizing Magdalene: if she can "find a mene" for the

Queen to conceive a child, he will “abbey thy God” (1567-70). And Mary delivers. Through her intercession by “reythfull” prayer to the Lord, and with the help of her “master” Saint Peter, the Queen becomes “grett with child” (1572, 1681, 1667). But crucially, this miraculous conception comes only after the King and Queen learn, by way of a miraculous nocturnal revelation, Christian charity. One night as the King and Queen sleep in their “chambir” while Mary endures “hongor, threst, and cold” in a dilapidated hut, Christ instructs two of His angels to bring Mary, wearing “clothing of white” to signify meekness, to the royal chamber and humbly petition the couple to provide her with “corporall” sustenance (1592, 1614, 1608, 1590). Mary arrives in the chamber with the angels, who are bearing “reverent” lights which bathe the room in divine illumination, and requests that the King and Queen depart with some of their worldly goods in order to relieve her suffering and for the sake of their own spiritual health (1594, 1611-18). The royal couple awakes the following morning ready to obey “Goddess cummaundement” by giving Mary “mete and mony, and clothys for the nyth” and generally prepared to help those in “nede” (1655, 1653, 1632). It is at this moment that the Queen feels the newly conceived child stirring in her “wombe” and she and her husband resolve to “worchep” the Christian God “with dew reverens” (1669, 1672).

These three miracles offer clear evidence, for Mary and the royal couple, of God’s supernatural reality as well as reliable signs indicating when they are or are not carrying out His will. Mary’s prayers in these scenes are miraculously efficacious because they correspond to God’s will. They express her commitment to the “evangelical ends” of her voyage to Marseilles, “the conversion of the king of Marseilles that Christ prescribed” to her as one of His chosen agents (Boehnen 343). Similarly, the Queen’s miraculous

pregnancy is ultimately not so much a precondition for the royal couple's conversion as it is an effect of their faithfully obeying God's will by practicing Christian charity. In addition, Mary, the King, and the Queen each acknowledge at various points throughout these scenes that the driving force behind the miracles which have accompanied the couple's conversion has been the grace of the "Holy Gost," rather than any "autonomous saintly power" on Mary's part (Boehnen 344).⁶ The "proper hierarchy of God and saint" is thus "establish[ed]": "Mary Magdalene is imaged as a helper and intercessor for humans, but one always subservient to Christ" (Boehnen 344-45). Mary's miracle-filled journey to Marseilles, therefore, argues that real miracles could still occur in the late medieval world of the play's audience, so long as the proper "mechanics" of the miraculous were present, God's all-powerful grace and righteous Christian faith and virtue.

Although the miracles that God works through Mary in Marseilles occur on land, they are nonetheless only made possible by her sea journey from the Holy Land. This journey itself is of a miraculous nature in that it involves what amounts to time travel. The Holy Land from which Mary embarks is firmly situated in the time of Christ's life and in the apostolic period, the era immediately following Christ's life when His disciples evangelized and set about establishing the early Church. Yet by the time her ship arrives in Marseilles, she seems to have entered a medieval world, suggesting that her ship has miraculously sailed across time and history. The Digby play's adaptation of Mary Magdalene's legendary sea voyage to convert "heathen" Marseilles thus begins to look very much like a version tailor made for Christian spectators of the later Middle Ages.

⁶ See, for example, lines 1627, 1654, 1663-64, and 1679-80.

Her mission to bring the true faith to a world those spectators would likely recognize as contemporaneous with their own represents an appeal to that audience for the re-establishment and strengthening of authentic Christianity in a Europe imperiled by Islamic encroachment and wayward medieval Catholicism. And her time-collapsing sea voyage from the primitive Christian epoch to the Middle Ages is the first miraculous step that propels the conversion of the kingdom of Marseilles; it is the original miracle that instigates the chain of miracles which results in the rebirth of the pure, early Church in Marseilles. Indeed, ships and the sea are repeatedly associated in *Mary Magdalene* with miraculous births and rebirths that reveal the operative force of the Christian God in the play's world.

For instance, a connection between ships and the virgin birth of Christ is established when the play introduces Mary Magdalene's apostolic mission. Just prior to the scene in which the angel Raphael relays to Mary Jesus' instructions that she set sail, we see Jesus on stage likening His mother, the Virgin, to Noah's Ark—the “shep of Noee”—and calling her a “vessel of puere clenness” where “my Godhed gaff my manhod [might]” (1351, 1354-55). Jesus, that is, depicts the Virgin Mary as a kind of miraculous ship that, in giving birth to Christ, transported God incarnate to humankind. Now, Christ wants Mary Magdalene to do something similar, by bringing genuine Christianity by ship to Marseilles. Her ship is another womb, like that of the Virgin Mary, carrying Christ anew to the world by figuratively giving birth to the Word in Marseilles and doing so as a result of divine, miraculous interventions.

The association between seafaring and birth also runs, quite extensively, through the journey of the King and Queen of Marseilles from their homeland to the Holy Land

and back. Just as Mary Magdalene's voyage to Marseilles is preceded by talk of a miraculous birth, the Virgin birth, so the Queen's miraculous pregnancy inspires the royal couple's sea-crossing. Having done her part in bringing about this miracle, Mary now instructs the King to sail on a pilgrimage to Jerusalem to be christened by her "master" St. Peter (1681). When the King does meet Peter in Jerusalem, he describes Mary in terms that suggest she is his spiritual mother: "Ther is a woman hyth Mary Maudleyn, / That [hither] hath [labored] me owt of Mercill" and "this pilgrimage causyd me to take" (1822-23, 1825). The King means that Mary has brought about his spiritual rebirth as a Christian and his journey to Jerusalem, so that Peter can place the early Church's stamp of approval on that rebirth, making his conversion to Christianity official.

There is also, of course, a literal birth during the King and Queen's sea voyage to Jerusalem. The Queen unexpectedly goes into labor and delivers her miraculously conceived child on board the ship. She then immediately dies because there is no midwife on board to assist her. As stormy weather threatens to sink the ship, the King and the shipmen leave her body with the child on a rock in the Mediterranean, all of which sets up what is perhaps the most stunning miraculous rebirth in the play: the physical as well as spiritual resurrection of the Queen. Two years after leaving his child and dead wife on the rock in the middle of the sea, and after completing his pilgrimage to Jerusalem, the King happens by the same rock on his voyage back to Marseilles. He finds the child inexplicably still alive, "preservyd and keptt from all corrupcion," despite having been without food for the last two years—a discovery which is miraculous in itself (1890). The King then witnesses a second miracle, the resurrection of the Queen before his eyes: "From grevos slepe she ginnit[h] revive!" (1897). In addition to this

physical resurrection, the Queen has undergone a resurrection of the spirit, one again facilitated by Mary Magdalene, during the two years between the time she was left on the rock in the sea and the time the King finds her there again. The Queen recounts this miraculous experience to the King:

[Mary] hast wr[a]ppyd us in wele from all variawns [mutability],
And led me with my lord i[n]to the Holy Lond.
I am baptisyd, as ye are, by Maryis [guidance],
Of Sent Peterys holy hand.
I s[a]we the blissyd crosse that Crist shed on his precius blod;
His blissyd sepulcur also se I;
Whe[r]for, good hosbond, be mery in mode,
For I have gon the staciounes by and by. (1904-11)

As David Bevington explains this scene, “The queen is describing another of Mary’s miracles; through her intercession, the seemingly dead queen has been transported to the Holy Land, as she wished” (746, n. 1911). The Queen’s miraculous transportation from the rock in the sea to the Holy Land is also a spiritual rebirth. It signifies that she has left behind the corrupt religion of her past and, through baptism and her pilgrimage to the holy sites of Christ’s life, has been cleansed and reborn into the pure faith of early Christianity, which is evoked by those holy sites and the presence on the pilgrimage of the disciple whom Christ appointed vicar of the early Church, St. Peter.

What is to be made of the play’s associating so many miraculous kinds of birth with seafaring? To begin with, somewhat obviously, the ship as a vessel, as the womb is a kind of vessel, logically lends itself as a symbol for the delivery of the Word throughout

the world. And insofar as, in *Mary Magdalene*, this divine delivery travels across history by sea from the Gospel era to “medieval” Marseilles, seafaring in the play is thoroughly infused with the miraculous aura of the virgin birth. The sea becomes the road or highway (to add another metaphor) by which the thinly disguised medieval Catholicism of Marseilles, which has fallen into corrupt idolatry, is reunited across the ages with the authentic, miraculously generated—because it was established by the virgin birth of the Son of God—early Church. As the route along which divine revelation travels, the sea is the geographic parallel to Mary Magdalene in her capacity as saintly intercessor, a place that mediates between history and the supernatural realm of sacred, essential truth that transcends and contains history.

Using sea imagery in this way would have made particular cultural sense to a late medieval audience, given the associations with the supernatural and the divine that seafaring frequently had in medieval culture. There was, for a start, the longstanding religious tradition of what Peter Dinzelbacher describes as the “conception of a boat-trip to the beyond” (78). Dinzelbacher provides a concise summary of the motif of the ship voyage to the other world within the medieval Christian tradition: “It is the famous symbol for the church on which the [Church] Fathers wrote since Tertullian, and which was represented in the arts from the fourth century onwards. We are divided, writes Honorius Augustodunensis, from our homeland of paradise as if a sea lay in between, i.e., the *saeculum*, perturbed by much bitterness. The ship is Christian religion,” and it can transport us across the treacherous seas of this world to the paradise beyond (81). Clearly, the sea voyages in the Digby *Magdalene* exploit this symbolic ship of religion.

But it should be remembered that medieval Christians often considered sea travel's association with the otherworldly to be more than simply literary and artistic. It was frequently seen to contain more than a grain of literal truth. Dinzelbacher, again, offers a good summary of the popular medieval understanding of what might be called supernatural geography, a conceptual framework within which the ship motif operated:

The places, *receptacula*, of the other world were not situated beyond this cosmos, but formed part of our disk-like earth, or of the spheres towering up over it. Hell [. . .] was thought to be in the middle of the earth; purgatory bordered upon it. The earthly paradise [Eden] was sought somewhere in the east and formed both a topic for map-makers to define, and a goal for regular expeditions. (70)

Perhaps the most renowned expedition to Eden was that of Columbus, who claimed to have sailed to the region of the “earthly Paradise,” which “all learned theologians agree [. . .] is in the East” (*Four* 221). Similarly, the “famous and widely popular” medieval legend of Saint Brendan asserted that “sometime in the sixth century” he undertook a sea voyage, “full of miraculous happenings,” from Ireland to the “Blessed Isles” (Taylor 67; Mancall 15). Scripture too provided medieval Christians with abundant historical documentation of maritime encounters with the supernatural: Noah and his God-directed voyage on the ark, the storm that God sent upon Jonah's ship after he had disobeyed God's command to go to Nineveh, and the Gospel accounts of Jesus walking on the sea towards his disciples' wave-tossed boat, to name a few.

The sea travels in *Mary Magdalene*, therefore, tap into a deep well of implicit connections between seafaring and the supernatural in medieval culture. Such

connections suggest that seafaring takes voyagers into a “liminal” or transitional zone between the natural and supernatural (Womack 183). Particularly in the notion of the boat trip to the other world, traveling on or across the sea holds the possibility of somehow crossing beyond natural, historical time and encountering, through revelatory experiences, the divine as a fully palpable presence. On their passages across the Mediterranean, Mary Magdalene and the royal couple of Marseilles break the boundaries of linear time, variously crossing back and forth between life and death and between the late medieval era and the era of the New Testament. It is fundamentally through the sea—through Mary’s miraculous journey across the sea to Marseilles and the King and Queen’s miraculous pilgrim voyage to the Holy Land—that God’s real presence is revealed to the previously misguided believers of Marseilles, that sacred truth is made known to them.

As a deeply resonant topos in medieval Christianity, the miraculous sea voyage lends powerful rhetorical force to the Digby play’s engagement with late medieval reformist critiques of saint cults and their claims to miraculous power. More specifically, the sea travels in the play lend rhetorical power to its argument that, while the miracles associated with idolatrous saint cults such as that of “heathen” Marseilles are fraudulent delusions, real miracles are nevertheless possible in the context of saint veneration within the medieval Church. It is, after all, the sea that brings a real saint, Mary Magdalene, from the pure Church of the Gospel era to fallen Marseilles in order to expose the false saint “Mahownde.” She emerges from the sea, in essence, to answer Lollard criticism of saint cults by reaffirming what had become “by the early fifteenth century” the orthodox position on saints and miracles, that of Aquinas (Goodich 19). That is, Mary

demonstrates the Thomistic argument that real miracles do, in fact, occur when by means of faith, virtuous prayer, and “the power of grace” true saints become intermediaries through whom God works “for the profit of mankind in order to confirm the truth of the Faith” (19).⁷ If Mary’s journey by sea to Marseilles represents the restoration of Christianity in the medieval Church to the true, original form of the early Church, then miraculous power is vital to her apostolic mission—and the sea is what delivers this miraculous power.

Sea imagery is also integral to *how* miraculous power works in *Mary Magdalene*. The first way it works is through the human labor of evangelizing, thus fulfilling Aquinas’ criterion that true miracles are brought about through preaching “the true Faith,” which profits humankind by bringing Christ to people in the form of the Word of God, through Scripture (Goodich 19).⁸ The understanding of Mary’s ship as a vessel carrying the Word is important in this regard. For, once she disembarks from the ship in the land of Marseilles, Mary promptly begins to evangelize by preaching “Goddes lawys” to the King, to “labor for that [land’s] comfort” (lines 1383, 1374). Declaring, “*In principio erat Verbum* [In the beginning was the Word],” she recounts the story of creation as it is set forth in “Holy Writt” and “Skriptur,” to show the King that all of creation proceeds from the Christian God and, consequently, that all people “shold reverens make” to the Creator that “doth susteyn” them (1481-1526). Also relevant to

⁷ Aquinas asserts that “faith makes a [holy] man deserve that a miracle be wrought” by the power of God’s grace “in answer to his prayer”; furthermore, because miracles provide “proof” of God’s power, “the divine power in miraculous works comes especially to the assistance of faith” (*Power*, Q. 6, art. 9).

⁸ To make his point, Aquinas refers to the Gospel of Mark’s account of the miracles which accompanied the Apostles’ evangelical missions after the Ascension: “hence it is said (Mk. xvi, 20): They going forth preached everywhere: *the Lord working withal, and confirming the word with signs that followed*” (*Power*, Q. 6, art. 9).

Mary's labor of evangelization is the difference between the manner in which her ship sails to Marseilles in the Digby play and how her ship arrives in Marseilles in the hagiographical sources of the play, such as the *Golden Legend* and the *South English Legendary*. In those sources, Mary and some companions are forcefully set afloat in a rudderless boat by hostile unbelievers and passively drift to Marseilles (Findon 32, 34). In the Digby play, Mary books passage for herself on the ship piloted by Nauta. And the journey across the Mediterranean is accomplished not by passive drifting but by the purposeful labor of navigation: plotting a course, striking sails, avoiding sandbars, taking soundings, and guiding the ship into port. This mundane labor of navigation assumes miraculous overtones in the play because it is vital to the apostolic work Mary undertakes on Christ's command; it is vital to the spread of the faith. The text, in fact, connects the work of navigation even more directly with the work of preaching when Mary declares in Marseilles that the "good Lord Crist [hither] me compassyd" in order, through the word of God, to cure the King of misbelief and guide him along "the [way] toward sa[l]vation" (1446-69). Evangelization here becomes miraculous spiritual navigation: it is the divine revelation of the reality of Christ through the symbolic medium of the word. In this moment, seafaring as physical journeying in the world of the play, through the geography of that world, is conjoined with spiritual awakening through the symbolic—through the Word of Scripture—to the divine reality immanent in that world.

The link in *Mary Magdalene* between seafaring and preaching illuminates the Digby dramatist's commitment to the idea of "the Word made Flesh," to symbolic representation as a reliable means of miraculous revelation. That is, *Mary Magdalene* shows the influence of a "symbolist [mode] of thought in medieval religion" that

“emphasised the real relations of analogy between different things” (d’Avray 271). As David d’Avray explains, “symbol and allegory,” according to this way of thinking, “bring out [. . .] likenesses between distinct things. The symbol is not just a conventional sign of the symbolized, but is believed to share a real similarity with what it stands for” (272). In their travels by ship, Mary Magdalene and the royal couple journey through a world in which things that may seem separate in time and space dissolve into one another. In so doing, those things are shown ultimately to partake of the same substance, unified within the eternal present of God’s plan (Womack 179). The sea voyages across history in the play, from the Gospel period to the Middle Ages and vice versa, are not “merely” symbolic of renewing medieval Christianity by looking to the past example of the early Church. They also reveal that the Christ of the Gospels and the “true” faith of the early Church are eternal, enduring realities that transcend the passage of time. Likewise, the ship on which Mary Magdalene, the messenger of God, sails is not simply like the womb of the Virgin Mary that miraculously delivered God Incarnate to the world of history. In the symbolic system to which the Digby play subscribes, the human Christ and the Word of the Gospels are the same thing. Therefore, when Mary Magdalene sails to Marseilles to preach the Word, her voyage is literally a miracle because it literally reveals Christ, the eternal truth of Scripture, to the fallen kingdom of Marseilles.

In short, seafaring in *Mary Magdalene* epitomizes a symbolic economy understood as revealing the true, timeless omnipotence and omnipresence of God. From this perspective, the depiction of seafaring in the play is not imaginary, but realistic: it faithfully represents the stable religious and supernatural meanings that are inherent behind the world of shifting, mutable phenomena. To put it another way, the sea

journeys in *Mary Magdalene* lead to real theophanic experiences, both for the play's characters and for the play's spectators, who see those journeys symbolically represented on stage: they unambiguously disclose God's real, supernatural presence in the world.

But *Mary Magdalene* not only uses seafaring to argue that natural, earthly things can be interpreted to reveal the divine that is immanent in them. It supplements that argument by using seafaring to portray a God given to revealing Himself in dramatic fashion through more explicit, clear-cut miracles, fabulous incidents that occur "apart from or against" the laws of nature (Oakley 447). This is the second way miraculous power works in the Digby play, corresponding to Aquinas' claim that God causes some miracles which are "contrary to nature" to rouse "our admiration and amazement," thereby drawing our attention to and nurturing our faith in His awesome presence and limitless, inscrutable power (Goodich 19-20). Because they violate the laws of linear time, Mary's and the royal couple's sea journeys back and forth between "medieval" Marseilles and the Holy Land of Christianity's ancient past belong in this category of miracles as well. Into this category also fall the Queen's bodily resurrection from death on the rock in the Mediterranean and her infant's inexplicable preservation from starvation while stranded for two years on that same rock. Lastly, the strange pilgrimage the dead Queen makes from the rock to the Holy Land also belongs in this category. It is noteworthy that when she tells the King of this baffling journey to Jerusalem, she does not actually specify that her soul made the journey while her body remained on the rock. She merely says that Mary Magdalene has "led me [. . .] into the Holy Lond," that "I" saw Christ's cross and sepulcher, that "I" was baptized by Saint Peter. In other words, it is not quite clear whether the Queen's soul alone made the miraculous pilgrimage to the

Holy Land or whether her body was along for the trip as well. Such incidents in the play make the divine will a reality that is eminently and objectively palpable, tangible—that is, an empirically verifiable reality. If these extra-rational manifestations of the supernatural that accompany the play’s depictions of ship voyages cannot be rationally situated within the natural, “ordinary course of things,” they nevertheless exist in a world where such manifestations are objective facts (Oakley 447). These extra-rational miracles, in a nutshell, disclose divine reality in such a way as to make it a powerful and awesome presence in *Mary Magdalene*.

This divine signification provides the foundation with reference to which the play’s characters can navigate the seas of their lives as rational actors. The metaphysical dimension of navigation corresponds to its literal dimension in *Mary Magdalene*. Nauta plots the course of his ship according to tangible, concrete points of reference. He sees “Torke” as he sails by it and, so, can steer a “cors” to avoid it. He has the ship’s boy “cast a led” to take a sounding of the sea floor. The boy climbs the rigging and spies a familiar castle, which tells Nauta they have reached a safe “havyn town” (1720-24). Mary and the royal couple, likewise, plot their spiritual voyages according to tangible, knowable points of spiritual reference. Mary’s encounter with Raphael allows her to know with confidence that Marseilles is the right destination for her. The royal couple’s encounter with the saintly Mary allows them to know with confidence that making a pilgrimage to the Holy Land to be baptized by Peter is the right thing for them to do. As we have seen above, such knowledge does not mean, of course, that these characters face no challenges as they navigate towards their rightful destinations. But because they are

granted access to an unambiguously real supernatural, they at least know with confidence where they *ought* to be going, however difficult getting there might be.

This is not quite the case with *Pericles*. Shakespeare's play follows *Mary Magdalene* by associating seafaring with the wondrous, in its handling both of the motif of the queen who dies at sea during childbirth only to be resurrected later and of nautical themes in general. But access to the supernatural by way of the wondrous is a significantly more problematic affair in *Pericles* than it is in *Mary Magdalene*. Whereas seafaring in *Mary Magdalene* involves the violation of the natural order by the supernatural, thus isolating the latter as clearly supernatural, Shakespeare treats the supernatural as coincident with the natural order, which makes it difficult, if not impossible, to identify seemingly supernatural events as supernatural beyond question, as qualitatively different from natural events.

Pericles' troubles begin when he learns of an incestuous relationship between the princess he hopes to wed and her father, Antiochus. Hoping to prevent news of this relationship from spreading, Antiochus plots to have Pericles killed. But Pericles hears of the plot and escapes by leaving his kingdom, Tyre, and going into exile for many years. During that time, he sails around the Mediterranean from one adventure to the next. He amazingly survives a shipwreck and is cast on the shores of Pentapolis, where he meets another woman, Thaisa, who becomes his wife. Intending to end his exile and reclaim his kingdom, Pericles sets sail for Tyre with Thaisa, who is now pregnant, but the ship runs into a terrible storm, which causes the terrified Thaisa to go into labor. She gives birth to a daughter, Marina, but appears to die in childbirth. The ship's mariners believe that the storm will not abate as long as there is what they now think is a dead

body on board; Thaisa is, therefore, thrown overboard at their insistence. Pericles then fears that his newborn child will not survive the journey to Tyre and alters the ship's course to Tarsus, where he leaves Marina to be raised by the governor, Cleon, and his wife, Dionyza. As Marina grows, her accomplishments outshine those of her guardians' own daughter, awakening Dionyza's envy and leading her to recruit an assassin to murder Marina. Just as the assassin, Leonine, is about to do the deed on Tarsus' seashore, pirates suddenly appear and abduct Marina. Leonine lies to Dionyza, telling her that he has indeed slain Marina. Cleon and Dionyza, in turn, deceive Pericles when he returns to Tarsus to retrieve his daughter, telling him that she has died but covering up their role in her presumed death. Believing that both his wife and child are dead, Pericles falls into a deep melancholy and spends a number of years on a ship drifting aimlessly about the Mediterranean, before finally being incredibly reunited with his little family.

At the opening of the fourth scene of *Pericles'* fourth act, the play's chorus, Gower, summarizes all we have seen on the stage to that point as follows:

Thus time we waste, and long leagues make short,

Sail seas in cockles, have and wish but for't,

Making to take our imagination

From bourn to bourn, region to region. (4.4.1-4)⁹

The Folger edition of the play notes that the "cockles," or "cockle shells," to which Gower refers here connote "supernatural sailing" (138, n. 2).¹⁰ Through their allusions to

⁹ Unless otherwise noted, all *Pericles* references are to the Folger edition.

¹⁰ The Arden edition notes that these lines allude to a kind of supernatural sailing mentioned in Reginald Scot's *The Discoverie of Witchcraft* (1584), the popular belief that witches can "saile in an egge shell, a cockle or muscle shell, through and under the tempestuous seas" (6; Arden 341, n. 2).

“supernatural sailing” and the imagination, Gower’s words touch on two important functions of the numerous sea voyages in *Pericles*. First, within the world of the play, these voyages carry Pericles and his family to a state of being that seems to be at once natural and supernatural; they serve to question the distinction between the natural and the supernatural. Secondly, the sea voyages in *Pericles* engage early modern debates about what, if anything, constitutes a miracle, debates which accompanied the Reformation truism that “the ‘age of miracles’ ended after the time of the apostles” and the Protestant assertion that “the Catholic ‘miracles’ of recent times were frauds or delusions” (Marshall, *Reformation* 130).

By focusing attention on the process of interpreting strange and improbable events surrounding sea voyages while also blurring the distinction between “real” and “imagined” miracles, the play represents a judiciously skeptical, if not entirely incredulous, position on the reality of miracles (Conlan 328, 332). It argues, on one hand, against superstition and an over-readiness to perceive the supernatural in every stunning occasion, in part through depicting the sort of bad ethical consequences to which such credulity can lead. But it also argues, on the other hand, against a thoroughgoing skepticism concerning miracles, in part through assigning positive ethical value to a measured, reasonable belief that marvelous occurrences sometimes reveal the divine. In the process, *Pericles* participates in what Alexandra Walsham calls Protestantism’s “transmutations of the miraculous [into special providences]”—that is, marvelous events with divine significance that nevertheless conform to the normal laws of nature—during the “onset and entrenchment of the Reformation” in early modern England (“Miracles” 295).

The problem of interpreting curious events is notably evident in Shakespeare's version of the queen who dies while traveling on the sea and is later reborn: Thaisa's apparent death, while giving birth to Marina, on board the storm-tossed ship and her later "resurrection" by the physician Cerimon. After Thaisa's attendant Lychorida reports to Pericles that his wife has died during the storm, one of the ship's sailors advises him that the supposedly dead "queen must [be cast] overboard" since the stormy sea will not settle "till the ship be cleared of the dead" (3.1.51-53). Pericles momentarily balks at the advice, saying that it is merely sailors' "superstition"; but he quickly relents, once the sailor tells him that the practice is a "strong" tradition among sailors, and Thaisa is soon thrown overboard (3.1.54, 56). Yet when Cerimon discovers her washed ashore in Ephesus, his reaction indicates that, in fact, she is not categorically dead. He implies that Pericles and company have thrown her overboard before being certain that she has actually died: "Look how fresh she looks. They were too rough / That threw her in the sea" (3.2.91-92). And Cerimon's claim that "She hath not been entranced / Above five hours" strengthens the implication that she is still alive, that she has merely been in a kind of cataleptic state (3.2.106-07). On this reading, Cerimon's success at reviving Thaisa is less a matter of supernatural goings-on than the result of a perceptive physician skillfully using natural means. If the definition of a miracle is an event that is "above nature," that is, strictly speaking, impossible within the natural course of things, then Thaisa's revival is not strictly speaking a miracle (Daston and Park 121). Since she is not definitively dead, her revival does not mean that the irreversible death of the body is nonetheless reversed.

Thaisa's apparent death and subsequent recovery work to highlight the dangers of superstition and over-ready credulity. We should keep in mind three aspects of the episode in this regard. First, Pericles never seeks to verify Lychorida's claim that Thaisa is dead; he simply takes her word for fact. Second, he immediately jumps to the conclusion that her alleged death is the result of divine intervention: "O you gods! / Why do you make us love your goodly gifts / And snatch them straight away?" (3.1.24-26). Third, as noted above, he describes the practice of throwing dead bodies overboard to appease the angry sea as superstitious but then proceeds rather readily to submit to the dictates of that superstition, telling the sailor, "As you think meet" (3.1.59). But the play subtly lets us know that this nautical practice counts as superstitious because it inaccurately identifies cause and effect. It suggests that a dead body on board a ship causes stormy seas. But if it is true that Thaisa has never in fact been dead, then she cannot have been a cause of the storm. Similarly, if she has never been dead, then Pericles' rebuke of the "gods," his identifying supernatural forces as causing her presumed death, is unfounded. And there are a number of dire ethical consequences of Pericles' misreading of events here and acting on the assumption that supernatural forces have caused them in some way (Conlan 337). For one, he becomes complicit in throwing his still-alive, helpless wife into the sea. Two, in so doing, he needlessly separates his newborn daughter from her mother. Three, his consequent decision to leave Marina to be raised by the treacherous Cleon and Dionyza in Tarsus means that he in effect delivers his own daughter into the hands of those who will eventually try to have her murdered and cover it up. And four, since the pirates who later sell Marina to a brothel snatch her

from the shores of Tarsus, Pericles is instrumental in setting his daughter on the path to becoming a victim of abduction and of captivity in that brothel.

Pericles' disinclination to investigate appearances closely, his lack of skepticism, also facilitates his being duped by Dionyza and Cleon's "foul show" in act 4 (4.4.23). To conceal the plot to murder Marina, which they believe has succeeded, the pair erect a fraudulent tomb for her on which is written a deceptive epitaph depicting her supposed death as caused by supernatural forces working through the sea. Specifically, it claims that, "*being proud*" that Marina was born at sea and therefore her "*birth-child*," Thetis (whom the play "confuse[s] with the sea-goddess Tethys") "*swallowed some part o' th' earth*" (4.4.40, 42; Evans 1503, n. 39). And "*the earth, fearing to be o'erflowed*" by Thetis—that is, inundated by the sea so long as Marina was alive—decided to cut its losses by "*bestow[ing]*" Marina "*on the heavens*," in other words, killing her (4.4.41-42). Pericles readily takes this tall tale for fact and speedily heads back to sea in full mourning for his daughter (4.4.25-28). As with his reaction to Thaisa's supposed death at sea, here too, Pericles' credulity, when it comes to the allegedly supernatural attributes of the sea, has troubling consequences. It both allows him to be easily deceived and plays a role in perpetuating his estrangement from the ones he loves. We have Thaisa secluded after her ordeal at sea in "Diana's temple" in Ephesus, Marina, now with no hope of rescue by a father who mistakenly believes her to be dead, left to fend for herself in a brothel, and the melancholy Pericles drifting aimlessly and lonesomely about the Mediterranean in his ship of mourning (3.4.12; 4.2.152).

In depicting some of the problematic consequences that may attend an unthinking propensity to interpret every strange event as supernaturally caused, or readily to accept

such interpretations as valid, these scenes echo Reformation-era debates about when strange events might qualify as divine intervention. Walsham analyzes the tension in early modern Protestant discourse between skepticism “about the intervention of supernatural forces in human affairs,” embodied in the Protestant claim that miracles “had long since ceased,” and a continuing “vocabulary of the miraculous” (“Miracles” 273-75). She writes that the “cessation of miracles” was both a “doctrinal precept” and a “cultural commonplace” by the “early seventeenth century,” noting also that “by the reign of James I” this truism had “attained the status of a proverb instantly familiar to theatre audiences” (“Miracles” 274). The claim that miracles had ceased was polemical as well as doctrinal. It complemented assertions that the Reformed faith, as opposed to Catholicism, did not depend upon “visible wonders,” which could “too easily be false and misleading teachers,” to “support its verity and purity” (“Miracles” 279). It was also a reaction against what reformers saw as the superstitious “popular credulity” promulgated by the late medieval Church and by the “forged and fraudulent miracles” of corrupt clergy, both of which “drugged [the laity] into servile submission and obedience” (“Miracles” 276-78). Indeed, as Peter Marshall remarks, the growing number of “English evangelicals” during the reign of Henry VIII who were influenced by Lollard tradition asserted that such fraudulent miracles were none other than the “false wonders of Antichrist” (“Forgery” 43, 49). Against this religious background, it would be little surprise if a Jacobean audience saw the events surrounding Thaisa’s tribulation at sea and Cleon and Dionyza’s “foul show” to deceive Pericles as in step with the doctrine that miracles had ceased. Both chains of events, to borrow a phrase from Gower of *Pericles*, demonstrate how “belief may suffer by” misleading representations (4.4.23).

Yet if *Pericles* highlights some of the problems attendant upon the propensity to see the supernatural at work behind peculiar events, the play is also uncomfortable with the sort of skepticism that would see only natural causes behind such events. In fact, it suggests that such skepticism may pose the greater danger, by eroding the divine ground upon which morality is built. After all, the play's most unsavory characters tend to be the most skeptical when it comes to supernatural matters. After Dionyza reveals to Cleon her plot to murder Marina, Cleon has a crisis of conscience during which he alludes to divine authority as the guarantor of moral order: "Of all the faults beneath the heavens, the gods / Do like this [murder] the worst" (4.3.21-22). Dionyza dismisses this belief by belittling Cleon as a superstitious fool who believes that "the petty wrens of Tarsus will fly hence" to communicate the supposed murder to Pericles (4.3.23-25). In other words, Dionyza skeptically sees no qualitative difference between Cleon's religious piety and superstitious folk beliefs. Both are, to her, equally empty illusions. And read in the light of Dionyza's skepticism, there also seems to be more than comedy in the Bawd's response to Marina's prayer to the goddess of chastity, Diana, to protect her virginity in the brothel: "Diana aid my purpose!" (4.3.153). When the Bawd responds, "What have we [keepers of brothels] to do with Diana, pray you?" her words also suggest a kind of "atheism" or "religious indifference" on her part that licenses her unwholesome trade, the sort of "atheism" that early modern clergy often saw as a "rising tide" and as encouraging sinners to "go forward in wickedness without remorse or terror of conscience" (4.2.154; Walsham, *Providence* 28-30). Both Dionyza and the Bawd give voice to a belief in an un-enchanted world where divine powers do not ensure that sin is punished.

Pericles, then, is concerned as much about the dangers of religious skepticism as it is about those of unthinking credulity. And if it dramatizes the pitfalls of an over-readiness to accept that supernatural causes lie behind strange events, it also provides instances that suggest seemingly miraculous happenings may actually be miraculous. In doing so, it partakes of the post-Reformation “vocabulary of the miraculous” that persisted despite the commonplace that miracles had ceased. In particular, many of the events surrounding marvelous happenings at sea in *Pericles* fall in line with a Protestant discourse of the miraculous that reconfigured miracles as divine or “special providences” (Thomas 80). Keith Thomas writes that, while the “general opinion” was that miracles which “interrupt[ed] the course of nature” had ceased, this opinion also held that, “since the world was entirely governed by divine providence,” God “could [. . .] bring about striking accidents or coincidences—‘special providences’” (80). Walsham explains that this reconfiguration “subsumed miracles into the category of ‘special’ or ‘extraordinary providences’” by way of an Augustinian “collapsing [of] the boundary between nature and supernature” (“Miracles” 286). For Augustine, “Creation was the sole, all-encompassing miracle, a system into which God had integrated stupendous signs and wonders which would strike awe and admiration into the feeble hearts of mankind, but which were in essence no less ‘natural’ than the daily rise and setting of the sun or the regular turn of the tide” (“Miracles” 285-86). Special providences were in this regard supernatural and natural at the same time, stunning incidents whose natural causes were but secondary causes orchestrated by the primary cause, God. Additionally, and importantly, they presented problems of interpretation, since they could easily be mistaken for “preternatural phenomena,” which belonged entirely “to the same, lower

order of causation” as natural phenomena, while also “evok[ing] the same astonishment and wonder” that supernatural phenomena would (Daston, “Marvelous” 99). The marvelous appearances of merely preternatural phenomena might resemble those of miracles or special providences, but they were caused by strictly natural means or “created beings”: unusual, “chance” configurations of “unaided nature”; magicians; Satan; “demons, astral intelligences, and other spirits” (Daston, “Marvelous” 97-98). Because the wholly “‘natural’ causes” of preternatural marvels often “remained cloaked and hidden from the view of imperfect human beings,” it was very difficult to distinguish them from divine providences, an interpretive problem like those we have seen in the case of Thaisa’s seafaring tribulations (Walsham, “Miracles” 285; 5.3.41-42).

Viewed from the perspective of miracles as special providences, though, Thaisa’s revival after her ordeal at sea may indeed qualify as miraculous. The episode certainly fulfills the criterion of wonder, as the Second Gentleman indicates by exclaiming, “Most strange!” when her coffin is opened to reveal what at least appears to be a corpse “shrouded in cloth of state, balmed and entreaured / With full bags of spices” and “a passport too!” (3.2.75-77). Thaisa herself emphasizes the weirdness of the event when, upon stirring, she asks, “Where am I? Where’s my lord [Pericles]? What world is this?” to which the onlookers respond, “Is this not strange?” and “Most rare!” (3.3.121-23). Furthermore, the episode implies that divine causation is at the root of Thaisa’s recovery from her trance. As she begins “to blow / Into life’s flower again,” the amazed Second Gentleman declares that Cerimon, who is “cunning” in “physic,” is a secondary cause powered by a divine primary cause: “The heavens, through you, / Increase our wonder” (3.2.31, 36; 3.3.109-10). Thaisa seconds this assessment of Cerimon in Act V when she

calls him “this man / Through whom the gods have shown their power” (5.3.71). In allowing for differing interpretations of the causes behind Thaisa’s ordeal, a natural interpretation and a supernatural one, *Pericles* draws attention to the interpretive problems raised by the concept of special providences.

Interpretation also plays a central role in the reunion of Marina and Pericles on board Pericles’ ship of mourning after it drifts to the shores of Mytilene, where Marina now “dwells” (5 Chorus 15). The uncanny nature of the circumstances of this reunion are amenable to a providential reading. When Marina boards the ship to attempt to cure Pericles’ melancholy and before either of them knows the other’s identity, Pericles again displays a readiness to believe before, so to speak, all the facts are in. Noting that Marina *appears* “Modest as Justice,” that she *seems* “a place / for the crownèd Truth to dwell in,” and that she looks suspiciously like Thaisa, Pericles wills himself to believe the story she will tell him, no matter how improbable it may seem: “I will believe thee / And make [my] senses credit thy relation / To points that seem impossible” (5.1.137-42).

Nonetheless, this time he puts to Marina a series of interrogative questions to get to “the bottom of [her] story” before fully accepting it, to try to make sure that he interprets it accurately (5.1.195). In particular, once she tells him her name, he “resists jumping to joyful but unlikely conclusions,” as the Arden edition notes (384, n. 153-4). Pericles, instead, seeks to verify that she is his daughter in the “flesh and blood” and not some preternatural illusion, a “fairy / Motion,” or an “impostor,” as Marina suspects he thinks she is (5.1.180-82, 208). He asks, “Where were you born? / And wherefore called Marina?”; “How came you in these parts? Where were you bred?”; and “What was thy mother’s name?” (5.1.182-83, 200, 234). It is only when she answers these questions

successfully—for, as he says, “truth can never be confirmed enough, / Though doubts did ever sleep”—that he accepts her claim to be “the daughter to King Pericles,” that he accepts what appears before him as truth and thanks the “holy gods” (5.1.235-36, 210, 232). In this scene, Pericles’ cautious approach to believing that the wonder he sees before him really is what it appears to be is noteworthy, considering his troublesome proclivity for taking appearances at face value earlier in the play. His caution demonstrates that he has become more skeptical, less quick to believe that the “holy gods” are behind the amazing events in his life.

The deliberate process of questioning appearances in this scene, moreover, helps to establish that if this unanticipated father-daughter reunion is miraculous at all, it is miraculous in a providential sense. On one level, it is the astounding effect of an uncanny series of events that have entirely rational, natural explanations, rather than an effect that represents an interruption of nature’s course. Marina stresses that this is the case by acknowledging, in response to Pericles’ questions, that the “history” which has brought her aboard her long-lost father’s ship after so many years is so amazing that it might “seem / Like lies disdained in the reporting” (5.1.134-35). “Seem” is the crucial word here: her point is that, however much her history may seem so spectacular as to be unbelievable, it nevertheless consists of an unusual yet natural chain of events. It may, for example, be a very unusual coincidence for a father’s ship to drift to where a long-lost daughter turns out to be living; all the same, coincidence, however improbable, is not necessarily supernatural. On another level, though, the play does encourage us to see Pericles and Marina’s meeting as made up of incidents that are supernatural at the same time that they are natural. The reunion is an unlikely coincidence that occurs in a context

of religious piety: Pericles' ship just happens to be "driven before the winds" to Mytilene at the precise time that the city is "striv[ing] / God Neptune's annual feast to keep" (5 Chorus 14-17). His reunion with his daughter, consequently, looks like an effect whose natural secondary causes could have been arranged by a divine first cause, Neptune (5 Chorus 14-17).

The divine orchestration of natural happenings looks even more apparent in the final reunion of Marina and Pericles with Thaisa, which is set in motion by Pericles' shipboard vision of the goddess Diana. Diana instructs him to journey to her temple at Ephesus, offer a sacrifice there, and publicly recount his history before her "maiden" priestesses and the Ephesians (5.1.273-80; 5.3.16). Unbeknownst to Pericles, Thaisa is now living at the temple as one of the priestesses. It would perhaps be overly skeptical to deny that all of this, which Pericles calls "this great miracle," is not in fact miraculous (5.3.69). And yet, it is important to remember that this vision too does not represent a divine irruption into the natural order in a way that is somehow at odds with that order. Pericles is so overwhelmed with joy at his improbable reunion with his lost daughter that he becomes "wild in [his] beholding," or, as the Arden edition notes, "over-excited about what [he sees]" (5.1.256; Arden 390, n. 211). This over-stimulation causes him to hear the "heavenly music" of the spheres—which the other characters present do not hear; that is, it is a subjective experience—and fall asleep while, significantly, alone on the stage (5.1.267-74). Only at this point does Diana appear to Pericles, and to Pericles alone, in a "dream" (5.1.282; Eggers 463). The play, therefore, carefully stages Diana's appearance to underscore that it is a subjective, imaginative vision. Although the dream vision may seem at first glance an obvious interruption of a natural scheme of things by a

supernatural agent, it is actually consistent with a natural order. As a dream, it has a fully natural explanation: it is a product of Pericles' unconscious and hyper-stimulated imagination.

Still, if the dream vision of Diana is a natural phenomenon, that does not necessarily mean that it is not supernatural as well. Although the vision itself is clearly imaginative, the information it provides Pericles does prove to be applicable in the play's "real" world. Pericles again acts on faith in this episode, when he immediately follows through on his unconscious vision, stating, "I will obey thee [Diana]," and ordering his crew to alter the ship's course "toward Ephesus" (5.1.284, 289). But there are significant differences between this act of faith and his earlier credulity. For one, his marvelous dream is a case of private revelation, whereas he experiences the earlier, deceptive marvels through distorting mediating figures such as Lychorida, the sailors, and Dionyza and Cleon. It would be difficult not to see an allusion to a Protestant emphasis on private revelation as taking precedence over clerical authority in this. And secondly, his dream vision gives him, and he acts on, relatively specific, straightforward instructions. In other words, private revelation delivers instructions directly to his imagination in a reasonable format; it communicates to him intelligible signs about where he is to go and what he is to do there. But in order to act on them, he must have faith that there is a reality behind those signs. He must have faith that the relationship between the signifier and the signified is not always arbitrary. And what he sees in the imaginative world of his unconscious turns out to be true in the outer world of the play: the prophecy that he dreams does in fact come to pass, when he and Marina discover Thaisa in the temple of Diana (Womack 182). Pericles' faith seems to be justified here, and it has favorable

ethical consequences: the final restoration of his family. The details surrounding this providential restoration, then, imply that if miracles do take place, they take place in the natural, psychological realm of the imagination, and that it is ultimately through reason in combination with faith in the imagination that we can perhaps discover the supernatural.

In his study of *Pericles*, Peter Holland comments, “every single scene takes place either at sea or in a town or other place that is a port or is on the coast” (12). Indeed, each incredible event I have discussed here happens on or around or alludes to the sea. So the question might remain: what is so special about the sea with regard to the matter of miracles in *Pericles*? As *Mary Magdalene* does, Shakespeare’s play draws on the tradition of “nautical piety,” the “once deeply felt Christian belief that God revealed His will in miracles on the Ocean,” which in the early modern period figured frequently in numerous accounts of perilous yet providential journeys upon the sea (Conlan vii). Shakespeare draws on this tradition to invite us to embark on our own “miraculous” sea voyage, through our imaginative involvement in the story of Pericles. One of Gower’s roles in the play is to encourage, quite explicitly, such participation. Often he begins by narrating Pericles’ journeys, thereby requiring us to picture them without seeing them. For instance, Gower introduces the fourth scene of act 4 by telling us, “Well-sailing ships and bounteous winds have brought / This king to Tarsus—think [his] pilot thought; / So with his steerage shall your thoughts [go on]” (4.4.17-19). Gower will then ask us to suppose that the action we are about to see on stage takes place in some “real” space, such as a ship or the seaside. At the opening of the fifth act, when he describes the arrival of Pericles’ ship off of Mytilene, Gower recommends that we “Think this his bark” (5 Chorus 22). Earlier, he introduces Pericles’ brief soliloquy at the beginning of

act 3 by asking us to imagine that the stage is Pericles' ship: "In your imagination hold / This stage the ship upon whose deck / The [sea-tossed] Pericles appears to speak" (3 Chorus 58-60). Gower thus repeatedly calls attention to the voyages in the play as being theatrical illusions in which we take part through our own "fancies" (3 Chorus 13). And the part that our imagination is to play is to be an active one: our "thoughts" participate in the piloting of Pericles' ship.

In other words, in encouraging us to participate imaginatively in the apparently providential seaborne events we witness on the stage, Gower highlights the fact that, however astonishing they may seem, they are nonetheless only products of the imagination. In the same way that Pericles' shipboard vision of Diana is staged to locate it in his subjective imagination, Gower's narration locates the play's providential sea voyages in our imagination, implying that they are flights of fancy that should not be taken too seriously. Furthermore, given that Pericles' subjective vision of Diana takes place on a fanciful ship on dreamt-up seas in a dramatic world that advertises its imaginative theatricality, the play seems to offer a furtive, skeptical critique of the concept of private divine revelation, by suggesting that the vision has been merely a pleasing fantasy set in a fictional world.

Gower's narration further unsettles a providential reading of Pericles' seafaring adventures by describing them during the majority of the play as caused by an erratic fortune that is merely toying with him. When Pericles' ship wrecks in a storm and he is washed ashore in Pentapolis, Gower tells us that "by waves from coast to coast [Pericles] is tossed" until "Fortune, tired of doing bad, / Threw him ashore to give him glad" (2

Chorus 34-38). He also depicts the storm at sea that leads to Thaisa's being thrown overboard as caused by variable fortune acting on natural forces:

But Fortune, moved,
Varies again. The grizzled North
Disgorges such a tempest forth
That, as a duck for life that dives,
So up and down the poor ship drives. (3 Chorus 46-50)

By aligning the sea and ships with imaginative illusions and chaotic fortune, Gower's narrative framing of events introduces the question of whether the very idea of providential seafaring is itself mere fancy, a problematic leap to supernatural conclusions based on what could finally be nothing more than bizarrely coincidental, yet entirely natural, occurrences.

At the very end of the play, however, when Gower summarizes the action in an epilogue, he seems to fall in line with a providential account. He proclaims that, although Pericles has been "assailed with fortune fierce and keen," his reunion with Thaisa and Marina shows that providence is triumphant, that he has been "Led on by heaven, and crowned with joy at last" (Epilogue 4-6). Yet this tidy conclusion is more ambiguous than it may appear. To read *Pericles* as an exercise in Christian providentialism requires that the pagan gods the play explicitly mentions (Diana and Neptune) are stand-ins for a Christian deity. And they may well be, given that the play, first published in 1609, would have been subject to the "1606 Act to Restrain the Abuses of Players, which forbade the use of the name of God on the stage" (Gossett 1, 114). But by prohibiting theatrical representations of the Christian God, the act of 1606 also opened the door to

representations of alternative cosmologies on the stage; in a way, it required them. Suzanne Gossett points out that *Pericles* at least suggests such alternative possibilities through the very fact that the “play takes place in a polytheistic universe,” that of Diana and Neptune (115). Even if we accept Gower’s providential conclusion in the epilogue, then, the providence to which he alludes is not necessarily a Christian one. Indeed, he continues to mention fortune as a causal force, one that operates simultaneously and apparently in competition with providence (fortune assails, while providence delivers), rather than insisting, as Calvin and other Reformers did, that fortune is a mirage and that all things are governed by providence. It is conceivable, that is, that Gower’s epilogue envisions a non-Christian universe ruled by a turbulent combination of pagan gods and fickle fortune.

It consequently becomes unclear whether the play as a whole endorses a specifically Christian providentialism. But neither can we say whether the play is, so to speak, “on the side of,” a non-Christian providentialism or a disenchanting interpretation of its plot, one that sees purely accidental fortune driving events, however much they might otherwise seem to gesture towards some kind of cosmic order. After all, if Gower’s focus on the fanciful nature of the dramatic action is to be trusted, then his assertions that fortune steers Pericles’ ships is open to question in the same way that a providential account of Pericles’ journeys is. Pericles’ trials and tribulations at sea leave us in a skeptical suspension of judgment. We do not know if his ships are ships of providence or ships of fortune. What we do know is that they are unsettling ships of the imagination, ships of uncertainty and doubt.

While the peculiar events that accompany ship travel in *Pericles* are open to supernatural or purely natural explanations, such events in *Mary Magdalene* are more clearly supernatural. The weird, ahistorical geography through which Mary Magdalene's ship travels, the death and rebirth of the Queen at sea, the fact that her infant survives without food for two years on a rock in the sea, the Queen's strange, undead journey across the sea to the Holy Land—these events cannot be accounted for in what we might call commonsensical, natural terms. Peter Womack points out that that is exactly what the play wants: “Each significant episode is centered on the audience's witnessing an astonishing event that discloses divine power. The improbability of these actions—their arbitrary eruption through the earthly texture of causes and effects—is precisely the point of their enactment” (176). That is, the Digby dramatist presupposes that his audience's faith exists and wants to reinforce it. Ship journeys in the Digby play facilitate what are ultimately clear revelations of a divine reality, thereby “proving” to the play's spectators a central truth that they should already know but may sometimes forget.

Ship journeys in *Pericles*, on the other hand, point to the play's ambiguous, cagey stance on the supernatural. The play allows for entirely natural explanations of events on or by the sea, while holding out, particularly when it comes to the vision of Diana and the reunion to which it leads, the possibility that the supernatural may be reached through the imagination, or, rather, through faith. But “possibility” and “may” are important here. For as much as *Pericles* may tease us with the possibility of mystical imaginative access to a divine sphere, it never asserts in clear, unambiguous terms that the supernatural exists beyond the shadow of a doubt, that it has an objectively verifiable existence apart from the imaginary, subjective realm. It never isolates the supernatural from the natural,

the imaginative, or the subjective in the way the Digby *Magdalene* does, and it does not allow us to say for certain that it dramatizes a world in which the natural is infused with the supernatural. Jesus in *Mary Magdalene* may tell us that those who have faith without needing visual evidence are “blissyd” (“blessed”), but that play nonetheless provides abundant “proof” of the supernatural (lines 699-700). Shakespeare, in contrast, makes the leap of faith in the powers of the imagination vital to any access to the supernatural, and by doing so, leaves open a space in which doubt can take up residence.

Thus, while *Pericles* is skeptical about religious skepticism and recognizes a pragmatic ethical value to belief in the supernatural, its handling of seafaring imagery is disturbed by religious uncertainty. Seafaring in *Mary Magdalene* registers a “real” supernatural and confronts its audience with the challenge of acting in accordance with the moral and spiritual imperatives of that supernatural. It functions, in this respect, as a test of its audience’s moral fiber. Seafaring in *Pericles* reveals a nagging doubt that the supernatural ever manifests itself apart from the imaginary, in a reality outside of it. In making the supernatural “seamless” with the natural, suggesting that if the supernatural does exist, we can never isolate it from the natural or somehow be sure that it is “in” the natural, Shakespeare also allows for the possibility that only the natural exists. And in this regard, ships and the sea in *Pericles* represent both the fundamental challenge of and a fundamental challenge to faith.

Chapter Three

Agnostic Voyages in Wyatt, Spenser, and Marvell

Antonis Balasopoulos' analysis of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century utopian literature argues that utopian thinking in those centuries was prompted, somewhat paradoxically, by the possibility of disorientation that accompanied the boom in oceanic voyaging after Columbus' voyages to the New World. The lack of very reliable methods of determining a ship's position on the blank, illegible ocean highlighted in the cultural imagination of the Renaissance the scenario of becoming lost or drifting aimlessly in unfamiliar, uncharted waters and the happy and unhappy accidents to which this loss of control might lead. Thus More's utopian voyager, Raphael Hythloday, travels "without any apparent plan or itinerary in mind" (Balasopoulos 135). Similarly, the "utility of disorienting error for the attainment of truth" figures in both Erasmus' *The Praise of Folly* and Cartesian thought, "for which the mind can be suffered to wander in error simply because the relentless pursuit of falsity ultimately leads one to truth" (136). Columbus himself, as Balasopoulos notes, gives voice in his voyage journals not only to the utopian fantasies but also to the dystopian fears that could arise during prolonged sailing on the unmarked, empty ocean. Columbus' journal observes that while crossing the Atlantic his sailors "have been paying more and more attention to the signs we see, and although they took some heart from the birds, now that no land has appeared they believe nothing they see, and think that the absence of signs means that we are sailing to a new world from which we will never return" (*Voyage* 88). On the one hand, this passage represents a "horrifying forecast"; the lack of legible signs by which to steer the

ship signals a loss of control and the threat of losing the old, comfortable world for good (Balasopoulos 141). On the other hand, in Balasopoulos' estimation, it reveals, "however obliquely, a glimpse at the utopic potential of spaces whose apparent lack of authoritative inscription—'nothing'—seems to make them fertile grounds for the growth of fantasies of a different kind of existence—'a new world'" (141). It is this optimistic, utopian impulse generated by sea travel in the Age of Discovery to which Balasopoulos devotes his attention.

But what of the dystopian or, more generally, pessimistic vision at play in Columbus' words? It too finds frequent expression in early modern writing concerned specifically with ships and the sea. My concern here is to demonstrate how the "emerging crisis of belief in established knowledge and authority" that Balasopoulos detects aboard Columbus' ship, a crisis spurred by sailing out of range of familiar and comforting signs, finds its way into the writing of early modern Britain, in particular, into lyric poetry. To that end, I examine a selection of nautically themed poems by Wyatt, Spenser, and Marvell: Wyatt's "My galley chargèd with forgetfulness," a sonnet which adapts poem 189 ("Passa la nave mia colma d'oblio") of Petrarch's *Rime Sparse*; three sonnets from Spenser's *Amoretti* (sonnets 34, 59, and 63); and Marvell's "Bermudas." Marvell's poem is clearly influenced by voyages to the New World: it describes the seafaring of Puritans who have left England to plant a colony in Bermuda.

That Wyatt's sonnet may have been influenced by his own knowledge of contemporary seafaring, including the rise in European navigation in distant, unfamiliar waters during the Age of Discovery, is suggested by his career under Henry VIII. To begin with, Wyatt gained first-hand experience of seafaring in his travels to and from the

Continent as an ambassador for Henry.¹¹ And in the last year of his life, before unexpectedly dying of a fever he caught while riding to Falmouth to meet the newly arrived Spanish ambassador, Wyatt was made a vice-admiral of Henry's royal fleet (Pearsall 607; Thomson 73-74). His diplomatic missions to Europe meant that he spent considerable time "in the European courts that were [at] the center of transoceanic exploration, especially that of Emperor Charles V" in Spain, where a school of navigation, which "became especially famous and was much admired abroad," had been established as part of the Casa de Contratación during the early sixteenth century (Cheney 82; Parry, *Age* 96). The school had been founded to prepare navigators for the trade in the West Indies at a time when there was a scarcity of pilots with "any real knowledge of the Atlantic route or of the American coasts" (Parry, *Age* 96; Haring 298). The result of such ignorance had been "not only [. . .] the loss of ships and the discouragement of trade, but also [. . .] the confusion of nautical knowledge through the reporting of false or inaccurate observations" (Haring 298). One of the Casa's first head navigators was Sebastian Cabot, who had also "sailed under the English flag in 1509 in search of a northwest passage to Asia" and who would return to England in 1548 as advisor to English navigators (McCann 48, 99). Cabot was already seeking a return to England in the 1530s, when Wyatt was at the Spanish court, and it was Wyatt who relayed his intentions to Henry (Muir 81).

Spenser's interest in long-distance voyages of exploration and trade is clearly evident in his epic poem *The Faerie Queene*. The proem to the second book of *The Faerie Queene* refers to the voyages of discovery in asserting the reality of the land in

¹¹ See, for example, Muir 37, 62, 65, 180, 203, 206.

which his epic is set, even though that land is invisible to human eyes. The reader who considers the “land of Faery” a mere “painted forgery” of an “idle braine” ought to remember

That of the world least part to vs is red [known]:

And dayly how through hardy enterprize,

Many great Regions are discouered,

Which to late age were neuer mentioned.

Who euer heard of th’Indian *Peru*?

Or who in venturous vessell measured

The *Amazons* huge riuer now found trew?

Or fruitfullest *Virginia* who did euer vew?

Yet all these were, when no man did them know;

Yet haue from wisest ages hidden beene:

And later times things more vnkowne shall show.

Why then should witlesse man so much misweene

That nothing is, but that which he hath seene?

What if within the Moones faire shining spheare?

What if in euery other starre vnseene

Of other worldes he happily should heare? (2.Proem.1-3)

The discovery of regions of the earth which previous generations of Europeans might have considered unreal because they had not themselves witnessed them implies, here, that Fairyland is real even if we cannot see it. Or as William Nelson pithily summarizes

the humor in the passage, “Fairyland exists because it has not yet been discovered. The logical absurdity should warrant at least a smile” (88).

More broadly, the existence of these previously unseen lands throws a question mark over the reliability of knowledge, and Spenser identifies the navigation of “venturous” ships to new lands with the unsettling of knowledge because it shows the problem of perspective, of how perspective limits our ability to comprehend what is real. From the vantage point of Europe prior to the voyages of discovery, that of Ptolemaic geography, which did not account for the New World because it literally could not see it, the world looked one way. But now, after the voyages, the European perspective has changed and the world—reality—appears different. Furthermore, Spenser asks, how do we know that our picture of reality is now complete, that future discoveries will not bring new perspectives that change the picture again and again? Joanne Woolway Grenfell explains that “the discovery of the New World” is grounds for Spenser to warn his readers “of the dangers of assuming that it is [their] comprehension or viewing of something that makes it real” (232). Although the sonnets from *Amoretti* which I examine in this chapter do not specifically mention voyages to the East or West Indies, they draw strong parallels between epistemological uncertainty and seafaring in a way that suggests they are deeply informed by the connection Spenser makes in the opening of Book Two of *The Faerie Queene* between trans-oceanic exploration and a sense that appearances are less than trustworthy.

Indeed, a common element in the poems by Wyatt, Spenser, and Marvell that I consider is what might be called uncertain or troubled sailing. In the cases of Wyatt’s “My galley” and Spenser’s *Amoretti* 34 (“Lyke as a ship that through the Ocean wyde”),

the uncertainty is apparent enough, as they describe ships lost in rough weather. The signs of uncertainty in *Amoretti* 59 (“Thrise happie she, that is so well assured”) and *Amoretti* 63 (“After long stormes and tempests sad assay”) are more subtle and stem from Spenser’s hints that perhaps we should not trust the generally optimistic portraits of ship travel these two sonnets seem to present. Marvell’s “Bermudas” may give the impression of being the exception to all of this uncertain sailing, insofar as the Puritan rowers in the poem appear to be the opposite of troubled sailors. We find them, at least on the face of things, confidently rowing to Edenic islands that God has lovingly prepared to receive them. Yet it is difficult not to detect the ironic voice of Marvell in the poem, suggesting that perhaps these sunny, devout mariners would do well to be troubled, or at least less confident about their own salvation.

On a literal level, Wyatt’s, Spenser’s, and Marvell’s poems may not always seem to be concerned specifically with the uncertainty of sailing to newly discovered or explored lands during the Age of Discovery, because they do not always overtly or unambiguously cite such voyages as experiences of doubt. Again, Marvell’s poem does describe the kind of colonial voyaging made possible by the Age of Discovery, but it is perhaps less than clear that it connects this voyaging to the experience of uncertainty. But on a less obvious level, these poems seem to be fundamentally influenced by the growth of exploratory and long-distance navigation in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, in that they recreate for the reader the sorts of epistemological challenges, the interpretive uncertainties, which early modern “exploratory navigation” in distant, unfamiliar seas highlighted (Ash 98). Moreover, they duplicate such challenges through ambiguous nautical images in order to explore theological uncertainties that could arise

from another development in early modern European, including English, culture: the Reformation. Specifically, Wyatt, Spenser, and Marvell employ nautical imagery in their poems to investigate the challenges to faith that could be presented by the influence of Reformist theologies of grace, particularly the doctrines of justification by faith alone and predestination, on Protestant thinking about salvation.

Naval historians such as Dorothy Burwash, David W. Waters, E. G. R. Taylor, and J. H. Parry have examined how the increasingly far-flung seafaring of the Age of Discovery highlighted the deficiencies in European navigational knowledge and practices when it came to charting a course on the open ocean for long stretches of time and, more broadly, in unfamiliar waters. “With the opening up of trade routes in remote and dangerous seas,” Burwash comments, “the conditions of navigation rapidly changed and new methods had to be devised to meet new difficulties” (3). European shipping during the Middle Ages was largely a matter of sailing within sight of the coast, employing the techniques of “pilotage or coasting,” which John Seller describes in his *Practical Navigation* (1672) as “the *Domestick*, or more *common Navigation*, I mean Coasting or Sailing along the Shore” (Waters 4; Seller 1). The “medieval pilot” engaged in this “*Domestick*” sort of sailing “work[ed] over a familiar course, in waters which were perhaps dangerous but which offered to one who knew them unnumbered kindly hints and signs” (Burwash 14). He “had need above all of experience, of intimate and detailed knowledge of currents, soundings, bottoms, and headlands. [. . .] To supplement [experience], compass, sounding line, and rutter were tools enough” (14).¹² For the

¹² Rutters, or pilot books, supplied such information as “bearings, distances between places, descriptions of landmarks, instructions for entering harbours,” “soundings and tides,” and “almanacs containing calendars with the phases of the moon” (Kinzel 32).

relatively brief stretches that pilots, such as the “pioneer explorers of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries,” ventured beyond the sight of any coast, the compass could generally show the course of a ship well enough (Waters 41). The techniques of medieval pilotage proved deeply insufficient, however, as exploration and discovery sent European mariners with growing frequency and for extended periods across greater distances on the blank ocean or into remote and strange waters. “When the task was to lay a course westward over the Atlantic and to make the same landfall which one’s predecessor, Cabot or Columbus, had reported,” then “new skill and knowledge” was required, for “the soundings and sea-marks and the other paraphernalia of coastwise sailing” in old, familiar seas were of “no help” in new, “unknown seas” (Burwash 14; Parry, *Age* 90).

Mariners now began to rely more heavily on other “fixed observable objects,” namely “heavenly bodies,” and the Pole Star in particular, “already familiar to seamen because of its constant northerly bearing and its use in telling the time” (Parry, *Age* 91). Seafaring thus underwent an epistemological modification of sorts, becoming a less “empirical” and a more “theoretical” or abstract business. Oceanic navigation was “fundamentally scientific and depended primarily upon calculation and the observation of celestial bodies”; it required the navigator to “direct the ship’s course and fix the ship’s position when far from land by instrumental observation of heavenly bodies and mathematical calculation” (Waters 5). There became a greater abstract or perceptual distance between sailors and the destinations at which they hoped to arrive. Pilots’ knowledge was largely, so to speak, grounded on the ground. Land was both the destination that they sought and, insofar as they sailed for the most part by visual reference to land, the means by which they achieved it. Oceanic navigation, on the other

hand, required mariners to give much greater weight to an additional and less palpable, more distant term in their knowledge-equation: to get where they wanted to go on earth, navigators had first to look to and measure their progress by distant stars. This greater reliance on more distant fixed objects did not quite solve the problems of orientation that came with navigating remote waters, however, since the more mathematical methods of oceanic navigation brought their own interpretive mazes.

Among the range of problems mariners faced when trying to sail by reference to celestial bodies were inherent complications with three popular instruments—the quadrant, the astrolabe, and the cross-staff—used to measure the Pole Star’s altitude, “its angle above the horizon,” which increased or decreased as a ship moved north or south and, therefore, indicated the ship’s latitude (Parry, *Age* 91). Sailors aligned the quadrant’s sights on the star, and an attached plumb-line hung to mark the angle on the quadrant’s “curved edge,” on which a “scale from 1° to 90° [was] marked” (91). The problem with this method was that the “least roll of the ship [at sea] set the plum-bob swinging and made accurate reading impossible” (92). Similarly, the slightest rolling of a ship at sea meant sailors using astrolabes to determine the altitudes of stars “found it impossible to take observations within 4° - 5°” (Waters 57). The “development of the cast brass model” of astrolabe, “completed by the middle of the sixteenth century,” helped to alleviate this problem (57). Even then, however, the “navigator preferred to go on shore and use [the astrolabe] there if he wanted to be sure of his latitude to within a half a degree” (57). In general, the “difficulties arising from the motion of the ship and from the wind” meant that “where possible seamen landed to make their observations”

(Taylor 161). But of course, this option was not available to seamen on ships in the middle of the ocean.

The “mariner’s cross-staff,” adapted from the “astronomer’s cross-staff” in the “early sixteenth century,” consisted of a staff “graduated along one side in degrees and minutes,” to which a “cross-piece was fitted [. . .] so as to slide evenly along it” (Waters 53-54; Parry, *Age* 93). The navigator held “the end of the staff” to his eye and moved the cross-piece “until it corresponded exactly to the distance from the horizon to the heavenly body observed, and the altitude [was] read off from the scale” (Parry, *Age* 93). This operation itself was not a simple matter. For example, it was difficult to avoid “errors of parallax,” caused by “the observer not holding the eye end of the staff at the exact spot against his cheek-bone which ensured that its end coincided with the eye’s centre” (Parry, *Age* 93; Waters 54). And when sighting the sun, the mariner was required to maintain an “arm-aching and eye-blinding attitude for minutes on end,” thereby increasing the likelihood of erroneous readings (Waters 54). As with the quadrant and the astrolabe, the chances of error were made greater by the “heaving deck” of the ship (54). Parry notes that “the more refined back-staff or Davis’ quadrant, which enabled the navigator to read solar altitude with his back to the sun by observing the fall of a shadow on a graduated scale, was not invented until late in the sixteenth century” (*Age*, 94). Finally, even if the navigator could avoid these errors related to positioning the cross-staff, he faced limitations built into the design of the instrument. If he used it to find the altitude of a star, he could only do so “at dawn and dusk, when both the stars and the horizon were visible at once” (93). A second limitation was that the cross-staff “could not be used to sight the sun below 20° of altitude because [the low end of] its graduations ended there,

nor in practice above 60° of altitude, although it was graduated up to 90°” (Waters 54). Although the scale went up to 90°, the “observer’s scan of eye was limited physically to a maximum arc of 60°,” and even if that were not the case, the “graduations on the staff” above 60° “became so small that the slightest error in observation made a difference of degrees to the observed altitudes” (54).

The compass also posed difficulties with regard to getting an accurate “fix” on one’s position at sea, specifically, the problem of magnetic variation. Many navigators in the fifteenth century discovered that compass needles pointed not to the true north, “towards the Pole Star, but to the east of north” (Waters 24). The degree of this variation, Patricia Fumerton explains, changed “irregularly (versus proportionately) as one traveled eastward or westward” (121). Some navigators, however, remained unaware of variation, tried to disregard it, or “denied its existence” (Parry, *Discovery* 151-52). And some compass makers, according to Parry, “manufactured ‘corrected’ compasses, in which the needle was offset against the north point of the [compass] fly to allow for the variation of some particular area [of sea]” (*Discovery* 152). Parry notes, “such compasses were worse than useless outside the area for which they were made, and seriously dangerous on long voyages” (152). In his 1599 English translation of Simon Stevin’s *The Haven-Finding Art*, Edward Wright laments that there is “much deformitie and confusion” in “ordinarie sea-charts” based on compass readings that had not properly accounted for variation (B3v). The “deformitie and confusion” that could result from compass variation exemplifies what Fumerton describes as the “unsettledness” and “uncertain variation” that was “inherent in [the] arts of navigation” in the early modern period (123).

Perhaps the most notorious and unsettling navigational dilemma sailors confronted in the period was that of knowing their “position east and west,” or longitude (Waters 66). Finding longitude involved interpretive disorientation to an even greater degree than did finding latitude. If determining latitude on the open ocean had to be done without the help of earthbound reference points, the navigator, nevertheless, could at least ground his latitude calculations, however imprecisely, on fixed points of reference in the sky, the celestial pole or the celestial equator. But “owing to the revolution of the earth, there is no fixed point of reference such as the pole or the equator” by which to measure longitude (58). Robert Thorne makes precisely this observation in his 1527 “booke” to Doctor Edward Lee, Henry VIII’s ambassador in Spain: “All the Cosmographers [. . .] that ever have bene cannot give certaine order to measure the longitude of the worlde, as they doe of the latitude: for that there is no starre fixed from East to West, as are the starres of the Poles from North to South, but all mooveth with the mooving divine” (164, 174). That is, as a ship sailed to the west or the east on the open ocean, the navigator could not gauge his east-west position at any particular moment during the journey by referring to a point in the heavens that was situated constantly above a particular point on the earth’s surface, because there was no such celestial point available to him.

It was not until the eighteenth century that the longitude problem was solved, when the “ingenious Yorkshire clockmaker” John Harrison produced a “reliable sea-going chronometer” and the German mathematician Tobias Mayer “drew up a set of lunar tables allowing the [accurate] calculation of longitude by the movements of the moon” (Cotter 28; Parry, *Age* 98; Herman 261). Until that time, the inability of navigators to measure longitude with precision remained, as Arthur Herman describes it,

“the greatest obstacle to transoceanic navigation, and its greatest peril” (80). It meant that “no sailor, no matter how skilled, ever knew exactly how far east or west he was traveling until his ship actually arrived at his destination—or, as happened almost as often, ran aground on some unexpected reef or shoal” (80). Or as Dava Sobel similarly observes, “For lack of a practical method of determining longitude, every great captain of the Age of Exploration became lost at sea despite the best available charts and compasses,” while “untold numbers of sailors died when their destinations suddenly loomed out of the sea and took them by surprise” (6). The year 1707 provides a famous, dramatic example: on October 22 “four home-bound British warships ran aground” at the “Scilly Isles near the southwestern tip of England,” resulting in the deaths of “nearly two thousand men” (Sobel 7).

The shortcomings of the quadrant, the astrolabe, the cross-staff and the compass and the enduring problem of longitude are only a small sampling of the daunting range of obstacles with which early modern navigators had to contend as they tried to fix a ship’s position and determine its course in strange waters. Nevertheless, they are representative in that they serve to highlight that the two centuries in which Wyatt, Spenser, and Marvell wrote were transitional for European navigation. The increasing regularity of oceanic voyaging demanded newer, more reliable, navigational techniques, yet such techniques were still at a far-from-advanced stage of development during this period and could potentially create as many problems as they solved. Early modern navigation thus represented an immense cognitive challenge that complicated the fundamental matter of orientation, of knowing one’s position and finding one’s direction within a larger whole (Kinzel 29).

The ever-present threat of disorientation at sea during this period finds a religious parallel in the ever-present threat of spiritual disorientation implicit in the stress on God's absolute sovereignty when it comes to the matter of human salvation in Luther's and Calvin's doctrines of justification by faith alone and predestination. For Luther, salvation is something that happens to one. It is a gift given freely from God, not something sinners can earn with merit accrued through good works and through adhering to the law of the Commandments:

All have sinned and are justified without merit [freely, and without their own works or merits] by His grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, in His blood, Rom. 3, 23 f.

Now, since it is necessary to believe this, and it cannot be otherwise acquired or apprehended by any work, law, or merit, it is clear and certain that this faith alone justifies us as St. Paul says, Rom. 3. 28: For we conclude that a man is justified by faith, without the deeds of the Law. Likewise v. 26: That He might be just, and the Justifier of him which believeth in Christ. (*Smalcald* 5)

Because everyone is by nature infected with original sin ("all have sinned"), humans are inevitably unable through their own efforts to transcend their fallen condition and reach perfect union with God, that is, salvation. Their salvation, instead, depends on the power of God's grace. Furthermore, it *utterly* depends on that grace, because, in Luther's understanding, God is a predestining deity whose power is absolute: "he foresees,

purposes and does all things according to His immutable, eternal and infallible will” (Erasmus and Luther 93).

As a result, Luther takes human free will to be an illusion as far as salvation is concerned: “this thunderbolt [i.e., God’s absolute sovereignty] throws free will flat and utterly dashes it to pieces. Those who want to assert it must either deny this thunderbolt or pretend not to see it” (93). Trying to live a good life, therefore, cannot necessarily be taken as a reliable sign that one would be saved. Luther also makes this point in his commentary on Psalm 4, where he argues against those who seek assurance of salvation “not by faith, nor by hope, but by a confidence in their own works, or by what others think of them” (*Standard* 182). Such people, Luther claims, are misguided in their faith because, in relying so much on their own efforts and on the good reputations those efforts earn them as signs that they are on the path to heavenly bliss, “they do not hope in God” and thus “do not hope purely” (182).

To be sure, Luther does not wholly dismiss the significance of good works. As potential signs—not causes—of salvation, they have importance. Good works can demonstrate who is among the saved: people perform good works if they are of the elect because grace moves or causes them to act in a godly way. That is, one does not perform good works in order to earn salvation; rather, one performs them because one is already saved (*Works* 26: 379; Simpson 150). This distinction raises an interpretive quandary: how can people be sure that they are performing good works because, as predestined members of the elect, God has made them do so and not because they are unconsciously and desperately trying to convince themselves that they are of the elect when, in fact, they are not? Luther’s answer is that they can only feel such certainty if their faith in

their salvation is itself strong and certain enough. In other words, only faith can ultimately be a sure sign of salvation: “faith is most rightly called ‘the light of God’s countenance,’ because it is the illumination of our mind inspired from on high, and a certain ray of the divinity conveyed into our heart, by which, every one is saved and directed, who is saved” (*Standard* 183).

Actually experiencing this supreme degree of assurance through faith can be another matter altogether, though, and a deeply problematic one, especially when we consider justification by faith alongside Luther’s conviction that God’s plan cannot be fathomed by human reason. To be assured through faith alone that one will be saved implies being certain about at least a part of God’s will, that part which has determined that one is to be saved. Yet Luther repeatedly states that fallen human reason cannot penetrate the profound mysteries of God’s ways, such as when people cannot fathom the righteousness of a God who condemns the “ungodly” for being ungodly, even though God is the one who has predestined them to be ungodly in the first place (*Works* 33: 289). In answer to such confusion, Luther maintains, “if [God’s] righteousness were such that it could be judged to be righteous by human standards, it would clearly not be divine and would in no way differ from human righteousness. But since he is the one true God, and is wholly incomprehensible and inaccessible to human reason, it is proper and indeed necessary that his righteousness also should be incomprehensible” (*Works* 33: 290). In fact, when “the judgment of human reason” observes that “the way of the world” seems to be that evil thrives while virtue suffers, it can only conclude that “either there is no God or that God is unjust” (291).

Of course, by definition, justification by faith alone involves putting aside reason and looking for assurance solely in faith. Luther recognizes, however, that it is extremely difficult for humans to move beyond their fallen reason and to occupy the realm of pure faith: “human nature, corrupt and blinded by the blemish of original sin, is not able to imagine or conceive of any justification above and beyond works” (*Works* 34: 151). The “innate evil” of sin corrupts our reason by putting us “in doubt about the favor of God toward us” so that we “cannot believe for a certainty that we are pleasing to God” (*Works* 26: 380). Even the exceptionally devout suffer from this “weakness of faith.” Because they experience “fear, doubt, sorrow, etc.,” they “dare not believe [. . .] for a certainty” that they are “in a state of grace,” that the “Spirit of Christ” is carrying them to eternal bliss (379). Overall, “in the midst of trial and conflict, when Christ does not become visible to any of our senses,” we tend to lose sight of faith in Him: “We do not see Him, and in the trial our heart does not feel His presence and help” (381). Instead, “there appears to be nothing left for us except despair and eternal death” (381).

Insofar as it envisioned a scheme of salvation in which humans have no active role, which was beyond logical analysis (according to human notions of probability and justice) and in which the nonetheless inevitable churning of logic tended to alienate one from the saving power of faith, Luther’s theology had the potential to be profoundly disturbing. In practice, the dynamics of justification by faith could leave believers feeling spiritually adrift, lacking both any power to control whether they would be members of the saved or of the damned (any power to further their own causes in God’s eyes) and any way of knowing, with any great degree of certainty, to which party they belonged. The “demand to count all human effort as naught when one stood before God”

in judgment could have been, for many believers, what Steven Ozment calls an “impossible religious ideal” and a source of great frustration, psychological unease, and ungodliness (375). In *The Free Will* (1524), Erasmus voiced his concerns about the possible ungodly consequences of Luther’s strict theology of grace:

How many weak [people] would continue in their perpetual and laborious battle against their own flesh? What wicked fellow would henceforth try to better his conduct? Who could love with all his heart a God who fires a hell with eternal pain, in order to punish there poor mankind for his [God’s] own evil deeds, as if God enjoyed human distress? Most people would react [by turning to godlessness and unbelief].

(Erasmus and Luther 8)

In other words, Luther’s all-powerful, impenetrable God could be so inconceivable to so many people that they would be unable to have faith in and love Him or to see any point in living a virtuous life. Luther himself acknowledged, in 1532, his own enduring difficulties with accepting that God’s grace, as a freely given gift, was alone the source of salvation. Despite “almost twenty years” of “preaching and cultivating” his theology of grace, he continued to “feel the old clinging dirt of wanting to deal so with God that I may contribute something, so that he will have to give me his grace in exchange for my holiness. And still I cannot get it into my head that I should surrender myself completely to sheer grace” (*Works* 51: 284).

Calvin’s theory of predestination also made for a God whose will could be deeply, frustratingly inscrutable. On one hand, Calvin insists in his *Institutes* that the saved never really lapse into despair, never become severed or detached, even temporarily, from the

assurance of their salvation, no matter how much that assurance might at times be “tinged with doubt” (3.2.17; Skulsky 235). By virtue of being predestined for salvation they are, in a sense, predestined to have enduring faith in their election. Thus Calvin declares, “we deny that, in whatever way [the elect] are afflicted, they fall away and depart from the certain assurance received from God’s mercy” (3.2.17). From this perspective, any distinction between faith and knowledge is erased: when the elect believe they are to be saved, they know they will be saved; their inner faith is “a knowledge of the divine benevolence toward us and a sure persuasion of its truth” (*Institutes* 3.2.12). Yet on the other hand, as Harold Skulsky observes, Calvin admits that “an illusory assurance” of election is possible among the reprobate (236). That is, the subjective experience, for the reprobate, of a delusional assurance of election is no different from the subjective experience, for the elect, of a true assurance of election. According to the *Institutes*, “For though only those predestined to salvation receive the light of faith and truly feel the power of the gospel, yet experience shows that the reprobate are sometimes affected by almost the same feeling as the elect, so that even in their own judgment they do not in any way differ from the elect” (3.2.11).

In short, the subjective, virtual reality of the damned who wrongly believe they are to be saved can, for all intents and purposes, be experientially indistinguishable from the subjective, true reality of the elect who rightly believe they are to be saved (Skulsky 237). Calvin’s God, moreover, sometimes purposefully confounds the reprobate by inspiring them with a mistaken, “transitory faith,” which affords them a taste of His “goodness” without bestowing upon them the enduring grace that accompanies salvation (*Institutes* 3.2.11). In order “to render [the reprobate] more convicted and inexcusable,”

the Lord occasionally “steals into their minds to the extent that his goodness may be tasted without the Spirit of adoption” (3.2.11). To make matters even more complicated, the elect do not know “immediately at birth” that they are the chosen ones (3.24.10; Sellin 171). Until the points in their lives when the Lord awakens them to their special status, they are, for all they know, no different from the reprobate and “scattered in the wilderness common to all” (3.24.10).

Keeping in mind that, in Calvin’s opinion, the reprobate can mistakenly believe themselves to be saved, we can see how an early modern Christian whose beliefs were shaped by Calvinism might have been psychologically tortured by trying to decipher whether he or she was indeed meant by God for eternal bliss. Knowing that it was entirely possible for the damned to labor for a time under the illusion that they were of the chosen, that Christian might quite understandably never have been able to get rid of the nagging suspicion that her or his awakening to faith was but an impermanent, delusional assurance. Faith and knowledge, from this perspective, were not the same after all; there was, instead, an impassable chasm between them.

The doctrines of justification by faith and predestination, then, had the effect not only of underscoring believers’ essential passivity, their inability to influence God’s judgment of them in any palpable way, but also of underscoring for them that hope and faith, as opposed to knowledge, were their only recourse. Again, however, believers could not be sure that their hope was itself justified because, in effect, they could never be entirely certain that their faith was actually real faith. Both doctrines, in this way, focused attention on a fundamental epistemological problem, that of distinguishing false appearances from truth, just as the limitations of early modern navigational techniques

complicated, if not thwarted, mariners' ability, in essence, to interpret data in order to know with precision their position and direction on the sea.

Wyatt's "My galley charged with forgetfulness" does not refer explicitly to the specific conundrums faced by early modern navigators trying to work out their latitude with imprecise instruments or determine their longitude in unknown seas. It nonetheless represents sea travel in a way that replicates early modern navigational conundrums in the reading experience. Likewise, the poem does not refer explicitly to the spiritual conundrums that the doctrines of justification of faith and predestination could present. But through its use of language rich in theological connotations and evocative of the popular Renaissance motif of the ship of fools, "My galley" associates sea travel with the kind of spiritual anxiety that could be brought about by a Reformist vision of human beings as passive non-actors in their destinies and who in the end could not accurately gauge, using their faith as a sign, their standing in God's eyes.

Wyatt's sonnet famously bemoans the painful turbulence of hopeless love by comparing the lover to a ship battered by a stormy sea, having lost sight of its guiding stars. For example, Richard Tottel's 1557 anthology *Songes and Sonettes*, perhaps most famously, gives the poem the title "The louer compareth his state to a shippe in perilous storme tossed on the sea" (38). More recently, Patricia Thomson has called the sonnet "a careful allegory of love," while Monika Fludernik sees it as depicting an "unsuccessful wooing' scenario" (Thomson 182; Fludernik 113). The tradition of reading "My galley" as a love poem stems, of course, from the fact that Wyatt adapted it from "Passa la nave mia" in Petrarch's *Rime*, the collection of love poetry inspired by his tortured desire for the woman he calls Laura (Fox 39-40). Interestingly, however, if we look at what is

actually in the text of Wyatt's sonnet, it is not strictly necessary to see it as an erotic poem:

My galley chargèd with forgetfulness
Thorough sharp seas in winter nights doth pass
'Tween rock and rock; and eke [also] mine enemy, alas,
That is my lord, steereth with cruelty,
And every oar a thought in readiness,
As though that death were light in such a case.
An endless wind doth tear the sail apace,
Of forced sighs and trusty fearfulness.
A rain of tears, a cloud of dark disdain
Hath done the wearied cords great hindrance,
Wreathed with error, and eke with ignorance,
The stars be hid that led me to this pain,
Drownèd is reason that should me comfort,
And I remain despairing of the port. (*Selected 22*)

“Enemy” and “lord” could refer to either the beloved or love itself. “A cloud of dark disdain” may refer to a look of disdain on the beloved’s face. “The stars” may refer to the eyes of the beloved. But if we limit ourselves to what we have on the page before us, we see no unambiguous signs pointing to a lover and his lady. There is, for instance, no direct evidence that the cruel lord is a lady for whom the speaker pines; all we know is that there is some kind of cruel lord. We do, though, have good evidence of a ship in trouble. And there is good evidence of a mind in trouble: “forgetfulness,” “sighs,”

“fearfulness,” “tears,” “error,” “ignorance,” “pain,” reason that has drowned, discomfort, and despair. These descriptors tempt us to seek the causes of the speaker’s anguish, but the sonnet as a whole then frustrates any attempt to identify those causes with any great degree of specificity.

From the first line, “My galley” employs ambiguous language that seems designed to make the reader participate in the discomfort that the speaker feels, whether that disorientation is the result of painful love or some other trying state of affairs. The phrase “chargèd with forgetfulness” allows for a number of readings. Perhaps most obviously, it can mean that the metaphorical ship of the poem is carrying or burdened with a cargo of forgetfulness, which would make the “galley” the speaker’s own forgetful, distracted mind. It can also mean something along the lines of “commanded to forget,” indicating that someone, possibly even the speaker himself, has advised him to forget something. A third possibility is that someone has accused the speaker of being insufficiently attentive; this accuser could, again, be the speaker himself or another. And as indicated above, there is similar elusiveness when it comes to the signifieds of “enemy” and “lord”: this adversarial lord could be the beloved or love itself. But it also makes sense to see “enemy” and “lord” as referring to whoever has instructed the speaker to be forgetful, to whoever has accused the speaker of being forgetful, or even to forgetfulness itself. Thus one possible reading of the sonnet’s first six lines is that the person who has commanded forgetfulness cruelly steers the speaker away from whatever or whomever he must forget, regardless of the dangers he may run into, including death. A second possible reading is that the person who has accused the speaker of inattentiveness now spurns him, sending him away on a painful journey of estrangement,

again with all the attendant dangers, perhaps even death by heartbreak or something similar. Or, a third possibility, forgetfulness or distraction itself sends the speaker off on a wild course and prevents him from taking heed of the dangers along the way.

A fourth possible reading of these six lines becomes available if we take the identity of the adversarial lord to be entirely separate from that of whoever has “chargèd” “forgetfulness.” We can see as much by taking into account Alistair Fox’s interpretation of “My galley.” Fox observes that one “function” of Wyatt’s “imitation” of Petrarch’s “Passa la nave mia” is “that of disguised political comment and complaint,” specifically, “political comment and complaint” pertaining to Wyatt’s place in the court of Henry VIII (49).¹³ If we look from this biographical perspective, it is possible that the complaint arose from Henry’s pursuit of Anne Boleyn, which interfered with the love affair Wyatt either had or may have hoped to have with her.¹⁴ We might then take the party who has instructed Wyatt to forget her to be the king or perhaps some intermediary at court busily warning off any competitors for Anne’s affections. The identity of the lord who cruelly steers, however, might be Anne Boleyn, withholding her affection and friendship from

¹³ Others have seen the sonnet in a political light as well. Andrew Hadfield notes that it “could describe the feelings of those who chose to live at court, a place where the rewards were undoubtedly great but the cost could be high” (124). Marion Wynne-Davies remarks that the voyage in the sonnet can be interpreted as that of a courtier who must “chart the tempestuous waters of court politics” (34). And Susan Bassnett suggests that “My galley” has political significance deriving from Wyatt’s position as a “courtier whose love affairs and political allegiances in the conspiracy-ridden court of Henry VIII almost cost him his life on more than one occasion” (92).

¹⁴ According to Patricia Thomson, “1525 offers the likeliest date [. . .] for the beginning of Wyatt’s intimacy with [Anne Boleyn]” (20-21). The relationship lasted “two years at most” and “ended on Henry’s appropriation of Anne and warning to Wyatt to leave her alone” (21). Wyatt was in Italy on diplomatic business “from January to May 1527” and arrived home “in England before the end of May” (21). If, as Kenneth Muir notes, Wyatt’s time in Italy “stimulated” him “to introduce Petrarch’s poems to English readers,” it is entirely possible that he had Anne Boleyn on the brain when composing “My galley” (8). This nevertheless does not preclude the possibility that he also had other matters on his mind, unconsciously or not, while composing the poem.

Wyatt in order to make herself wholly available to Henry. Alternatively, the identity of the cruelly steering lord in this scenario could be Wyatt's own unflinching and unquestioning loyalty to the king, whatever the emotional and psychological cost to himself "in such a case."

The elusive, if not confusing, signification of these first six lines has consequences for how the remainder of the sonnet is to be interpreted. For example, we learn in the seventh and eighth lines that "An endless wind doth tear the sail apace, / Of forced sighs and trusty fearfulness." If the ship of the poem is the speaker, then what is the origin of the "forced sighs" that in part constitute the "endless wind"? We might read them as the speaker's own sighs, but this reading raises problems. One problem is the question of why his sighs are "forced." That is, if the speaker is in fact suffering the pangs of painful love, it would seem to make sense for his sighs to be involuntary, not forced or compelled. They could, of course, be compelled and involuntary at the same time, in the sense that the painful love-situation has compelled the lover to break out involuntarily into sighs. It is important, however, to consider the corresponding lines in Petrarch's sonnet: "La vela rompe un vento umido, eterno, / Di sospir, di speranze, e di desio" (Petrarch 280). Fox provides a literal translation of Petrarch's characterization of the wind in these lines: "a wet, changeless wind of sighs, hopes and desires" (49). One element that is missing in Petrarch's lines, but which Wyatt has added to his own, is the suggestion that the sighs are in any way forced; indeed, in Petrarch's version, there is no adjective modifying "sighs" to suggest that they are anything but simple, uncomplicated sighs. Wyatt's purposeful addition of such a multivalent modifier as "forced" seems, therefore, designed to inject an element of ambiguity into the sighs, into how the reader is

to understand them.¹⁵ A second difficulty, if the sighs are the speaker's, is that it means he is both the ship and the weather. In other words, we come up against a logical paradox: the ship is propelled by its own wind. We might decide then that the "sighs" belong to a beloved. But this reading raises a similar interpretive quandary if we also take the unpleasant lord who pilots the ship to be that same beloved. Here too we run into a logical paradox: the beloved is both the wind that drives the ship and the ship's pilot.

There is also a paradox at play in the "trustful fearfulness" that is the other component of the wind, insofar as to be fearful is by definition not to be trusting. It is possible to try to smooth out this contradiction by observing, as the Norton editors do, that the phrase can mean "fear to trust" or, to put it another way, "certain to be afraid" (465). Yet this move does not entirely solve this particular interpretive dilemma, since "fearfulness" can also denote, according to the *OED*, "the quality of inspiring fear; dreadfulness" (def. 1). Thus from "trustful fearfulness" we can get something like "certain to inspire fear" or "reliably dreadful," which raises yet another question: who or what is it that the speaker finds to be so reliably dreadful or awe-inspiring? Furthermore, it is not quite clear if it is the speaker or someone else who is characterized by "trustful fearfulness." And if the fearfulness characterizes both the speaker and the wind, thus identifying them with one another, we are back at the paradox of the speaker being both the ship and the elements that drive it.

¹⁵ According to the *OED*, "to force" in Wyatt's time could mean, among other things, "to use violence to"; "to constrain by force (whether physical or moral)"; "to compel, constrain, or oblige"; "to strengthen, reinforce"; "to trouble oneself, be concerned, care"; or "to be of force, importance, or weight." Similarly, "forced" could mean "enforced, compulsory; not spontaneous, voluntary, or optional."

A similar interpretive problem arises when it comes to identifying the origins of the “rain of tears” and the “cloud of dark disdain” that have “done the wearied cords great hindrance.” It seems reasonably clear that the “cords” here refer metaphorically to both the rigging of the ship and the speaker’s nerves or the vital “cords” of his heart or mind. But even though, given that the poem describes the speaker’s distressed state of mind, it might also seem likely that the tears are his own, we again face the ship-weather paradox if we read the tears that way. To avoid this difficulty, we might interpret the tears as well as the disdainfulness as belonging to a beloved. If, however, we are open to the possibility that someone other than the beloved has commanded the speaker to forget the object of his affection, it is also entirely possible that the disdainfulness belongs to that someone. And seeing the tears as the beloved’s makes it logically difficult to see her also as the “lord” who steers the ship, since, yet again, that would make her both the ship’s pilot and the weather battering the ship. By this point in the reading process (if not before), we will likely begin to sympathize with the speaker of the poem, as the “wearied cords” of our own minds suffer the “great hindrance” of being “wreathed” with interpretive “error” and “ignorance.” And like the speaker, we may despair that we will ever be able to reason our way to a safe “port” of stable meaning.

Wyatt, then, laces “My galley” with terms that, taken together, lead into a seemingly endless maze of analysis. The maze can be avoided by looking less literally or closely at the poem, by relying on a kind of macro-analysis rather than trying to pinpoint specific signifieds for the ambiguous terms Wyatt uses. That is, we can be satisfied with saying that Wyatt is not concerned to make a logical argument; his purpose is to describe artistically a troubled state of mind. But the ambiguity of the sonnet’s language suggests

that Wyatt does not merely want to describe this situation, to have readers, as it were, look at the picture from a distance. He wants readers to be drawn into it, to experience for themselves the disorientation and hopeless confusion the sonnet describes. This is achieved with signifiers that tantalizingly suggest we can discover the precise causes that have led this metaphorical ship on its reckless voyage in stormy metaphorical seas, only then to thwart that discovery, depriving interpretation of conclusiveness by allowing for a multitude of often incompatible meanings. We know there is a “galley” that is “chargèd,” but we cannot say, finally, how it is “chargèd.” We know that there is “forgetfulness,” but we do not know what kind of forgetfulness it is. We know that there is a “lord” and an “enemy,” but we cannot say who or what exactly they are. We know that there are “forced sighs,” but we cannot entirely explain them. We know that there is “trusty fearfulness,” but we do not know precisely what that is or to whom it belongs. And so on. The very words of the sonnet function for the reader as the “stars” in line twelve do for Wyatt’s mariner.

Indeed, as indicated earlier, it is not even clear that the stars refer to the eyes of a beloved. Fox observes, “Petrarch’s reference to Laura’s eyes, ‘Celansi i duo mei dolci usati segni’ (My two usual sweet stars are hidden), is rephrased [by Wyatt] as ‘The starres be hid that led me to this pain’, which allows for the idea of an evil fortune to be substituted for the erotic referent” (49).¹⁶ In other words, Wyatt’s addition of the word “pain” allows the twelfth line as a whole to evoke a predetermined, unhappy fate that is written in the stars and implacably determines the course of the speaker’s life. Thus the

¹⁶ Similarly, Philip Edwards argues that, by using the more general “stars” in place of Petrarch’s more specific “*i duo miei dolci usati segni*”, the two accustomed sweet signs,” Wyatt’s poem “transcends the immediate object of desire, and speaks about that which directs the course of his life” (11).

stars could signify a loved one's eyes, a fixed destiny, or both. The furthest we can push our interpretation with certainty is to see them as signs that have guided the speaker into his confused predicament and then disappeared, leaving him lost. And where the stars are misleading signs to the stricken mariner of the sonnet, the words of the sonnet lead the reader into the "pain" of interpretive confusion.

By considering Wyatt's "My galley" alongside the contemporary history of navigation, it becomes apparent that the definitive interpretive "key" to the sonnet is not necessarily, or only, its status as an early English imitation of Petrarchan courtly love. There is also a historically specific power to the seafaring imagery at work in the sonnet, to the extent that Wyatt captures in nautical images the sort of interpretive quandaries with which European sailors were increasingly confronted during the sixteenth century. In particular, the image of a ship lost at sea after having erroneously followed stars which have now disappeared echoes the very real danger of becoming disoriented and lost at sea that sixteenth-century mariners were facing more and more as they depended on faulty celestial navigation to determine latitude and longitude in faraway, uncharted, or unfamiliar seas. But the poem's nautical imagery does not capture such navigational dilemmas merely by referring to them. To reiterate, these nautical images work together to reproduce such quandaries for readers by frustrating their ability to decipher the language of the poem and arrive at a settled meaning. Wyatt's poem mimics the way that technological limitations, the motion of the sea, and the movement of the earth with respect to the heavens conspired to frustrate the early modern navigator's ability to "read" the skies and to know where he was on the sea and how to get from that point to where he wanted to go. In short, the ship astray in heavy weather becomes in this sonnet

more than a metaphor for the emotional turmoil of Petrarchan love; it becomes a figure for registering a despair of the possibility of finding fixed meaning behind mutable signs.

Moreover, the interpretive disorientation in which “My galley” implicates its readers serves to emphasize Wyatt’s concern in the poem with a related problem, that of self-knowledge. Here too, seafaring imagery serves to drive the point home. We can see how this happens by considering the echoes in Wyatt’s sonnet of what Robert S. Kinsman describes as the “conceit of a fool’s ship” that gained popularity in late medieval and Renaissance Europe, particularly by way of Sebastian Brant’s *The Ship of Fools* (282). Brant’s work contains a poem that mentions contemporary nautical history:

They’ve found in Portugal since then
And in Hispania naked men,
And sparkling gold and islands too
Whereof no mortal ever knew. (222)

Franklin McCann explains that the allusion here is to the “recent Portuguese discoveries and the brand new voyage of Columbus” (77). These events are, for Brant, two examples among many of an obsessive and futile pursuit of geographical knowledge, futile because “the longing to depart” and see the world does nothing to help prepare the soul for eternity (225). Instead, it merely distracts individuals from “self-knowledge,” from an awareness of the need to “serve God with all their heart” in order to attain salvation (224-25). Brant reads geographical exploration according to a Christian tradition in which curiosity is highly suspect, to the extent that it treats the world as an end in itself, whereas the world should be understood as an impermanent, bitter sea of temptation and sin through which we must pass cautiously in the hope of being united with God in eternity.

From that perspective, focusing on the things of this world makes people liable to forget about God and the dependence of their souls on Him; that is, curiosity gets in the way of real knowledge about our true condition as God's creatures (C. Johnson 38). Brant thus brings oceanic exploration under the umbrella of foolish worldly pursuits: "Some have explored a foreign land / But not themselves can understand" (225). Whoever engages in such pursuits "thinks of no eternal life, / How spacious 'tis, with beauty rife, / Where live the souls of sterling worth" (224). Exploratory navigation is, in this regard, emblematic of a foolish lack of self-awareness, which is in turn defined by a foolish disregard for practicing faith.

In his discussion of Brant's poem and the woodcuts that accompany it, Kinsman too takes notice of the faithlessness that is part and parcel of the unreason of Brant's fools and that generally figured into late medieval and Renaissance understandings of folly; both of these qualities, faithlessness and unreason, are also shared by Wyatt's forlorn speaker. Kinsman details some of the "wide spread of connotations" of the term "fool" in "late Middle English" (277). In addition to signifying an ignorant person or "a person deprived or bereft of reason," "fool" referred to one "who through an impious carelessness" was "imprudent in his religious [. . .] practices" (277). Kinsman also observes that preceding the prologue of Brant's work is a woodcut beneath which appear the "sardonically edited Latin verses" of Psalm 107 (Psalm 106 in the Vulgate): "They that go down to the sea in ships, that do business in great waters . . . They mount up to the heaven, they go down to the depths: their soul is melted because of trouble. They reel to and fro, and stagger like a drunken man, and are at their wit's end" (282). Kinsman points out that what is edited out of this reproduction of Psalm 107 is its twenty-eighth

verse: “Then they cry unto the Lord in their trouble, and he bringeth them out of their distresses” (282). The omission is revealing because it shows that a defining characteristic of Brant’s foolish sailors is their lack of faith that the Lord will deliver them from the troubles they encounter on all their various metaphorical seas; it is this lack of faith that makes their plight that of “truly desperate wandering” (Kinsman 283).

A similar lack of faith applies to Wyatt’s mariner: the “pain” of his ill-starred journey leaves him “despairing of the port.” Moreover, Wyatt’s mariner shares in the unreason of fools such as Brant’s. The “wearied cords” of his ship/mind are “wreathed with error” and “ignorance.” The reckless, careless “readiness” of his thoughts drives him obsessively on regardless of the consequences. And most noticeably, his “reason” has been “drownèd” in the course of the journey. In other words, the ship in Wyatt’s sonnet looks to be a fool’s ship very much in the tradition of Brant. Wyatt’s sailor has apparently made the foolish mistake of looking for satisfaction, of seeking salvation, in “earthly matters,” implied by the “stars” that have brought him to his “pain” (McCann 82). Whether we take them to be the eyes of a beloved or some other material objects, even actual stars by which he has sought to guide his ship, the stars he has been pursuing have proven to be unreliable signs. They have lured him onto a journey away from reason, a journey from which he believes there is no return—“drownèd” suggests that the loss is permanent.

The faithless despair of Wyatt’s sailor and its connection to his foolishness are crucial to understanding the sonnet’s concern with self-knowledge, and more specifically, the vexed matter of determining one’s salvational status from the perspective of Reformist grace theology, which also influences Wyatt’s *Penitential Psalms*. Elizabeth

Heale shows how his renditions of the seven Penitential Psalms “[negotiate] with care the theological niceties of a Reformed emphasis on the saving sufficiency of grace and a Roman Catholic emphasis on the importance of merit in the work of salvation” (165). They are “increasingly shaped as a critique of one” of Wyatt’s “unimpeachably Catholic sources,” the *I Sette Salmi de la Penitentia di David* by Pietro Aretino (159-60). Where Aretino puts “continual stress on merit” in salvation, Wyatt’s *Psalms* contains “an insistent emphasis on the primacy of grace” (160). In Wyatt’s version, the Psalmist David becomes a passive instrument of God, making it clear that his penitence originates not in his own will but in the movement of God within him, acting on his soul. The fourth Psalm, for example, credits God as the source of David’s penitential praises: “My mouth shall spread thy glorious praises true. / But of thyself, O God! this operation / It must proceed” (Wyatt, *Poetical* 198). And the prologue to the sixth Psalm describes David as a musical instrument through which the “Spirit of God” expresses Himself. David realizes that he voices the “great things” which that “greater Spirit compiled; / As shawm or pipe lets out the sound impress’d / By music’s art forged tofore and filed” (Wyatt, *Poetical* 202). Finally, any forgiveness that David receives is not the result of merit earned through the work of atonement: “Oh! happy are they that have forgiveness got / Of their offence, not by their penitence / As by merit, which recompenseth not” (189). Pardon comes only as a charitable gift of grace from God: “by the goodness / Of Him” (189).

If “My galley” is not an overtly religious poem like Wyatt’s paraphrases of the Psalms, its language is nevertheless general and capacious enough to accommodate both erotic and spiritual meaning. In particular, just as Wyatt’s *Psalms* depicts David’s

passivity before God, so “My galley” casts its speaker as a passive participant in his own existence. His ship is steered through the “sharp seas” by a cruel “lord.” A wind of “sighs” and “fearfulness,” a “rain of tears,” a “cloud of dark disdain”—all forces acting on the mariner and whose origins Wyatt obscures—batter the ship. The mariner has been “led” to his pain by “stars.” In none of these descriptions do we get a sense that the mariner himself is the actor of his actions. The impression is, rather, that forces over which he is powerless act upon him. This powerlessness applies even in the line that might seem to offer some evidence of agency on the part of the speaker: “And every oar a thought in readiness.” A ship’s oars are, of course, a means of self-propulsion. These particular oars, then, could suggest that the speaker’s thoughts are his means of self-guidance. But these thoughts are also subject to the control of the lord who is the speaker’s enemy; they are “in readiness” to him. Thus even the oars of the mariner’s thoughts, the ones that propel him on regardless of the possible consequences (“as though that death were light in such a case”), seem beyond his control. The uncertain identity of the “lord” also leaves open the possibility that the “enemy” who cruelly steers the ship is none other than God. This emphasis on the speaker’s passivity accords with Reformist notions of God, rather than the individual, as the agent who works to bring about that individual’s salvation. From this perspective, the mariner’s “despairing of the port” indicates his doubts about his chances of being saved, while the “endless wind” that “doth tear the sail apace” perhaps indicates his feeling that he is already in the midst of eternal damnation, that he is predestined to it. The poem, on this reading, plays out the logic of justification by faith alone and predestination to a troubling conclusion. The mariner’s understanding of himself as a passive entity damned by forces greater than he

is represents true self-knowledge, an accurate understanding that his journey through life is ultimately determined by an all-powerful providence—a terrifying vision since it means that one can finally do nothing actively to shape one's own fate for the better, to turn around a bad situation and achieve salvation.

But as so often is the case with “My galley,” another reading, a contradictory one, of the mariner's despair is available: that it represents his misunderstanding of himself. It is questionable at best whether his plight is as desperate as he claims it to be. After all, if we are to believe that the mariner has lost his reason, we should also question whether it is, in fact, a foregone conclusion that he will never reach the port of heaven. Furthermore, from a Christian perspective, the despair of Wyatt's sailor is an essentially unreasonable state of mind. It points to a foolish, illogical pride because it implies he is beyond all hope of salvation—even with the assistance of God's grace. That is, he implicitly assumes that his predicament is of such magnitude as to be beyond even God's powers to remedy, a belief symptomatic of unreason, or folly, since it is fundamentally illogical: for if God is omnipotent, then no problem is too difficult for God to solve (Snyder 32-33).

In the end, we cannot say whether one reading of Wyatt's despairing mariner is more accurate than another. We cannot be sure if the mariner's understanding of his own condition as one of “spiritual desertion and ultimate loss” is a foolish illusion or if to see him as a blind fool would actually be an illusion on our part, because the sonnet does not offer an authoritative voice independent of its speaker's voice to assure us one way or the other whether we are dealing with a damned or a deluded sailor (Edwards 11). By turning to images of disorienting sea travel to highlight theological uncertainty

concerning salvation, Wyatt associates seafaring with the kind of spiritual anxiety that could be occasioned by a Reformist vision of human beings as finally passive non-actors in their own salvation or damnation and who cannot finally gauge accurately, using their faith as a sign, their standing in God's eyes.

Spenser similarly turns to seafaring in his sonnet sequence *Amoretti* to explore interpretive anxiety over whether one is destined to be chosen, whether by a beloved or by God. *Amoretti* traces the emotionally turbulent journey of the sequence's lover towards the final union with his beloved in the bliss of marriage, an erotic journey that Spenser also identifies at times throughout the sequence with a spiritual journey towards final union with God. As Reed Way Dasenbrock notes, "love and the Lady are identified with the sacred" in *Amoretti*, so that the "transcendent rest" of a "selfless" marital love which the sequence anticipates and which is fulfilled in Spenser's *Epithalamion*, also signifies salvation, the loving marriage of the soul with the Lord in heaven (46). The identification of the beloved with the divine can be seen, for instance, in sonnet 72, where the lover describes his lady's "soverayne beauty" as "resembling heavens glory in her light," or sonnet 79, where her "true beautie" "doth argue" that she is "divine and borne of heavenly seed" (*Amoretti* 616, 619). Within the overall narrative arc of the sonnet sequence, seafaring imagery appears in three poems, sonnets 34, 59, and 63, to mark moments in the course of the lover's simultaneously erotic and spiritual journey during which either the reader, as an onlooker, or the lover himself struggles to ascertain whether he is destined to be chosen.

Spenser follows Wyatt's "My galley" in *Amoretti* 34, "Lyke as a ship that through the Ocean wyde," by offering an adaptation of the Petrarchan ship wandering off course

in a storm at sea. But Spenser does not quite follow Wyatt when it comes to the mood of the sonnet. While Wyatt's speaker despairs of a happy ending to his journey, Spenser's introduces an element of hope to the sea voyage:

Lyke as a ship that through the Ocean wyde,
By conduct of some star doth make her way,
Whenas a storme hath dimd her trusty guyde,
Out of her course doth wander far astray:
So I whose star, that wont with her bright ray
Me to direct, with cloudes is overcast,
Doe wander now in darknesse and dismay,
Through hidden perils round about me plast.
Yet hope I well, that when this storme is past
My Helice the lodestar of my life
Will shine again, and looke on me at last,
With lovely light to cleare my cloudy grief.
Till then I wander carefull comfortlesse,
In secret sorow and sad pensivenesse. (*Amoretti* 600-01)

Like Wyatt's sonnet, Spenser's could be seen as concerned with interpretive confusion, to the extent that the obscurity of the sign, or "star," that guides the speaker causes him to "wander" and brings on "dismay" and "darknesse." Also like Wyatt's, Spenser's sonnet finishes on a gloomy note. Having established the similarity between himself and a ship lost in a storm, the speaker concludes by concentrating on his current melancholy state, his anxious isolation.

Yet, in some ways, the speaker's melancholy in the final couplet seems not quite indicative of despair, since it is tempered by the encouraging tone of the preceding quatrain. Whereas Wyatt's mariner sees no end to the storm in which he is caught, Spenser's speaker assumes, or at least claims to, that the storm will pass—"when this storme is past"; it is not here a matter of if, only when. And he professes an abiding hope that sustains him in the midst of trouble, the "hope" that his "lodestar"—both the Pole Star and figuratively, as the *OED* defines it, "that on which one's attention or hopes are fixed"—will "looke on," and thereby reorient, him again (def. 2). Incidentally, Spenser emphasizes the seemingly enduring quality of this hope by the structure of the sonnet itself: we literally encounter it embedded in the midst of the stress on confusion, anxiety, and sorrow to be found in the first and second quatrains and in the closing couplet. Unlike Wyatt's mariner, who apparently has lost any guiding principle, whose reason has drowned in all the confusion he describes, Spenser's speaker allows for the possibility that the sign, the "lodestar," that guides him is ultimately trustworthy or, we might say, legible, that it will "shine again."

Interestingly, however, its legibility is less a matter of interpretation than of revelation, of passive illumination. He hopes that his star will act upon him by bathing him in the light of inspiration. "Helice," the city that lies "at the foot of" Mount Helicon, the haunt of the Muses, indicates inspiration clearly enough (Maclean and Prescott 601, n. 6). And if all goes well, it is this inspiring star that will do all the work of rescuing the speaker's wandering ship and put him back on track: it "will shine again"; it will "looke" down upon him; and it will clear away the confusion of his "cloudy grief." In addition, the "lovely light" that the star sends forth contains theological connotations, inasmuch as

it suggests God's revelatory grace. Spenser's *Hymne of Heavenly Love* also associates starlight with grace in a cluster of images that highlight the gifts of revelation, as the Word made flesh, and self-sacrifice that Christ gave to humankind:

O blessed well of love, ô floure of grace,
O glorious Morning starre, ô lampe of light,
Most lively image of thy fathers face,
.
Meeke lambe of God before all worlds behight [ordained],
How can we thee requite for all this good?
Or what can prize [pay for] that thy most precious blood? (*Yale 729*)

In accordance with the blending of sexual and religious love that is to be found elsewhere in *Amoretti*, the issue of spiritual, not only sexual, salvation appears then to be at stake in sonnet 34, salvation through the merciful light of grace.

To be more precise, the schematic of salvation that informs *Amoretti* 34 is a noticeably Protestant one, insofar as it is in harmony with the notion of justification by faith. John N. King observes that the "Lenten sequence" of *Amoretti*, sonnets 22-68, "plays a central role in Spenser's articulation of a theology of love that accords with Protestant doctrine concerning grace and justification by faith" (166). In *Amoretti* 66, for instance, "the lady imitates Christ's redemptive sacrifice" by graciously deigning to return the affections of one so unworthy as her suitor, a "mutuality" that "mirrors the reciprocal operation of grace and faith" (167). Sonnet 84, moreover, shows an "explicit concern with 'election'" that "aligns the speaker's ultimate assurance of fulfillment in wedlock [. . .] with the pleasures of those faithful souls who are the recipients of the

providential gift of salvation” (167).¹⁷ Spenser’s coupling of faith—the lover’s hope—with passivity in “Lyke as a ship,” a passivity underscored by the conspicuous absence onboard of actual mariners who exert any efforts to correct the ship’s course, is important in this light. It serves as a reminder that human beings are powerless to effect their own salvation, that their lot is to endure the vicissitudes of this life and hope in the saving power of God’s grace, that they will be justified by their faith. It is only fitting, therefore, that Spenser likens the speaker of the poem, not to a navigator on a ship, but to the ship itself. This too emphasizes his passivity: he is a vessel inhabited and conducted by another, a power greater than himself; he is a ship sailed.

Yet, if the third quatrain’s focus on the speaker’s hope and passivity is consistent with the doctrine of faith alone as the key to salvation, sonnet 34 as a whole is not entirely at peace with that doctrine. The sonnet’s ending couplet reveals a lingering psychological unease on the lover’s part that points towards the sort of interpretive anxiety, discussed above, that could arise from the difficulty of determining whether faith in one’s election was a reliable indicator that one would be saved or whether it was an “illusory assurance,” a misleading sign. The shift in the final couplet to “comfortlesse” wandering represents a stepping back from the hopeful momentum built up in the third quatrain and a reminder of the lover’s present predicament, that of being adrift on a dark, dismaying, and perilous spiritual sea. The very fact that he describes himself as “comfortlesse” calls into question the authenticity of the hope he professes in the sonnet’s ninth verse; we might reasonably ask why, if he is as hopeful as he claims to be, he

¹⁷ For more on the influence of Protestant theology in *Amoretti*, see Fox 75-83. Dasenbrock notes the influence in *Amoretti* of a Protestant emphasis on the sacredness of marriage (47, 49).

derives no comfort from it. In other words, the insecurity implied by “comfortlesse” counteracts the assurance of “hope I well,” suggesting that the lover is unsure in his own mind whether the hope of deliverance he has just expressed is actually a real, abiding hope or a false optimism. The final couplet thus evokes the struggle to keep faith alive in the absence of any palpable grounds, any “trusty guyde,” upon which to ground that faith.

Indeed, the sonnet as a whole alternates between images of light and dark to create a sequence of tonal mood swings indicative of spiritual uncertainty (Fox 78). The first quatrain begins with an image of light, the ship guided by a bright star, and ends with the darkness of a storm at sea. Likewise, the second quatrain begins with the metaphorical “bright ray,” standing for both the beloved and the light of grace, before taking a turn for the ominous with “cloudes,” “overcast,” “darknesse,” “dismay,” and “hidden perils.” And the third quatrain, again, bathes us in the shining light of hope before the sonnet’s concluding couplet returns us to the psychological darkness of a mind weighed down with cares, pensiveness, and sorrow. These shifting images accentuate the vacillating faith of one who is struggling, in the absence of trustworthy signs, to determine whether he is on the route to salvation or not. They also hint, in conjunction with the fact that sonnet 34’s ship is wandering off course on the “Ocean wyde” after losing sight of the Pole Star, at the interpretive uncertainties of trans-oceanic navigation according to celestial observations. By referring to navigational wandering on the ocean while reproducing the speaker’s doubtfulness through shifting images of light and dark, the poem recreates the cognitive disorientation that early modern mariners could experience as a result of uncertain navigational methods. In turn, the navigational disorientation of the poem underscores the spiritual disorientation and doubt the speaker

experiences through trying to read the ambiguous signs of his spiritual condition according to the guidelines of grace theology.

The shadow of spiritual illusion and uncertainty also haunts Spenser's use of ship imagery in *Amoretti* 59, "Thrise happie she, that is so well assured," a sonnet that otherwise seems to do the exact opposite, to celebrate, through the ship metaphor, a robust, certain faith. The sonnet likens the lover's lady to a "steddy ship" with a kind of built-in and fail-safe navigation system, or what the Norton editors call "an internal guidance system to steady her during fortune's storms or diversions" (610; Maclean and Prescott 610, n. 3). Her "stay," or "ship's rope," is "her owne stedfast might" (*Amoretti* 611). She is "so well assured / Unto her selfe and setled so in harte," that nothing can prevent her from keeping "her course aright," be it the hope of something "better," the fear of something "worse," "raging waves," a "tempest," "fayrer weathers false delight," the "spight / Of grudging foes," or the need to "seek" the "favour" of "friends" (610-11). It is the lady's unflappable faith, her "selfe assurance," that is the key to her navigating the temptations of the world with perfect success (610). Spenser drives this point home by mentioning her assurance three times in the sonnet: she is "well assured"; she has "selfe assurance"; and she is "most assured" (610-11). King argues that the lady's self-assurance should not be mistaken for a sinfully proud faith in her own innate, autonomous ability; rather, it represents, from a Protestant viewpoint, a "proper" and steadfast faith in the saving power of God's grace (166). Likewise, John D. Bernard reads her self-assurance as "a triumphant adherence to virtue" (424). As King notes, "assurance" was a word favored by Protestants in Spenser's day for denoting election by God; that is, the assured were those whom God had preordained for salvation (166). And

to be strongly convinced of one's salvation did not necessarily indicate arrogance. From Calvin's point of view, it simply demonstrated true faith: "he alone is truly a believer who, convinced by a firm conviction that God is a kindly and well-disposed Father toward him, [. . .] lays hold of an undoubted expectation of salvation" (*Institutes* 3.2.16). Thus we might say that the ship in sonnet 59 is an eminently Reformist one. It "emphasizes faith, predestination, and the individual's total dependence upon external grace rather than free will," and it functions as a palinode to sonnet 58, in which the speaker interprets the lady's self-assurance disapprovingly as a haughty belief in her own "spiritual autonomy" which "carries the stamp of original sin" (King 166).

But if it is true that in *Amoretti* 59 Spenser offers a snapshot of the sort of assurance that, from a Reformist perspective, makes for proper, reliable spiritual navigation, it is also true that through the combination of sonnets 58 and 59 he draws our attention to the problematic matter of distinguishing proper assurance—true faith—from improper or "weake" assurance—false faith (610). Certainly, sonnet 58 stresses that improper assurance is that which is grounded in the "flesh," that is, in human abilities (610). Thus the poem's opening two lines tell us, "Weake is th'assurance that weake flesh reposeseth / In her [i.e., the flesh's] owne powre" (610). Yet judging by the descriptions in the text of sonnet 59 itself, it is not readily apparent that proper assurance would, so to speak, "look" to the neutral observer, the reader, all that different from improper assurance, were it not for the narrating voice telling us that it is. For example, the opening two lines of sonnet 59 state, "Thrise happie she, that is so well assured / Unto her selfe and settled so in hart" (610). As in sonnet 58, assurance here is, or at least appears to be, located within the self. The primary difference is that, whereas the speaker

of 58 follows Romans 7.18 and casts the self in a negative light by associating it with the sinful and frail “flesh,” the narrative voice in 59 casts the self in a positive, “happie” light, by associating it with a quiet, “setled” “hart” (King 166; *Amoretti* 610).¹⁸ Similarly, when it comes to the ship’s rigging in sonnet 59—the “stay” of the lady’s self-assurance—the only “evidence” we have that it is truly strong and dependable comes from the narrator’s telling us it is: “in the stay of her owne stedfast might, / Nether to one her selfe nor other bends” (611). And the only verification we have in 58 that the “stay” of the lady’s self-assurance is flimsy and unreliable comes from the narrator’s telling us so: “All flesh is frayle, and all her strength unstayd, / Like a vaine bubble blowen up with ayre” (610). In this way, Spenser raises the difficult question of whether sonnets 58 and 59 do, in fact, depict two different kinds of self-assurance (one false and one true) or merely offer two different interpretations of self-assurance.

One result of his doing so is that, in the wake of the skeptical take on the lady’s self-assurance offered by sonnet 58, it becomes difficult to take at face value the abrupt reversal on the topic represented by sonnet 59, difficult not to detect a whiff of complacency or misplaced confidence in it. Once again, therefore, Spenser employs the ship metaphor in what can be described as an almost underhanded way. He introduces misgiving into what would otherwise be a metaphor for steadfast inner faith and thereby allows it also to work as a metaphor for belief in something that is perhaps not real. The ship metaphor in *Amoretti* 59 is, in this respect, informed by a more epistemologically unsettling side of Reformed predestination theology: the “false or temporary faith” of the

¹⁸ “For I know that within me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing” (Rom. 7.18).

reprobate “which to others is indistinguishable from true faith and which they themselves believe to be genuine” (Lane 45, 38).

When *Amoretti* revisits the ship metaphor once more in sonnet 63, “After long stormes and tempests sad assay,” Spenser again uses it to cast a generally positive light on faith, while hinting at the possibility that the object of that faith might be more hallucination than reality. As in sonnet 34, the lover is the one at sea; his “silly barke” has been “tosséd sore” by “stormes and tempests,” leaving him in “dread of death and daungerous dismay” (*Amoretti* 612). That is, sonnet 63 picks up where sonnet 34 leaves off, with the speaker unsure what his fate will be, hoping for the best but fearing the worst. But it goes on, beginning with the fifth line, to quiet, apparently, this uncertainty, with the picture of a happy ending in sight:

I doe at length descry the happy shore,
In which I hope ere long for to arryve:
Fayre soyle it seemes from far and fraught with store
Of all that deare and daynty is alive.
Most happy he that can at last atchyve
The joyous safety of so sweet a rest:
Whose least delight sufficeth to deprive
Remembraunce of all paines which him opprest.
All paines are nothing in respect of this,
All sorrowes short that gaine eternall blisse. (612)

Spenser plays up the theological overtones of the poem’s seafaring imagery by making the link between the sea voyage and the soul’s journey all but explicit in the final couplet,

where coming safely into port is evocative of achieving salvation, “eternall blisse.” Lines five and six, therefore, express a vision of salvation at hand or within reach, the “happy shore” that the speaker describes and hopes to reach “ere long.” And the lines that follow appear at first glance to express the speaker’s sense of reassurance and contented anticipation, arising from his belief that he will “atchyve” the “joyous safety of so sweet a rest.”

Yet this vision of salvation includes two curious features that indicate he is not quite convinced of its veracity. For one, the use of the third-person “he” in line nine has the effect of putting the speaker at a psychological distance from the peaceful haven he claims to “descry” from his ship. It suggests that the speaker is thinking generally or in the abstract about the happy effect that achieving salvation has on a soul, without quite identifying himself as that soul. It is as if he sees the lush shore hovering tantalizingly off his bow, laid out for his longing gaze in all its Edenic splendor, but he still does not quite believe that he will reach it. Secondly, the phrase “Fayre soyle it seemes from far” alludes to problems of perspective and, in so doing, intimates that the “happy shore” might not be as happy as the speaker hopes it will be. The shore might seem like an ideal destination from his present vantage point, aboard a ship at a distance from it, but it would maybe seem less than ideal from another vantage point, perhaps that of someone already on the shore. We are thus made to wonder whether the shipboard vision of salvation that sonnet 63 elaborates is not so much a revelation resulting from enduring faith as it is a “false delight,” a fancy with no basis in reality.

It is possible that while composing this sonnet for *Amoretti*, published in 1595, Spenser had in mind the ultimately failed colonial expeditions to Roanoke Island during

the 1580s, which were backed by his friend Sir Walter Raleigh (Wall 1). Promotion for the colonial missions to Roanoke had invoked the idea of an earthly paradise waiting across the ocean, suggesting that sailing to Virginia would be akin to sailing to Eden. For example, Arthur Barlowe's description of the first voyage in 1584 claims that the native inhabitants live "after the manner of the golden age" and that the land, being "the most plentiful, sweete, fruitfull and wholsome of all the worlde," "bringeth fourth all things in abundance, as in the first creation, without toile or labour" (qtd. in Wall 4). By the late 1580s, however, less glowing reports of life in Virginia by disappointed participants in the expeditions seem to have begun to circulate in England, making it "difficult for Raleigh to interest the right kinds of people in supporting the venture" (Wall 14). By the 1590s, it was apparent that the colony on Roanoke Island had been lost and that the colonists had disappeared into the Virginia wilderness (Wall 16). The last voyage to Virginia in search of them, in 1590, was abandoned after the expedition could not find "any of our planters" and the "foule" weather along the coast cost the party a ship's boat, supplies, and seven of its "chiefest men" (White 317). If, as John Wall, Jr. argues, the "colonizing efforts at Roanoke Island" influenced how Spenser portrays the Bower of Bliss in *The Faerie Queene*, it is also likely that the influence extended in some measure to his depiction of navigating to a seemingly Edenic coastline in *Amoretti* 63. The picture of the "happy shore" given in lines seven and eight in particular—where the "fayre soyle" is "fraught with store / Of all that deare and daynty is alive"—recalls Barlowe's portrait of Roanoke as a bountiful earthly paradise. Spenser's knowledge of the sad fate of the Roanoke enterprise after its hopeful beginnings could have contributed to his use of the sea-voyage image in sonnet 63, and in the other seafaring sonnets of the *Amoretti*, as a

device that works against itself, expressing doubt and disillusion at the same time that it connotes the assurance of faith.

Marvell's "Bermudas" is more obviously inspired by colonial voyaging, that of seventeenth-century English travelers to Bermuda. His most immediate historical source was most likely a "firsthand account of the locale" given to him by "the Puritan divine John Oxenbridge," in whose home Marvell lodged during the period, 1653-54, when he probably wrote the poem (Donno 266; Smith 54). In 1634, Oxenbridge had been dismissed by Archbishop Laud from a tutorship at Oxford "for his imposition of a Puritan disciplinary system" and had fled to Bermuda, "where his cousin was governor" and where Oxenbridge had then become "embroiled in its religious controversies" (Donno 266; Smith 54; Rees 45). Oxenbridge went on to become a "contributor to Puritan expansionist propaganda"; his *A Seasonable Proposition of Propagating the Gospel by Christian Colonies in the Continent of Guaiana* was published in 1670 (Colie 76). But Marvell's poem also draws more broadly on an array of literary and historical treatments of voyages to and settlement of the Bermudas in which the islands' suitability for colonization is at stake and in which voyages to the islands are often figured as journeys of deliverance or destiny specially orchestrated by the hand of God (Smith 54). Thus Silvester Jourdain's *A Discovery of the Bermudas* describes the 1609 wreck of the *Sea Venture* there in such terms: "it pleased God out of His most gracious and merciful providence [. . .] to direct and guide our ship (being left [by those on board] to the mercy of the sea)" to "the islands of the Bermudas" (106-07).¹⁹ Marvell's treatment of colonial

¹⁹ See also, for example, William Strachey's *A True Reportory of the Wreck and Redemption of Sir Thomas Gates, Knight, upon and from the Islands of the Bermudas* (1610) and Lewes Hughes' *A Letter, Sent into England from the Summer Ilands* (1615).

venturing to Bermuda differs, in that he follows Spenser by combining images of seafaring with tricks of perspective to create a critical distance from what seems initially to be the main thrust of the poem, that of casting the Bermudas as an earthly paradise for Puritans to which God has providentially directed them. The main body of the poem, the “song” that the Puritan rowers sing in lines 5-36, gives us their point of view, in first person plural, on their exile to the Bermudas, while the opening and closing quatrains bookend that point of view with an outsider’s perspective that works against the rowers’ understanding of their journey (Fizdale 205).

In the rowers’ understanding, their exile across the Atlantic to the Bermudas is an instance of divine deliverance from religious persecution that marks them out as an elect people, typologically identifying them with the Israelites of Exodus (Ormerod, “Type” 92). God has “led us through the wat’ry maze” to an “isle” that is “far kinder than” England and where “we” are “safe” from “prelates’ rage,” presumably, that is, from Laud’s crackdown during the 1630s on radical Puritans who refused “to submit to the Laudian liturgy” (Marvell 56-57; Patterson 487; Loewenstein 19-20). The “raging prelates back in England,” to borrow Tay Fizdale’s phrase, call to mind the Pharaoh of Exodus, from bondage to whom “a protective and benevolent God” delivers the Israelites (207). The “wat’ry maze” of the ocean, by extension, corresponds to the wilderness, and to the Red Sea in particular, through which God guides the Israelites (Ormerod, “Type” 98-99). The characterization of the ocean as a maze stresses the difficulty of the oceanic passage, letting us know that such a dangerous journey could not succeed unless God wanted it to, just as, without God’s miraculous power over the sea (which in Exodus exemplifies “the salvation of the Lord”), the Red Sea would have been impassable to the

children of Israel (*Bible*, Exod. 14.13). The same holds true for the comparison between the “huge sea-monsters,” or whales, that God “wracks” on the Bermudas’ shores and the pilgrims’ vessel, which the Lord “lands” on the “grassy stage” of the islands (Marvell 57). The rowers here touch on the matter of God’s omnipotence in salvation by hinting at the fate of two different kinds of ships: ships of the damned—the monstrous whales that, in Nigel Smith’s words, are “[cast] ashore” as if they were “wrecked ships”—and the ship of the elect, that of the Puritans (57, n. 9). The implication is twofold. First, the hand of God must be at work behind the scenes if the rowers’ craft survives the Bermudas’ treacherous coastal waters, especially given that those waters are turbulent enough to overcome mighty whales. Second, a creature’s own innate strength, no matter how great, amounts to nothing if God has destined it for damnation. Likewise, creatures’ frailty in the face of seemingly overwhelming forces—the rowers’ vessel is a “small boat” making its way through a “wat’ry maze” and “seas that roar”—is no obstacle if God has destined them for salvation (Marvell 56, 58).

Furthermore, if we believe the rowers’ account, the “isle” is a promised land that is at the same time a rediscovered Eden (Ormerod, “Type” 92, 98-99, 103). It is a place where they passively, effortlessly luxuriate in the dazzling array of blessings the Lord provides. Weather is never a problem for the island’s inhabitants, for God has supplied the perfect climate: “He gave us this eternal spring,” a phrase that connotes everlasting salvation as a gift of God’s grace (Marvell 57). There is no chance the Puritans will suffer the least pangs of hunger, since God provides a steady supply of flesh and fruit. He “sends the fowl to us in care / On daily visits through the air,” supplies oranges and “pom’granates,” “makes the figs our mouths to meet,” and “throws the melons at our

feet” (57). This food supply alludes, again, to biblical instances of God’s providential care for his chosen people: in Exodus, for example, He sends them quails and manna, while Canaan, which God has promised to the Israelites, contains pomegranates and figs (Exod. 16.13, 15, 35; Num. 13.23). And like the Bermudas, the Garden of Eden is well stocked by God with fruit-bearing trees, and not just forbidden fruit, as Genesis recounts: “out of the ground made the Lord God to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight, and good for food” (2.9). But there is also forbidden fruit in the Bermudas: God has planted “apples [. . .] of such a price, / No tree could ever bear them twice” (Marvell 57). These apples are as risky as the forbidden fruit of the original Eden: that “No tree could ever bear them twice” suggests the possibility that the Puritans could fall into sin all over again by eating them. But the apples’ presence also suggests that the Puritans have found a new, inviolate Eden in the Bermudas. If no tree could bear them twice, then these are the original apples, having never been plucked from the tree.

The islands even seem to cater to the Puritans’ aesthetic sensibilities. The endless springtime “enamels ev’rything” on the islands, which, Nigel Smith points out, doubles the Bermudas’ visual pleasures by “embellish[ing] what is already beautiful” (Marvell 57; Smith 57, n. 14). God “hangs” the “bright” oranges in the “shades” made by the leaves of the orange trees, so that they shine like “golden lamps in a green night” (Marvell 57). And He encloses “Jewels more rich than Ormus shows” in the pomegranates, while the “cedars” with which “He stores the land” are specially “chosen by His hand,” pomegranates and cedars reminiscent of “another paradisiacal garden,” that of the Song of Solomon (Marvell 57-58; Fizdale 206). Smith observes that these details taken together call to mind the pleasing effects of still-life and landscape painting (57, n.

17). And to please the nose, God causes the sea to cast up fragrant “ambergris on shore” (Marvell 58).²⁰

Finally, the Lord provides for the Puritans’ spiritual well-being by casting the “pearl” that is the Gospels “upon our coast” and fashioning a place of worship for them out of the Bermudas’ rocks, a church not made with hands: “And in these rocks for us did frame / A temple, where to sound His name” (58). The temple of natural rock is another allusion to the biblical Promised Land. In Deuteronomy, Moses instructs the Israelites to erect an altar made from natural, uncarved stones (“thou shalt not lift up *any* iron *tool* upon them”) after they “pass over Jordan” into the “land that floweth with milk and honey,” so that they can properly thank God with “burnt offerings thereon” for their deliverance (27.2-6; Ormerod, “Type” 100). The natural temple of Marvell’s Puritans is even, in a sense, an improvement on the Israelites’ stone altar: the Puritans do not have to exert any effort to build it; it is already conveniently prefabricated for them by the Lord (Ormerod and Wortham, “Notes” 276, n. 32).

This “catalogue of natural delights,” as David Loewenstein calls the Puritans’ description of the Bermudas, signifies a return to a prelapsarian pastoral setting in which the “curse of labour”—such as agriculture, animal husbandry, and even the construction of churches—that alienates humankind from God’s creation does not hold (Loewenstein 20; Patterson 487; McInnis 16). It is a place where the elect are, instead, implanted within and unproblematically sustained by the natural world, and thereby unified with

²⁰ The cedars are also “From Lebanon,” thus referring to the cedars with which Solomon built his temple (Marvell 58; *Bible*, 1 Kings 5.6). Smith notes, too, that the beached whales recall the “leviathan” and “dragons in the waters” whose “heads” the Lord “brakest” to provide food for His “people inhabiting the wilderness” (Smith 57, n. 9; Ps. 74.13-14). Therefore, the cedars, the beached whales, the ambergris, the fowl, and the fruit also add up to indicate more generally an overabundance of natural resources made easily available by God’s providence (Smith 57, n. 9, 25-6; Ps. 74.13-14).

God. And the rowers heighten the sense of their unity with God by depicting “God as the agent” in their song, “presenting him repeatedly as the active subject of its main verbs” (Loewenstein 20). They see themselves as happily flowing along in the stream of God’s will, a “godly community” “led by providence” (20).

In this regard, the rowers’ song “captures” what Loewenstein describes as the “post-Reformation emphasis on God’s sovereignty and immediate providences” (20). “Puritan providentialism,” in particular, “was a major force in English life and politics from 1620 to 1660” and “included the sense that God intervenes continually in the world (with signs of his presence) and the sense that Israelite history serves as a parallel to English experience” (20). This sort of providentialism also marks Marvell’s Puritans as understanding their situation according to the doctrines of justification by faith and predestination. In their belief that a beneficent providence has brought them to the paradisiacal Bermudas, just as God directed the Israelites to the Promised Land, they demonstrate their unshakeable faith that they have been predestined for salvation. And according to the logic of justification by faith, their firm faith serves as proof of that election.

But the quatrains that bookend the rowers’ song disturb any sense that its glowing assessment of life in the Bermudas is an accurate one. While not quite offering an overt counterpoint to the rowers’ providential interpretation of their situation, the third-person point of view found in these quatrains includes details that subtly counteract the feeling of charmed assurance voiced by the Puritan singers in their boat. The poem’s first line informs us that the Bermudas “ride,” a description that, Smith notes, likens the islands to “ships riding at anchor” (Marvell 56; Smith 56, n. 1). But “ride” also denotes the more

pronounced movement of ships traveling, thus likening the islands to ships moving through the ocean. In either case, the characterization of the Bermudas as ships—in transit or bobbing on the ocean’s surface—gives them a significantly more changeable, mutable quality than would a more literal rendering of them as fixed geographic formations rising from the ocean’s floor. This image of the islands as movable objects goes against the grain of the Puritans’ depiction of them as a secure locale of permanent abundance, “Safe from the storms” of the outer, fallen world (Marvell 57).

The adjective “unespied” in the poem’s second line builds on the unsettled quality created by “ride” in the opening line, giving the first quatrain as a whole an ambiguity that complicates interpretation, very much in the vein of Wyatt’s “My galley”:

Where the remote Bermudas ride
In th’ ocean’s bosom unespied,
From a small boat, that rowed along
The list’ning winds received this song. (Marvell 56)

A crucial question suggests itself here: who exactly does not espy the Bermudas? Perhaps the more apparent answer is that the Bermudas are unseen by the outside world. But it is also possible to interpret these lines as saying that the islands are unseen from the “small boat” containing the singing Puritans, indicating perhaps that their utopian vision of the Bermudas (or the Summer Islands, as they were often called) is not based on their own firsthand experience of them. If that is the case, it would seem, instead, that the Puritans’ utopian expectations are influenced by secondhand information, such as idealized accounts of the sort written by historical travelers and “published for

propaganda purposes,” including Hughes’ *A Letter sent into England from the Summer Islands*, which, Nigel Smith remarks, “claims the islands had a special destiny” (54).

This reading of the first quatrain, then, calls into question the soundness of the rowers’ utopian vision, suggesting that their expectations of finding an earthly paradise in the islands may be sorely disappointed. Indeed, other “accounts of the settlement of the Bermudas” published in the seventeenth century support this reading (Smith 54).

According to Smith, such accounts document a healthy degree of hardship, factiousness, and ungodly goings-on among the historical settlers, the kind of adversity entirely left out of the harmonious, godly Puritan community envisioned by Marvell’s rowers. By way of example, Smith mentions “disputes among the colonists, the punishment of some of them, conspiracies against the governors, the furore and squabbling caused by the pressure to ship ambergris back to England, instances of sodomy, and the unpopularity of Puritan activities [on the islands] in the 1620s and 1630s” (54). In addition, far from regarding the islands as a pastoral outpost overflowing with a natural abundance that eliminated the need for labor, the settlers appear to have found that all their efforts were required both to exploit and to sustain the Bermudas’ natural resources. “Planters were advised to come” to the islands “equipped with all the necessities of life” and were “encouraged” to maintain a good “work ethic,” so that “idleness” would not “run rife” (54). Sustainable hunting practices were also encouraged. Tortoises, for example, “were protected by law, to prevent their extinction on the islands” (54). And while there were in fact numerous whales in Bermudan waters, they do not appear to have been stranded very often. Rather, the settlers had to hunt for them, but according to R. M. Cummings, “all attempted whaling ventures in the Bermudas failed” nonetheless (334). Cummings

observes that these “contradictions” between the historical Bermudas and how Marvell’s rowers imagine the islands “have [. . .] all the appearance of being quite systematic” on Marvell’s part; in other words, Marvell wants us to notice the “discrepancies between the point of view of the singers and what they are supposed to be singing about” (335, 331). If that is the case, it makes sense to see the Bermudas as “unspied” by the Puritans in their “small boat,” in the sense that they do not see clearly where they are heading—they are on a fool’s voyage.

The insinuation that the oarsmen’s belief in their special favor with God may amount to foolish self-deception is strengthened by other interpretively destabilizing elements in the poem’s opening and closing lines. To begin with, these lines inform us that the Puritans’ boat is traveling, but they neglect to specify where it is headed. All we are told is that the boat, in line three, “rowed along” and that, in lines 39-40, “all the way” the rowers “kept the time” to their song with their “falling oars” (Marvell 56, 58). We are left to wonder where the oarsmen are rowing to and what their course, or “way,” is. And incidentally, we cannot rely on the oarsmen themselves to tell us where they are going. On the one hand, as I have argued above, their song seems to indicate that they are en route for the first time to the islands, about which they have heard so much wonderful, fantastic news. The fact of their rowing implies that they are en route in a ship’s boat from an oceangoing vessel, which is anchored at a safe distance from the shore. On the other hand, it is possible that their song does, after all, represent their own firsthand experience of the islands, however filtered through and idealized by the lens of religious faith that representation may be. This would suggest that they are already in the Bermudas and are either setting off to another unspecified destination or “merely about

their daily colonial business,” as Smith speculates (56). We do not finally know which is the case, partly because they never actually arrive anywhere; we last see them in the poem’s final lines as they continue to row along singing (Colie 79). Marvell puts his readers here in a position akin to that of sailors on an open sea without visible celestial bodies to guide them. It is unclear to us where this boat is going in a literal sense. And that ambiguity in turn creates uncertainty with respect to whether the poet or we accept that the boat is going where its crew believes it to be going in the figurative sense, that it is being watched over and guided to salvation by the workings of providence.

Our critical distance from the oarsmen’s point of view is made one degree greater by the conspicuous absence of providential associations in the third-person report of their journey found in the opening and closing quatrains, as opposed to the heavy-handed providentialism of their song. Whereas God is the dominant actor in the song, the Puritans are the agents in the quatrains; they are the ones rowing. Whereas the text of the song is full of epic biblical overtones, the quatrains describe a “small,” prosaic “English boat” (Marvell 58). And whereas, in the text of the song, the Puritans dedicate their collective “voice” to “His praise” and direct their singing at “heaven’s vault,” it is but the “list’ning winds” that “received this song” in the first quatrain (57). This last contrast in particular raises the question of whether the rowers’ song reaches beyond nature to God’s ears or whether nature is its only audience. As Takashi Yoshinaka puts it, “The opening lines suggest that there is no one and nothing but the ‘Wind’, as if the islands were bounded by the mysterious void all around” (23). Even the closing quatrain’s description of the Puritans’ song as “an holy and a cheerful note” does not endorse their providential version of events; it merely describes the religious format that their narration of those

events assumes, i.e., a prayer (Marvell 58). It might be said, therefore, that the nautical images in the beginning and ending quatrains of “Bermudas” work together as a disenchanting lens, through which we look on the Puritan oarsmen’s providentialism without being able to share in it. The images work against our own faith insofar as they make it difficult for us to believe the oarsmen’s religious discourse, to believe that they are reliable narrators of their own story. Or to put it another way, Marvell allows for the possibility that the Puritans’ resolute faith in their status as chosen by God might be more accurately described as an “illusory assurance” of salvation, a “self-contented, or even solipsistic, vision of Paradise” projected onto a world that “operat[es] quite independently of the construction they put upon it” (Yoshinaka 23).

This skeptical distance from the rowers’ presentation of themselves as chosen is increased more by a crack in that image that we glimpse at the end of their song of praise. They propose to sing the song “Till it arrive at heaven’s vault: / Which thence (perhaps) rebounding, may / Echo beyond the Mexique Bay [Gulf of Mexico]” (Marvell 58). If the rowers are as confident that they are chosen as they appear to be in the greater part of the poem, why do they wonder here if their praise of God will deflect or ricochet off the vault of heaven, rather than penetrate it and be received by God? Fizedale reads this moment as implying that their prayers may “go unheard” because of the smug “spiritual arrogance” they display in their “matter-of-fact assumption of salvation” and by focusing much more on the “sensual delights” they enjoy than on actually praising God (207-10). The rowers’ use of “the conditional ‘may’” and the “parenthetical ‘(perhaps)’” only compounds their arrogance, for Fizedale, “by introducing a note of false humility,” thereby making it that much more unlikely that God will hear their prayer (210). In other words, we again

encounter the possibility that the rowers' complacent self-assurance about their salvation is delusional. From another perspective, however, their use of "may" and "perhaps" could indicate sincere misgivings about their status in God's eyes, pointing to doubts underlying a faith that otherwise seems eminently stable. And there is a yet more skeptical reading of this moment available. The image of the rowers' prayers rebounding off the heavenly vault builds on that in the opening quatrain of their song being heard only by the wind to figure nature as a self-enclosed echo chamber in which humans tell themselves stories about a providential, interventionist God, but beyond which is either a deistic God who does not concern Himself with what goes on in the world below or perhaps even no God at all. Marvell's poem, then, follows those of Wyatt and Spenser in dramatizing through a sea voyage the acute difficulty of scrutinizing faith for signs of salvation. The poem draws the reader into a "wat'ry maze" of ambiguous, shifting signs that replicates the maze of uncertain, fluid signs in which early modern mariners could find themselves when trying to navigate strange, uncharted, or inadequately charted waters.

In general, seafaring in the poems I have been discussing has a disenchanting quality. Wyatt, Spenser, and Marvell resort to depictions of sea travel to present us with voyagers who, we are made to suspect, do not understand their spiritual conditions clearly or whose conditions, particularly in the case of Wyatt's voyager, we as readers also struggle to grasp clearly. In this respect, these poems share a feature that Lucy Gent finds throughout Marvell's work and which results from what she calls Marvell's "games with teleology" (522). Gent describes Marvell's penchant for "highlight[ing] the human habit of thinking in terms of purpose—what today would be called a teleological habit of

thought”—the “most notable Renaissance form” of which “was to regard the world as made for a purpose, which as far as the human point of view was concerned, was man himself” (514). When Marvell highlights this Renaissance habit in his work, he does so, according to Gent, to demonstrate the “arbitrariness of interpreting the designs of Providence in a man-centered way” and to critique the habit as “solipsistic,” implying “he saw that statements involving cause and purpose reveal more about the speaker than about the world they offer to explain” (514, 517). The result in Marvell’s poetry is a self-conscious awareness that “whatever claims poetry makes to discover truth, it will always discover more about man’s mental and imaginative processes than about a truth extrinsic to man” (528). This is the feature that Marvell’s “Bermudas” shares with the other seafaring poems considered here: the sense that the interpretive process—whether that of the reader or of the various voyagers in these poems—does not disclose or discover an objective state of affairs uncolored by the mind (or minds) doing the interpreting. The poems thus evoke the kind of interpretive disorientation that sixteenth- and seventeenth-century navigators faced as they sought to guide their ships through unfamiliar waters using instruments and techniques with inherent design flaws. Seafaring in these poems becomes emblematic of dystopic interpretive wandering, dystopic because in these poems nautical imagery is connected with a loss of certainty, of truth, by making the reader question which, if any, of the contradictory readings the poems allow gets at the truth of the scenarios the poems describe.

The drawing together of sea travel with religious anxiety about the status of one’s soul in God’s eyes in early modern poetry is in a sense only logical. And this is so not only because poets such as Wyatt, Spenser, and Marvell had available to them the long-

established tradition, reaching back through the Middle Ages to early Christianity, of associating ship travel with spiritual voyaging. There was a more specific historical reason for bringing together the two. As discussed above, both exploratory navigation and Reformation theology had the potential to propel one on a disorienting voyage of no return beyond the bounds of certainty. Exploratory navigation could do so because it often removed sailors from reliable signs, the familiar contours of familiar coasts, and forced them to rely on more ambiguous signs, such as distant celestial bodies in relation to which it was difficult to fix one's position on the ocean. Reformation theology could do so because it denied that good works and, in general, human effort played any causal role in salvation, denied that people could actively do anything to chart (or to feel that they were actively charting) a dependable course to salvation. It limited them instead to relying on what in practice could be the very uncertain method of scrutinizing their own faith to determine if it was real or illusory and, therefore, whether it was a true or false indicator of election.

These parallels between early modern navigation and Reformation theology meant that seafaring imagery was available to writers such as Wyatt, Spenser, and Marvell as a culturally powerful literary device through which to explore the psychological and epistemological implications of the theology of grace. Indeed, by turning to seafaring to explore the relationship between interpretation and knowledge, and more particularly, between interpretation and knowledge of the soul's salvational status, these poets follow the lead, up to a point, of participants in actual exploratory and colonial voyages during the early modern period. In narrating their accounts of such voyages, these voyagers repeatedly tried to make sense of the numerous trials and

tribulations they endured along the way by situating them within a providential framework. An example of this tendency is provided by the Royalist Henry Norwood's account of his journey of exile to Virginia in 1649 after the assassination of Charles I. Norwood's account displays both the potentially disorienting effects of navigating in stormy weather and distant, unfamiliar seas and the habit of seeing evidence of God's providential direction of human events in such navigational difficulties. In the wake of a storm off the Virginia colony's coast that has battered their ship, Norwood and his companions take "an observation on a sunshine day" to check the ship's position, and they discover that they are far from where they thought they were (46). Having been under the impression that they were "to the southward of Cape Hatteras," they now realize they have been "carried by a current we knew not of to the windward, much beyond all our dead reckonings and allowances for sailing, insomuch that when we thought we had been to the southward of the cape, we found ourselves considerably shot to the north" (46). Difficulties of this kind inspire a sense of helplessness in Norwood and his crew: "we despaired ever to recover without a miracle of divine mercy" (49). And this sense of helplessness leads Norwood in turn to read events at sea as signs that will ultimately indicate whether the passengers on the ship find favor with God or not. At one point, Norwood tries to comfort the captain as he is drunkenly lamenting their "sad condition" by telling him, "we must all submit to the hand of God and rely on his Goodness, hoping that the same providence which had hitherto so miraculously preserved us would still be continued in our favor till we were in safety" (51). While Norwood does not go so far here as to assert confidently that he and his companions are destined to be saved by God, he nevertheless confidently assumes that, whatever the outcome of the

ship's present predicament, God is working behind the scenes to orchestrate that outcome, that the events of the journey are evidence or signs of God's presence. Furthermore, he assumes that, whatever the journey's outcome, when all is said and done, the voyage will have been a revelatory experience, inasmuch as in retrospect it will be seen to have revealed God's will with regard to the ship's passengers.

It is at this point of confidently believing that events at sea reveal the hand of providence that historical sea narratives such as Norwood's begin to diverge from the poems of Wyatt, Spenser, and Marvell. For not only do the ambiguous signs in their poems—whether the linguistic signs that we read on the page or the material signs that the characters of the poems see around them (for instance, the “fayre soyle” “fraught with store” of *Amoretti* 63)—fail to disclose the true spiritual condition, the spiritual reality, of those characters. By virtue of the very fact that the poems' signs withhold this certainty, the poems also leave open the possibility that these signs do not refer at all to a spiritual reality behind them. It is significant in this regard that, in contrast to Norwood's narrative, there are no clearly authoritative or trustworthy narrative voices in the poems to assure us that, even if we cannot make out the precise details of a providential reality structuring the events we read about, we can still be sure such a reality is there underpinning those events. In short, the seafaring poems by Wyatt, Spenser, and Marvell that I have looked at here allow for the possibility that, if we see them as invested with salvational or providential significance, it is only because we are looking for that kind of significance in them, not because it is actually there. To that extent, these poems suggest the emergence in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries of something of a counter-tradition to that which invested seafaring with theological weight, a counter-tradition that

could be described as agnostic seafaring, in which sea travel reveals at best only our inability to see clearly whether or not God is behind the scenes controlling events or, if He is there, what exactly He is doing. If as Psalm 107 asserts, the sea is full of signifiers of God's works and wonders, in "Bermudas," "My Galley," and *Amoretti* 34, 59, and 63, those signifiers are intensely ambiguous—a "wat'ry maze"—highlighting God's inscrutability and hiddenness, His distance from our comprehension. Sea travel thus gestures towards a God who is so transcendent and mysterious that He is unknowable, perhaps even impossible.

Chapter Four

Piratical Seas: Providence Unmoored in *A Christian Turned Turk*, *Fortune by Land and Sea*, and *Hamlet*

This chapter attempts to understand the intertwined religious and ethical significance of the pirate and piratical practices in late Elizabethan and Jacobean drama by looking at how piracy is portrayed in three plays in which pirate characters take center stage or acts of piracy are central to the plot development: Robert Daborne's *A Christian Turned Turk*, Thomas Heywood and William Rowley's *Fortune by Land and Sea*, and Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. As numerous critics have observed, the pirate in early modern English drama is a highly ambiguous figure, at once fearsome, quasi-demonic, dissolute, heroic, adventurous, tantalizing, and mysterious. Much of this ambiguity stems from the pirate's paradoxical status in early modern English culture as both the model of an intrepid English hero whose superior naval and military skill subdues England's traditional enemies at sea and a supremely antipathetic figure who feels no enduring loyalty to any nation and who, therefore, will not hesitate to attack the ships of any nation, including those of his native land, in his self-interested pursuit of spoil. But the pirate is frequently also a religiously ambiguous figure in the drama of the period. Often a pirate ship emerges suddenly and seemingly out of nowhere to radically alter a dramatic plot in a spectacular fashion that suggests direct divine intervention in the lives of a play's characters. Thus the pirate is often a dramatic personification of the guiding hand of providence. Yet the pirate also repeatedly appears on the stage as one who brazenly defies God and violates all religious and moral laws, so that he stands for a poisonous alliance of irreligion and, its seemingly inevitable counterpart on the early modern stage,

amorality, an alliance which challenges the very notion of providence itself. This paradoxical double nature of piracy is evident, to different degrees and in somewhat different manifestations, in each of the three plays examined here. By looking in each of these texts at the religious and ethical significance of the pirate, as a figure that both stands in defiant opposition to providence and functions to reveal the workings of providence, my aim is to demonstrate how the fascination with and deep fear of piracy that is found in early modern drama ultimately expresses profound anxieties and suspicions that Christianity's central hypothesis of a universe watched over by a just deity and governed according to immutable, universal moral laws established by that deity was a fundamental misreading of the nature of human existence.

Robert Daborne's *A Christian Turned Turk* (1612), a dramatization of the life of the famous Jacobean pirate John Ward, tends to represent pirates, in their ruthless pursuit of profit and individualistic power, as synonymous with a wild sea, a tempestuous force devoid of "reason and conscience" (Vitkus, *Three* 160). In this way pirates embody what was, for many early modern English writers, the sort of human world implied by an "atheistic" philosophy: an anarchic, merciless world fueled by coldblooded competition, in which any attempt to structure human affairs according to a transcendent moral order has been dropped. Daborne's play extends this associative chain to include what it depicts as the inauthentic religion of Islam, with which the European pirates of the play come into dangerously intimate contact in the port of Tunis, Ward going so far as to convert to Islam himself. In the world of *A Christian Turned Turk*, Islam counts as an inauthentic religion because for the various Muslims, or "Turks," in the play religion is but a convenient fiction with which they seek to advance their competing self-interests;

Daborne thus suggests that a “Turk” and an atheistic pirate amount to much the same thing. Daborne’s text figures the Ottoman-dominated Mediterranean world, where piratical actors of all stripes operate openly and freely, as a manifest example of the sort of morally lawless sea of irreligion to which the individualistic energies of commerce unleashed by England’s investment in foreign trade might lead, expressing a fear that atheistic tendencies fostered by this development could lead to English culture becoming, in effect, a pirate culture.

To be charged with atheism in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries was not necessarily to be accused of believing outrightly that God did not exist, since it was a common opinion that “atheists could, and often did, believe in the existence of a God or gods” (Wootton 86). Rather, what defined an atheist was that “he or she did not believe in a divine economy of rewards and punishments, in heaven and hell” (86). To be an atheist was to deny either explicitly or, in the way one acted, implicitly that there was a divinely established moral order inherent in the universe which human beings were compelled to obey; it was to deny the “existence of a law enforced by God,” that is, providence (86). Unrepentant sinfulness was seen to constitute an atheistic disavowal of “God’s providence” because it demonstrated the absence of a “fear of punishment” that would “restrain [one] from evildoing” (86). Such “practical” atheism came to be embodied in the figure of the Machiavel, with his shades of Epicureanism. The Machiavel chased “pleasure and power without fear of divine retribution” (86). Those atheists whom Roger Ascham castigates in *The Scholemaster* engage in such unwholesome practices as “geuing themselues vp to vanitie, shakinge [off] the motions of Grace, driuing from them the feare of God, and running headlong into all sinne” (Ascham

232). Being “Epicures in liuing, and [atheists] in doctrine,” they can see no reason not to try cynically to “make Christ and his Gospell, onelie serue Ciuill pollicie” (Ascham 233, 232; Hunter 140).

Rather than seeking to accommodate themselves to a universally applicable moral order, Machiavels seek to order the world according to their own desires and wants, and it is their atheism that allows them to do so, by allowing them to invert the relationship of the individual to the law. The atheistic individual no longer submits to the law; the law submits to the individual, becoming merely a function of his or her will. Human affairs, therefore, become no longer group endeavors structured according to transcendent moral truth, but rather, at bottom, hardly more than many exceedingly mutable and fragile alliances among many little tyrants.

The sea in *A Christian Turned Turk* is a zone in which such a selfish, Machiavellian ruthlessness holds sway, a fact that is made clear in the play’s first scene, after two French merchants, Albert and Ferdinand, who have come aboard the pirate captain Ward’s ship to gamble, realize that they have unwittingly boarded a pirate vessel and are being shanghaied to assist in attacking another merchant ship, captained by Monsieur Davy. They plead their case by appealing to a number of ethical principles that would require the pirates to show self-restraint and think of a greater good. Ferdinand, for instance, tries to convince Ward and his officer Gismund not to abduct him and Albert by appealing to honor and loyalty to one’s homeland as virtues which should guide one’s actions. What brings “honor” to the “venting” merchant who “puts to the main / With hazard of his life and state” is that his commercial dealings, in the end, take “from other lands / To enrich his own” land, not merely himself (1.56, 62-65). Gismund rejects the

principle of loyalty to one's native land by referring to the plight of soldiers who have made great sacrifices in the service of their country only then to have the state, once it no longer needs their services, "ungratefully," contemptuously neglect them, allowing them to suffer "the weight of poverty" unaided (1.40-51).

Gismund seems to refer to the "naval demobilization and the suspension of letters of marque" in 1603 that accompanied James I's moves towards peace with Spain, which resulted in the sudden unemployment of "a large portion of the maritime workforce" and meant that the "fewer legitimate jobs" which were left were often "low-paying and toilsome" (Starkey 118; Vitkus, *Turning* 149). This state of affairs "put pressure" on "English Seamen" to "pursue their living at sea unlawfully," as pirates (*Turning* 149). Daborne's text suggests that, while Gismund makes a valid point about the neglectful cruelty of the state towards its own, the lesson that he and pirates like him derive from it is a perversely extreme one. In a sense, they throw the baby out with the bath water. Rather than understandably reproving the state for an injustice, its cruel lack of gratitude and compassion for its soldiers, they dispense entirely with the principle of compassion in their own dealings with others and use the state's cruelty to license their own cruelty to merchants and, by extension, those merchants' wives and children, who are made "widows" and "orphans" by piracy's predations (1.59). In their exchange with these French merchants, Ward and Gismund in essence represent a kind of lazy, cynical skepticism. They take the hypocrisy of one party in violating the ethical standards that sustain social bonds to mean that those standards express no objective moral truths, but are instead mere social constructs. And because they view such standards as socially constructed, they do not believe in them or feel compelled to adhere to them. Ward,

therefore, dismisses Ferdinand's "virtuous lectures" as "tongue-comfort," the kind of hollow rhetoric with which the weak and "tattered" try to console themselves for being dominated by the strong but which have no relevance to hardy, daring "mariners and soldiers" such as Ward and his men (1.77-80).

The skepticism of Ward and his companions extends to religion. As Ward begins to carry out his threat to throw overboard the prisoners his band of pirates has taken in the attack on Davy's ship, one of the prisoners expresses his shock: "There were no conscience, no religion in't" (4.15). The impatient rejoinder by another of Ward's officers, Gallop, shows an atheistic disregard for both religion and the ethical system it grounds: "How? Conscience? Were it but to banish those two words, they shall go overboard"; in other words, conscience and religion shall go overboard with the prisoners (4.16-17). Moments later, after a dispute over who is in charge has erupted among the pirates, Ward reveals his tyrannical leanings, claiming that his "word," whatever it happens to be, "shall be law" (4.33). This prompts an aside from Gallop, "That may be, for he hath conscience by the ears already," meaning that Ward has already banished religion and conscience in the way Gallop would like to do (4.34-35; 167). Ward articulates his atheistic ways more explicitly after the action of the play has moved to Tunis: "The slavery of man, how this religion rides us! / Deprives us of our freedom from our cradles, / Ties us in superstitious bondage" (7.201-03).

Like good early modern Machiavels, Ward and Gallop take religion and "conscience," the "economy" of divine "rewards and punishments" that accompanies religion, to be fictions that unjustifiably restrain freedom—precisely because these things are, in the Machiavel's eyes, unreal. And this clears the way, most notably in Ward's

case, for envisioning life's purpose to be a hyper-individualistic, unfettered pursuit of personal satisfaction, or more specifically, of the satisfaction of three primary kinds of lust: the lust for material accumulation, the lust for power, and sexual lust. As Ward puts it, "Beauty, command, and riches—these are the three / The world pursues" (7.193-94). Ward gives direct expression to this anarchic individualism after he and his mates have taken Davy's ship: "The sway of things / Belongs to him dares most. Such should be kings, / And such am I. / [. . .] / This maxim I hold: / He lives a slave that lives to be controlled" (4.83-87). And after Gallop and Gismund have plotted a mutiny against Ward, Gallop announces, "So that I rise, let the world sink, heaven fall" (4.82).

Life among pirates on the open sea in Daborne's play serves to emphasize the fragmenting, destructive effect on human bonds of atheistic individualism being given free expression. Among Ward's crew, allegiances are made to be broken. The corrosive effect of Ward's lust for "command" is especially apparent when he and his crew are at sea debating whether to throw the French prisoners from Davy's ship overboard. Ward's reaction to Gallop's opinion that "they should go overboard" shows a perverse contrariness:

WARD. They shall go overboard? Suppose I speak the contrary?

GALLOP. My captain, my man-of-war, speak the contrary; they are as safe as the Great Turk.

WARD. Now they shall [go] overboard.

GALLOP. Outswaggered? (4.18-22)

Ward is equally uncooperative when Gismund suggests that not keeping the French prisoners alive would "rob" Ward of "brave witnesses" who could testify that the battle

between Ward's and Davy's ships has indeed been an epic one (4.25-26). Ward ignores Gismund's logic, indignantly seeing the idea as simply a presumptuous challenge to his own authority: "How dare you, sir, give us directions?" for "I am before you" (4.28, 31). His stance in these exchanges shows that Ward is not concerned with what may be right or wrong in any possibly objective sense, but only with asserting his will over that of others, with "outswagging" them. As such he is a petty tyrant whose "rule" is arbitrary. The effect is to alienate his crew members, who see themselves as, in Gismund's words, "equal unto" him, and to spark the aforementioned mutiny in which they "gull" Ward by stealing his ship and sailing to Tunis with a "share" of the booty from the French merchant ship (4.30, 79-80). Meanwhile, Ward, still unaware of this conspiracy, remains behind fighting to protect the prize from the claim of another pirate, Francisco, whose own ship had originally been pursuing the French merchantman for "three days," before the latter, making for Ward's ship in the mistaken hope that it would offer help, was instead attacked by Ward (2.20). Gallop's megalomaniacal pronouncement after the mutiny has been arranged ("So that I rise, let the world sink, heaven fall") makes it not quite surprising that, once he and his fellow mutineers have arrived in Tunis and sold their stolen "goods," he promptly tries to "deal like a commander" with them by refusing to pay over their shares in lump sums, instead planning to dole the shares out in installments in order to force them to remain his "followers" (4.82; 6.107, 111-14).

The sea in *A Christian Turned Turk* is, then, a welter of violence, one-upmanship, and insecurity, a place where one can never be sure of another's trustworthiness or loyalty. It is a zone beyond good and evil: out of reach of Christianity's ethical influence and dominated by the skeptical ruthlessness of piracy. And it is significant in this regard

that an atheistic Ward tosses Lemot—a patriotic gentleman merchant of France who firmly believes in a divine “power that’s just”—into the sea, as if to say that religious truth becomes lost there (2.15). Additionally, the various ships attacking and running from each other encapsulate the aggressive, chaotic nature of human relationships that have become highly unstable as a result of the atomizing quest for total autonomy that pirates like Ward represent in the play, and which is underpinned by these pirates’ rejection of religion’s moral vision.

Daborne’s depiction of such a chaotic sea is not far at all from the reality of maritime activity in the Mediterranean during the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. Daniel Vitkus notes that “1570 is the [. . .] year that the English made diplomatic contact with the Ottoman sultan, and it marks the beginning, for economic historians, of a sudden surge in overseas trade between England and the Mediterranean” (“Poisoned” 47). When English ships ventured onto the seas on trading voyages, it was far from certain that those voyages would be peaceful. Rogue elements were seemingly everywhere, lying in wait to attack weaker or unsuspecting vessels. The lawlessness of the sea made for what Vitkus describes as a “sphere of economic activity in which might made right. Every encounter with another ship was potentially dangerous. There were opportunities for the profitable taking of booty, but there was also the danger that a more powerful adversary would come along” (*Three* 29-30). It was difficult to distinguish merchants from pirates because pirates used the strategy of disguising their ships as merchantmen to ambush their victims (Fuchs 47; *Three* 30). *A Christian Turned Turk* alludes to this strategy when Monsieur Davy’s ship mistakenly believes that Ward’s ship might offer assistance and when, at the play’s beginning, the merchants Ferdinand and

Albert have apparently come aboard Ward's ship to gamble without knowing that it is a pirate vessel, suggesting that Ward has probably disguised his own ship as a merchantman. Moreover, "traders and merchantmen habitually combined commerce and theft"; indeed, "pillage was a routine, legitimate part of any commercial venture or voyage of 'exploration'" (*Three* 30).

In this light, when Daborne has Ferdinand observe about Ward and his fellow pirates that their "better part" (1.97)—their "powers of reason and conscience"—are "captived" by their "sense and will" (1.97-98)—their "sensual appetites and selfish desires"—it seems that he is responding as well to the lawless conditions in the real Mediterranean of the early seventeenth century (Vitkus, *Three* 160, n. 97-9). Ferdinand goes on to describe how such unreasonable selfishness makes one

like a ship unmanned,

That's borne by motion of the violent waves

And giddy winds, [which] seem[s] to make a course

Direct and punctive, till we see it dash

Against some prouder Scylla, and display

How much she inward wanted to her sway. (1.98-103)

What Ferdinand argues here is that a sphere in which human interaction is defined primarily by the unrestrained freedom to seek the gratification of a selfish lustfulness is an untenable illusion, because it does not recognize that one person's single-minded pursuit of self-gratification will inevitably be thwarted by a "more powerful adversary," a "prouder Scylla," that is freely pursuing the same goal. The quest for unconditional personal freedom ends in something resembling a Hobbesian state of perpetual war, in

which one's total freedom is constantly under the threat of being eliminated by that of another. And in that this image of the sea as an anarchic space of lawless competition resonates strongly with the actual conditions at sea during Daborne's time, it expresses a concern that the Mediterranean has effectively become a sphere in which a kind of practical atheism, in the form of piratical self-interest that casts aside a religious economy of right and wrong, has established itself as the dominant ideology.

When the action of the play moves to Islamic Tunis, we witness the destructive consequences of a state having fostered a piratical, Machiavellian atheism as the basis of social organization. Ward's conversion to Islam, his turning "Turk," in Tunis is the play's ultimate example of religion's subordination to political, economic, and, in Ward's case, sexual expediency. But two of the "Turk" characters who help engineer Ward's conversion, the governor of Tunis and the Jewish merchant Benwash, are also converts themselves, or renegades: characters who have "converted to Islam" to "gain freedom, wealth, and patronage in [the] Muslim society" of Tunis (Vitkus, *Three* 234). Benwash's conversion has been, like Ward's, a matter of sexual expediency, done in order to prevent the Turks of Tunis from sleeping with his wife (6.76). And the governor's conversion is a particularly clear instance of religious indifference combined with a cynically Machiavellian use of religion to advance his worldly ambitions. He points to his own experience of conversion, and the apparent lack of punishment by God for doing so, as evidence that it makes not a whit of difference in any spiritual or moral sense whether one is a Christian or a Muslim: "What difference in me as I am a Turk / And was a Christian? Life, liberty, / Wealth, honor—they are common unto all!" (7.29-31). The only point he sees to religion has to do with what cultural and economic capital it brings,

and in this regard he has found Islam to be the most profitable religion: “If any odds be, ‘tis on Mahomet’s side: / His servitors thrive best, I am sure” (7.32-33). He thus holds that one should not tie oneself in “the slave’s fetters of religion” by worrying about right and wrong but should instead use religion to serve one’s own personal, worldly ends (7.28).

This opportunistic use of religion drives the Turks’ push to convert Ward. They hope to bring Ward into the Islamic fold not out of missionary zeal but to keep him in Tunis and to ensure the continuation of their lucrative trading arrangement with him, fearing that he “purpose[s] shortly a return” to England (7.12). And they offer Islam to him not as a gateway to divine truth but as a tool for rising through the ranks of Ottoman society, for ensuring his financial prosperity, and for procuring sexual satisfaction (7.53). Benwash flatteringly hints that by turning Turk Ward might hope to become “the sultan’s admiral,” while Crosman, a “native” Muslim and captain of the Tunisian janissaries, suggests that he might rise to become an important customs officer (7.20-21). Moving to financial matters, the Turks argue that the natural purpose of “men” is to seek “profit” and that the best means for Ward to achieve that purpose is by “turn[ing] Turk,” thereby providing “assurance of [his] trust” to his Tunisian clients (7.47-57). Any question of genuine religious faith on Ward’s end is irrelevant to the Turks, as Benwash makes clear: “Christian or Turk, you are more wise, I know, / Than with religion to confine your hopes” (7.25-26). These Turks view his conversion as an act that would signify his good faith in business alone; their religious identity is a sham, hardly more than a tool for gaining a competitive edge in the marketplace. When Ward hesitates, suspecting that turning Turk will deprive him of his freedom by making him a servant to Ottomans (just

the sort of “slavery” his ambition cannot bear), they bring in Crosman’s sister, Voada, to sweeten the deal, offering her up to Ward’s sexual desire in exchange for his conversion. And Voada is willing to be sold into marriage, believing that doing so will be to her profit, as she tells us in an aside: “I have my ends. / [. . .] thy [Ward’s] wealth shall bear me high” (7.175-76). The strategy ultimately works, as Ward indicates it will: “Here comes an argument [i.e., Voada] that would persuade / A god [to] turn mortal” (7.90-91). Voada’s role in the bargaining shows that women’s worth in Daborne’s *Tunis* is primarily as a commodity that facilitates the flow of coin, like a buy-one-get-one-free customer incentive. Daborne makes the Ottoman Empire synonymous with a whole host of “Machiavellian merchants”—pimps, whores, pirates, and slick, unscrupulous businessmen—a world of market forces where all non-mercantile values are sacrificed in the pursuit of greed and lust, and where relationships function almost exclusively as avenues of ravenous acquisition in which one tries to gain a competitive advantage over another (Vitkus, *Turning* 178; “Poisoned Figs” 53).

Like the open sea in Daborne’s play, Daborne’s Ottoman world is given over wholesale to commercial enterprise, so that human alliances are extremely fragile and continually collapse. Thus, after the Dutch pirate Dansiker and his crew, in an act meant to mark their recently arranged loyalty to France and reintegration into Christendom through a pardon granted to them by the French king, set fire to Tunis and sail off in Ward’s treasure-laden ships, the Turks turn mercilessly against the newly destitute Ward and with breathtaking hypocrisy now denounce him for converting. That is, when his mass of wealth made him a source of profit to the Turks, his status as a convert meant he was a loyal ally. Now that Dansiker has reduced him to poverty and he can offer no

profit to the Turks, they use his status as a convert to define him as faithless and untrustworthy and to dissociate themselves from him. A janissary reproaches him as “false runagate! Slave, beggar!” (13.104). And Voada suddenly decides that “our just Prophet [. . .] hates false runagates” and lets Ward know, “I contemn thee / as a most abject slave, and hate thee more / Than all thy wealth could make me love thee before” (13.27, 33-35). She proceeds to turn her back on Ward entirely, hoping to satisfy her newfound lust for the “boy” Fidelio (who is in fact a French girl, Alizia, who has been abducted and brought to Tunis by Ward, where she disguises herself as a male page and takes the name Fidelio to protect her chastity while among the Turks) (11.24). Voada’s abandonment of Ward speeds his downfall, which entails a lengthy and tangled series of deceptions and betrayals implicating Ward, Voada, Alizia (disguised as Fidelio), Alizia’s fiancé Raymond, and another of Ward’s pirate associates, Francisco—and they all die as a result. Ward ends by murdering Voada in revenge and then despairingly taking his own life, having finally been convinced through all of this torture that there is a God who holds us accountable for our actions, although he remains unable to believe that such a God could forgive a sinner as monstrous as himself (7.274-77; 16.285-326). It is only fitting that once Ward is dead, the governor of Tunis declares, “Tear the wretch piecemeal! Throw his accursed limbs / Into the raging bowels of the sea!” (16.323-24). For Ward has lived up to Ferdinand’s earlier description of him as a “ship unmanned” driven wildly by “sense and will” until it eventually wrecks unsuspectingly against “some prouder Scylla,” some stronger foe (1.98-102). He has been overwhelmed and shipwrecked by the “violent waves” and “giddy winds” of the scheming commercial society in Tunis (1.99-100). The similarity between the atheistic Ottoman Machiavels in

Tunis and Ward's piratical atheism at sea suggests that Islamic Tunis is in a figurative sense a kind of irreligious sea upon which its piratical citizens amorally, recklessly try to outmaneuver and take advantage of one another.

The prologue of *A Christian Turned Turk* claims that the play's concern is not that "Ward turned pirate" but, instead, that he "turned Turk," because his conversion to Islam represents "the heart itself of villainy" (8,14). Nevertheless, the play makes clear that it is the first act of turning, of becoming an atheistic pirate, through which Ward sets out on the Machiavellian voyage that ends with his becoming lost in the atheistic "sea" of Tunis. Ward's piracy is the manifestation of his disenchantment, his atheistic disbelief in objective moral standards, which makes him amenable to doing whatever seems to him to be in his self-interest at any given moment. Ward as pirate is an expression of an early modern fear of the consequences and implications of disbelief or, more specifically, what Robert Watson describes as "an anxiety" in "Jacobean culture" that "social order can find no footing without shared systems of understanding, and that such understanding can find no real footing without positing an organizing deity" (3, 15). "For the Jacobean," according to Watson, "the Christian God was [. . .] a necessary anchor in a troublesome sea of mutability" (14). As a result, "if God began to lose His unity and stability through doctrinal schism"—and perhaps nothing could be more schismatic at the time than to deny the existence of universal moral laws operating in a universe providentially organized by a Christian God—"then the culture as a whole would become vulnerable [. . .] to unbounded thinking" (Watson 14-15). Piracy, as Daborne presents it, is the incarnation of such unboundedness and disorder, as well as the disastrous consequences to which those things were thought inevitably to lead. As noted above, while at sea,

Ward and his fellow pirates show themselves to be unbound by both religion and conscience, when they throw overboard both the captives they have taken and the “conscience” that would have otherwise restrained them from such murderous action. And the play’s chorus summarizes Ward’s downfall as the inevitable result of unrestrained, riotous living: “How black a path unbounded riot treads, / [. . .] No course that violent is, secure can last” (14.1-6).

It is important to emphasize, in addition, that the faithlessness and moral unboundedness of Ward and his fellow pirates—that is, those qualities that, Daborne’s play suggests, make them pirates—are enabled by their experience of what in *A Christian Turned Turk* is the lawless freedom of the seas. In fact, early in the play, Gismund describes Ward’s crew as belonging to the sea when the merchant Davy shouts from his ship to Ward’s ship to ask from which land it hails. Gismund replies with the standard cry of pirates, “We are of the Sea!” (2.35). Gismund’s reply not only disavows any allegiance to any country. It also defines the pirate as intimately bound to the sea itself, the vast, ever-changing, watery zone that, as Marcus Rediker explains, was commonly understood in pre-modern British culture, because of both its natural dangers and the associations it had in Christian thinking with evil and threatening forces, to be “a distant place full of dangers, a site of frequent disaster, [. . .] a natural space that was difficult if not impossible to control,” “a place where sins proliferated,” and where, as a result of his ship’s geographical distance from the “organizing” “authority” of any church, the pirate was liable to forget about God (*Villains* 134-36). In *The Passions of the Minde in Generall* (1604), Thomas Wright likens the “vnquiet” “heart” of the “passionate man” to a “Sea” that is “tossed with contrary windes, even at the same time and moment” (71). In

Beaumont and Fletcher's *The Maid's Tragedy*, Amintor characterizes the sea as a deadly combination of tempting possibility and deceptive changeability. The "dissembling" sea "now wears brows as smooth as virgins' be, / Tempting the merchant to invade his face," but "in an hour calls his billows up / And shoots 'em at the sun, destroying all / 'A carries on him" (3.1.59-64).

And writing in the early seventeenth century, Samuel Rowlands accentuates in "The Picture of a Pirat" the moral disorder of piracy in part by presenting it as a seaborne inversion of the feudal style of social organization found on a country estate, a feudal style that calls to mind traditional notions of a God-given, fixed hierarchy in human society.²¹ Whereas the image of enduring stability that a feudal estate connotes derives to a great extent from the idea of predetermined social structures rooted "organically" in the solidity of the land, the inverted, piratical "estate" in Rowlands' short poem is defined by tumultuousness and instability as a result of being located, yet *un*-situated, on the turbulent, decidedly unsettled and inconstant sea. The pirate's "dwelling is vpon the raging waues," and his ship, his "house," is "tost and carried" by "stormes." He is "Tennant [. . .] at will" to the volatile temper, the "rage," of the lord of the sea, Neptune. In anthropomorphizing the raging sea as the pagan god Neptune whose raging will controls the pirate, insofar as it makes his occupancy of the sea ever uncertain, the poem suggests a correspondence between the sea as an inanimate physical force and its role in human affairs: the volatility of the sea makes for volatile relationships on it.

Accordingly, in addition to the pirate's being at the mercy of his lord Neptune's volatile

²¹ For a discussion of how Jacobean country house poetry represents the country estate as a continuation of an idealized manorial system in which divinely established feudal arrangements are organically embedded in the land, see Bruce McLeod's *The Geography of Empire in English literature, 1580-1745* (83-88).

will, the pirate's "seruants" are a "crew of theeuish Knaues" and "Incarnate deuils," while his "Neighbours," those other pirates in their ships on the same raging sea, are "Monsters of the Seas." The fickle, uncertain nature of the sea makes it a non- or anti-foundation, so that pirates' attempts to establish their "dwelling" upon it inevitably result in a dysfunctional and morally chaotic state of affairs: the pirate's "life is spent in all outragious euils, / Vertue abhors the place of [his] abode." Furthermore, Rowlands' poem implies that the tumultuous sea is the natural home of the pirate because it fits his "lawlesse nature" and that this lawlessness is a product of his atheism and his disdain for religious laws, the Ten Commandments: "My heart (with *Dauid's* foole) denies a God, / And those same lavves (they say) he gaue to men: / My lawlesse nature keepes not one of ten." The connection Rowlands' poem makes between piracy and the sea is that the sea is the natural, logical place for piracy not simply because that is where piracy actually takes place but because it is an ungrounded place, matching the pirate's own groundlessness, his lack of a moral center anchored in a firm belief in God.

Rowlands' "Picture of a Pirat" offers a portrait of piracy similar, but in miniature, to that drawn by Daborne's play. In both, piracy stands as a fearful image of human life that has become as ungrounded and unstable as the sea through a religious skepticism that calls God into question and thereby throws human beings' moral compass into disarray. Ultimately, these associations in Daborne's play between the unruly pirate and the unruly sea suggest that piracy, in its fundamental faithlessness, represents a regression to the primordial chaos—which Genesis envisions, in Alain Corbin's description, as "the 'great abyss,'" "an uncharted liquid mass," and a "quivering expanse, which symbolized, and actually was, the unknowable"—onto which God "imposed" structure "so that it might

become part of Creation” (1-2). This return to the kind of formless, undifferentiated chaos epitomized by the sea which piracy stands for in *A Christian Turned Turk* is violently evoked at the play’s conclusion when we learn that the piratical Turks will complete the psychological, spiritual, moral, and—with his death—physical disintegration that the pirate Ward endures by tearing him limb from limb and throwing the pieces of his de-formed body into the sea’s “raging bowels.”

Yet Daborne’s purpose in depicting piracy and the Ottoman maritime sphere, where renegade pirates such as Ward often struck up profitable commercial arrangements, as together forming a lawless sea of atheism is not only to demonize pirates and the Muslim world. He also seems to want to hold up as a mirror to English society this disturbing rendering of a Mediterranean world dominated by ruthless commercial ventures which, the play hints, the English state risks replicating through its uncharitable, Machiavellian treatment of its seafaring subjects. At one point, the patriotic Frenchman Ferdinand lets it be known that he and Albert can afford to be virtuous merchants rather than “pirates” because “our country yields us / more honest means of living” (6.313-14). In contrast, we learn, the pirate Dansiker and his crew were originally driven to piracy by economic necessity. It was not want “of virtue” but “want of employment” that “forced” their “former act of spoil and rapine” (5.17-18). Taken together with Gismund’s abovementioned allusion to the predicament of sailor-soldiers left without work by James’ peace with Spain, these passages add up to a critique of the English state’s failure, as a Christian state, to take care of its own Christian subjects by providing them an “honest means of living” (6.314). Rather, England washed its hands

of them in Machiavellian fashion after they had broken their bodies in its service (Robinson 90).

In my analysis below of how James' maritime policy helps to explain the somewhat sympathetic portrayal of the pirates Purser and Clinton in Heywood and Rowley's *Fortune by Land and Sea*, I will more closely examine the royal proclamations which notified James' seafaring subjects of his peace with Spain and informed them that the English government was therefore getting out of the business of sponsoring privateering raids against Spanish shipping. Here I simply want to indicate briefly that James' suspension of letters of marque effectively rebranded what had formerly passed as heroic, honorable naval endeavors (when they had served the financial needs of Elizabeth's government) as "ungodly" piratical crimes (now that they contradicted the interests of James' foreign policy) (Larkin and Hughes 108; Fuchs 46). This move might have seemed to observers like a particularly cynical, Machiavellian sleight of hand on the part of the English crown, much like that performed by the Turks in Daborne's play when they rebrand Ward as a despicable, "false runagate" after he no longer has any treasure to hand over to them.

Furthermore, Daborne's portrayal of predatory Tunisian profiteering functions as a cautionary tale with respect to England's economic policy, which by the early seventeenth century had become firmly tied to international trade, sending "commodities, sailing vessels, and people [. . .] back and forth between English ports and foreign destinations," including those in Ottoman lands (Vitkus, "Poisoned Figs" 48). English writers, such as Joseph Hall, who were suspicious of travel expressed their concern that, in their journeys, English merchants might "go so farre, that they leaue God behinde

Barabas' violent image of the "bowels of the earth" being torn open in the mercantile quest for riches also evokes anxiety caused by the violent potential in the logic of "risk and profit," or "venturing," that drove "international trade," a logic which, Vitkus observes, "embraced danger and prepared for violence" ("Poisoned Figs" 53). The opening scene of Daborne's play figuratively makes this connection between commerce and violence through the ease with which Ward disguises his plundering pirate ship as a merchant vessel and through the dice game of "hazard" that the pirates Ward and Gismund share with the French merchants (1.18; 233). Overall, *A Christian Turned Turk* suggests how what might be called merchants' inner pirates could override their consciences, causing them to evaluate people and systems of thought, including religion, solely according to how they could facilitate their personal gain. By extension, English culture as a whole might ultimately find itself lost in a radically unstable, dysfunctional sea of commerce like that of the Turks in Daborne's Tunis, a world effectively devoid of moral principles accorded timeless and fixed value and where the only values are contingent, transitory ones that the marketplace assigns at any given moment. In this regard, the representation of piracy in *A Christian Turned Turk* dramatizes a fear that England's investment in overseas trade with the Ottoman world might result in a culture of piracy becoming the norm among James' subjects, a fear of the onset of a modern commercial culture that is skeptical in an "atheistic" fashion of all values other than those that can pragmatically contribute to an individual's worldly advancement (Robinson 108-09; Vitkus, *Turning* 162).

A Christian Turned Turk thus endeavors to discredit, as a viable ideology, the Machiavellian atheism that Ward embodies and for which the pirate commonly stood in

the Jacobean period, by mapping out its less than pleasant ethical and social consequences. Nonetheless Daborne's text contains suggestions that Ward's Machiavellianism, in particular, its view that religion and the moral code it grounds are mere fictions created by humans to serve the ends of "policy," may be a clear-sighted view of reality after all. This ambivalence is exemplified in the uneasy juxtaposition that Daborne establishes between Ward and his "foil," the pirate Dansiker (Vitkus, *Three* 39).

The story of Dansiker, as Daborne tells it, functions as a counterplot to that of Ward. Where Ward becomes, until it is too late, ever more alienated from religious and moral truth and any sense of patriotic loyalty to England, Dansiker moves in the opposite direction. When we first meet Dansiker, we learn that for the past "four years" he has led a band of pirates "through a sea of terror," carrying out violent "act[s] of spoil and rapine" and selling his booty in the chaotic, amoral marketplace of Tunis, all of which amounts to a monumental defiance of "justice" insofar as it has "breach[ed]" the "laws" and "civil society" of Christian "nations" (5.7-18). But Dansiker and his men have recently had a change of heart and, desiring to reform themselves from the life of Mediterranean pirates, set out towards moral regeneration by seeking a pardon from "King Henry of France" (5.6). They succeed in obtaining their pardon, with the "condition" that "We henceforth for the state of France employ / Our lives and service," that they use their plundering skills on behalf of, rather than against, a Christian state (5.3-5). To begin to fulfill their end of the bargain and "redeem" their "honor" with a "worthy deed," Dansiker and his crew strike a "daring," violent blow against the enemies of France when they set fire to Tunis and most of the pirate ships in its harbor and then sail off to deliver the "prize" from this raid to the French state (5.13-16; 14.39). It is

significant that Dansiker describes his attack on Tunis and its pirate community as using “the same weapon”—maritime violence—to serve France as that with which he formerly “wounded her” (5.24-25). What distinguishes Dansiker’s maritime violence from that of Ward—what validates it as moral and just as opposed to Ward’s amoral, faithless violence—is that it is linked in a chain of allegiances ostensibly anchored in faithfulness to the Christian God. That is, Dansiker’s newly proclaimed loyalty to and reintegration into the Christian state of France also signifies his faithfulness to God and God’s laws. Thus, even though the “aggressive energy” that Dansiker unleashes against the pirates’ nest of Tunis may look the same as that which Ward unleashes against his victims, it is to be understood, on one level, as different in kind: because it is done on behalf of a Christian state, it is also, in theory, done on behalf of God (Vitkus, *Turning* 144).

On a deeper level, however, Daborne’s text challenges the transformation of “illegitimate maritime aggression” into “legitimate,” state-sanctioned aggression that this religio-political logic underwrites (Vitkus, *Turning* 143). As indicated above, *A Christian Turned Turk* refers to James I’s shift from a maritime policy that encouraged individual acts of plundering by English sailors to one that condemned such acts. And the play draws attention to how the Jacobean state’s apparent indifference to the detrimental effect that shift had on its seafaring subjects might have been seen by many as an instance of cloaking political expediency in moral and, by extension, godly terms. In doing so, the play implies that the pardon through which the French king and Dansiker accommodate themselves to one another is also a politically expedient arrangement. It is an arrangement that serves, first and foremost, the practical interests of both parties and in which the logic that makes loyalty to a Christian state a signifier of one’s faithfulness

to God functions as an after-the-fact justification that provides the arrangement an illusory aura of sanctity.

It could be said, finally, that pirates and piracy serve a double, and perhaps paradoxical, purpose in *A Christian Turned Turk*. On one hand, the pirate epitomizes the atheistic Machiavel who, despite himself, validates a conventional Christian morality. He is the ultimate fallen soul who, unable to believe in “higher” moral truths that are immanent in the reality God has created, wanders the uncertain sea of the world seeking above all else to please himself and, as a consequence, forever threatening to reduce human affairs to a state of anarchy, while unwittingly, tragically rushing towards his own destruction. On the other hand, Daborne draws on the actual political and economic conditions that contributed to the explosion of lawless maritime violence around the Mediterranean during the early seventeenth century to suggest that the Machiavellian atheism for which renegade pirates such as Ward were notorious might, in fact, be the result of a clear, sober view of reality. In other words, what is disturbing in *A Christian Turned Turk* about the atheistic pirates haunting the seas and coasts, using whatever means are at their disposal to overcome their adversaries in an ongoing struggle for power and wealth, is the possibility that those pirates are inspired by a firm grasp of the fact that religion and the moral economy it supports are mystifying fictions that lend a veneer of respectability to the less obvious piracy of “legitimate” political and economic actors, such as kings and the venturing merchants who are loyal to them.

A very similar tension exists in *Fortune by Land and Sea*, which Heywood is believed to have co-written with Rowley in the first decade of the seventeenth century, between the discourse of fortune, represented by the pirates Purser and Clinton, and the

discourse of providence, embodied by Young Forrest, the play's heroic young seafarer. In Herman Doh's reading of the play, the discourse of providence triumphs in the end. As Doh puts it, "just reward for virtue is the guiding principle [of *Fortune by Land and Sea*]. Although fortune may be said to determine the progress of the play, Heywood's fortune observes and rewards fidelity, industry, fair play, kindness, and temperance. [. . .] One must suffer the slings and arrows of what seems to be outrageous fortune; patient endurance will eventually pay off" (44-45). Another way to state this point is to say that providentialism is the dominant principle in the play. God's hand ostensibly guides the fortunes of the play's characters, so that fortune comes to be seen not as an indifferent, mechanistic force that tosses characters to and fro regardless of their inner merits, but as the handmaiden of heaven, and "heaven rewards the honest" in the end (L. Wright 640). Or at least it seems to. In the end, the triumph of providentialism in Heywood and Rowley's play is not as complete and uncomplicated as Doh's assessment suggests it is.

As the title implies, a significant part of the action of *Fortune by Land and Sea* takes place on the sea, to which Young Forrest, who epitomizes the forces of virtuous "honesty," escapes on a ship owned by the play's sympathetic and charitable Merchant, after a series of unfortunate events has unfairly made Forrest a criminal in the eyes of English law. Forrest eventually finds himself in command of a kind of privateering vessel that clashes with the two notorious pirates Purser and Clinton, who are among those who, at least on the surface, epitomize the forces of "dishonesty." The "honesty" of Young Forrest consists of a sense of fair play, an ability to believe that ultimately God watches over him, a hardy spirit, and an unwavering loyalty to England, despite the fact that he is considered a criminal there. The pirates' "dishonesty," on the other hand,

consists largely of their lack of loyalty to England and a skeptical attitude to religious and legal matters. It is at sea that the play's apparent providentialism starts to become particularly evident: there Young Forrest's virtue seems to be rewarded when the tide of events finally starts to turn in his favor. He defeats the pirates, reaps a tidy profit from the spoils of their ship, and delivers them to the crown for execution, as a result of which the crown pardons him and offers him a reward and a knighthood. With his newfound wealth, Forrest is able to restore the fortunes of his family, which has recently suffered a serious decline in its economic and social standing, and of those who have assisted or remained true to it during its time of suffering.

Yet at the same time that *Fortune by Land and Sea* moves towards this apparently happy, just conclusion, it draws some uncanny parallels between Young Forrest and the pirates and between the pirates and the English state on whose behalf Forrest fights them. Forrest runs his ship and engages in plunder in much the same way the pirates do. The reason Forrest goes to sea in the first place is similar to the reasons the pirates are at sea. The pirates conceive of themselves as monarchs similar to the English monarch to whom Forrest remains loyal. And, lastly, while Forrest comes to be aligned with faith in a divine, just providence, whereas the pirates believe in the arbitrary and relentless forces of fate and fortune—forces that are, at least in theory, diametrically opposed to providence—that providence nonetheless comes to seem by the end of the play to be barely distinguishable from the causal forces in which the pirates believe. The end result is to destabilize two fundamental assumptions that are crucial for the apparently happy ending of the play to be seen as indeed happy: one, that events in the world of the play are structured not by random chance but by an ultimately benevolent providence and,

two, that justice has been served by the execution of the pirates at the hands of English law, pirates whose downfall is, after all, what makes the “happy ending” possible.

In associating the outlaw pirates Purser and Clinton with fortune, Heywood and Rowley draw on traditional images of ships and the sea as emblems of fortune. The ceaseless fluctuations of the waves in such images express, in V. A. Kolve’s words, “a restless motion—a raising high and casting low—symbolically equivalent to that figured by Fortune’s wheel” (326). For example, the Middle English poem “Of the Flood of the World” compares the instability of life to a ship rocking precariously on the waves:

for when richesse & welthe heghes a man,
þo world as flowand hym vpberis þan;
but þo wawes of þo world weltren to & froo
& kesten a mon now to wele nowe to wo;
Po world bigynnes to ebbe & to *wit*drawe
Fro a man when he fallis fro hegh state to lawe.

(Horstmann 68; Kolve 326)

The endless churning of the waves duplicates the endless turning of the wheel of fortune, lifting “a man” to the heights of prosperity before inevitably plunging him back into the depths of adversity. Renaissance iconography, too, commonly depicts fortune in a nautical setting, such as Nicoletto da Modeno’s engraving of fortune standing in the sea with one foot on a rudder and a “cloak billow[ing] behind her like a ship’s sail” (Kolve 49). In the same way, the heraldic badge of the fifteenth-century “Florentine merchant Giovanni Rucellai,” found in the courtyard of his palazzo, places Lady Fortune in a boat “as though she were the mast of the vessel,” her left hand holding the main yard while her

right hand grasps the billowing sail” (Kiefer 195). These emblems contain echoes of classical, pagan images of fortune, such as those found in Roman sculpture and coins, “in which Fortune either holds or stands upon a rudder, as if to say that she alone directs human affairs” (Kolve 326-27).

Ships and the sea could, in addition, express Christian concerns to reconcile the seeming randomness of fortune with a providentially structured universe, by placing fortune in the service of providence. The rudderless boat in Chaucer’s *Man of Law’s Tale* exemplifies such concerns. The Man of Law prays that Custance’s boat, lacking a literal rudder, will be steered by God, who is the “lord of Fortune” (448). Here God is, as Kolve puts it, “the shaping intelligence and moral coherence behind the apparent anarchy of human life, [. . .] at once rudder to Custance’s boat and shipman to her soul” (330). Custance’s boat recalls Augustine’s position against Cicero in *The City of God*: “As to those causes which [Cicero] calls fortuitous, from which the word ‘fortune’ is also derived: we do not say that these do not exist, but that they are hidden, and we attribute them to the will of the true God” (*City*, Dyson 202; bk. 5, ch. 9). With the Reformation came a greater insistence among Protestant thinkers on doing away with fortune altogether, on insisting that “nothing could happen in this world without God’s permission” and replacing the “notion of a capricious Fortune, Fate or Chance” with the “doctrine of divine providence” (Thomas 79; 110). Among those who represented a “new insistence on God’s sovereignty” was John Knox (79). To affirm that nothing occurred by “fortune and chance,” Knox quoted Calvin: “fortune and adventure are the wordes of Paynims, the signification whereof oght in no wise to enter into the heart of the

faithfull. For if all prosperitie be the benediction of God, and adversitie his malediction, there remaineth no place to fortune in such things as come to men” (*Works* 32).

But if providence displaced fortune in Christian theory, in practice that displacement often went unmentioned or was forgotten. In both popular and official culture, a belief in fortune persisted throughout the medieval and early modern periods (Walsham, *Providence* 20-21). Keith Thomas demonstrates that “medieval people were fully acquainted with the idea of chance, and felt no need to ascribe every event to the workings of divine providence” (110). For instance, “routine misfortunes” did not always require “a supernatural explanation”: “‘Death by misadventure’ was a common verdict at inquests, both in the Middle Ages and thereafter; and the concept of ‘chance’ as a lucky accident was also current by the thirteenth century” (Thomas 110). In the sixteenth century, Calvin still thought it necessary to denounce the “opinion” that “almost all mortals hold [. . .] today, that all things come about through chance,” that is, “fortune and fortuitous happenings” (*Institutes* 1.16.2). Among the events that Calvin saw people erroneously attributing to mere chance rather than to “God’s ever-present hand” were “being shipwrecked at sea by a sudden gale” and reaching safe harbor after “having been tossed by the waves” (1.16.2). In *The Extent of Gods Providence* (1623), the English divine William Gouge decries the popular habit, which he attributes to the enduring influence of “Heathen Philosophers,” of ascribing “those things which are most immediately done by the divine *Providence*” instead to “*fortune, or chance, or lucke, (for these are but severall titles which are used to set out one and the same thing.)*” (380). And John Carpenter’s *A Preparatiue to Contentation: Containing a Display of the Wonderfull Distractions of Men in Opinions and Straunge Conceits* (1597) complains

that “manie great and famous personages” have subscribed to the opinion that “*Fortune guideth euerie mans life*” and that “the greatest part of all people, in the gouernment of great matters, direct not their counsailes to any certaine rule and doctrine: but hoise vp sailes to be carried whither soeuer the winde shall driue, or blind Fortune permit them” (279). Clearly, then, a “pagan” discourse of fortune as a causal force continued to compete, or at least was often seen to be competing, with a discourse of providence emphasizing the direct involvement of God’s hand in the events of the world.

Purser and Clinton are shown in *Fortune by Land and Sea* to be “gentlemen of fortune,” aligned with the discourse of fortune, both by their association with traditional signifiers of fortune and by the way they speak about the causes of human actions. Most obviously, we initially meet these two pirates aboard a ship at sea, the “surprised bark” of the Merchant which they have just taken as a “prize,” a serious, unforeseen reversal of fortune for the Merchant, his family, and those who have invested in his voyage (4.1.1599, 1587). Purser and Clinton have, in the Merchant’s words,

seised all my substance,
And shared amongst you my best merchandise;
And not alone undone me, and in me
All that are mine, but in overwhelming us
Shook the estate of all my creditors. (4.1.1599-1603)

Emerging, as it were, out of the sea and into the action of the play, providing a sudden, dramatic shift in the plot as well as an unexpected, drastic shift in the material conditions of the Merchant and those tied to him by family and business, Purser and Clinton in this moment embody capricious fortune itself. When the Merchant struggles to discern the

moral whys and wherefores of his new predicament—“Nor did I think the providence of heaven / Would so have favoured [. . .] / Such as profess wrong, pyracie and theft”—the pirates’ response suggests there are none (4.1.1595-97). Purser refuses to recognize the validity of appeals to conscience in the matter:

Whats that to us? men of our known condition
Must cast behind our backs all such respects,
We left our consciences upon the land
When we began to rob upon the sea. (4.1.1604-07)

Purser’s reply implies that the sea is an altogether different sphere of existence from the land, not just geographically, but from a moral and metaphysical standpoint as well. He implies that providence and the moral sense (conscience) that corresponds to it in humans simply do not exist at sea, that the sea is not a place where moral considerations structure events.

Clinton’s elaboration on Purser’s answer further confounds the belief system to which the Merchant gives expression by showing that he is misguided in trying to make sense of the capture of his ship using the logic of a providential framework, in which “wrong, pyracie and theft” would presumably not be rewarded with success. Clinton says to the Merchant:

We know we are Pirates, and profess to rob,
And wouldst not have us freely use our trade?
If thou and thine be quite undone by us,
We made by thee, impute it to thy fortune,
And not to any injury in us;

For he that's born to be a beggar know

How e'r he toyls and trafficks must dye so. (4.1.1608-14)

In addition to naming fortune, not human agency, explicitly as the cause of the trouble into which the Merchant has fallen, Clinton excises any question of right and wrong from the equation. Human beings in Clinton's account are not the originators of their own actions; rather, they are but the mediums through which those actions occur. Whatever impact humans have on one another, whether positive or negative, it is not to be attributed to them but to the unfolding of an implacable fate, as the final two lines of this passage make particularly clear. Logically, then, individuals cannot be held accountable for the consequences of the actions they perform. Such moral indifference is indicated by the general lack of moral evaluation, of attributing guilt or merit, to be found in Clinton's words. Most notably, while he owns up to being a pirate who robs, thus agreeing with the Merchant that he is one who professes "pyracie and theft," he leaves out the more evaluative descriptor "wrong," which makes its way into the Merchant's assessment of him. Furthermore, Clinton's rhetoric blunts the negative connotations of the term "rob" by placing that activity under the more neutral or acceptable category of "trade," in effect saying that the pirate is no worse or better than the merchant. Both are but businessmen indifferently carrying out the assignments given to them by fortune. If one of them is "undone" while the other is "made," that is no reason to bring questions of morality into the picture; it is just business, fortune's business. Clinton expresses a vision of human beings as morally neutral puppets acting upon one another at the behest of larger forces.

Moments later, Clinton appears to contradict this view of fortune somewhat, when he invokes the figure of occasion in a way that suggests he does, in fact, see a place for

human agency in the workings of fortune; but here too moral considerations do not figure into the equation. Continuing to justify to the Merchant why he and Purser have seized his ship, Clinton explains,

[. . .] since thy fate hath cast thee upon us,
We must neglect no opportunity;
For they that intermit advantages,
Must know occasions head is bald behind. (4.1.1627-30)

Clinton's explanation again aligns Purser and himself, through an associative chain that binds together fortune, opportunism, and the sea, with the discourse of capricious fortune rather than providentialism. As Bruce Danner observes, "the figure of Occasion, a woman bald apart from a forelock of hair, associated with moveable images like wings, ships, balls, and wheels, closely resembles that of Fortune in Renaissance emblem books" (13). Danner's elucidation of how occasion functions in Machiavelli's thought is useful here because it corresponds to what occasion means for Purser and Clinton as well.

Occasion, as Danner puts it, is a "middle ground between fortune and *virtù*" (13).

Fortune presents a prince with occasion, or a moment of opportunity when the prince is able to act upon his unique "ability and position" as the ruler of a state in a way that brings about what is, politically, in the best interest of the state (13). Therefore, occasion offers a prince the opportunity, in turn, to assert control over the fluctuations of fortune.

Occasion is the component in Machiavelli's understanding of how fortune works that makes human agency possible and which, in a sense, allows him to say in *The Prince*, "In order that our free will not be extinguished, I judge it to be true that Fortune is the arbiter of one half of our actions, but that she still leaves the control of the other half, or almost

that, to us” (159). By asserting that he and Purser must not “neglect” the opportunities that fortune brings their way, Clinton voices the practical atheism of the much-feared Machiavel, that bogeyman who seeks to turn circumstances to his own best advantage without considering moral imperatives, one for whom the dictates of God’s law do not figure in his calculations.

By the time Purser and Clinton, along with the ship they have stolen from the Merchant, have been captured by Young Forrest’s ship, they are back to expressing a rigidly deterministic view of their fates, and again no consideration of any possible relationship between their predicament and their own moral merits or faults enters into their musings. Purser attributes their defeat to the inconstancy of fortune, not to any failing in themselves: “We now are captives that made others thrall / Thus ebbs may flow, and highest tydes may fall” (4.5.1845-46). And Clinton concludes that one’s destiny is written in the stars and that there is nothing one can do to change it: “The latest day must come to have his date; / Stars govern all, and none can change his fate” (4.5.1847-48). The pirates’ seemingly amoral fatalism continues in act 5 as they await their execution on the gallows at Wapping, where, Clinton laments, “the fates have cast us on the shelf / To hang ‘twixt air and water” and which Purser describes as “this infortunate peece of land” (5.1.2193-94). And in the moments before death when devout believers would typically commend their souls to God in the hope of eternal salvation, Clinton instead seems to anticipate that his and Purser’s deaths will be the annihilation of their selves: “now our last night’s come, / And we must sleep in darkness” (5.1.2162-63). Throughout the play, then, the pirates consistently and conspicuously neglect to mention any causal role for God or their own moral standing in their reflections on the forces that

shape human lives. Their silence in this regard is significant, as it marks them with the kind of atheistic fatalism that Calvin preaches against in his *Institutes*: “The prophet [Jeremiah] forbids God’s children ‘to fear the stars and signs of heaven, as disbelievers commonly do’ [Jer. 10:2 p.]. [. . .] When unbelievers transfer the government of the universe from God to the stars, they fancy that their bliss or their misery depends upon the decrees and indications of the stars, not upon God’s will” (1.16.3).

As I will discuss further on, *Fortune by Land and Sea* makes it clear that it is their disloyalty to the English state and its laws, however flawed those laws may be in practice, that makes Purser and Clinton a threat to that state’s interests and, so, a threat that must be eliminated. But it seems important to consider here that they also represent a deeper threat in the play to the moral distinctions that, in theory, ground the law. More specifically, as pirates whose depredations are underpinned by their religious skepticism, they threaten, from the perspective of the dominant providentialist discourse in the play, the very possibility of making clear moral distinctions. The discourse of fortune and fate which piracy represents in the play implies a universe empty of an immanent moral order that moves teleologically towards the end for which God has destined it. That is the way Calvin puts the matter when he describes what he views as the delusion of believing in a world structured by fortune alone, that is, fortune that is not bound up with the working out of God’s moral laws. For Calvin, those who act as if such a world is the one they live in “[despoil God] of his judgment and providence” and “shut him up idle in heaven” (*Institutes* 1.6.2). And, as noted earlier, it was widely believed that to deny “God’s providence” was *ipso facto* to “be immoral” since it was assumed that only the “fear of punishment” for violating God’s immutable, providential laws “would restrain [one] from

evildoing” (Wootton 86). In the later seventeenth century, the German moral and political theorist Samuel Pufendorf expresses this opinion when he includes “pirates” in an infernal alliance comprising “those whose manner of life is an open profession of their villainy,” “atheists, who deny either the existence of God or his divine providence,” and “those persons who deny the immortality of the soul,” people whose only idea of “justice” is “that which is based on advantage, measured by their own judgment” (qtd. in Wootton 86).

What underlies the condemnation of atheistic persons such as pirates, in other words, is the fear that, without God as the source and adjudicator of moral law, objective standards for defining behavior would disappear, to be replaced by an infinite variety of subjective, relative standards which could always be reconfigured or reworked to justify whatever behavior suited a particular individual’s or group’s advantage at any given moment. Thus it would become impossible to arrive at firm, commonly agreed upon value judgments about which human activities counted as ethically justifiable and which counted as ethically unjustifiable. We have already seen one example of this fear at play in *Fortune by Land and Sea*, when Clinton describes as “trade” the voyages of plunder he and Purser undertake. He suggests that there is no essential difference between piracy and mercantile voyages and, so, argues that, as pirates, they should be allowed to “freely use our trade.” This moment is only one among many moments in Heywood and Rowley’s text that show deep affinities between those seamen, such as the real Purser and Clinton, who counted as “bad” pirates in late Elizabethan and early Stuart England and those who counted as “good” privateers, represented in the play by the heroic Young Forrest, and between merchants and pirates in general.

Critics including Claire Jowitt, Barbara Fuchs, and Mark Netzloff have demonstrated how the play develops these parallels through highlighting the similar methods and motives that figure into the sea voyages of Purser and Clinton and Young Forrest and through references to the shift in the state's maritime policy and laws regarding piracy that occurred when James succeeded Elizabeth to the throne. Before looking more closely at the ways *Fortune by Land and Sea* accomplishes these ends, however, I would like first to consider how James' proclamations against piracy reveal an uneasy rhetorical strategy that combines providentialism, state law, and political expediency to justify his new maritime policy. I hope to show that, as a result of that strategy, James' maritime policy could have been seen by contemporaries as an act of Machiavellian opportunism that made religion the tool of political power and that would, contrary to the intent of his proclamations, actually foster in his seafaring subjects a skeptical disregard, of the sort exemplified by Purser and Clinton in Heywood and Rowley's play, of religion and the law.

When James came to the throne of England and made peace with Spain, a component of that peace was the reversal of Elizabeth's longstanding policy of tacitly or openly supporting piracy, and his proclamations concerning piracy suggest repeatedly that this shift in policy is one that enacts God's will, insofar as it seeks to suppress what he describes as ungodly piratical acts. Referring in his proclamation of 30 September 1603 to a series of "divers great and enormous spoyles and Piracies" recently committed by "English Pirats" in the Straits of Gibraltar, James claims that such acts bring not only "dishonour [to] this State," but also "great displeasure [to] God" (Larkin and Hughes 55-56). And his "Proclamation for revocation of Mariners from forreine Services" of 1

March 1605 takes aim at the “unlawfull and ungodly course of living by Spoile,” while another from July of that year takes issue with “inferiour Officers” in the “Ports” and “Maritime Counties” who, rather than doing their duty of acting as “industrious watches over those that runne” their “wicked courses” in the underground economy of piracy, instead act as “Receitors or Abettors of the same” (108; 115). James warns that those who are complicit in the network of piracy violate the King’s law, the dictates of conscience, and the law of God all at the same time. He expects them to uphold the law with “continuall care and vigilancie” not only “out of feare of his Majesties displeasure,” but also “for conscience sake” and because those that “hinder not the evill of others” as their “perculiar places and duties” require them to do are “as well accomptable to God” as pirates themselves (115).

Yet the argument throughout his proclamations that piracy contravenes the law of God as well as James’ own laws, thereby making James’ policy against piracy but an expression of God’s own policy against pirates, contains a number of loopholes and conditions that threaten to undermine the argument itself, including its alignment of James’ will with God’s will. If at times the language of the proclamations is clear and emphatic in claiming that piracy is abhorrent in both God’s eyes and the eyes of the law, this claim is outweighed by the greater attention James gives to making it clear that it is only a very particular kind of violence committed against ships at sea by Englishmen—not maritime violence in general—that he is concerned to keep in check. James’ “Proclamation concerning Warlike ships at Sea” of 23 June 1603, for example, is sensitive to that fact that some of England’s “warlike” mariners might find themselves

unfairly caught out engaging in an activity that the government, under Elizabeth, had encouraged one day and then, under James, criminalized the next:

We are not ignorant, that our late deare sister the late Queene of England, had of long time warres with the King of Spaine, and during that time gave Licences and Commissions to divers of her, and our now Subjects, to set out and furnish to Sea, at their charge, divers ships warlikly appointed, for the surprising and taking of the said Kings subjects and goods, and for the enjoying of the same, being taken and brought home as lawful prize.

(Larkin and Hughes 30)

After acknowledging that some English sailors may still be taking prizes at sea under the impression that they are doing so with the government's approval, not yet having become aware of James' peace with Spain and his subsequent change in policy towards Spanish shipping, and that the shift in policy will bring severe economic hardship to "a great number of our good and serviceable Subjects," James offers those sailors a grace period (31). He proclaims that those "Shippes of warre" which "have set out" to hunt at sea with letters of marque issued by Elizabeth prior to her death and which, being unaware of James' ascension to the throne, have captured Spanish ships and "returned" with these prizes "into any of our Dominions" during the first month of his reign "shall quietly enjoy the sayde Shippes and goods taken" (31). Those mariners who sail with Elizabeth's letters of marque but who have captured Spanish prizes after that date will have the spoils taken from them, so that they may be returned to their "true Proprietaries," while any mariners who sail without letters of marque and attack the ships of any of James' allies "shall bee reputed and taken as Pirates, and both they and all their

accessaries, maintainers, comforters, abettors, and partakers shall suffer death as Pirates, and accessaries to piracie” (31).

James, therefore, distinguishes between privateers, those whose plundering was underwritten by Elizabeth’s government, and pirates, those whose plundering is done on their own or, as later proclamations demonstrate, a foreign monarch’s behalf. And he takes a more lenient approach with privateers than with pirates. Nonetheless, the increased severity with which his government will handle privateers who continue to operate after the grace period ends implies that these privateers will effectively mutate into something different—pirates—something hateful to God, as if James is claiming to have identified the precise date at which something previously designated as good by God will transform into something evil. Furthermore, James reserves the right to change his policy again in the future, by reinstating privateering and thus reverting to Elizabeth’s approach to maritime plundering, should future “Warres” make it apparent that England’s economic and military well-being would benefit from the “forwardnesse” of his “loving and dutifull Subjects” in “venturing their lives and goods for the weakning of the publique enemy” (31). The quite carefully expedient manner in which the “Proclamation concerning Warlike ships at Sea” distinguishes privateering from piracy might plausibly have raised doubts in its audience about the extent to which James was motivated by a concern to identify and prohibit the “real” crime of piracy, whose reality supposedly stemmed from the fact that it breached an objective moral law ostensibly laid down by God, rather than to create, and reserve the right to un-create, a crime based on whether the particular violent actions under consideration served to help or hinder the state’s immediate political objectives.

James' practice of conflating God's law with English law regarding piracy becomes especially tied in knots in his 1605 "Proclamation for revocation of Mariners from forreine Services." Here his target is the "many Mariners and Seafaring men" of his realm who "leave their ordinary and honest vocation" of "Trading in Merchantly Voyages" and "betake themselves to the Service of divers forreine States, under the Title of men of Warre" (108). These seamen, according to James, have a predisposition to "make profit by Spoile," a "custome and habite" they acquired as privateers "in the time of Warre" between Spain and England while Elizabeth was on the throne (108). Now, as privateers working on behalf of foreign rulers, these sailors "have thereby occasion to continue their unlawfull and ungodly course of living by Spoile" (108). James takes a skeptical view of these new privateering contracts between Englishmen and foreign governments. English mariners

[use] the service of those Princes but for colour and pretext, [. . .] in effect making themselves commonly no better then Pirats to robbe both our owne Subjects their Countreymen, and the Subjects of other Princes our neighbours, going in their honest Trade of Merchandize: By which courses they doe impeach the quiet Traffique of Nations one with the other, leave our Realme unfurnished of men of their sort, if we should have cause to use them, and inure themselves to an impious disposition of living by rapine and evill meanes. (108)

When it comes to foreign princes, James no longer recognizes any distinction between privateer and pirate: they are the same "unlawfull and ungodly" thing. But in his rush to erase this distinction, James seems unaware that doing so also undermines that distinction

when it comes to privateers plundering for England, the distinction that he was careful to maintain in his 1603 proclamation. Indeed, the wording of this latest proclamation suggests that loyal English privateers are just as much ungodly pirates as their disloyal counterparts. To begin with, these unfaithful privateers were once loyal English plunderers themselves, and entering into foreign service merely enables them to “*continue*” their sinful ways. What counts as ungodly violence at sea when it is done on behalf of foreign princes, in other words, also counted as ungodly violence when it was done on behalf of Elizabeth. In addition, after having inadvertently established that privateers and pirates amount to the same impious beings, regardless of whether they serve an English or a foreign ruler, James goes on to lament that because “men of their sort” are employed by foreign states, their piratical talents are unavailable to England, should they be required. This complaint raises some uncomfortable questions. If piracy done for a foreign state is ungodly, and if it was also ungodly when it was done for Elizabeth’s sake, would it not be just as ungodly done for James’ sake? And if not, what precisely would remove the taint of ungodliness from it in that case? In short, this proclamation’s apparently accidental characterization of both privateering and piracy as irreligious undertakings comes dangerously close to making James’ project of denouncing “ungodly” foreign piracy, while at the same time maintaining his own right to employ pirates/privateers, seem hardly more than “colour and pretext,” a rather transparent attempt to disguise his own all-too-worldly endeavors in a cloak of divinity.

Overall, the language of James’ proclamations suggests that those proclamations do not bring the monarch’s laws concerning piracy in line with God’s wishes so much as they reconfigure God’s wishes to conform to eminently mutable human laws, laws which

will change as circumstances change. In other words, it is not difficult to see how James' proclamations against piracy could have been understood by his subjects as an instance of Machiavellianism, of religious "truth" being made to serve secular policy rather than the other way around. Paying attention to the rhetorical gymnastics of these proclamations allows us to see just what it is that Purser insinuates in *Fortune by Land and Sea* when he says, of himself and Clinton, "our country have proclaim'd us pyrats, / And cut us off from any claim [*i.e.*, right] in *England*" (4.1.1618-19). Mark Netzloff remarks that, "despite" Heywood and Rowley's "selection of two historical Elizabethan pirates," Purser and Clinton, as antagonists in the play's sea plot, this moment "firmly places [the two] in the context of contemporary Jacobean efforts to suppress piracy," insofar as Purser's use of the word "proclaims" is a "reference to James I's numerous Royal Proclamations concerning piracy" (58). Purser suggests that he and Clinton are not pirates in fact, in any objective or real sense, but only in the context of a particular time and place, when it serves someone's (the English state's) interests to identify them as such, that time being James' peace with Spain and that place being England (hence the emphasis Purser places on the word "England"). Just as Purser and Clinton take advantage of the opportunity that occasion presents them to further their own interests by seizing the Merchant's ship, so, Purser implies, James' denunciations of pirates amount to but an instance in which the English state has seized an opportunity presented by occasion to further its own interests.

Heywood and Rowley's text builds on Purser's insinuation that the crown's policies are contingent in nature by setting up Purser and Clinton's piratical enterprise as a "double" or "parallel," as Barbara Fuchs observes, of Young Forrest's seafaring

endeavors as well as of the political organization of the English state, in a manner that casts doubt on the ethical legitimacy of that state (54-55). As pirates, Purser and Clinton mimic and, in doing so, represent a challenge to the legitimacy of the English state. They also represent a metaphysical system—that of “pagan” fortune and fate—that mimics the metaphysical system of Christian providence in which Forrest, the Merchant, and their friends and family believe, and mimics it in a way that raises doubts about just how much Heywood and Rowley’s text itself “believes” in that providential framework.

The similarities in *Fortune by Land and Sea* between Young Forrest, whose actions at sea call to mind those of Elizabethan privateers, and the pirates Purser and Clinton have the effect of making Purser and Clinton’s status as criminal antagonists ambivalent at best, insofar as those similarities cause us to question how much Purser and Clinton deserve to be treated as criminals. Of central importance in this regard is the fact that Purser and Clinton and Young Forrest are all at odds with English law not because of any inherent injustice in their actions but because of inconsistencies with the law itself. As noted previously, the play suggests that the initial cause of Purser and Clinton’s criminality is that they have been caught out by a shift in English law concerning piracy, not that their actions as pirates are essentially criminal. The law has not discovered their criminal nature; rather, it has criminalized them. In Young Forrest’s case, he runs afoul of the law and flees to sea after killing in a duel the “quarrelsome Gentleman” Rainsford in retribution for Rainsford’s unjustified slaying of Forrest’s brother, Frank, during a fit of insolent arrogance (75). That Young Forrest’s killing of Rainsford is an act of “just revenge” is made apparent by the fact that the recently impoverished Forrests cannot rely on the law to bring to justice the rich, well-connected gentleman who has murdered one

of their own (1.2.263). As Young Forrest observes, Rainsford “hath such honourable [*i.e.*, reputable and powerful] friends to guard him” that to look to the “Law” for recourse would be but to “bark against the Moon,” especially given that the Forrests “are poor, and the world frowns on all [their] fortune” (1.2.259-260, 264). Like Purser and Clinton, therefore, Forrest comes to be at sea in defiance of an English legal system that has, in effect, turned him into a criminal. In fact, from a strictly legal standpoint, Forrest’s actions at sea mark him as just as much a pirate as Purser and Clinton, even if his actions are considered from the standpoint of Elizabethan, rather than Jacobean, policy concerning piracy. Claire Jowitt points out that Forrest’s practice of distributing the spoils of his raids on shipping among his crew while still at sea would have violated “the official Elizabethan policy of the prize being divided only on return to England, thus ensuring that the crown was awarded a certain percentage of the spoils” (“Piracy” 227). In addition, Forrest’s lack of state sponsorship for his plundering, even if he limits his attacks to the ships of those nations, such as Spain, which were England’s “foes” during Elizabeth’s reign, would have made him a pirate in the eyes of Elizabeth’s government (4.2.1715; Fuchs 46).

Further similarities between the heroic Forrest and the pirates are to be found in the respect they each have for their adversaries in the naval battles they engage in during the play’s fourth act and in the way they distribute the spoils of those battles. After Purser and Clinton have captured the Merchant’s ship, Clinton shows his admiration of the military skill and bravery the Merchant and his men have displayed in resisting the attack:

A gallant prize, and bravely purchast too,

With loss of blood on both sides. A sea fight
Was never better managed nor employed
With more exchange of hostile opposition,
We did not look for such a valiant spirit
In any Merchants breast; nor did we think
A ship of such small burden, so weakly man'd,
Would have endur'd so hot and proud a fight. (4.1.1587-94)

Young Forrest echoes such language when he proclaims his desire to hunt down Purser and Clinton and thereby win the “thousand pounds reward” and the “pardon” being offered by the crown for bringing in these notorious pirates (4.2.1696, 1698). His description of his quarry reveals the respect and awe in which he holds them. They are “valiant Pirats” who are

So fear'd of all that trade for Merchandise,
So proud of their strong vessels and stout ging [crew],
That man her with their proud Artillery
That thunders wrack to every ship alike. (4.2.1693, 1707-10)

And after Forrest does defeat the pirates, his account of the battle echoes Clinton's account of his own crew's fight with the Merchant. Forrest describes his ship's “great victory” over theirs as “Bought with fearful hazard of our lives, / And large expence of blood on either part” (1842-44). Likewise, Forrest and the pirates both apparently employ an egalitarian system of wealth distribution on their ships. Referring to the captured vessel of the Merchant, Purser tells his crew:

The spoyl of this rich ship we will divide

In equal shares, and not the meanest of any,
But by the custom of the sea may challenge

According to his place, rights in the spoyl. (4.1.1581-84)

Forrest uses almost identical language when telling his shipmates how the booty from the pirates' ship will be distributed: "the riches of their ship / We 'mongst you will divide in equal shares, / To every mans desart, estate, and place" (4.2.1850-52).

One intended effect of such resemblances between Forrest and the pirates seems to be to prevent our feeling any easy, straightforward antipathy to Purser and Clinton as the play's antagonists. The play superimposes Forrest and the pirates on one another, makes them mimic one another, so that some of the sympathy we feel for Forrest, as the play's heroic figure, becomes transferred to Purser and Clinton, who, as a result, come to seem less antagonistic. This is especially so when it comes to the similar manner in which Forrest and the pirates distribute wealth on their ships. Not only does that particular similarity show the pirates to be not so different from the heroic Forrest. It also establishes that the shipboard community of the pirates—again, the supposed antagonists or "enemies" in the world of the play—is more consistently equitable and just for its members than the land-based social system, the English state, which Forrest continues to champion, despite the corruption in that system's hierarchical nature that makes it impossible for his family to find justice within it. As Jowitt puts it, the scene in which Purser sets out the rules of wealth distribution on the pirate ship "[makes] it abundantly clear that we are witnessing an alternative, possibly superior, social world" ("Piracy" 224). It is an alternative social order or "parallel state" in which the rule of law holds firm (Fuchs 55). In Purser's words, "Though Out-laws, we keep laws amongst our

selves, / Else we could have no certain government” (4.1.1585-86). It is, in addition, a social order that stands as a kind of improved version of the monarchical government that holds sway in England. More than once, *Fortune by Land and Sea* portrays Purser and Clinton as monarchs of the sea. During the fifth act, as they await execution on the gallows at Wapping, Purser recalls the time when he and Clinton “raign’d” as “Lords, / Nay Kings at Sea” and “the Ocean was our realm,” where “the light billows in which we sayl’d” were “Our hundreds, nay our shires, and provinces, / That brought us annual profit” (5.1.2157-61). In identifying pirates as kings, this scene reminds the audience of the violent origins of monarchy, when feudal lords first subdued the lands that would become income-producing realms, much as Purser and Clinton have lorded it over the seas, reaping their profits from the ships they have subdued. But Purser and Clinton’s realm is also a democratic monarchy of sorts, inasmuch as they practice distributing the riches of that realm in “equal shares” among their crew.

The pirates’ “certain government” at sea amounts to a “coded comment,” to use Jowitt’s phrase, that rebukes an England where the rule of law is subject to the corrupting influence of the rich and the powerful and where, as a result, government is not quite “certain” (“Piracy” 224). After all, in taking his revenge on Rainsford, Forrest chooses not to be governed by the law, to go outside of it, precisely because he knows he will not find justice within it. Similarly, Purser’s reference to James’ proclamations against piracy hints that he and Clinton have chosen not to be governed by English law because the inconsistency of laws concerning piracy has unfairly defined them as criminals. Thus Clinton’s abovementioned reply to the Merchant’s indignation at having been targeted by him and Purser can also be read as a moment of sarcastic defiance, in which Clinton

implies that the inconstancy of English law has made ungovernable subjects of himself and his fellow pirate captain: “We know we are Pirates, and profess to rob, / And wouldst not have us freely use our trade?”

The staging of the pirates’ execution on the docks at Wapping intensifies still further the relatively sympathetic light *Fortune by Land and Sea* has cast on them up to that point. Their gallows speeches suggest, according to Jowitt, that “the pirates’ deaths are not necessarily to be celebrated,” by showcasing their intrepid bravery and naval prowess to indicate that they and their kind would be loyal, patriotic Englishmen who would do their country great service, as they have done in the past, if they were treated better and more wisely by the crown (“Rogue” 60). Purser exhorts his “Worthy mate” Clinton to maintain his dignity and boldness as the moment of death approaches:

We have a flash left of some half hour long,
That let us burn out bravely, not behind us
Leave a black noysom snuf of cowardice
Ith’ nostrils of our noble countrymen;
Lets dye no base example. (5.1.2164-69)

He goes on to bemoan what he describes as the senseless waste of courageous and talented pirates, “gallant spirits,” on Execution Dock at Wapping, which he refers to variously as a “gulf,” “this infortunate peece of land,” “a quick sand,” and a “ship” that he and Clinton are doomed to take on a “desperate voyage” (5.1.2201, 2204, 2237, 2212-13). He implies that the crown will come to regret its hard-line position on piracy: Wapping “shall swallow many a brave Marine souldier, / Of whose valour, experience, skil, and Naval discipline, / Being lost, I wish this land [England] may never have need”

(5.1.2238-40). And he directly accuses the legal apparatus of the crown of a shameful display of ingratitude to those who have done much to raise the profile of the English in a global scramble for imperial dominance. The “silver oare,” that is, the “badge” worn by the officer of the Admiralty courts who attends the execution, will “blush in blood” for putting to death so many of the pirate “Captains” who have “aw’d the seas,” “commanded Ilands,” collected “Tribute” from the “Indian Mines,” subdued the “Turk,” and “made Armadoes fly before our stream” (5.1.2202-08; Doh 274).

As Mark Netzloff observes, Purser’s words on Execution Dock offer the play’s audience a “sympathetic rendering of the pirates and their contributions to the English nation,” one that places piracy at the center of a “nostalgic narrative of Elizabethan heroism” (67). By having their piratical characters offer to a Jacobean audience this nostalgic evocation of a bygone Elizabethan era—when an aggressive, adventurous, and nationalistic impulse led the way towards establishing English power at sea—from the gallows where they are about to be hanged, Heywood and Rowley in effect make the execution scene also one of mourning for a “past golden age,” for something precious that has been regrettably lost in the transfer of power from Elizabeth to James (Netzloff 67). It might be said that by the time Purser and Clinton meet their ends, they have morphed from being the antagonists in *Fortune by Land and Sea*’s sea plot into quasi-heroic figures.

The way the pirates mimic both the heroic Forrest and the English crown he ultimately serves works to raise doubts about what counts as legitimate in the play. On one level, these doubts have to do with political and legal legitimacy. Which is the legitimate state? Is it the English state, where the poor and unfortunate such as Forrest

cannot find justice within the law unless they effectively cut a deal with or do a favor for the government, one which serves the government's interests regardless of whether or not those interests seem ethically justifiable? This is essentially what Forrest does by hunting down the pirates Purser and Clinton. To save himself, he must accommodate himself to the English state's contradictory and ethically questionable policy towards privateering and piracy. Or is the legitimate state the microstate of Purser and Clinton's ship? Like the English state, the pirate ship may also have an ethically questionable "policy" towards maritime violence. But the apparently egalitarian distribution of wealth on the pirate ship makes for a much less hierarchical, more just social arrangement than that found on English soil, where a more rigid social hierarchy has a corrupting influence on the course of justice.

On another, perhaps more fundamental, level, the pirates' mimicry raises doubts about the otherwise providential thrust of *Fortune by Land and Sea*. Whereas Purser and Clinton attribute their downfall and Forrest's victory over them at sea to the insurmountable workings of fortune and fate, Forrest reads the happy reversal of his fortunes as evidence of divine providence's oversight of human events, in a way that rewards the righteous and the virtuous. Once his defeat of the pirates is certain, Forrest makes sure to acknowledge the helping hand of God: "First thanks to heaven for this great victory" (4.5.1842). Later, he speaks of the recently widowed Anne, the woman who helped him escape to sea in the first place by putting him in touch with her brother, the Merchant, to arrange passage on one of his vessels, as a kind of guardian angel sent from heaven to protect him. He takes the help Anne has given him to mean that he owes her a debt of gratitude and love, and he interprets the recent death of her husband as a

sign from God that he ought to repay that debt by marrying her. There is “a providence that prompts” him to propose to her and his proposal, accordingly, is framed in terms of repaying the debt he owes to her and, through her, to heaven (5.2.2348). He addresses Anne as the “Gentle Lady” whom the “heavens have made my preserver” when “Married you venter’d for my single life,” so that now, being “Widdow’d,” she might “by me” once again “gain the name of wife” (5.2.2352, 2358-59). The marriage of Forrest and Anne—especially considering the wealth and renewed social power Forrest brings to the marriage from his adventures at sea and the wealth that Anne brings to it from the inheritance her first husband has left her—epitomizes what on the surface seems to be the play’s conventionally Christian message: that God’s hand guides all things and rewards virtue in the process. Thus Forrest is ultimately rewarded for the loyalty he has shown to his family by avenging his brother’s death and for the loyalty and gratitude he shows to Anne. In turn, God rewards Ann for the Christian “charity” she has earlier shown to Forrest, a stranger whom she chose to “succor” rather than turn away when she first encountered him as a “distrest” fugitive unjustly hunted by the law (2.3.934).

The legitimacy of this framing of events through a providential lens is, however, made questionable by the cumulative effect of the close parallels Heywood and Rowley’s text draws between the pirates and Forrest and between the pirates’ seaborne “state” and the English state. That cumulative effect is the nagging sense that the pirates’ downfall has less to do with their being supposedly morally reprobate sinners in a supposedly just world watched over by a benevolent God and more to do with their being caught on the losing end of a series of events that have been caused by an impersonal, arbitrary force, whether that force is fortune or fate, that operates without regard to the moral standing of

the people whose destinies it determines. If it is just that things work out well for Forrest in the end, it is less clear that justice is served by the execution of Purser and Clinton, whom the play sets up as doubles of Forrest not in the sense they are necessarily “dark” or “evil” versions of Forrest but in the sense that they are very much like Forrest except for the fact that they end up on the wrong side of luck and circumstances. After all, *Fortune by Land and Sea* offers no indication that Purser and Clinton have the opportunity to capture Forrest and return *him* to England in exchange for clemency from the crown. Clinton and Purser’s case might, therefore, be summed up by saying, “There but for the grace of God goes Forrest.” And Heywood and Rowley leave it less than obvious why Forrest deserves that grace any more than the pirates do.

Netzloff suggests how this predicament in the play can be resolved by seeing it in Calvinist terms when he notes the “Calvinist language evoked in *Fortune by Land and Sea*” (63). In this reading, the difficulty the play presents in terms of understanding why the pirates deserve their fates just as much as Forrest deserves his combines with its references to God’s providence to elaborate a vision of a providence that is at once just and inscrutable. That is, we are meant to take it on faith that Forrest is destined to be saved by God, that the pirates are destined to be damned by God, and that in both cases the “eschatological status” of these characters is in accord with their moral fitness or unfitness, even if the connection is not apparent to our “fallen” human understanding (Walsham, *Providence* 19).

Nonetheless, if these Calvinist elements are indeed present in the sea plot and its aftermath in Heywood and Rowley’s play, that in itself ironically makes the events depicted in the sea plot and its aftermath more amenable to a non-providential

interpretation, the sort of interpretation of events touched on above that, according to Alexandra Walsham, “Elizabethan and early Stuart clergy” worried was all too prevalent among English men and women (*Providence*, 20). “Protestant divines” fretted about the popularity of “‘heathenish’ concepts of fate and fortune” among the “laity,” many of whom “had no understanding of, if not outright contempt for” the “crucial doctrine” of providence (20-21). These benighted souls, like Purser and Clinton, explained the “vicissitudes” of their lives as caused by forces such as “chance, ‘haphazard’, and luck,” the “fickle goddess Fortuna,” or “‘a fatall kind of necessity’, a remorseless, inexorable force which men and women could do nothing to evade” (21-22). One reason for the persistence of these alternative “theor[ies] of causation” was that, from an experiential standpoint, it was difficult to distinguish between them and the “divine determinism” of the Calvinist theory of predestination (21, 22). To many, for example, there seemed to be no reliable way of determining that the trajectory of one’s life was predestined by God’s plan to match one’s moral integrity or lack thereof, rather than the unfolding of the unchangeable path mapped out for one by an indiscriminate, “Stoicall destinie” that could not care one way or the other whether one was a good or a bad person (22). As Walsham puts it, “The cynical objection of ‘calumniators’ that providence was merely a Calvinist rehash of classic Senecan thinking had all too convincing a ring” (22). In short, one of the unintended consequences of the Calvinist theory of providence was that it could foster unbelief in those who found it difficult, if not impossible, to comprehend. And one particular form of incomprehension and unbelief, noted by Ernest A. Strathmann, was rooted in the question of how a just providence could be said to exist when so often it appeared that “the righteous perish” while the “wicked prosper” (Strathmann 87).

Fortune by Land and Sea does not quite offer a simple portrait of the righteous perishing and the wicked prospering. Neither does it overtly put forward the fact that the righteous frequently suffer while the wicked prosper as evidence that providence does not exist. But through the close parallels the play's sea plot draws between the quasi-heroic pirates and the heroic, self-appointed privateer Forrest and between the pirates' "outlaw," seagoing "state" and the "lawful" English state, it deeply complicates the matter of identifying who is righteous and who is wicked in the play. This complication, in turn, complicates the matter of deciding which, if any, theory of causation the play privileges: the providentialism that is associated with Forrest or the belief in fortune and fate through which Purser and Clinton understand their rise and fall in the world. The providentialism represented by Forrest offers an inadequate explanation of why Purser and Clinton must die on the gallows while Forrest prospers, given that the reasons for their being at sea, outside the law, and engaging in piracy appear, once we have taken into account the historical context provided by James' proclamations against piracy, to be as understandable as Forrest's reasons for being at sea, outside the law, and engaging in piracy. In order to reconcile the providentialism in the play with this inconsistency, we must invoke the escape clause offered by the Calvinist notion of an inscrutable providence, a providence that it is just even if knowing why and how it is just is something that is "beyond the reach of human reason or experience" (Elton 9). But in going this far to rationalize Purser's and Clinton's deaths, it is not difficult to see how their belief in fortune and fate offers an equally plausible explanation for their execution: it is simply something that happens to them as a result of larger, arbitrary forces working themselves out and without regard to the question of whether or not the pirates deserve

what happens to them. In this way, the discourse of fate and fortune that the pirates represent in the play not only mimics the discourse of providence that Forrest represents, but it also undercuts the credibility of the providentialism that Heywood and Rowley's text otherwise bestows on it.

The sea plot of *Fortune by Land and Sea* thus takes its audience on a disorienting journey to the limits of providentialism as a theory of causation. At these outer limits we encounter pirates, liminal figures who blur the distinction between protagonists and antagonists in the play and thereby highlight important points of ambiguity in Calvinist eschatology: that of identifying who is of the elect and who is of the damned and that of making sense of *why* the elect have been chosen and the damned have been rejected by God. And by highlighting these points of ambiguity in Calvinist providentialism, the pirates also highlight its point of contact with rival theories of causation such as fortune and fate, the point at which the Calvinist vision of the "bafflingly inscrutable" ways of providence becomes for all practical purposes indistinguishable from a "heathenish" vision of a world in which humans are tossed to and fro by the erratic, "capricious" operations of fortune or driven by "a remorseless, inexorable" fate which they "[can] do nothing to evade" (Elton 9; Walsham, *Providence* 21, 22). As a result, when Forrest returns to land from his sea voyage, it is anything but certain, despite his and other characters' claims to the contrary, that he is returning to a world where justice always triumphs in the end, because a benevolent God makes sure that it does, and not to a world where a cracked façade of justice imperfectly masks the reality of arbitrarily determined winners and losers.

The difficulty of distinguishing between providence and fortune is also at stake in the way that Shakespeare's *Hamlet* presents Hamlet's famous sea voyage from Denmark towards England and his encounter with pirates during it. Much has been written about the spiritual transformation that Hamlet appears to undergo as a result of his experiences during this voyage. Critics have often seen this transformation as Hamlet's finally coming to recognize the full force of God's providence in shaping his destiny, so that when he returns from the sea to Denmark, his prior agonizing over if, how, and when he should revenge himself on Claudius for the murder of his father is replaced by a supreme resignation and readiness to do whatever the course of events seems to position him to do to bring about that revenge.²² Hamlet, in other words, has come to conceive of himself as a passive instrument of providence, whose role is to complete the actions providence wants him to complete and not to think, as he puts it, "too precisely on th' event[s]" in which he is caught up and what their consequences may be (4.4.41). Yet, as far as I have been able to discover, the critical attention that has been paid to the providential element of Hamlet's sea voyage has not noted the curious traces in that voyage of the popular motif in medieval and Renaissance writing of the rudderless or un-steerable boat that is guided by God alone. While the ship on which Hamlet travels towards England and which is attacked by pirates and the pirate ship on which he returns to Denmark are, from a literal standpoint, anything but rudderless, un-steerable boats, such as the one in which Chaucer's Custance sails, the details of his sea voyage nonetheless share a number of the defining features of tales of rudderless boats driven along by providence. But the sea voyage in *Hamlet* evokes the rudderless-boat motif only then to turn it against itself. The

²² See Ide 313; Gold 54-55; Calderwood 273; Pannu 105; and Mahon 45.

play subjects the image of the un-steerable but divinely guided boat to a skeptical treatment by framing it within a narrative of questionable reliability, which Hamlet himself provides about the voyage. Hamlet's narrative is at pains to construct the actions of the pirates who attack his ship and what amount to piratical actions on Hamlet's part during the voyage as, in fact, acts planned by God in order to reveal His hand in determining the course of Hamlet's life. But within the overall context of the play, Hamlet's account of what happens to him at sea comes to seem as if it may be a "pirated" or counterfeit representation of what happens and of *why* those things happen. The result is that by the play's end it is questionable whether Hamlet's sea voyage and, by extension, the events of his life have been steered by a just providence or by an arbitrary, uncaring fortune.

In *The English Romance in Time: Transforming Motifs from Geoffrey of Monmouth to the Death of Shakespeare*, Helen Cooper devotes a chapter to the literary history of stories concerning boats "carrying no equipment for steering or propulsion" in which such boats were "a guarantee of providential adventure" (106). The history of such stories "goes back beyond legend into myth" and also has roots in "the actual practice of casting adrift or exposure on water" in "early societies" where "malefactors," the "unwanted," and other "social outcasts" were "often [. . .] quite literally, cast out from [. . .] their community" (108). "Exposure at sea" was one form of such casting out and put the "fate" of its victims "in the hands of the gods, or of God" (108). In a Christian frame of reference, the "lack of agency" that one has in an un-steerable boat is crucial, for it puts one entirely "at the mercy of the seas and winds," which are but instruments through which God exercises His providence (108). Therefore, what becomes of the

person exposed at sea in this way is to be understood as the revelation of the particular plan, the special providence, that God has in store for that person. That is, the un-steerable or rudderless boat is a “means of making visible the judgement of God” (132).²³

Cooper also details some of the common features that recur in stories of providentially driven boats of this kind. The most common feature, not surprisingly, is that the boat is in some way un-steerable. It lacks a rudder, oars, a sail, or all of those things, or the boat’s means of propulsion has become disabled in some way (106, 124-25). The lack of means to direct the boat does not always have to be this literal, however, just as the vessel does not always have to be a literal boat. Cooper notes that there is a “recurrent analogy drawn in text after text” about “victim[s] exposed on water” with the story of Jonah and the whale, in which the whale is analogous to the boat (119). A whale, of course, has ample ability to steer itself, but Jonah and the victim in un-steerable boats are both “[helpless] . . . to direct where they are going” (119). What is important, in other words, is that the victim who has been put to sea is unable to control the vessel, not that the vessel is itself uncontrollable. A second important feature of such voyages, as I have already suggested, is that the passengers that are these stories’ main focus have been expelled from their societies for one reason or another. They can be simple criminals, but more often than not they seem to be inconvenient or dangerous, though not necessarily criminal, people who have been unfairly cast out to sea. Often they are rulers’ “political enem[ies]” and have some claim “to [a] throne,” thereby making them,

²³ J. R. Reinhard also gives the history of the belief that a boat drifting on the sea is a means of divine revelation: “Among the ancient Greeks the sea was considered an arbiter of sin and innocence. To have adventured upon the sea without accident was a presumption of purity and virtue. [. . .] The sea would not injure the innocent, and persons accidentally or purposefully cast upon its surface were safely conveyed to shore. [. . .] The belief in the arbitrament of the sea survived into Christian times, and the Christian god replaced the pagan divinity of the sea” (35-36).

from those “ruler[s]’ point of view,” “potential traitors, threatening deposition or assassination” (113). And they are political rivals whose “execution or murder” by the reigning monarch “would be likely to result in [. . .] a rebellion against the ruler who ordered it” (114). Furthermore, the victims of exposure at sea often inevitably return to the places from which they have been thrown out (115).

Hamlet’s voyage shares these features, some more obviously than others. Perhaps most obviously, Hamlet is sent on this voyage by his political enemy, Claudius, the usurping uncle who has secretly poisoned the rightful king, Hamlet’s father, and taken the throne. Claudius ships Hamlet to sea after his unusual behavior at the Danish court and his sudden killing of Polonius make Claudius feel that he is a troublemaker and a political danger who must be gotten out of the way. Claudius knows that Hamlet is close to the hearts of Denmark’s people, so that it would be politically very dangerous to punish Hamlet openly for Polonius’ death (4.3.3-7). Because he feels Hamlet is too dangerous to have near him but also knows that he cannot be seen to have Hamlet’s blood on his hands, Claudius decides that the politic thing to do is to ship him off to England and have the English kill him, well out of the sight of Denmark’s populace. Much like usurping rulers in tales of rudderless boats, then, Claudius looks to the sea as a means to be rid of a political rival. Unlike the typical usurper in such tales, though, Claudius does not plan to leave his victim’s ultimate fate up to God by casting him adrift in an unsteerable boat and letting the sea, or, rather, providence, do with him what it will. He gives explicit instructions to Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, who accompany Hamlet on his voyage, and in the letters that these two carry that Hamlet is to pass over the sea to England in a very steerable ship and be killed there by all-too-human hands.

Nevertheless, providence seems to intervene anyway, in numerous ways that effectively take the control of the ships in which Hamlet travels out of human hands, at least according to Hamlet's narrative of events at sea. This narrative portrays the actions Hamlet and the pirates take during those events as, in fact, actions that a divine force compels them to take. I will look more closely in a few moments at how his narrative does so. Right now, I simply want to make the point that Hamlet's description makes God the real actor of those actions, and Hamlet and the pirates ultimately God's passive tools, so that those events in essence become the means by which God makes His judgment visible at sea. Finally, as in tales of rudderless boats, Hamlet, the victim ejected to sea, returns to the land from which he has been ejected, against the hopes and intentions of the usurping ruler, Claudius. And further tying his sea voyage to common plot elements in tales of rudderless boats is the fact that Hamlet, once he has returned to Denmark, suggests that he sees himself as something of a dispossessed heir. He accuses Claudius of "having killed my king and whored my mother" and "popped in between th' election and my hopes" (5.2.64-65). Hamlet feels that Claudius has unfairly deprived him of his chances of following in his father's footsteps by assuming the crown in Denmark's elective monarchy.

As for Hamlet's providentialist narrative of his sea voyage, it is delivered in the letter he writes to Horatio alerting him of his unexpected return to Denmark and in his conversation with Horatio after Horatio has rushed off to meet the freshly arrived Hamlet. During this conversation, Hamlet recounts his restlessness on board the ship heading to England during the night before that ship's "sea-fight" with a pirate ship (5.2.54). He describes "a kind a fighting" in his heart that "would not let [him] sleep" (5.2.4-5). This

restlessness somewhat mysteriously prompted Hamlet “rashly” to leave his cabin and go surreptitiously rifling through Rosencrantz and Guildenstern’s “packet” to discover the letter they carried from Claudius instructing the English to kill Hamlet (5.2.6, 12-25). This discovery, in turn, prompted Hamlet to take immediate defensive action (5.2.29-36). At that moment he sat right down and dashed off a forged letter supposedly from Claudius to the English commanding them to put Rosencrantz and Guildenstern to death instead (5.2.32). To give this fake letter the look of authenticity, Hamlet forged Claudius’ signature, folded the letter exactly as the original had been folded, sealed it with his “father’s signet” (which he just happened to have with him on the ship and which is the “model of that Danish seal” Claudius had used to seal the original letter), and, undetected, substituted it in Rosencrantz and Guildenstern’s “packet,” thus making them the unwitting messengers of their own deaths (5.2.49-53).

Importantly, in telling Horatio about his actions on the ship, Hamlet makes it seem as though he took them before even having time to think about what he did, suggesting they were done automatically, without any deliberation on his part. Rather, any planning of those actions is made to seem God’s doing. Thus, in recounting how he was able to fake Claudius’ seal by using his father’s signet, Hamlet claims, “even in that was heaven ordinant” (5.2.48). The words “even in that” imply that heaven was also ordinant in each of the other actions Hamlet has described. And this implication is strengthened when it comes to Hamlet’s composition of the forged letter by his stating that he began to write before he even knew what he was writing, before he had a chance to tell his mind what to say: “[Before] I could make a prologue to my brains, / They had begun the play” (5.2.30-31). He depicts his “brains” here as actors who launch into the

action of a play before he is able to provide an introductory account of what is about to happen. Likewise, Hamlet portrays the “fighting” in his heart that kept him awake and his subsequent indiscreet act of stealing Claudius’ original letter from the sleeping Rosencrantz and Guildenstern as a sequence that had been prearranged by God. He claims, “Our indiscretion sometime serves us well, / [. . .] and that should learn us, / There’s a divinity that shapes our ends” (5.2.8-10).

By describing what occurred on the ship during the night before the day of the pirate attack as so many providentially initiated events, Hamlet also represents that pirate attack itself as the culmination of a series of divinely orchestrated happenings at sea. For example, Hamlet boarded the pirate ship as it and the ship he had initially been on were grappled together in a classic sea battle. As Hamlet tells it in his letter to Horatio, in the heat of the fight he leapt onto the pirates’ vessel at the “instant” before the two ships separated, so that inadvertently he “alone became their prisoner” (4.6.15-16). Yet the pirates happened to be especially accommodating “thieves of mercy” and struck a deal with Hamlet that resulted in their giving him passage back to Denmark (4.6.17-18). In the logic of Hamlet’s providential rendering of his sea voyage, this particular sequence of events adds up to more than just extraordinary good luck for Hamlet. Rather, the sequence suggests that the pirates were not so much gentlemen of fortune as gentlemen of providence (“thieves of mercy”), sent by God to pluck Hamlet out of the teeth of danger on the high seas and set him safely back in Denmark to carry out his destiny by killing Claudius (Gold 54).

In total, therefore, Hamlet’s narrative of his sea voyage constructs that voyage to make it a version of what Cooper calls the “meme of the rudderless boat,” where all

human agency on the sea is effectively nullified in order to make forcefully clear the real operative force in human events, the controlling hand of God (*English*, 113). Hamlet's account of his voyage represents all the apparently human actions and choices that went into it as merely the outward appearances of divine mechanisms at work. Just as the drifting boats in stories of seemingly un-steerable boats wandering on the sea only appear to be drifting, when, in fact, God is steadily piloting them, so all the human activity in Hamlet's narrative of his voyage only appears to show humans directing the ships involved, when it is really God who is orchestrating all that activity, who is piloting Hamlet's ships.

But it is not entirely clear that we should accept Hamlet's narrative at face value. There is something curious about the combination in it of the encounter with pirates and his sneaking around on the first ship bound for England to forge a letter that changes the mission of that ship. Whereas it has sailed from Denmark as a ship carrying Hamlet to his death, it becomes, after Hamlet forges the letter, a ship carrying Rosencrantz and Guildenstern to their deaths. That is, Hamlet effectively pirates that first ship, by appropriating it and making it serve his own ends rather than the purpose for which it originally set sail. Moreover, he does so in classic pirate fashion: he forges, mimics, passes off a fake as an original (Lezra 260). Hamlet's counterfeiting recalls Barbara Fuchs' observation, already noted above with regard to the pirates in *A Christian Turned Turk*, that counterfeiting was indeed a tactic of early modern pirates, who commonly "passed as merchants until they spotted a likely target" or "[flew] a fake flag, thus pirating the very symbols of national allegiance" (47, 54). His forging of the letter while at sea, in other words, makes Hamlet himself a pirate of sorts, one who dissimulates.

One of the effects of such piratical counterfeiting, and counterfeiting in general, is that it obscures the causes that bring about a particular situation. For example, when a pirate flies a fake flag to entice another ship into a trap, those on board that other ship, if they are duped by the forgery, can be said to misread the cause of their meeting up with the ship that is, unbeknownst to them, a pirate ship. They see benign intentions as what causes the meeting of the ships when, in fact, hostile intentions, at least on the part of the pirates, are the cause of the meeting. And Shakespeare's play is full of forgeries, including a number of forgeries in which Hamlet has a hand and which make it extremely difficult or impossible for characters in the play to identify or be aware of the real causes of the "rotten" state of affairs in Denmark (1.4.90). A representative example is the "forged process," or fake account, of the cause of the death of Hamlet's father, which is spread by Claudius and which makes the people of Denmark believe that Claudius has become king because "a serpent stung" and killed Hamlet's father while he was "sleeping in [his] orchard," when what actually happened was that Claudius poisoned him (1.5.37, 36, 35, 62). Similarly, the "antic disposition" that Hamlet "put[s] [. . .] on," as if it were a costume, when he takes on the role of revenger generates much worry in Claudius' court because no one, except those whom Hamlet lets in on the plan, can quite pinpoint what has caused his behavior to seem increasingly like that of a madman (1.5.171; 2.2.8-9). What happens in each of these forgeries is that representation deludes its audience, or victims, so that they cannot see clearly why things are the way they are.

It is, consequently, significant that we do not see Hamlet's sea voyage acted out on the stage; we only know about it through Hamlet's narrative, his representation of it (Kiefer 259; Farley-Hills 330-31). Given the preponderance of counterfeit

representations in *Hamlet*, it is far from certain that we are to accept Hamlet's representation of his sea voyage as accurate, as clearly identifying the true cause of the various things that happen during that voyage. In fact, earlier in the play, Hamlet himself arouses our suspicions about the trustworthiness of the fundamental process of representation that is thought itself, when he skeptically claims, "there is nothing either good or bad, but thinking makes it so" (2.2.241-42). And there are a number of moments throughout the play that suggest his providential understanding of the voyage may be mistaken, that he is the unreliable narrator of his own sea story. In particular, Hamlet's reaction to the mysterious intuition—the "fighting" in his "heart," which kept him awake—that he experienced at sea and that drove him to discover Claudius' letter differs significantly from his reaction to another intuition he experiences after returning to Denmark. While at sea, he followed up on his intuition. Later, while telling the story to Horatio, he reads that intuition as a providential stirring within him that he was compelled to obey. After returning to Denmark and telling his sea tale to Horatio, Hamlet learns that he is to take part in a sporting display of swordsmanship with Laertes. Although he is not consciously aware that the duel is a trap set by Claudius, Hamlet nonetheless experiences a sense of foreboding about it, telling Horatio, upon hearing the news, "how ill all's here about my heart" (5.2.188). Yet this time Hamlet does not obey his intuition and Horatio's advice that, if Hamlet's "mind dislike[s] anything" about the proposed duel, he should "obey" his intuition and refuse to participate (5.2.192). Instead, Hamlet ignores his misgivings, claiming, "We defy augury. There is special providence in the fall of a sparrow," and goes off to the duel, seeing it as what God wants him to do (5.2.194-95). So, in *this* instance, Hamlet interprets his intuition as at odds with the will

of providence, suggesting that to obey that intuition and not participate in the duel would be to resist providence. In other words, Hamlet is inconsistent when it comes to interpreting the signs of providence: on the one hand, intuition is the stirring of providence within one; on the other hand, it is not (Blits 366).

This inconsistency suggests, that whether he is aware of it or not, Hamlet's newfound providentialism is less the result of authentic divine revelation and more of a convenient psychological bulwark against the anxieties of uncertain knowledge—the sort of crippling uncertainty with which Hamlet notoriously struggles until he goes off to sea (Conlan 314-15). Indeed, it is not even clear that Hamlet remains a faithful convert to providentialism. Jan H. Blits notes that once Hamlet learns, during the duel with Laertes that concludes the play, that Laertes has wounded him with a poison-tipped blade and that the duel has been a trap set by Claudius, Hamlet “never again even alludes to providence” and, instead, takes matters into his own hands by “turn[ing]” the poisoned blade “against” Claudius (378-79). Blits thus reads Hamlet's mindset during these final moments of his life as indicating that he has “abandon[ed]” his “recent trust in providence” (382). And this interpretation seems to be upheld by the fact that, as he lies dying, Hamlet describes his death as the result of chance, addressing those who watch him dying as “You that look pale and tremble at this chance” (5.2.313). Horatio, too, in describing all that has happened in the play—including the rapid succession of the deaths of Hamlet, Laertes, Claudius, and Gertrude with which the play ends—avoids any direct mention of a divine plan. He speaks, instead,

Of carnal, bloody, and unnatural acts;

Of accidental judgments, casual slaughters;

Of deaths put on by cunning and forced cause;
And, in this upshot, purposes mistook
Fall'n on th' inventors' heads. (5.2.360-64)

Alan Sinfield observes that Horatio's assessment is "carefully vague about who is responsible for it all," thus allowing for "the protestant-providential reading" (250). In such a reading, what may seem like meaningless chaos turns out, upon closer inspection, to be a story carefully plotted by a divine author in which everyone gets what he or she deserves. But as Peter Holbrook remarks, "the sense of chaotic meaningless waste and 'havoc'" at the end of *Hamlet* "is overwhelming. The stage awash with corpses; Hamlet himself dead; what story can be salvaged from it all?" (185).

Such vagueness about what force or forces have, in the end, caused all this havoc in Denmark reflects back on Hamlet's narrative of his sea voyage in such a way that the play as a whole appears to undermine the resolute providentialism which that narrative offers. It is worth remembering here Kolve's point that the providential meanings invested in Christian images of rudderless or un-steerable boats derive from "a special [pagan] conception of fortune imaged in terms of the sea, which is older than Christianity" and in which "the waves of the sea present a restless motion—a raising high and casting low—symbolically equivalent to that figured by Fortune's wheel" (Kolve 326). This association of the sea with fortune commonly includes "a symbolic ship as well" (Kolve 327; Kiefer 195-96, 204). In Christian adaptations of un-steerable boats of fortune, of course, seemingly random events are, in fact, evidence of a "larger providential order whose ends are good," meaning also that what may seem like the "cruelty and caprice" of fortune's reign over "human life" should be understood as, in

reality, merely the inscrutable benevolence of God (Kolve 332, 334). One problem with this Christian transformation of the boat of fortune into the boat of providence—as an emblem of God’s benevolent control over human life—was that if the life that boat symbolized appeared to human eyes to be no different than a life governed by arbitrary, indifferent fortune would appear, it could be very difficult to see or to accept that the ultimate cause of that life’s trajectory was actually a loving God and not just uncaring fortune (Sinfield 230). In short, a world governed by providence could look very much like a world governed by fortune. It is in this regard that *Hamlet* can be said to draw on the tradition of providentially governed boats on the sea in order then to question that tradition and, more broadly, to question through it the Christian providentialist view of the forces that shape human lives. *Hamlet* alludes to the famed motif of the un-steerable boat, or, rather, the boat steered by a benevolent deity, in order to raise the possibility that providentialism was but a counterfeit, “piratical” representation masking a world structured finally by chance or in which human choices and actions were carried out without the oversight of a just and benevolent deity.

In fact, in each of the plays I have examined here, the association of pirates with some form of counterfeiting, forgery, copying, or mimicry points to an urgently felt concern and uncertainty about distinguishing fakes or illegitimate impostors from the legitimate, the genuine, the original, or the true. In each play, pirates or instances of piracy act, at first glance, as litmus tests by which the legitimate or true is clarified, distinguished from the impostor, and given its due. This happens in economic and political terms when plots to which piracy is central work themselves out to reveal that providence smiles upon the patriotic, faithful Christian merchant, the Christian religion,

the loyal English subject, or the honorable son, while it deals sternly with the usurping king and politically disloyal or even traitorous pirates. But it also happens in cosmological terms insofar as in each play piracy shows (again, at first glance) that providence operates in the universe in the first place—that the legitimate, accurate view of universal causality is Christian providentialism, as opposed to the inauthentic cosmology of “pagan” fortune or the practical atheism of the Machiavel. Yet as I hope I have shown, piracy as imposture or mimicry in these texts also, when considered closely, deeply complicates the matter of distinguishing which of these worldviews—providentialism or the belief in fortune or the belief in a generally morally lawless universe given over to the rampant pursuit of self-interest—counts as the faithful, genuine representation of the elementary causes governing human affairs. The ambivalent portrayal of piracy by Daborne and Heywood and Rowley and the ambivalent, uncertain legitimacy of Hamlet’s “pirate” appropriation of the rudderless-boat motif underscore a difficult issue at the heart of Reformed providentialism, that of keeping faith that the seeming injustices and randomness that determined human lives were actually opaque signs of God’s unfathomable, yet finally just, plan and not evidence of a morally empty universe ruled by random fortune or unconstrained Machiavellian ruthlessness.

Perhaps what is most intriguing about piracy in these plays is that on its most fundamental level—one that includes, but is also arguably more basic than, such questions as identity, politics, cultural difference, empire, or nationalism—it articulates the struggle of “legitimate,” “true” providentialist faith to sweep away the “fraudulent” discourses of fortune and Machiavellianism. It might be said that the image of a sea

battle between a pirate ship and a merchant or privateering ship embodies the struggle for legitimacy between the discourse of providence and that of fortune or Machiavellianism. But to the extent that pirates bear uncanny resemblances to their adversaries—whether patriotic privateers, patriotic merchants, or the monarchs and states they represent—the question of the degree to which the pirate and his adversary are each in the right or the wrong becomes clouded, which, in turn, makes it difficult to determine whether the outcome of the sea battle constitutes evidence of providential justice, of the arbitrary fluctuations of fortune, or merely of the triumph of one party’s self-interest over that of another. Thus the pirate’s uncanny resemblance to his “legitimate” adversaries ultimately suggests the discourse of providence’s uncanny resemblance to the discourse of fortune or its vulnerability to a Machiavellian critique that it is but an elaborate ethical façade to disguise self-serving “policy.” Furthermore, pirates’ mirroring of their rivals opens or perpetuates, more than it answers, the vexed question of which discourse counts as the illegitimate copy and which counts as the genuine article—which misrepresents, misidentifies, or obscures the true causal “engine” driving the chain of human events? What might have been most intriguing and potentially disturbing, then, about pirates on the early modern stage, as well as the real-life pirates to which they alluded, was that they played on persistent doubts about the legitimacy of Christian providentialism itself.

Conclusion

Religious reform of the later Middle Ages and the Renaissance complicated the issue of God's visibility in creation, by raising doubts about those things in medieval Catholicism that counted as real, visible manifestations of God's presence in the world. As we have seen, the Digby *Mary Magdalene* engages with Wycliffite skepticism concerning the miracles associated with late medieval saint cults as well as about the clergy's official status as God's visible representatives on earth. The *Man of Law's Tale* and the *Book of Margery Kempe* share in such skepticism about the clerical hierarchy of the medieval Church, while *Pericles* explores Protestant skepticism regarding the existence of miracles which make God's power dramatically, clearly visible by violating the order of nature. In reformist thought, the Catholic Church overall, in its capacity as a centralized doctrinal and ecclesiastical structure that authorized and oversaw the channels through which Christians could access God, lost its unique status as the clear, visible "proof" of God's reality in the created world. Signs of God's presence and will in the world could, instead, be found outside the parameters of ecclesiastical authority, as happens in the *Man of Law's Tale* and the *Book of Margery Kempe*. In order to see those signs, that evidence, all one needed was a strong enough personal faith, not the authoritative backing of the Church confirming that they were indeed authentic signs. The world thus becomes a "text" filled with "signs and portents" which one can read independently, using the insight of one's subjective faith, in order to map out the contours of God's will, of providence, and one's place in it (Simpson 5, 142).

One example of studying the world's textuality in this way was the growing popularity of providential sea narratives in which the dramatic events of sea-deliverances were interpreted as signs demonstrating that the protagonists were recipients of God's saving grace and generally proving that the hand of providence guided human history (Hartman 9, 18-19, 21, 28). Narratives of this sort tend to proclaim their didactic purpose in their titles. Edward Pellham, for example, recounts a perilous voyage of 1630 to Greenland, where he and some fellow sailors become separated in a shallop from their expedition's ship and face the Greenland winter before being rescued the following spring when the rest of their crew finally finds them. Pellham's narrative is helpfully titled *Gods Power and Providence: Shewed, in the Miraculous Preservation and Deliverance of Eight Englishmen, Left by Mischance in Green-Land Anno 1630, Nine Moneths and Twelve Dayes*. In 1659, William Johnson gives us *Deus Nobiscum. Or, a Sermon Preached upon a Great Deliverance at Sea. With a Narrative Annexed*. And in 1674, the Puritan preacher James Janeway offers *Mr. James Janeway's Legacy to His Friends, Containing Twenty Seven Famous Instances of Gods Providences in and about Sea Dangers and Deliverances, with the Names of Several That Were Eye-Witnesses to Many of Them: Whereunto is Added a Sermon on the Same Subject*.

These narratives frequently include epigraphs that align them with scriptural precedent, thus signaling visible evidence of providence. Johnson's *Deus Nobiscum* quotes Psalm 107.29: "He maketh the storm a calm, so that the waves thereof are still"; a second edition published in 1664 quotes Psalm 40.2: "He brought me out of the horrible pit, out of the mire and clay: and set my feet upon the rock, and ordered my goings." Pellham's narrative likewise quotes Psalm 107 to stress that his voyage to Greenland and

his tribulations on its seas and coasts add up to tangible proof of providence in action: “They that goe downe into the Sea in ships; that doe businesse in great waters: These see the workes of the Lord, and his wonders in the deepe.” Providential sea tales such as these, drawing on scriptural precedent in which the sea supplies dramatic evidence of God’s will, exemplify Protestant concerns to find signs of salvation “out there” in the text of the world, where providential history and one’s place in it are written into the fabric of nature.

Yet as I have attempted to show, the theological significance of the sea and seafaring also began, over the “long” age of reform, to become more uncertain. The sea, that is, was not always a place where or through which the Christian God’s power became especially palpable; it was also a place, in literature and in the wider culture, where and through which visible signs of the providential direction of human affairs became increasingly difficult to discern. Sea travel was, of course, essential to the discovery and exploration of new lands and cultures, which had raised questions about the accuracy of long-held beliefs about the history and the very structure of the world, at the same time that reformist thought was calling into question the Church’s longstanding authority as the visible embodiment and vehicle of divine power in creation. Not only did the voyages of discovery reveal the inaccuracy of the world-image in Ptolemaic geography; they also generated uncomfortable questions about the accuracy of the Bible’s account of human history. There was, for example, the difficulty of explaining how, if all people were descendants of Adam and Eve by way of Noah’s family, the native inhabitants of the New World, whom the Bible did not mention, had ended up in lands which also were not mentioned in the Bible (Popkin, “Pre-Adamite” 57; Scott 75-

76). John Rastell's play *The Four Elements*, written around 1518, alludes to this problem: "But howe the people furst began / In that contrey or whens they cam, / For clerkes it is a question" (lines 817-19). The sea, in addition, had ungodly significance inasmuch as it continued to be associated with fortune, which challenged providence as a causal explanation, and to the extent that it was the site of activities such as piracy and overseas trade in which, it was feared, the pursuit of worldly ambitions at all costs would displace Christian godliness and salvation as the ultimate purposes of existence. And through its emphasis on an all-determining, inscrutable God who was effectively invisible to reason, Reformed grace theology could itself make the discernment of God's providential will profoundly uncertain. Given that by the Middle Ages, the Catholic Church and the sea had become tightly connected in the ubiquitous figure of the ship of the Church, in which the ecclesiastical ship that conducted souls safely through the sea of the world constituted visible evidence of providence, it only makes sense that the sea and ships would become popular devices for thinking through the challenges that religious reform presented to the matter of identifying providence at work in the world and in oneself.

In fact, applying the logic of Reformed grace theology to the image of the ship of the church provides a kind of heuristic exercise in seeing how that theology could imply the fading visibility of providence. The concept of the predestined elect implied that the ship of the true church did not correspond to any visible ecclesiastical institution in history. The authentic church was, rather, an invisible church of the elect who were known only to God in the end, because the inscrutable nature of His all-determining power meant that outward signs as well as the inward sign (true faith) of election were

effectively impossible to read clearly. Or as Anthony Milton explains it, “those members” of the “church of the elect” who “were alive on earth, while visible as men, could not be outwardly perceived to be true members of Christ’s church, because the kingdom of God lay within men’s souls, and God alone truly knew who were his elect” (Milton 129). The ship of the church guided by providence through the sea of the world thus became an invisible ship. In this respect, the image of the ship of the church expresses, not the visibility of God’s providential will, but the hiddenness of that will.

Taken together, the texts I have considered in this dissertation sketch out a rough trajectory along which the sea and sea travel express emerging doubts about whether human lives and human history really are ruled by God’s providential care. The sea, in other words, comes to signify the growing invisibility of God. In *Mary Magdalene*, seafaring is central to the play’s engagement with late medieval reformers’ critiques of what they saw as spiritual corruption among the clergy and in the devotional practices of the medieval Catholic Church. The miraculous nature of the play’s sea voyages across not only geographic space but also historical time symbolize how the medieval Church could be spiritually renewed: by rediscovering and reconnecting with the spiritual purity of early Christianity. But insofar as the sea delivers Mary Magdalene to a medieval Christianity that, prior to her arrival, has clearly fallen out of line with God’s will, her sea voyage to rescue Christianity from misbelief is born of doubts in the contemporary culture about the medieval Church’s claim to be the reliable visible manifestation and agent of providential action in history. Furthermore, the sea that lies between the corrupted Christian world of Marseilles and the pure Gospel-era Christianity in the Holy Land from which Mary departs expresses the distance and alienation of the medieval

Church from God's will. In other words, there are overtones in Mary Magdalene's voyage of the beginnings in late medieval reformist thought of the unraveling of the theological equation in which the institutional Church was the visible, palpable "proof" that God providentially guided history.

The unraveling of that equation is more noticeable in the sea voyages in the *Man of Law's Tale* and the *Book of Margery Kempe*. Custance's and Margery Kempe's sea travels image an interventionist God whose providential power overflows the channels of grace and spiritual leadership claimed by the institutional Church, a God who communicates directly to his chosen people through their subjective revelations and whose immanent, controlling presence in the very fabric of creation offers tangible, reliable signs of His will. The sea is thus a firmly providential space in the *Book of Margery Kempe* and the *Man of Law's Tale*. But in suggesting that salvation is primarily a matter of one's personal, subjective relationship with God as it unfolds in the broader world, rather than of spiritual mediation and direction by the institutional Church, Margery's and Custance's sea journeys call into question the need for the Church's guidance in salvation. They unsettle its status as the real, visible agent of God's providential government of creation. In this way, Custance's and Margery's sea travels point towards divine revelation as a matter of individual, subjective interpretation that sees supernatural intentions driving natural, sublunary events. Here, we come to the interpretive quandaries and skeptical possibilities created by Reformed notions of a hidden God whose will could only be seen through the "vision" of faith. For example, only the elect possessed true faith, but only God knew who the elect were; therefore, one could never really know whether one's faith was true. As a result, when people thought

that through faith they were seeing God's providential will acting through natural events, they could never be sure that they were seeing it clearly or even seeing it at all.

This problem of assurance is at the heart of the more general problem of discerning a God who is seamlessly hidden in the texture of creation, a problem *Pericles* explores through the series of uncanny events that occur in the context of Pericles' sea journeys around the Mediterranean. The wondrous, liminal events that accompany seafaring in *Pericles*—events that seem to gesture towards the supernatural while nonetheless allowing for natural causal explanations—show how the doctrine that miracles had ceased could make the possibility of clear divine revelation seem unlikely. If providence did not reveal itself in ways that defied the order of nature, that is, how could one truly determine whether providence was speaking through strange, wondrous events or whether marvels and wonders were merely improbable, yet entirely natural, occurrences, devoid of any supernatural significance? In a similar way, piratical seafaring in *A Christian Turned Turk*, *Fortune by Land and Sea*, and *Hamlet* complicates our ability to situate within a providential framework the events those plays dramatize, by making it difficult to perceive providential justice at work in dramatic worlds that otherwise seem dominated by the randomness of fortune or where Machiavellian expediency seems to have free rein. Finally, my analysis of sea imagery in Wyatt, Spenser, and Marvell suggests how the disorienting, unsettling possibilities of navigation gave the sea significance as a “wat'ry maze,” to borrow Marvell's phrase, in early modern culture. In Wyatt's, Spenser's, and Marvell's poems, the disorienting potential of early modern sea travel subtly and powerfully expresses the unsettling religious doubts

that could result from trying to discern, according to Reformist theologies of grace, who was and who was not sailing through life in the invisible ship of the elect.

In the texts I have discussed, then, we see providence gradually becoming lost at sea, as if the primal disorder of the pre-creation abyss of Genesis begins to reassert itself, begins to overflow providentialism's discursive containment of it. At and through the sea, providence starts to disappear, to fade into natural forces, leaving only an all-too-natural world behind, one filled with fortuitous events that can overwhelm human attempts to navigate them or that humans can manipulate to their own ends, but in either case, a nature that begins to seem emptied of divine oversight. The emergence of this sea of doubt does not represent an objective discovery of or re-awakening to an essential, timeless meaning inhering in the sea that makes it a lawless, a-theological space. But neither can it be described as merely a cultural construct bearing no relationship to the material reality of early modern seas. Rather, the material reality of sea travel—the difficulty of navigating the sea, the fact that sailing on it had revealed the world to be fundamentally different from what European culture had imagined it to be—conspired with the potential for profound metaphysical uncertainty in Reformed salvation theology to create a historically specific concept of the sea as unstable and uncontainable, a sea that articulated the early stages of what Jonathan Dollimore has called a skeptical “disintegration of providentialist belief” (83). When early modern culture contemplated the sea of the world and asked, in a metaphysical sense, “Who rules the waves?” it began to suspect that the answer to that question might be that nothing did, or, at least, that something other than a just providential God did.

Works Cited

- Adamnan. *Adamnani Vita S. Columbae*. Eds. J. T. Fowler and William Reeves. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1894.
- Akbari, Suzanne Conklin. *Idols in the East: European Representations of Islam and the Orient, 1100-1450*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2009.
- Aquinas, Thomas. *On the Power of God (Quaestiones disputatae de potentia Dei)*. Trans. English Dominican Fathers. Westminster: Newman Press, 1932. *Quaestiones disputatae de potentia Dei (On the Power of God)*. Ed. Joseph Kenny. Web. 7 Dec. 2011.
- Armstrong, Karen. *Muhammad: A Biography of the Prophet*. San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1993.
- Arnold, Thomas, ed. *Select English Works of John Wyclif*. Vol. 1. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1869-71.
- Arundel, Thomas. *The Constitutions of Thomas Arundel*. Trans. John Foxe. *The Book of Margery Kempe: A New Translation, Contexts, Criticism*. Ed. and trans. Lynn Staley. New York: Norton, 2001. Norton Critical Editions. 187-96.
- Ascham, Roger. *English Works: Toxophilus, Report of the Affaires and State of Germany, The Scholemaster*. Ed. William Aldis Wright. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1904.
- Ash, Eric H. *Power, Knowledge, and Expertise in Elizabethan England*. Baltimore: John Hopkins UP, 2004.
- Atkinson, Clarissa W. *Mystic and Pilgrim: the Book and the World of Margery Kempe*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1983.
- Augustine. *The City of God*. Trans. Marcus Dods. Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1871. Vols. 1 and 2 of *The Works of Aurelius Augustine, Bishop of Hippo: A New Translation*. Marcus Dods, gen. ed. 15 vols. 1871-76.
- . *The City of God against the Pagans*. Ed. and trans. R. W. Dyson. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998. Cambridge Texts in the History of Political Thought.
- Balasopoulos, Antonis. "'Suffer a Sea Change': Spatial Crisis, Maritime Modernity, and the Politics of Utopia." *Cultural Critique* 63 (Spring 2006): 123-56.

- Bassnett, Susan. "Text Types and Power Relations." *Text Typology and Translation*. Ed. Anna Trosborg. Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 1997. 87-98. Benjamins Translation Library 26.
- Beaumont, Francis and John Fletcher. *The Maid's Tragedy*. Ed. Thomas Wallace Craik. Revels Plays. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999.
- Benson, C. David. "Poetic Variety in the *Man of Law's* and the *Clerk's Tales*." *Chaucer's Religious Tales*. Eds. C. David Benson and Elizabeth Ann Robertson. Woodbridge: D. S. Brewer-Boydell and Brewer, 1990. *Chaucer Studies* 15. 137-44.
- Benson, Larry D., ed. *The Riverside Chaucer*. By Geoffrey Chaucer. 3rd ed. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1987.
- Bernard, John D. "Spenserian Pastoral and the *Amoretti*." *ELH* 47.3 (Autumn 1980): 419-32.
- Bertram, Benjamin. *The Time is Out of Joint: Skepticism in Shakespeare's England*. Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2004.
- Bevington, David, ed. *Mary Magdalene. Medieval Drama*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1975. 687-753.
- The Bible*. Introduction and notes by Robert Carroll and Stephen Prickett. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998. Oxford World's Classics. Authorized King James Version.
- Blits, Jan H. *Deadly Thought: Hamlet and the Human Soul*. Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2001.
- Boehnen, Scott. "The Aesthetics of 'Sprawling' Drama: The Digby *Mary Magdalene* as Pilgrims' Play." *JEGP* 98.3 (July 1999): 325-52.
- Boethius. *The Consolation of Philosophy*. New York: Barnes and Noble, 2005. The Barnes and Noble Library of Essential Reading.
- Borlik, Todd Andrew. *Ecocriticism and Early Modern English Literature: Green Pastures*. New York: Taylor and Francis, 2010. *Routledge Studies in Renaissance Literature and Culture* 16.
- Bowers, Terence N. "Margery Kempe as Traveler." *Studies in Philology*. 97.1 (Winter 2000): 1-28.
- Brant, Sebastian. *The Ship of Fools*. Trans. Edwin H. Zeydel. New York: Dover, 1944.

- Brayton, Dan. "Shakespeare and the Global Ocean." *Ecocritical Shakespeare*. Eds. Lynne Bruckner and Dan Brayton. Farnham: Ashgate, 2011. 173-90.
- Bucholz, R. O., and Newton Key. *Early Modern England, 1485-1714: A Narrative History*. 2nd ed. Malden: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009.
- Burgess, Clive. "A Hotbed of Heresy? Fifteenth-Century Bristol and Lollardy Reconsidered." *Authority and Subversion*. Ed. Linda Clark. Woodbridge: Boydell Press-Boydell and Brewer, 2003. Fifteenth Century 3. 43-62.
- Burwash, Dorothy. *English Merchant Shipping, 1460-1540*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1947.
- Bush, Jerome. "The Resources of Locus and Platea Staging: The Digby 'Mary Magdalene'." *Studies in Philology* 86.2 (Spring 1989): 139-65.
- Calderwood, James L. "Hamlet's Readiness." *Shakespeare Quarterly* 35.3 (1984): 267-73.
- Calvin, John. *Institutes of the Christian Religion*. Ed. John T. McNeill. Trans. Ford Lewis Battles. 2 vols. Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1960. Library of Christian Classics 20.
- Carpenter, John. *A Preparatiue to Contentation: Conteyning a Display of the Wonderful Distractions of Men in Opinions and Straunge Conceits*. London, 1597.
- Chaucer, Geoffrey. *The Canterbury Tales. The Riverside Chaucer*. Ed. Larry D. Benson. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1987. 3-328.
- . *The Parliament of Fowls. The Riverside Chaucer*. Ed. Larry D. Benson. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1987. 383-94.
- Cheney, Patrick. *Reading Sixteenth-Century Poetry*. Malden: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011.
- Classen, Albrecht. *The Power of a Woman's Voice in Medieval and Early Modern Literatures: New Approaches to German and European Women Writers and to Violence Against Women in Premodern Times*. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2007. Fundamentals of Medieval and Early Modern Culture 1.
- Clay, C. G. A. *Economic Expansion and Social Change: England 1500-1700*. Vol. 1. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984.
- Cohen, Jeffrey Jerome. *Medieval Identity Machines*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003. Medieval Cultures 35.

- Cole, Andrew. *Literature and Heresy in the Age of Chaucer*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011. Cambridge Studies in Medieval Literature 71.
- Coletti, Theresa. "Paupertas est donum Dei: Hagiography, Lay Religion, and the Economics of Salvation in the Digby *Mary Magdalene*." *Speculum* 76.2 (2001): 337-78.
- Colie, Rosalie L. "My Ecchoing Song": *Andrew Marvell's Poetry of Criticism*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1970.
- Columbus, Christopher. *The Four Voyages of Christopher Columbus*. Ed. and trans. J. M. Cohen. London: Penguin, 1969.
- . *The Voyage of Christopher Columbus: Columbus' Own Journal Of Discovery Newly Restored and Translated*. Ed. and trans. John Cummins. New York: St. Martin's, 1992.
- Conlan, James Peter. "Marvelous Passages: English Nautical Piety in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance." Diss. University of California, Riverside, 1999.
- Constable, Olivia Remie. "Storms at Sea on a Voyage between Rhodes and Venice, November 1470." *Medieval Christianity in Practice*. Ed. Miri Rubin. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009. Princeton Readings in Religions. 81-85.
- Cooney, Helen. "Wonder and Immanent Justice in the *Man of Law's Tale*." *The Chaucer Review* 33.3 (1999): 264-87.
- Cooper, Helen. *The English Romance in Time: Transforming Motifs from Geoffrey of Monmouth to the Death of Shakespeare*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008.
- . Introduction. *Chaucer and Religion*. Ed. Helen Phillips. Cambridge: D. S. Brewer-Boydell and Brewer, 2010. Christianity and Culture: Issues in Teaching and Research 4. xi-xix.
- Corbin, Alain. *The Lure of the Sea: The Discovery of the Seaside in the Western World, 1750-1840*. Trans. Jocelyn Phelps. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994.
- Cotter, Charles H. *A History of Nautical Astronomy*. New York: American Elsevier, 1968.
- Craun, Edwin D. *Ethics and Power in Medieval English Reformist Writing*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010. Cambridge Studies in Medieval Literature 76.

- Cummings, R. M. "The Difficulty of Marvell's 'Bermudas'." *Modern Philology* 67.4 (May 1970): 331-40.
- Daborne, Robert. *A Christian Turned Turk*. 1612. *Three Turk Plays from Early Modern England: Selimus, A Christian Turned Turk, and The Renegado*. Ed. Daniel J. Vitkus. New York: Columbia University Press, 2000. 149-239.
- Danner, Bruce. "Courteous *Virtù* in Spenser's Book 6 of *The Faerie Queene*." *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900* 38.1 (Winter 1998): 1-18.
- Dasenbrock, Reed Way. "The Petrarchan Context of Spenser's *Amoretti*." *PMLA* 100.1 (January 1985): 38-50.
- Daston, Lorraine. "Marvelous Facts and Miraculous Evidence in Early Modern Europe." *Critical Inquiry* 18.1 (Autumn 1991): 93-124.
- Daston, Lorraine, and Katherine Park. *Wonders and the Order of Nature, 1150-1750*. New York: Zone Books, 1998.
- d'Avray, David. "Symbolism and Medieval Religious Thought." *The Medieval World*. Eds. Peter Linehan and Janet L. Nelson. London: Routledge, 2001. 267-78.
- Dinzelbacher, Peter. "The Way to the Other World in Medieval Literature and Art." *Folklore* 97.1 (1986): 70-87.
- Doh, Herman, ed. Introduction and notes. *A Critical Edition of Fortune by Land and Sea*. By Thomas Heywood and William Rowley. New York: Garland, 1980.
- Dollimore, Jonathan. *Radical Tragedy: Religion, Ideology, and Power in the Drama of Shakespeare and His Contemporaries*. 2nd ed. Durham: Duke University Press, 1993.
- Donno, Elizabeth Story, ed. *The Complete Poems*. By Andrew Marvell. London: Penguin, 1996.
- Dyas, Dee. "'Wildernesse is Anlich Lif of Ancre Wununge': The Wilderness and Medieval Anchoritic Spirituality." *Approaching Medieval English Anchoritic and Mystical Texts*. Eds. Dee Dyas, Valerie Edden, and Roger Ellis. Cambridge: D. S. Brewer-Boydell and Brewer, 2005. 19-33.
- Edwards, Philip. *Sea-Mark: The Metaphorical Voyage, Spenser to Milton*. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1997.
- Eggers, Walter F., Jr. "Bring Forth a Wonder": Presentation in Shakespeare's Romances." *Texas Studies in Literature and Language* 21 (1979): 455-77.

- Elton, William R. *King Lear and the Gods*. Lexington: University press of Kentucky, 1988.
- Erasmus, Desiderius and Martin Luther. *Discourse on Free Will*. Trans. and ed. Ernst F. Winter. London: Continuum, 1989.
- Evans, G. Blakemore, ed. *The Riverside Shakespeare*. By William Shakespeare. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1974.
- Fagan, Brian M. *The Little Ice Age: How Climate Made History, 1300-1850*. New York: Basic-Perseus, 2000.
- Farley-Hills, David. "Hamlet's Account of the Pirates." *The Review of English Studies*, New Series 50.199 (1999): 320-31.
- "Fearfulness." Def. 1. *Oxford English Dictionary Online*. Oxford University Press, September 2011. Web. 21 November 2011
- Findon, Joanne. "Mary Magdalene as New Custance? 'The Woman Cast Adrift' in the Digby *Mary Magdalene* Play." *ESC: English Studies in Canada* 32.4 (December 2006): 25-50.
- Fizdale, Tay. "Irony in Marvell's 'Bermudas'." *ELH* 42.2 (Summer 1975): 203-13.
- Fludernik, Monika. "Allegory, Metaphor, Scene and Expression: The Example of English Medieval and Early Modern Lyric Poetry." *Theory into Poetry: New Approaches to the Lyric*. Ed. Margarete Rubik. Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2005. 99-124.
- "Force." *Oxford English Dictionary Online*. Oxford University Press, September 2011. Web. 21 November 2011.
- Fowler, Elizabeth. "The Empire and the Waif: Consent and Conflict of Laws in the Man of Law's Tale." *Medieval Literature and Historical Inquiry: Essays in Honor of Derek Pearsall*. Eds. David Aers and Derek Albert Pearsall. Cambridge: D. S. Brewer-Boydell and Brewer, 2000. 55-67.
- Fox, Alistair. *The English Renaissance: Identity and Representation in Elizabethan England*. Oxford: Blackwell, 1997.
- Foxe, John. *The Unabridged Acts and Monuments Online or TAMO*. 1570 ed. HRI Online Publications, Sheffield, 2011. Web. 20 Dec. 2011. <<http://www.johnfoxe.org/>>.

- Frassetto, Michael. "Medieval Attitudes Toward Muslims and Jews." *Misconceptions About the Middle Ages*. Eds. Bryon Lee Grigsby and Stephen J. Harris. New York: Routledge, 2008. Routledge Studies in Medieval Religion and Culture 7. 76-82.
- Fuchs, Barbara. "Faithless Empires: Pirates, Renegadoes, and the English Nation." *ELH* 67.1 (Spring 2000): 45-69.
- Fumerton, Patricia. *Unsettled: The Culture of Mobility and the Working Poor in Early Modern England*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006.
- Gent, Lucy. "Marvell's Games with Teleology." *Renaissance Quarterly* 32.4 (Winter 1979): 514-28.
- Gold, J. "Hamlet's Sea-Change." *English* 15 (1964): 53-55.
- Goodich, Michael. *Miracles and Wonders: The Development of the Concept of Miracle, 1150-1350*. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007. Church, Faith, and Culture in the Medieval West.
- Gossett, Suzanne. Introduction. *Pericles*. By William Shakespeare. Ed. Suzanne Gossett. London: Arden Shakespeare-Thomson Learning, 2004. The Arden Shakespeare, Third Series. 1-163.
- Gouge, William. *The Extent of Gods Providence: Set out in a Sermon Preached in Black-Friers Church, 5. Nov. 1623. Gods Three Arrowes: Plague, Famine, Sword, in Three Treatises*. London, 1631. 373-401.
- Grenfell, Joanne Woolway. "Do Real Knights Need Maps? Charting Moral, Geographical and Representational Uncertainty in Edmund Spenser's *The Faerie Queene*." *Literature, Mapping and the Politics of Space in Early Modern Britain*. Eds. Andrew Gordon and Bernhard Klein. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001. 224-38.
- Hadfield, Andrew. *The English Renaissance, 1500-1620*. Malden: Blackwell, 2001.
- Hall, Joseph. *Quo Vadis? A Just Censure of Travell as It Is Commonly Vndertaken by the Gentlemen of Our Nation*. London, 1617.
- Haring, Clarence Henry. *Trade and Navigation between Spain and the Indies in the Time of the Hapsburgs*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1918. Harvard Economic Studies 19.
- Hartman, James D. *Providence Tales and the Birth of American Literature*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999.

- Heal, Felicity. *Reformation in Britain and Ireland*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003. Oxford History of the Christian Church.
- Heale, Elizabeth. *Wyatt, Surrey and Early Tudor Poetry*. London: Longman, 1998.
- Helfers, James P. "The Mystic as Pilgrim: Margery Kempe and the Tradition of Nonfiction Travel Narrative." *Journal of the Rocky Mountain Medieval and Renaissance Association* 13 (1992): 25-45.
- Helgerson, Richard. *Forms of Nationhood: The Elizabethan Writing of England*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992.
- Herman, Arthur. *To Rule the Waves: How the British Navy Shaped the Modern World*. New York: Harper Perennial, 2004.
- Heywood, Thomas and William Rowley. *A Critical Edition of Fortune by Land and Sea*. Ed. Herman Doh. New York: Garland, 1980.
- Higgs, Laquita M. "Richard Rolle and His Concern for 'Even Christians'." *Mystics Quarterly* 14.4 (December 1988): 177-85.
- Hiscock, Andrew. "John Florio." *Encyclopedia of Literary Translation into English, A-L*. Ed. Olive Classe. Vol. 1. Chicago: Fitzroy Dearborn, 2000. 453-56.
- Holbrook, Peter. "Nietzsche's *Hamlet*." *Shakespeare Survey: An Annual Survey of Shakespeare Studies and Production* 50 (1997): 171-86.
- Holland, Peter. "Coasting in the Mediterranean: The Journeyings of *Pericles*." *Angles on the English Speaking World* 5 (2005): 11-29.
- The Holy Bible, Containing the Old and New Testaments, with the Apocryphal Books, in the Earliest English Versions Made from the Latin Vulgate by John Wycliffe and His Followers*. Eds. Josiah Forshall and Frederic Madden. Vol. 4. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1850.
- Horstmann, Carl, ed. *Yorkshire Writers: Richard Rolle of Hampole and His Followers*. Vol. 2. New York: Macmillan, 1896.
- Hudson, Anne. *The Premature Reformation: Wycliffite Texts and Lollard History*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988.
- , ed. *Selections from English Wycliffite Writings*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997. Medieval Academy Reprints for Teaching 38.

- Hughes, Lewes. *A Letter, Sent into England from the Summer Ilands*. London, 1615.
- Hunter, Michael. "The Problem of 'Atheism' in Early Modern England." *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society, Fifth Series* 35 (1985): 135-57.
- Hutchinson, Gillian. *Medieval Ships and Shipping*. Rutherford: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1994.
- Hutchinson, Roger. *The Image of God, or Layman's Book. The Works of Roger Hutchinson*. Ed. John Bruce. Cambridge, 1842. 1-208.
- Ide, Richard. "Shakespeare and the Pirates." *Iowa State Journal of Research* 58.3 (1984): 311-318.
- Janeway, James. *Mr. James Janeway's Legacy to His Friends, Containing Twenty Seven Famous Instances of Gods Providences in and about Sea Dangers and Deliverances, with the Names of Several That Were Eye-Witnesses to Many of Them: Whereunto is Added a Sermon on the Same Subject*. London, 1674.
- Jeffrey, David Lyle. Introduction. *English Spirituality in the Age of Wyclif*. Ed. and trans. David Lyle Jeffries. Vancouver: Regent College Publishing, 1988. 1-53.
- Johnson, Christine R. *The German Discovery of the World: Renaissance Encounters with the Strange and Marvelous*. Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2008.
- Johnson, William. *Deus Nobiscum. Or, a Sermon Preached upon a Great Deliverance at Sea. With a Narrative Annexed*. 1659.
- . *Deus Nobiscum: A Sermon Preached Upon a Great Deliverance at Sea: With the Narrative of the Dangers and Deliverances*. 2nd ed. London, 1664.
- Jourdain, Silvester. *A Discovery of the Bermudas, Otherwise Called the Isle of the Devils*. 1610. *A Voyage to Virginia in 1609; Two Narratives: Strachey's "True Reportory" and Jourdain's Discovery of the Bermudas*. Ed. Louis B. Wright. Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1964. 103-16.
- Jowitt, Claire. "Piracy and Politics in Heywood and Rowley's *Fortune by Land and Sea* (1607-9)," *Renaissance Studies* 16.2 (2002): 217-33.
- . "Rogue Traders: National Identity, Empire and Piracy 1580-1640." *Borders and Travellers in Early Modern Europe*. Ed. Thomas Betteridge. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007. 53-72.
- Kaminsky, Howard. *A History of the Hussite Revolution*. Berkeley: University of

- California Press, 1967.
- Kamowski, William. "Chaucer and Wyclif: God's Miracles Against the Clergy's Magic." *The Chaucer Review* 37.1 (2002): 5-25.
- Kempe, Margery. *The Book of Margery Kempe*. Ed. Lynn Staley. Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute Publications, 1996. TEAMS Middle English Texts Series.
- Kiefer, Frederick. *Fortune and Elizabethan Tragedy*. The Huntington Library, 1983.
- King, John N. *Spenser's Poetry and the Reformation Tradition*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990.
- Kinsman, Robert S. "Folly, Melancholy, and Madness: A Study in Shifting Styles of Medical Analysis and Treatment, 1450-1675." *The Darker Vision of the Renaissance: Beyond the Fields of Reason*. Ed. Robert S. Kinsman. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974. 273-320.
- Kinzel, Ulrich. "Orientation as a Paradigm of Maritime Modernity." *Fictions of the Sea: Critical Perspectives on the Ocean in British Literature and Culture*. Ed. Bernhard Klein. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2002. 29-48.
- Knox, John. *The Works of John Knox*. Ed. David Laing. Vol. 5. Edinburgh, 1856.
- Kolve, V. A. *Chaucer and the Imagery of Narrative: The First Five Canterbury Tales*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1984.
- Labarge, Margaret Wade. *Medieval Travellers*. New York: W. W. Norton, 1982.
- Lane, Anthony N. S. "Calvin's Doctrine of Assurance." *Vox Evangelica* 11 (1979): 32-54.
- Larkin, James F., and Paul L. Hughes, eds. *Stuart Royal Proclamations I: Royal Proclamations of King James I, 1603-1625*. Oxford: Clarendon, 1973.
- Le Goff, Jacques. *The Medieval Imagination*. Trans. Arthur Goldhammer. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988.
- Lewis, Archibald R. "The Islamic World and the Latin West, 1350-1500." *Speculum* 65.4 (October 1990): 833-44.
- Lezra, Jacques. "Pirating Reading: The Appearance of History in *Measure for Measure*." *ELH* 56.2 (1989): 255-92.
- Lindley, David. Introduction. *The Tempest*. Ed. David Lindley. Cambridge: Cambridge

- University Press, 2002. *The New Cambridge Shakespeare*. 1-83.
- Lochrie, Karma. *Margery Kempe and Translations of the Flesh*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1991.
- “Lodestar.” *Oxford English Dictionary Online*. Oxford University Press, September 2011. Web. 22 November 2011.
- Loewenstein, David. “Politics and Religion.” *The Cambridge Companion to English Poetry, Donne to Marvell*. Ed. Thomas N. Corns. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993. 3-30.
- Ludwig Jansen, Katherine. *The Making of the Magdalen: Preaching and Popular Devotion in the Later Middle Ages*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001.
- Luther, Martin. *Luther’s Works*. Gen. Eds. Jaroslav Pelikan and Helmut T. Lehmann. 55 vols. Saint Louis: Concordia; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1958-86. CD-ROM.
- . *The Smalcald Articles*. Trans. F. Bente and W. H. T. Dau. Whitefish: Kessinger, 2004.
- . *Standard Edition of Luther’s Works*. Ed. John Nicholas Lenker. Trans. Henry Cole. Vol.1. Sunbury: Luther in All Lands, 1903.
- MacCulloch, Diarmaid. *The Reformation*. New York: Penguin, 2003.
- Machiavelli, Niccolò. *The Prince. The Portable Machiavelli*. Ed. and trans. Peter Bondanella and Mark Musa. New York: Penguin, 1979. 77-166.
- Maclean, Hugh and Anne Lake Prescott, eds. *Edmund Spenser’s Poetry: Authoritative Texts, Criticism*. 3rd ed. New York: W. W. Norton, 1993. Norton Critical Editions.
- Mahon, John. “Providential Visitations in *Hamlet*.” *Hamlet Studies*. 8.1-2 (1986): 40-51.
- Mancall, Peter C. *Travel Narratives from the Age of Discovery: an Anthology*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006.
- Marlowe, Christopher. *The Jew of Malta. Drama of the English Renaissance I: The Tudor Period*. Eds. Russell A. Fraser and Norman Rabkin. New York: Macmillan, 1976. 263-94.
- Marshall, Peter. “Forgery and Miracles in the Reign of Henry VIII.” *Past and Present* 178.1 (February 2003): 39-73.

- . *The Reformation: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009.
- Marvell, Andrew. *The Poems of Andrew Marvell*. Ed. Nigel Smith. Rev. ed. Harlow: Pearson-Longman, 2007. Longman Annotated English Poets.
- Mary Magdalene. Medieval Drama*. Ed. David Bevington. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1975. 687-753.
- Matthew, F. D., ed. *The English Works of Wyclif Hitherto Unprinted*. London: Early English Text Society, 1880. Early English Text Society Series 74.
- McCann, Franklin T. *English Discovery of America to 1585*. New York: King's Crown-Columbia University Press, 1951.
- McInnis, David. "The Golden Man and the Golden Age: The Relationship of English Poets and the New World Reconsidered." *Early Modern Literary Studies* 13.1 (May 2007): 1-19.
- McLeod, Bruce. *The Geography of Empire in English Literature, 1580-1745*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999.
- McSheffrey, Shannon. *Gender and Heresy: Women and Men in Lollard Communities, 1420-1530*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1995.
- . "Heresy, Orthodoxy and English Vernacular Religion 1480-1525." *Past and Present* 186.1 (February 2005): 47-80.
- Meister, Chad and J. B. Stump. *Christian Thought: A Historical Introduction*. New York: Taylor and Francis, 2010.
- Mentz, Steve. *At the Bottom of Shakespeare's Ocean*. London: Continuum, 2009. Shakespeare Now! Series.
- . "Toward a Blue Cultural Studies: The Sea, Maritime Culture, and Early Modern English Literature." *Literature Compass* 6.5 (September 2009): 997-1013.
- Middle English Dictionary*. Middle English Compendium.
<<http://quod.lib.umich.edu/m/med/>>.
- Milton, Anthony. *Catholic and Reformed: The Roman and Protestant Churches in English Protestant Thought, 1600-1640*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002.

- Mitchell, Marea. *The Book of Margery Kempe: Scholarship, Community, and Criticism*. New York: Peter Lang, 2005.
- Montaigne, Michel de. "Apology for Raymond Sebond." *The Complete Works: Essays, Travel Journal, Letters*. Trans. Donald M. Frame. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2003. 386-556.
- Muir, Kenneth. *Life and Letters of Sir Thomas Wyatt*. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1963.
- Myles, Robert. "Judeo-Christian Semiological Metaphysics: Chaucer's Metaphysical Option." *Chaucerian Realism*. Woodbridge: D. S. Brewer-Boydell and Brewer, 1994. *Chaucer Studies* 20. 55-74.
- Nelson, William. "Spenser ludens." *A Theatre for Spenserians: Papers of the International Spenser Colloquium, Fredericton, New Brunswick, 1969*. Eds. Judith M. Kennedy and James A. Reither. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1973. 83-100.
- Netzloff, Mark. *England's Internal Colonies: Class, Capital, and the Literature of Early Modern English Colonialism*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003.
- Norton, Thomas, trans. *The Institution of Christian Religion, Written in Latine by Maister Iohn Caluine, and Translated into Englishe Accordyng to the Authors Last Edition, by T.N. London, 1562*.
- Norwood, Henry. "A Voyage to Virginia." *America Begins: Early American Writing*. Ed. Richard M. Dorson. New York: Pantheon, 1950. 34-66.
- Oakley, Francis. "The Absolute and Ordained Power of God in Sixteenth- and Seventeenth-Century Theology." *Journal of the History of Ideas* 59.3 (July 1998): 437-61.
- Ormerod, David. "Type, Icon and Number in Marvell's *Bermudas*." *Parergon* 9 (1991): 91-109.
- Ormerod, David and Christopher Wortham, eds. "Explanatory Notes." *Andrew Marvell: Pastoral and Lyric Poems, 1681*. By Andrew Marvell. Nedlands: University of Western Australia Press, 2000.
- Owst, G. R. *Literature and Pulpit in Medieval England: A Neglected Chapter in the History of English Letters and of the English People*. 2nd ed. New York: Barnes and Noble, 1961.
- Ozment, Steven. *The Age of Reform, 1250-1550: An Intellectual and Religious History*

- of Late Medieval and Reformation Europe*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1980.
- Pannu, D. S. “‘Deep Plots’: Chance and Providence in *Hamlet*.” *Hamlet Studies* 15.1-2 (1993): 100-06.
- Parker, Kate. “Lynn and the Making of a Mystic.” *A Companion to The Book of Margery Kempe*. Eds. John H. Arnold and Katherine J. Lewis. Cambridge: D. S. Brewer-Boydell and Brewer, 2004. 55-73.
- Parry, J. H. *The Age of Reconnaissance: Discovery, Exploration and Settlement, 1450 to 1650*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981.
- . *The Discovery of the Sea*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981.
- Patterson, Annabel. “*Bermudas and The Coronet*: Marvell’s Protestant Poetics.” *ELH* 44.3 (Autumn 1977): 478-99.
- Pearsall, Derek Albert. *Chaucer to Spenser: An Anthology of Writings in English, 1375-1575*. Malden: Blackwell, 1999. Blackwell Anthologies.
- Pellham, Edward. *Gods Power and Providence: Shewed, in the Miraculous Preservation and Deliverance of Eight Englishmen, Left by Mischance in Green-Land Anno 1630, Nine Moneths and Twelve Dayes*. London, 1631.
- Petrarch. *Songs and Sonnets*. Trans. Anna Maria Armi. New York: Pantheon, 1946.
- Phillips, Helen. “Morality in the *Canterbury Tales*, Chaucer’s Lyrics and the *Legend of Good Women*.” *Chaucer and Religion*. Ed. Helen Phillips. Cambridge: D. S. Brewer-Boydell and Brewer, 2010. Christianity and Culture: Issues in Teaching and Research 4. 156-74.
- Popkin, Richard. *The History of Scepticism: From Savonarola to Bayle*. Rev. and expanded ed. New York: Oxford Univeristy Press, 2003.
- . “The Pre-Adamite Theory in the Renaissance.” *Philosophy and Humanism: Renaissance Essays in Honor of Paul Oskar Kristeller*. Ed. Edward P. Mahoney. Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1976. 50-69.
- Rastell, John. *A New Interlude and a Mery, of the Nature of the Four Elementis. Three Rastell Plays: Four Elements, Calisto and Melebea, Gentleness and Nobility*. Ed. Richard Axton. Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1979. 29-68.
- Raybin, David. “Custance and History: Woman as Outsider in Chaucer’s *Man of Law’s*

- Tale.*” *Studies in the Age of Chaucer: The Yearbook of the New Chaucer Society* 12 (1990): 65-84.
- Rediker, Marcus. *Villains of All Nations: Atlantic Pirates in the Golden Age*. Boston: Beacon Press, 2004.
- Rees, Christine. *The Judgment of Marvell*. London: Pinter, 1989.
- Reinhard, J. R. “Setting Adrift in Mediæval Law and Literature.” *PMLA* 56.1 (1941): 33-68.
- Robertson, Elizabeth. “The ‘Elvyssh’ Power of Constance: Christian Feminism in Geoffrey Chaucer’s *The Man of Law’s Tale*.” *Studies in the Age of Chaucer: The Yearbook of the New Chaucer Society* 23 (2001): 143-80.
- Robinson, Benedict S. *Islam and Early Modern English Literature: The Politics of Romance from Spenser to Milton*. New York: Palgrave, 2007.
- Roman, Christopher. “Margery Kempe and Italy: Sacred Space and the Community in Her Soul.” *Travels and Travelogues in the Middle Ages*. Ed. Jean-François Kosta-Théfaine. New York: AMS, 2009. 157-88.
- Rose, Susan. *The Medieval Sea*. London: Hambledon-Continuum, 2007.
- Rowlands, Samuel. “The Picture of a Pirat.” *More Knaues Yet? The Knaues of Spades And Diamonds, with New Additions*. London, 1613? *Literature Online*. Web. 3 August 2010.
- Rudd, Gillian. *Greenery: Ecocritical Readings of Late Medieval English Literature*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007.
- Russell, Paul A. *Lay Theology in the Reformation: Popular Pamphleteers in Southwest Germany, 1521-1525*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002.
- Scot, Reginald. *The Discoverie of Witchcraft*. New York: Dover, 1989.
- Scott, Eugenie C. *Evolution vs. Creationism: An Introduction*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004.
- Seller, John. *Practical Navigation, or, an Introduction to the Whole Art*. 2nd ed. London, 1672.
- Sellin, Paul R. “The Hidden God: Reformation Awe in Renaissance English Literature.” *The Darker Vision of the Renaissance: Beyond the Fields of Reason*. Ed. Robert S. Kinsman. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974. 147-96.

- Shakespeare, William. *Hamlet: An Authoritative Text, Intellectual Backgrounds, Extracts from the Sources, Essays in Criticism*. Ed. Cyrus Hoy. 2nd ed. New York: Norton, 1992.
- . *Pericles*. Ed. Suzanne Gossett. London: Arden Shakespeare- Thomson Learning, 2004. The Arden Shakespeare, Third Series.
- . *Pericles, Prince of Tyre*. Eds. Barbara A. Mowat and Paul Werstine. New York: Washington Square Press, 2005. Folger Shakespeare Library.
- . *Pericles, Prince of Tyre. The Riverside Shakespeare*. Ed. G. Blakemore Evans. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1974. 1479-1516.
- . *The Tempest: Sources and Contexts, Criticism, Rewritings and Appropriations*. Eds. Peter Hulme and William H. Sherman. New York: W. W. Norton, 2004. Norton Critical Editions. 1-82.
- Shklar, Ruth. "Cobham's Daughter: *The Book of Margery Kempe* and the Power of Heterodox Thinking." *Modern Language Quarterly* 56.3 (September 1995): 277-304.
- Simpson, James. *Burning to Read: English Fundamentalism and its Reformation Opponents*. Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2007.
- Sinfield, Alan. *Faultlines: Cultural Materialism and the Politics of Dissident Reading*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992.
- Skulsky, Harold. "Spenser's Despair Episode and the Theology of Doubt." *Modern Philology* 78.3 (Feb. 1981): 227-42.
- Smith, Nigel, ed. *The Poems of Andrew Marvell*. By Andrew Marvell. Rev. ed. Harlow: Pearson-Longman, 2007. Longman Annotated English Poets.
- Snyder, Susan. "The Left Hand of God: Despair in Medieval and Renaissance Tradition." *Studies in the Renaissance* 12 (1965): 18-59.
- Sobecki, Sebastian I. *The Sea and Medieval English Literature*. Suffolk: D. S. Brewer-Boydell and Brewer, 2008.
- Sobel, Dava. *Longitude: The True Story of a Lone Genius Who Solved the Greatest Scientific Problem of His Time*. New York: Walker, 1995.
- Spenser, Edmund. *Amoretti. Edmund Spenser's Poetry: Authoritative Texts, Criticism*.

- Eds. Hugh Maclean and Anne Lake Prescott. 3rd ed. New York: W. W. Norton, 1993. Norton Critical Editions. 587-625.
- . *The Faerie Queene*. Eds. Thomas P. Roche, Jr. and C. Patrick O'Donnell, Jr. London: Penguin, 1978. Penguin Classics.
- . *The Yale Edition of the Shorter Poems of Edmund Spenser*. Eds. William A. Oram et al. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989.
- Staley, Lynn, ed. *The Book of Margery Kempe*. By Margery Kempe. Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute Publications, 1996. TEAMS Middle English Texts Series.
- . *Margery Kempe's Dissenting Fictions*. University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1994.
- Starkey, David J. "Pirates and Markets." *Bandits at Sea: A Pirates Reader*. Ed. C.R. Pennell New York: New York University Press, 2001. 107-24.
- Strachey, William. *A True Reportory of the Wreck and Redemption of Sir Thomas Gates, Knight, upon and from the Islands of the Bermudas*. 1610. *A Voyage to Virginia in 1609; Two Narratives: Strachey's "True Reportory" and Jourdain's Discovery of the Bermudas*. Ed. Louis B. Wright. Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1964. 3-101.
- Strathmann, Ernest A. *Sir Walter Raleigh: A Study in Elizabethan Skepticism*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1951.
- Taylor, E. G. R. *The Haven-Finding Art: A History of Navigation from Odysseus to Captain Cook*. London: Hollis and Carter, 1956.
- Thomas, Keith. *Religion and the Decline of Magic*. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1971.
- Thomson, Patricia. *Sir Thomas Wyatt and His Background*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1964.
- Thorne, Robert. "The Booke Made by the Right Worshipful M. Robert Thorne in the Yeere 1527. In Sivil, to Doctour Ley, Lord Ambassadour for King Henry the Eight, to Charles the Emperour, Being an Information of the Parts of the World, Discovered by Him and the King of Portingal: And Also of the Way to the Moluccaes of the North." *The Principal Navigations, Voyages, Traffiques and Discoveries of the English Nation*. Ed. Richard Hakluyt. Vol. 2. Glasgow: Maclehose and Sons, 1903. 164-81.
- Tottel, Richard, ed. *Songes and Sonnettes, Written by the Ryght Honorable Lorde Henry*

- Haward Late Earl of Surrey, and Other. Tottel's Miscellany (1557-1587).* Ed. Hyder Edward Rollins. Rev. ed. Vol. 1. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1965. 1-259.
- Tricomi, Albert H. "Joan la Pucelle and the Inverted Saints Play in *1 Henry VI*." *Renaissance and Reformation/Renaissance et Réforme* 25.2 (2001): 5-31.
- Tyndale, William. *An Exposition upon the Fifth, Sixth, and Seventh Chapters of Matthew. The Works of the English Reformers: William Tyndale and John Frith.* Ed. Thomas Russell. Vol. 2. London, 1831. 225-379.
- Vitkus, Daniel. "Poisoned Figs, or 'Traveler's Religion': Travel, Trade, and Conversion in Early Modern English Culture." *Remapping the Mediterranean World in Early Modern English Writings.* Ed. Goran V. Stanivukovic. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007. 41-57.
- , ed. *Three Turk Plays from Early Modern England: Selimus, A Christian Turned Turk, and The Renegado.* New York: Columbia University Press, 2000.
- . *Turning Turk: English Theater and the Multicultural Mediterranean, 1570-1630.* New York: Palgrave, 2003.
- "The Voyage of St. Brendan." Trans. Denis O'Donoghue. *Brendaniana: St. Brendan the Voyager in Story and Legend.* 2nd ed. Dublin: Browne and Nolan, 1893. 111-175.
- Wall, John N., Jr. "'Fruitfullest Virginia': Edmund Spenser, Roanoke Island, and the Bower of Bliss." *Renaissance Papers* (1984): 1-17.
- Wallace, David. "Margery in Dańsk." William Matthews Lecture Series. Brunei Gallery Lecture Theatre, SOAS, London. 19 May 2005. Lecture. <<http://www.bbk.ac.uk/english/our-research/william-matthews-lectures/margery-in-dansk>>.
- Walsham, Alexandra. *Charitable Hatred: Tolerance and Intolerance in England, 1500-1700.* Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2006. Politics, Culture, and Society in Early Modern Britain.
- . "Miracles in Post-Reformation England." *Signs, Wonders, Miracles: Representations of Divine Power in the Life of the Church.* Eds. K. Cooper and J. Gregory. Studies in Church History Ser. 41. Woodbridge, Suffolk: The Ecclesiastical History Society in association with The Boydell Press, 2005. 273-306.
- . *Providence in Early Modern England.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999.

- Waters, David W. *The Art of Navigation in England in Elizabethan and Early Stuart Times*. London: Hollis and Carter, 1958.
- Watson, Robert N. *The Rest is Silence: Death as Annihilation in the English Renaissance*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994.
- White, John. "A Letter of M. John White to M. Richard Hakluyt Written in February 1593." *Hakluyt's Voyages: The Principal Navigations, Voyages, Traffiques and Discoveries of the English Nation*. By Richard Hakluyt. Ed. Irwin R. Blacker. New York: Viking, 1965. 316-18.
- Windeatt, Barry. Introduction. *The Book of Margery Kempe*. Ed. Barry Windeatt. Cambridge: D. S. Brewer-Boydell and Brewer, 2004. *Library of Medieval Women*. 1-35.
- Womack, Peter. "Shakespeare and the Sea of Stories." *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 29.1 (Winter 1999): 169-87.
- Woods, William F. *Chaucerian Spaces: Spatial Poetics in Chaucer's Opening Tales*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 2008. SUNY Series in Medieval Studies.
- Wootton, David. "Unbelief in Early Modern Europe." *History Workshop Journal* 20.1 (1985): 82-100.
- Wright, Edward, trans. *The Haven-Finding Art, or the Way to Find Any Haven or Place at Sea, by the Latitude and Variation*. By Simon Stevin. London, 1599.
- Wright, Louis Booker. *Middle-Class Culture in Elizabethan England*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1935.
- Wright, Thomas. *The Passions of the Minde in Generall*. London, 1604.
- Wyatt, Thomas. "My Galley." *The Norton Anthology of English Literature*. Ed. M. H. Abrams. 4th Ed. Vol. 1. New York: W. W. Norton, 1979. 465.
- . *The Poetical Works of Sir Thomas Wyatt*. Ed. Charles Cowden Clarke. Edinburgh, 1868.
- . *Selected Poems*. Ed. Hardiman Scott. New York: Routledge, 2003.
- Wyclif, John. *On Simony*. Trans. Terrence A. McVeigh. New York: Fordham University Press, 1992.

---. "Wyclif's Response to Pope Urban VI." *Heresy and Authority in Medieval Europe: Documents in Translation*. Ed. Edward Peters. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1980. University of Pennsylvania Press Middle Ages Series. 273-74.

Wynne-Davies, Marion. *Sidney to Milton, 1580-1660*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003. Transitions Series.

Yoshinaka, Takashi. "'Perhaps' in Marvell's 'Bermudas'." *Seventeenth Century* 13.1 (Spring 1998): 22-25.

Yunck, John A. "Religious Elements in Chaucer's *Man of Law's Tale*." *ELH* 27.4 (December 1960): 249-61.

Kurt E. Douglass

English Department
Lehigh University
Drown Hall
35 Sayre Drive
Bethlehem, PA 18015
610 758 3311
ked2@lehigh.edu

EDUCATION

Ph.D. in English
Lehigh University
Major Field: Early Modern Literature
Minor Field: Medieval Literature
Dissertation: "Who Rules the Waves? Reading the Sea in Late Medieval and Early Modern English Literature"
May 2012

M.A., with Distinction, in European Literature, Culture, and Thought
Queen Mary, University of London
November 2001

B.A. in Literature
Richard Stockton College of New Jersey
December 1991

TEACHING AND RESEARCH INTERESTS

Sixteenth- and Seventeenth-Century British Literature	Intellectual History
Shakespeare	Literary Theory
Medieval Literature	New Historicism
Religion and Literature	Composition and Rhetoric
Travel and Literature	Modern Literatures in English

AWARDS

University Fellowship, Lehigh University, 2004-05, 2007-08

Department Fellowship, Lehigh University, 2005-07, 2009-10

PRESENTATIONS AND PUBLICATIONS

“The Ungodly Theology of Predestination in John Donne’s ‘The Storme.’” Seminar 42: The “Ungodly” in Shakespeare’s England. Annual Meeting of the Shakespeare Association of America. Hyatt Regency Hotel, Bellevue, Washington, USA. April 2011.

“Hamlet’s Sea Voyage and the Motif of the Rudderless Boat.” From the Anchor to the Crow’s Nest: Naval Imagery from the Renaissance to the Age of Photography. German Center of Venetian Studies, Venice, Italy, April 2010.

“Disoriented Sailing in Sir Thomas Wyatt’s ‘My Galley Chargèd with Forgetfulness.’” The Fifty-Sixth Annual Meeting of the Renaissance Society of America, Venice, Italy, April 2010.

“‘No Conscience, No Religion’: Atheism, Piracy, and Islam in Robert Daborne’s *A Christian Turned Turk*.” Seminar 29: England and the Islamic World: A Reassessment. Annual Meeting of the Shakespeare Association of America. Renaissance Washington Hotel, Washington, D.C., USA. April 2009.

“Marvels, Miracles, and the Sea in *Pericles*.” Shakespeare and the Supernatural Seminar. Annual Meeting of the Shakespeare Association of America. Sheraton Marina Hotel, San Diego, CA, USA. April 2007.

“The Double Voice of the Croxton *Play of the Sacrament*.” Medievalism Transformed. University of Wales, Bangor, UK. June 2005.

“The Voyage to Northumberland” in “John Gower’s Transformation of the *Tale of Constance* from Nicholas Trevet’s *Of the Noble Lady Constance*.” Ed. Peter G. Beidler. *John Gower Society*. April 2006.
<<http://www.johngower.org/scholarship/beidler/voyage-northumberland.html>>.

COURSES TAUGHT

English 189: Questions of Travel, Then and Now
Lehigh University, Spring 2010

English 1: Composition and Literature
Lehigh University, Fall 2009

English 11: Literature Seminar for Freshmen
Lehigh University, Spring 2009

English 2: Composition and Literature
Lehigh University, Spring 2007

English 1: Composition and Literature
Lehigh University, Fall 2006

English 2: Composition and Literature
Lehigh University, Spring 2006

English 1: Composition and Literature
Lehigh University, Fall 2005

English 102: Composition II
Atlantic Cape Community College, Spring 2002

DEPARTMENTAL SERVICE

Search Committee for Assistant Professor of Seventeenth-Century British Literature,
Lehigh University, Fall 2008 and Spring 2009

Search Committee for Assistant Professor of Medieval British Literature, Lehigh
University, Fall 2007

PROFESSIONAL AFFILIATIONS

Shakespeare Association of America
John Gower Society

REFERENCES

Dr. Barbara Traister
Professor of English
Lehigh University
English Department
Drown Hall
35 Sayre Drive
Bethlehem, PA 18015
610 758 3307
bht0@lehigh.edu

Dr. Scott Gordon
Professor of English

Lehigh University
English Department
Drown Hall
35 Sayre Drive
Bethlehem, PA 18015
610 758 3320
spg4@lehigh.edu

Dr. Kate Crassons
Associate Professor of English
Lehigh University
English Department
Drown Hall
35 Sayre Drive
Bethlehem, PA 18015
610 758 3310
kac404@lehigh.edu

Dr. Benjamin G. Wright, III
University Distinguished Professor, Religion Studies
Lehigh University
Department of Religion Studies
Maginnes Hall
9 West Packer Avenue
Bethlehem, PA 18015
610 758 3344
bgw1@lehigh.edu