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From Favour to Eternal Life: Trajectories of Grace and the Poetic Career in the Sonnets of Henry Constable and Barnabe Barnes

María Jesús Pérez-Jáuregui

In the summer of 1591, poets Henry Constable (1562–1613) and Barnabe Barnes (1571–1609) joined the Earl of Essex's expedition to France.¹ The rising star Robert Devereux could not have failed to attract two men who had started out with promising prospects and were making their way in a world that was notoriously difficult for the unknighthed heir of a knight and a bishop's third son.² Their acquaintance is uncertain, but their lives and careers yield some striking points of convergence that have so far been unexplored. They turned to writing poetry as a means of seeking patronage and protection, but their efforts yielded mixed results. Constable converted to Catholicism, gave up everything he had been working towards and lived in exile for over a decade, unable to benefit from his fledgling literary reputation.³ Barnes, apparently the boisterous type, was ridiculed by literary rivals, made a bad choice of enemies and later even stood accused of attempted murder.⁴ As writers, both men performed a shift of interest from the secular to the sacred at about the same time, when they were living abroad between 1594 and 1595.⁵ They died unmarried and without issue.

Constable's reputation largely rested on *Diana. The praises of his Mistres, in certaine sweete Sonnets* (1592), an edition of twenty-three amatory sonnets that is nevertheless only a sample of a much vaster collection that survives in manuscript.⁶ Barnes's *Parthenophil and Parthenophe* saw the light a year later. Often considered a medley of poetic forms of inconsistent quality, it was still a remarkable achievement for a man of 22, displaying a wide range of formal experimentation.⁷ As far as religious poetry is concerned, Constable's *Spiritual Sonnets*, very

obviously the work of a Catholic, were unpublishable in England and had a limited circulation.⁸ Barnes's *A Divine Centurie of Spirituall Sonnets* was more palatable to Protestant tastes and was printed in 1595 by John Windet.

Barnes's voyage from secular into religious themes parallels Constable's. Both redeploy language in a way that is consistent with deliberate moves in their poetic career; the same words are often used and made to acquire different layers of meaning to serve a new, more elevated purpose. A salient key term that is explored in all its semantic possibilities and nuances throughout and across the four collections is *grace*. The shared secular connotations of the word, arisen from the common ground of Petrarchan sonnetting, give way to the poets' expression of divergent religious beliefs, according to which the workings of divine grace vary.⁹ For Barnes, grace is linked with the doctrine of *sola gratia* by which human beings are saved; his Protestant notion of predestination determines all aspects of life, his poetic gift included. In Constable's verse, the repentant speaker, under the influence of prevenient grace, undertakes a journey to merit salvation with the help of the Virgin and saints.

In both Constable's and Barnes's sonnets there is a despairing lover who hopes to win the favour of an angelic lady. Confessional differences notwithstanding, the poet later transcends his worldly subject matter and enters a one-sided conversation with the divine, and does so by articulating the various meanings of grace. This chapter will trace the trajectories of grace in the sonnets by Constable and Barnes in an attempt to uncover parallels and points of discrepancy. It ultimately aims to chart an upwards move through which each poet reaches not only for the divine but also for transcendence and the fulfilment of literary ambition. Both authors develop a practical poetics that is surprisingly similar as an attempt to change course, *un*writing a career that, at an early stage, had looked to earthly matters only.

Grace and the Lady-Saint in the Secular Sonnets

Parthenophe, the lady addressed in Barnes's amatory collection, is presented as the most inaccessible sort of Petrarchan mistress. Her name evokes her chastity, which is seen as an insurmountable obstacle by the frustrated Parthenophil, driving him to voice an array of emotions ranging from melancholy to jealousy or rage.¹⁰ She is exceedingly beautiful; her 'graces', that is, her attractive attributes, are frequently invoked. Indeed, they open the sequence:

Mystrisse behold in this true-speaking Glasse,
 Thy beauties Graces of all women rarest,
 Where thou maist finde how largely they surpass
 And staine in glorious louelynesse the fayrest. (1.1–4)¹¹

The poet's verse is said to function as a mirror of her beauty, which was a conventional enough trope. It is no coincidence that he should have chosen the same mirror motif to conclude the sequence. His poetry, he insists, fails to encompass the totality of Parthenophe's beauty, which escapes the powers of his Muse. 'Graces' occurs both in the second and the second-to-last line in his sonnet collection, and can be considered a key word in terms of structure:¹²

Hold (matchlesse myrrour of all womankind)
 These pennes, and Sonnettes, seruaunts of thy prayse,
 . . .
 Thine endlesse graces are so amiable,
 Passing the spirite of my humble muse,
 So that the more I write more graces rise
 Which myne astonish't muse cannot comprise. (104.1–2, 11–14)

The lady's beauty is often equated to or connected with the mythological Graces, as in sonnet 64, in which the love complaint is rife with allusions to gods and goddesses, and the term 'graces' appears three times in as many consecutive lines:

If all the loues were lost, and should be founde,
 And all the graces glories were decayde,
 In thee the graces ornamentes abounde,
 In me the loues by thy sweet graces layde. (64.1–4)

In sonnet 71, her eyes are 'two cleare springs of graces gracious named, / There graces infinite do bathe, and sporte' (4–5). The mythological sisters bathe in them; metaphorically, Parthenophe's beauty and charm streams from her eyes as a source or fountain. Barnes employs the rhetorical devices of polyptoton and antanaclasis in this sonnet and the next, in which goddesses Phoebe and Juno compare the nymph-like Parthenophe with the graces and find her superior in beauty, to the extent that 'in her cheekes the graces blush for shame' (72.13).

Grace becomes a locus of tension when it is used to refer to the lady's lack of favour and pity. When the two meanings are presented together to refer to the good-looking but pitiless Parthenophe, the

word stands in an oxymoronic relationship with itself. Sonnet 73 is one of the best examples and deserves to be quoted in full:

Why did rich nature graces grant to thee,
 Since thou art such a niggard of thy grace?
 Or how can graces in thy body bee
 Where neither they, nor pittie finde a place?
 Ah they bene handmaydes to thy bewties furie,
 Making thy face to tyrannise on men.
 Condemn'd before thy bewtie by loues Iurie,
 And by thy frownes adiudg'd to sorrowes den.
 Graunt me some grace, for thou with grace art wealthie
 And kindly mayst afforde some gracious thing,
 Mine hopes all as my minde weake and vnhealthie,
 All her lookes gracious, yet no grace do bring
 To me poore wretche, yea be the graces theare:
 But I the furies in my brest doe beare.

'Grace' and derived words mean beauty in lines 1, 3, 9 (second instance), 12 ('gracious') and 13. They stand for the lady's favour in lines 2, 4 ('they'), 9 (first instance), 10 and 12 ('grace'). This means that there are five occurrences of the word in each sense throughout the sonnet, creating a perfect balance – or unresolved tension. Additionally, in line 9 the lover presents himself as a man condemned before a 'jury', so grace takes on the additional meaning of pardon or an act of clemency. In the final couplet, the mythological allusion to the Three Graces and the Three Furies serves to contrast her beauty with the poet's state of mind. Parthenophil voices no melancholy acceptance of his fate but bitter anger.

In the Petrarchan tradition, the poetic mistress is often presented as a divine creature, a *donna angelicata*. Hence grace is an attribute ascribed to the lady-saint in Barnes's sonnets. The words that come out of her mouth are described as angelic: 'And from loues rubie portall louely rushes / For euery word she speaks an Angels grace' (26.11–12).¹³ However, Parthenophe's divinity is undermined by her lack of mercy towards the poet, given that this quality is associated with Christian *caritas*. In sonnet 28, the lover complains that the lady is stonehearted and she ignores his plight:

When I begge grace, thou myne intreatie spurnes:
 Mine hart with hope vpheld, with feare returns
 Betwixt these passions endlesse is my fit
 Then if thou bee but humaine grant some pitie

Or if a saint sweet mercies are there meedes
 Faire louely chast sweet-spoken learned wittie
 These make thee saint-like and these saints befit
 But thine hard hart makes all these graces weedes. (7–14)

Pity could be expected of a human woman, and mercy of a saint. Despite her many heavenly attributes, duly enumerated in line 12, her cruelty – understood as a lack of grace towards the lover-devotee – essentially offsets them, and she is portrayed in strikingly negative terms in the final line. The implication is that, in order to be truly divine, the lady should take pity on the poet and yield to his desires, which seems ironic in that giving in to lust would ruin the chastity that makes her a saint in the first place. This fundamental conflict simply cannot be resolved.

Among the amatory sonnets of Henry Constable, the closest parallel to Barnes's sonnet 73 is one in which the word 'favour', synonymous with 'grace', takes on different meanings; this is Constable's own exercise in antanaclasis:

Ladye in beautye and in favoure rare,
 Of favoure, not of due, I favoure crave;
 Nature to thee beautye and favoure gave,
 Fayre then thow arte, and favoure thow mayst spare. (10.1–4)

The word 'grace' is also used to contrast the lady's attributes and her lack of compassion – albeit Constable's persona exhibits considerably less bitterness than Barnes's. This does not happen within the same sonnet but across his amatory production. His mistress is praised for her 'gratiouse lookes' in sonnet 49, which contrast with her 'hard and disgratiuous words', mentioned in the heading to an occasional piece. In the text the poet complains that his 'hope laye gasping on his dying bed / slayne with a word' (64.1–2).¹⁴

As in Barnes, grace is perceived to be a quality of the lady as a divine being in Constable's amatory poetry. In sonnet 20, the speaker persuades her to show him favour. After explaining that a friend has urged him to give up on his love because the lady cannot be moved, the poet asks her to prove his friend wrong and do something apparently impossible, which is what a god or goddess would do:

Gods only doe impossibilityes;
 Impossible, sayth he, thy grace to gayne.
 Shew then the powers of devinityes

By granting me thy favoure to obtayne.
 So shall thy foe give to himselfe the lye;
 A goddesse thow shalt prove, and happie I. (20.9–14)

If his mistress's grace is bestowed on him, the poet's friend will be figuratively defeated, she will prove that she is a goddess – having worked a miracle – and the poet will achieve his heart's desire.

In Constable's secular sonnets, 'grace' acquires another – unique – layer of meaning, which is woven together with religious overtones. The introductory sonnet in the MS Dyce 44 collection dedicates the whole sequence 'To his Mistrisse', and opens with a curious apostrophe:

Grace, full of grace, though in these verses heere
 My love complaynes of others then of thee,
 Yet thee alone I lov'd . . . (1.1–3)

It evokes the apostrophe to the Virgin Mary, 'Hail Mary, full of grace', and thence a form of Catholic prayer; the lady is praised as a Mary-like figure – whereas Barnes, a Protestant, never goes that far. The possibilities for wordplay are enhanced by the fact that Constable's addressee is called Grace; she was Grace Pierrepont, a young lady whom he might have intended to marry.¹⁵ The sonnet may work as a preface, but it reads almost like a farewell. It is the poet's last attempt at romantic love, written about the time of his conversion. If unsuccessful, he promises to give up love altogether and turn to God, who – unlike the lady – will have mercy on him and save him from further lovelorn suffering:

To him I flye for grace that rules above,
 That by my Grace I may live in delight
 Or by his grace I never more may love. (1.12–14)

Similar wordplay is found in a sonnet to Grace's aunt, Mary Talbot, Countess of Shrewsbury, in which he complains about his unrequited love for her niece, possibly lodging with Mary at the time, and asks for her intercession. This is all the more significant considering that the Countess was a devout Catholic:

A warrioure of youre campe by force of eyes
 Mee pris'ner tooke, and will with rigor deale
 Except yow pity in youre heart will place,
 At whose white hands I only seeke for grace. (38.11–14)

If the possessive 'yours' is correct, and not a scribal error replacing third person 'her', the poet is pinning his faith on being able to move the Countess so that she will sanction his courtship. His desire for 'grace' is as much a plea for mercy or intercession as a direct, literal allusion to his mistress.

In both Barnes's and Constable's secular sonnets, the speaker presents himself as disconsolate, irate or – at most – mildly hopeful in his attempt to woo a lady who is fundamentally out of his reach. She emerges as a contradictory figure in that she boasts every positive physical and psychological attribute but one, the willingness to return the speaker's affections and thus metaphorically spare him the suffering of unrequited love. Grace is ascribed to the lady in all its multiplicity of meanings through the use of rhetorical devices such as antanaclosis; what emerges is a *donna angelicata* who is, at the same time, full of grace and utterly devoid of it; she can only preserve her sanctity by denying the poet her mercy.

Recantation as a Career Move

The final manuscript collection of Constable's secular sonnets can be holistically appraised as a landmark in his career or, rather, a conscious career move.¹⁶ On the verge of, or perhaps fully immersed in, a process of conversion, he gathers together the fruits of his poetic efforts, neatly organises them under sections and subheadings, and adds the introductory sonnet, his parting gift to 'Grace', and some materials that both serve as a conclusion and give the sequence – and the first part of his poetic career – closure.¹⁷ A short prose inscription between the second-to-last and last sonnets records a momentous decision:

When I had ended this last sonnet and found that such wayne poems as I had by idle houres writ did amount to the climatericall number 63, me thought it was high tyme for my follie to die and to employe the remnant of wit to other calmer thoughts lesse sweete and lesse bitter. (42v)

It is significant that Constable the poet does not give up writing altogether. The climacteric number seems to manifest to him as some sort of revelation, a signal urging him to change direction; it could hardly have been accidental, given his concern with balance and proportion, but he seems to want his prospective readers to think otherwise.¹⁸ Here he is manifesting an intention to move on to the next stage of his

poetic career, leaving behind the frenzies and the despair of his amatory endeavours in verse, now seen with hindsight as the product of his foolishness – the old meaning ‘lewdness’ is perhaps implicit. By doing so he joins a tradition of written recantation of earlier, or youthful, poetry and his career takes an Ovidian turn in that, like the Roman poet, he expresses a regretful attitude towards his former works.¹⁹ As Prescott puts it, ‘Renaissance poets could think the love sonnet a beginner’s genre’, whereas ‘divine poetry was . . . both an alternative to secular literature and a means of ascent to something new’.²⁰

That Constable’s move is going to be upwards, to God, is perhaps hinted at in the very last sonnet, number 63, which functions as a petition to Lady Arbella Stuart, a potential candidate for the English throne, to protect his book:

So, like twin byrds, my Muse bred with her fame,
 Together now doe learne theyre wings to use.
 And in this booke which heere yow may peruse
 Abroad they flye, resolv’d to try the same
 Adventure in theyre flight; and thee, sweet dame,
 Both she and I for oure protectoure chuse. (3–8)

The avian conceit by which he and his mistress, his poetic reputation and her eternal fame, fly safely under Arbella’s wing can be read in the light of Cheney’s notion of ‘the myth of the winged poet’, used by poets ‘to communicate the workings and goals of their art’.²¹ With some wistfulness, Constable the poet imagines a scenario in which his sociopolitical aspirations and romantic desire could come together, fulfilled in the same space and time: ‘O happie if I might but flitter there, / Where yow and shee and I should be so neare’ (63.13–14). If the feeling of disillusionment with earthly affairs is to be taken seriously and deemed consistent with his prose renunciation, the envisioned destination of this flight upwards may be heaven, where souls are reunited after death, and the next stage in his career religious poetry. Failing to obtain grace literally and figuratively, the poet readies himself to embrace a life devoted to spiritual matters. He seems bent on a Virgilian career path, a self-conscious ascent; however, it is hard to forget that the poet’s progress in terms of public literary achievement and fame was thwarted by the exile ensuing from his conversion, rendering Constable an Ovidian figure with an ‘after-career’ charged with plaintiveness and a sense of displacement.²² The word ‘abroad’ in the sonnet quoted above points at this tension between fame and fleeing; it means ‘in public’ or ‘in general circulation’, which hints at his poetry being read by a wider audience, and it

also means away from home, perhaps in the current ‘overseas’ sense, in a thinly veiled allusion to his contemplation of exile.

Like Constable, Barnes comments on the former stage of his career and expresses an intention to write in the praise of God. The shift is expressed textually. In the epistle to the reader that prefaces his *Divine Centurie of Spirituall Sonnets*, the poet refers to Du Bartas and describes the writing of religious poetry as elevating; it brings the poet closer to God and renders him ‘more then man’, whereas other poetic endeavours are the product of ‘humane furie’, which debases man.²³ It is not surprising that the first sonnet in the collection should have an avian conceit depicting the metamorphosis of the poetic muse from a baser kind of winged creature, a sparrow, into one endowed with angelic wings:²⁴

No more lewde laies of Lighter loues I sing,
Nor teach my lustfull Muse abus'de to flie,
With Sparrowes plumes and for compassion crie,
To mortall beauties which no succour bring.
But my Muse fethered with an Angels wing,
Diuinely mounts aloft vnto the skie. (1.1–6)

It is Him alone, and not a lady, that kindles his desire, and he promises to make ‘Thy loue my theame and holy Ghost my Muse’ (1.14). This series of substitutions confirms the renunciation of his amatory poetry and sets the tone for the collection.

In their recantations, both Constable and Barnes seem to accomplish two things at the same time. They reflect on a stage in their poetic career that they deem to be over and express a desire to unwrite it by moving on to a loftier subject matter. Nevertheless, their denial amounts to emphasis. The use of expressions such as ‘high time’, ‘now’ and ‘no more’ leaves the reader to ponder what exactly is being renounced; the fundamental shift cannot be understood without knowledge of the love sonnets which the poets purport to be dispensing with. Despite the two poets’ changing feelings towards their previous self-image, the poems remained in circulation; they were left behind, not buried.²⁵

Grace in the Religious Sonnets

Reading Constable’s and Barnes’s religious sequences side by side reveals obvious differences but also common ground. Barnes’s

Divine Centurie was published in print and dedicated to Tobie Matthew, Bishop of Durham, to whom he writes in the prefatory epistle that the sonnets were composed during his travels in France and devoted to God ‘daily to his honour by prescribed taske’ (sig. A2v).²⁶ There is the sense of an intention to undertake a project; as Marcy North notes, ‘the task is disciplined and focused, not occasional or casual’.²⁷ In terms of organisation, Barnes himself admits that his sequence ‘may to some readers seem disordered and straunge’, with an ‘unequall coherence’ (sig. A3v). Earl takes this at face value, but nevertheless identifies some landmarks or ‘cardinal points’, and loosely delimited thematic groups.²⁸

Constable’s *Spiritual Sonnets* were largely unknown; they were kept close, copied in manuscript and probably shared with a reduced Catholic coterie only.²⁹ The copy at Berkeley Castle, a booklet containing twenty-one sonnets, is the most perfect in terms of organisation. The poems are intricately arranged in groups and triads informed by strong numerological and hierarchical concerns.³⁰ The same careful structuring that Constable applied to his secular sonnets in their last, definite compilation seems to be at work in the sacred, lending authority to the manuscript’s readings.

Besides the poets’ choice of medium and its implications, another fundamental difference lies in the religious landscape presented in the sonnets themselves. In Constable’s *Spiritual Sonnets*, that landscape is populated by the Trinitarian God, the Virgin Mary and a panoply of saints, perfected human beings who, having merited salvation, are capable of aiding the poet, and are thus petitioned for spiritual succour and intercession. The Virgin and the female saints honoured, in particular, effectively replace the earthly mistresses of the secular sonnets. In the tenth sonnet, St Catherine of Alexandria is presented as a female paragon; the term ‘grace’ is used with multiple meanings.³¹

Because thou was the Daughter of A kinge,
 whose beautie did all natures wourkes exceede
 and wysedome wonder to the wourlde did breed,
 a muse might rayse it self on Cupids winge.
 But sith these graces which from nature springe
 were grac’d by those which from grace did proceed
 & glory have deserv’d, my muse doth neede
 an Angelles feathers when thie prayse I singe. (10.1–8)

In this instance of antanaclasis, the first occurrence of ‘graces’ refers to her natural attributes: nobility, beauty and wisdom, which would

make her a worthy Petrarchan mistress (4). But these qualities were embellished by God's divine 'grace' (6), which made her an exemplary Christian and a martyr who has deserved 'glory' (7). Constable returns to the avian or flight conceit in this sonnet, with angels' wings far surpassing Cupid's and enabling the poet's muse to soar higher.

The landscape in Barnes's *Divine Centurie*, on the contrary, is populated by God alone. His grace is all-encompassing, unmerited and bestowed directly on the believer. Barnes's sonnets are informed by a specifically Protestant rationale, which Lewalski summarises in her volume on John Donne in the following way:

[M]an's salvation is wholly the work of God . . . Because the image of God in man is almost wholly destroyed by original sin its restoration must be wholly God's work, effected by the merits of Christ and apprehended by a faith which is itself the gift of God.³²

This Protestant view is fully illustrated in sonnet 53, which begins with a powerful question – 'Didst thou redeeme my soule, my sole saluation?' (1) – and provides an account of the human soul's original purity and later regeneration enacted by Christ's sacrifice:

Because at our forefathers first creation,
Hee in his breast by sacred inspiration,
From his owne mouth (which did so well beseeme it)
Breathed a soule diuine, then let vs deeme it
A gracious, precious and deare immolation,
For him to saue our soules with his bloodshed. (53.3–8)

No intercession is necessary or possible in Barnes's view; therefore, there is no place in the sequence for anyone but God, and the Virgin and the saints are excluded as addressees.³³ Only God replaces earthly mistresses as the object of devotion and praise. In sonnet 2, the poet muses on Christ's sacrifice and His blood comes to replace the eyes of the Petrarchan mistress as the source of all love to which the wretched sinner needs to respond; Barnes juxtaposes the conventions proper to love poetry, so familiar to him, with renewed spiritual concerns:

In steede of lustfull eyes with arrowes fillde:
Of sinfull loues which from their beames abound.
Let those sweete blessed wounds with streames of grace,
Aboundantly sollicite my poore spirite:
Rauish'de with loue of thee that didst debase
Thy selfe on earth that I might heauen inherite. (2.7–12)

The 'streames of grace' effectively cleanse and heal his soul in the final couplet, and render the poet aware of and grateful for this freely bestowed salvation.

Grace is described by Halewood as 'God's inexplicable benevolence' that 'passes all distances and overcomes all obstacles'.³⁴ Its healing properties pervade Barnes's sequence. It is often imagined in a liquefied state to emphasise its permeating capabilities, with phrases such as 'thy graces louely Riuier' (26.5), 'siluer streame of grace' (68.2); it distils from God 'in full abundance' (15.6), compared to an 'Antidote' (2.2), a 'nectre' or elixir that purifies (2.14). The state of the sinner's soul, or heart, is constantly depicted as wounded: 'my wounded hart with pearsed conscience bleeddes' (25.7). This 'wound', emphatically described with epithets such as 'foule' (19.9) and 'desperate' (77.3), or with gruesome images of festering or rotting (77.3), can only be cured with grace by way of an ointment: 'gracious oyle' (10.10), 'oyle of mercies and sweete grace' (19.10), 'his gentle graces Oyle, his mercies balme' (64.2).³⁵ The epithets 'Gracious shepherde' (9.1), 'gracious bridegroom' (5.9) or 'bounteous giver of all graces' (75.6) are employed to refer to God. His grace is, of course, 'endless' (38.13) or 'eternal' (87.3), 'lively' in that it is life-giving for the spiritually dead sinner (15.12), and, above all, unmerited – men are deemed 'worthlesse' (65.7) or 'not worthie' (56.5). The musical quality and repetition of some of these phrases is reminiscent of the language in the Psalms, which have been identified as the main source for Barnes's sonnets.³⁶

One particular description of grace as incense or perfume is shared by Constable and Barnes. In Constable's 'To God the Father', which opens the sequence, the poet beseeches God to let his soul become a true *imago Dei*, 'and sence my harte with sighes of holie love / that it the temple of the sprite may prove' (1.13–14). Barnes's appeal is strikingly similar: 'O let my soule (thy Temple) be perfum'de / With sacred incense of thy vertuous grace' (4.9–10).³⁷ This evidences that biblical references worked cross-confessionally, and some metaphors came from a shared pool of knowledge at the disposal of both Catholic and Protestant writers.³⁸ In this instance of comparison of divine grace to incense the underlying notion could be what Manley refers to as an 'infusion . . . *de sursum descendens*, which allowed the soul to perceive the beauty of god'.³⁹

A major preoccupation in both sequences is the status of the sinner. The two poets mournfully repent their sinful life focused on earthly passions, and, by extension, on amatory poetry. The speaker in Barnes expresses sorrow over his many shortcomings, for instance in sonnet 40:

My daies bee few, my sinnes past number bee,
 Adde to my daies (Oh God) more time of grace,
 And mercy to my sinnes: behold my case,
 With eyes of gracious pittie looke on mee:
 My wounded and afflicted conscience see,
 My soule afraide to stand before thy face. (1–6)

Grace is the divine gift that the poet longs for; he presents himself as ‘him that penitently sues for grace’ despite his sins (40.4), which he depicts in colourful terms such as ‘the large blacke bill / Of my dead sinnes’ (3.7–8); they ‘sting’ or prick his soul (e.g., 19.4, 34.5). In true Protestant fashion, the sinner cannot work towards his salvation. In her study of Donne, Papazian has referred to the ‘irony’ that arises in the *Holy Sonnets*: ‘as readers of Donne’s divine poems of religious anxiety – if not the speakers themselves – know, the very ability of these speakers to contemplate their sinfulness is itself a sign of God’s presence with them’.⁴⁰ Regardless of his momentary lapses in confidence throughout the sequence, the speaker in Barnes knows that his ‘very ability . . . to call out to God’, not only in prayer but also in writing, is a sure sign of grace being at work in him.⁴¹

As a Catholic convert, the speaker in Constable has no such assurances. He must undergo the different stages of the sacrament of penance, from contrition to confession and satisfaction, and he asks for assistance during his journey along the *via penitentiae*. In a sonnet meditating on the Blessed Sacrament, he asks God to ‘quench’ in his heart ‘the flames of bad desire’ following His assimilation into the communicant’s body during the Eucharist (4.14). His best explorations of the theme of penitence take a woman saint, Mary Magdalene, as the exemplary penitent worthy of emulation. In the seventh sonnet in the sequence, the poet muses on the Magdalene’s legendary penance in the desert and the metaphorical wasteland in which his sinful soul lives:⁴²

In suche a place my soule doth seeme to bee
 when in my boddye she laments her synne
 and non but brutall passions findes therein,
 excepte they be sent downe from heaven to me.
 Yet if those graces god to me imparte
 which he inspir’d thy blessed brest withall,
 I may finde heaven in my retyred harte.
 And if thou change the objecte of my love,
 the wing’d affection which men Cupid call
 may gett his sight and like an Angell prove. (7.5–14)

Inspired by the success story of the Magdalene, the poet prays that divine grace will be the inspiration he needs to overcome sin and be reconciled with God and infused with a holier type of love through penance. Struggle lies ahead: the poet is not certain of salvation; he hopes to become worthy of it so that he may go to heaven, and faith must go hand in hand with actions. In a collection fraught with longing and anxiety, the Virgin and the female saints, in particular, are asked to point the way. He petitions St Margaret for chastity mirroring hers: 'Give me then puritie, in steed of powre / and lett my soule, made chaste, passe for a mayde' (11.13–14); the Virgin will inspire him, through contemplation of her 'lovely face' (13.6), to leave worldly ambition behind and transcend into the only true court in God's realm.

The above sonnet presents the theme of the conflict between body and soul, which is common to Constable and Barnes, although with significant nuances. In *Divine Centurie*, the poet states in his address to the reader that his sequence arises out of 'inseperable combat betwixt earth and my spirite' (sig. A3r). The recurrent image remains one of violent strife:

My soule through manifold assaults of sinne
 (In grieuous combate with my flesh retain'de)
 Declining faintes, vnlesse it bee sustain'de:
 Then send thy mercies which might enter in,
 To seuer them least further broyles beginne (97.1–5)

God's grace is invoked as that which can intervene and settle the matter. There is a certain dynamic quality to this struggle: the Devil works incessantly to corrupt the sinner's soul, but God can – and indeed does – succour him:

Mee swallowed in the gulfe of sinne behold:
 A Lambe amongst wilde wolues (once of thy fold)
 Whom Sathan now doth for his porcion craue:
 Deare sonne of Daudid helpe, yet helpe with speede (13.6–9)

In the *Spiritual Sonnets*, the body is a prison for the soul, holding back its purification and progress towards God. The speaker's soul is portrayed as 'shutt in' his 'bodies Jayle' (11.9); it is at odds with a body overcome with 'brutall passions' (7.7).

Earl has observed that, despite the obvious influence of the penitential Psalms, in particular, Barnes 'undertakes the penitential mode only to a limited extent' and expends more poetic energy on the praise of God:

Barnes proclaims his repentance in a more subtle Calvinist fashion and seeks the means of newness of life and the chance . . . to praise his Maker and Redeemer. To that extent, in looking for new life upon earth, his poetry is life-affirming, and . . . the final intuition in the reader's mind must be optimistic, and so hopeful in the deeper Christian sense.⁴³

There are indeed moments of great joy and confidence in the sequence, such as sonnet 43, in which Satan tempts the poet as he travels abroad but fails to doom him because grace is already at work within him:

But now behold Gods mercie to mee showne.
 Hee gracious, louing, mercifull, and wise,
 Declar'd expressly that I was ordaind
 Vnto saluation, for that enterprise
 Of Sathans mou'de my soule (before profaind)
 To purge it selfe, with that repentant grace,
 Which mee shall saue from hell, and him displace. (8–14)

Whereas Barnes's religious poetry, like his theology, is life-affirming, Constable's can be read as life-denying. A core idea is that happiness is not to be found in this life but in the next. In a little-known sonnet to St Colette, the patron saint of his birth day, grace is the resulting state of the poet's perfected soul after purification is complete:

Yf I to longe in earthes affection staye,
 lett this thy better liffe teache me to see
 howe I muste strive to sett my spiritt free
 before true lyffe and Joye I purchase maye.
 When I was borne, I lefte with grieffe and woe
 my mothers wombe, & for to lyve againe
 I muste with payne from my owne bodye goe;
 firste from the lustes thereof to live in grace,
 then from it self before I cann obtayne
 a lyfe of glorye in thy dwellinge place. (12.5–14)

Life on earth is depicted as a vale of tears and a transitory state, and the poet must undergo a double pain – that of renouncing earthly passions and the more literal one of illness and death – before achieving eternal life. The tone is markedly sombre. The only moments of true joy in Constable's religious sonnets are those in which the emphasis shifts to life in heaven and the soul's union with God is imagined. He draws upon erotic or marital imagery to describe the state of bliss associated with the mystical ascent and union.⁴⁴

My boddy is the garment of my sprite
 while as the daye time of my liffe doth laste;
 when death shall bringe the night of my delighte
 My soule, uncloth'd, shall rest from labours paste
 and, clasped in the arms of god, enjoye,
 by sweete conjunction, everlastinge Joye. (18.9–14)

There is little mysticism in Barnes's poetry and erotic language is used more sparsely. He nevertheless anticipates John Donne's depiction of God's ravishing of the soul in *Holy Sonnets*, for instance in *Divine Centurie* sonnet 2, 'rauish'de with love of thee' (11). Later in the sequence grace inflames the poet with divine love, which drives the poet to praise Him:

Kindle my spirit with that sacred heate,
 Which me may rauish with an heauenly Loue:
 Whil'st I thy ceaselesse graces doe repeate (8.10–12)

Barnes's protestations that the *Divine Centurie* arose out of his own spiritual conflict and in 'especiall occasions and in earnest true motions of the spirite' (sig. A3v) are deemed 'an interesting ploy' by Serjeantson, who notes their relatively impersonal, universal character and use of widely available, ready-made images.⁴⁵ Barnes offers an account of the spiritual life of the Protestant believer to which the notion of justification is central; his sequence is safely conventional in its theology, publishable and published, available to readers who might benefit from it. Constable's religious sonnets, as a whole, have an air of privacy or sincerity which, as has been argued, 'is rare in the secular sonnets'.⁴⁶ There was little immediate social gain to be expected from writing fiercely Catholic sonnets; the poet knows it, and he trusts that his ultimate reward will be reaped in the life to come.

Self-affirming and Self-denying Poetics

Constable and Barnes made a conscious decision to devote their energies to religious verse that replaced their earlier secular lyrics. Drawing upon Cheney's classification of career models, they stand at a crossroads between the Virgilian and the Augustinian models. The former traces the ascent from lower to higher genres. The latter 'emphasizes the poet's need to end such a career by turning from youthful, courtly, erotic poetry to aged, contemplative, divine poetry'.⁴⁷ As in the case of Spenser, their shift took place in the mid-1590s, when the influence of

Du Bartas was at its peak.⁴⁸ In the French poet's invocation to Urania, poetry is a God-sent gift and an unequivocally Christian divine fury rightfully replaces the more pagan *furor poeticus*.

Barnes deploys this notion of divine gift; in the *Divine Centurie* it is a state of heavenly rapture resulting from the inspiration of the Holy Spirit on the poet, as in the final couplet in sonnet 29: 'Rayons of comfort through my Temples pearse, / And consecrate my Muse to sacred verse'. In another, the speaker, grateful for God's redemption, turns his talent 'to praise the Lord' and compels fellow poets to do the same: 'Nay try (vain Poets) try, that King, that place, / If God, and heauen, giue not your Muse most grace' (39.13–14). He reflects upon his own literary prowess and asserts its connection with divine grace in sonnet 50: 'that facultie / with which thou didst mee worthlesse beautifie' (2–3). The poet seeks to return God's gift by devoting all his energy to His praise, in an act of reciprocation or gift exchange which further proves the life-affirming character of Barnes's poetics – the act of writing is to be carried out on earth:

That all my thoughts thy Testament embrace,
That all my wits thy tearmesse grace set out,
That by thee praising I may shew thy grace
Which in large Talent thou to mee let out (26.9–12)

'Talent' is a key term here, and its equation with grace is paramount; in its original fifteenth-century meaning, it referred to an ability granted by God to a person. It was therefore linked to godliness in the Protestant sense.⁴⁹

Barnes is not only looking to Du Bartas but also drawing on a concept central to Renaissance sacred rhetorics; in Shuger's words, 'to express one's own feelings is to express one's response to the inner presence of the Spirit'. These feelings are articulated by means of 'figures of thought'.⁵⁰ At certain points in the *Divine Centurie*, rhetorical devices fall short and the poet despairs at the inadequacy of language, leading to 'conventional aphasia'.⁵¹ Sonnet 22 is an enumeration of epithets given to God but language fails him in the very last line: 'What man can giue due glorious Epithites?' (32.14). God's grace is such a gift that no degree of gratefulness suffices:

Oh where shall I finde to my spirite voice?
Where to my voice sufficient choyce of words?
To shew how much my spirite doth reioyce
In those large blessings, which thy grace affords? (65.8–11)

Despite the limitations of language, from a Protestant standpoint poetic talent and its rightful application confirm the poet's status among the elect. The connection between poetry and eternal life is made explicit in sonnet 70, in which the winged poet motif and the idea of ascent return:

Vnto my spirite lend an Angels wing,
By which it might mount to that place of rest,
Where Paradice may mee releue opprest.
Lend to my tongue an Angels voice to sing (1–4)

Towards the end the poet imagines himself 'In spotlesse white', bound to wear 'an Angels Crowne' in the afterlife (13–14). He is to become one of God's 'Saints' (e.g., 16.9, 33.12) a term that does not refer to the men and women from Catholic hagiology, but to God's chosen.

In the *Spiritual Sonnets* Constable also enacts the career shift he promised in the conclusion to his secular collection. In Augustinian fashion, 'mastery of the word' is turned to the praise of God instead of being used as a means to fulfil his earthly ambitions.⁵² He does not articulate the notion of divine *furor*, but turns to the heavenly court and its king as an alternative to fallible monarchs and ungrateful patrons – whose protection he had sought and failed to achieve in any lasting way. He reflects on the futility of his desires for material gain in a sonnet to the Virgin:

Soveraigne of Queens, yf vayne ambition move
my harte to seeke an earthly princes grace,
shewe me thy sonne in his imperiall place
whose servants raigne, o're kinges & Queens, above. (13.1–4)

The use of 'grace' here is significant; the implication is that God's grace, unlike earthly monarchs' favour, will be everlasting:

Soe by ambition I shall humble be
when in the presence of the highest kinge
I serve all his, that he may honnor me. (9–12)

If the poet successfully atones for his sins and purifies his soul, he will merit a 'highe rewarde' (9.14) such as no monarch can bestow; it is described as 'true lyffe and Joye' (12.8) or 'everlasting Joye' (18.14), and as a 'place' or position in the heavenly court (16.1). Whereas the speaker in Barnes's sequence confidently asserts his own talent as a divine gift, what is transcendent in Constable's religious

sonnets is his displacement of ‘the urge for his own fame . . . into an urge to glorify God’.⁵³ In drawing upon the exact same conventions he had employed in his secular verse, Constable unwrites his career, only to rewrite it by denying ambition and fame – and, by extension, earthly life. His later poetics could therefore be termed self-denying. This denial is, on the page, merely a rhetorical ploy which stands at odds with the biographical facts surrounding the *Spiritual Sonnets*, which may indeed have been partially intended to curry favour with prospective Catholic patrons.⁵⁴

Grace in Exile

Barnes’s and Constable’s voyage from secular into religious themes went hand in hand with their literal removal from home. Sonnet 41 in *Divine Centurie* links a ‘forren nation’, France, with temptations of the flesh, so much that the poet turns his ‘sinfull eyes’ towards God (1, 6). In the final lines, temporary displacement from his country makes the poet wish to be done with earthly matters altogether, and his literal change of language is made to prefigure the shift in his literary concerns:

That (as I haue my natiue Countrie changed)
So likewise from the world I may bee weaned:
And as my weede with nation is estranged,
I so may shine in Christian armes vnfeyned:
And as I leaue my nations true language,
My Muse may change for a diuiner rage. (9–14)

The circumstances surrounding Barnes’s stay in France are obscure, although they were likely political rather than religious in nature.⁵⁵

Constable’s exile was much longer and was self-imposed – but it remained irrevocable for years, as he was not allowed back home. The sense that exile is equated with death pervades his poetic production. In the secular collection, the poet distances himself from the lady in order not to die, only to find out that ‘absence’ cannot save him (59.5) because he is doomed to endure a living death. In the *Spiritual Sonnets*, the poet is both alone and isolated, with only his language, poetic talent and faith to hold on to. He is dead to his country and his former friends. His poetry is life-denying not only because there is a better, eternal life to come but also because, like Ovid, he can ‘only cope with his loss of identity by understanding exile as

a living death'.⁵⁶ This renders Constable a peculiar figure as far as career poetics is concerned: following Virgil, he moves upwards; like Augustine, conversion elevates the nature of his concerns; lastly, as an Ovidian figure, exile brings his career and all his former aspirations to an abrupt halt, which forces him to find the rhetorical modes to deal with his expulsion from his former community and with his after-career. There is no ready comfort for a Catholic convert who, unlike Barnes, cannot seek solace in the idea of divine grace and his status as one of God's chosen, but must work tirelessly for his own salvation. Much as Ovid appealed to relatives and friends in his *Tristia* and *Epistulae ex Ponto*, Constable petitions a series of silent interlocutors to keep him company along his penitential journey. In this sense, grace recovers its former meaning of mercy, or favour, in that the poet asks for succour to cope with his sense of displacement and disconnection.

Conclusion: A Poetics of Grace

Never before has the poetry of Barnes and Constable been juxtaposed, perhaps due to the traditionally clear-cut division between Protestants and Catholics in historiography and literary criticism. Within the last two decades, this polarisation has begun to be transcended, with scholars emphasising the 'remarkable degree of cross-pollination of ideas, imagery, and texts across confessional divides'.⁵⁷ Indeed, the two authors inhabited the same political and cultural milieu, and it is possible to look for similarities and, in particular, shared keywords in their poetic production.

The semantic multiplicity of the term 'grace' is fully exploited in Barnes's and Constable's secular and religious sonnet sequences. Their shift from worldly concerns, articulated around petitions for the angelic lady's favour, to a focus on the divine is not only thematic but also a deliberate career move clearly seen at, and after, a turning point based on renunciation. The poets' perception of divine grace and its attainment is as different as could be expected of their opposed confessional stances, Barnes's firm belief in *sola gratia* contrasting with Constable's penitential course and his reliance on intercession. Grace is also central to their consideration of their own poetic talent and the purpose of their art: Barnes is grateful for the God-given gift of poetry, which he wants to devote to His praise; his poetics is affirming as much as Constable's is life-, self-, and even career-denying in that his *Spiritual Sonnets* unwrite his earlier courtly pieces, and he trades

a concern with secular love, social ambition and earthly reward for a longing for communion with God and eternal life. Whereas the career move of both poets can be seen as Augustinian, and, to a limited extent, Virgilian in their ascent from a lower to a higher or more enlightened genre, Constable's exilic poetry can also be appraised in Ovidian terms; the isolated poet who has lost everything he knew is left to lament and petition for help and some form of intercession that will earn him grace.

This chapter has shown that neither Constable nor Barnes articulates the tenets underlying the unwriting of their poetic careers and the avowed rehabilitation of their self-image as poets in a prose manifesto or treatise on *ars poetica*. Instead, their poetics of grace remains unwritten, woven into the textual fabric of the sonnets through the deployment of shifting, contradictory and often irconcilable meanings.

Notes

1. Essex led a contingent meant to aid the Huguenot Henri of Navarre in the suppression of rebels. See Sutherland, *Henry IV of France*, 405–8.
2. Henry Constable was the son of Sir Robert Constable, who had served the Crown in various capacities and held the positions of Marshal of Berwick and Lieutenant of the Ordnance; see Wickes, 'Henry Constable', 272. Sir Robert's good connections with court personages such as Sir Francis Walsingham and Lord Burghley kick-started his son's career. For an extensive, updated biography, see Constable, *Complete Poems*, ed. Pérez-Jáuregui. Barnes's father was Dr Richard Barnes (1532?–1587), bishop of Durham; see Dodds, 'Barnabe Barnes'.
3. Constable declared his Catholicism publicly while he was in France and deserted before he could be sent to England. He lived abroad until James I's accession, when he was allowed to return home.
4. He was drawn into the quarrel between Gabriel Harvey and Thomas Nashe and became a target of Nashe's satirical pen. See Cox, 'Barnes, Barnabe'.
5. See Dodds, 'Barnabe Barnes', 24; Wickes, 'Henry Constable', 278.
6. A second, augmented edition including sonnets by Sidney and unknown authors saw the light in 1594. The most comprehensive collection of Constable's sonnets survives in the miscellany MS Dyce 44, in the National Art Library, Victoria and Albert Museum (London), also known as the Todd MS. Quotations are from my own edition of its text (Constable, *Complete Poems*), which the publishers at the Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies have kindly allowed me to reproduce.

7. Blank praises Barnes as a ‘metrical experimentalist surpassed only by Spenser and Sidney’, following the model of Petrarch and other continental poets in terms of metrical variety and range (*Lyric Forms*, 31).
8. MS Harley 7553, in the British Library, contains seventeen sonnets, whereas the later collection at Berkeley Castle, Gloucestershire, Select Books 85, has twenty-one. I am quoting from my edited text of the latter.
9. For a more general exploration of ‘grace’ as a keyword in the Renaissance, see Mac Carthy, ‘Grace’.
10. The name derives from *parthénos*, ‘virgin’, an epithet given to the Greek goddess Athena.
11. Barnes, *Parthenophil and Parthenophe*, ed. Doyno, 3. All quotations are from this edition, containing a critical old-spelling text edited from the sole extant copy of the 1593 edition, with an apparatus and notes. Further references are given parenthetically in the text by sonnet and line number.
12. Note that sonnet 104 concludes the ‘Sonnets’ section of the 1593 volume, yet it is not the very last sonnet in the volume. One more sonnet serves as a prelude to the infamous ‘Sestine 5’, which concludes the book. It seems that Barnes was concerned about the structural integrity of each section; see Doyno’s introduction in Barnes, *Parthenophil and Parthenophe*, lxvii–lxviii.
13. The poetic mistress’s voice is described as angelic in other sonnets. See, for instance, Watson, *Hekatompathia*, sonnet 12, sig. B2v, and Constable’s sonnet 11, ‘Of the excellencye of his Ladies voice’, the latter of which compares the singing lady to the angelic choir.
14. This sonnet survives only in an earlier manuscript, MS Z3.5.21, in Marsh’s Library, Dublin, 25r. It is numbered 64 in my edition.
15. For the first identification of Grace with a real woman, see Lyall, ‘Stella’s Other Astrophel’, 200. Grace was niece to the Countess of Shrewsbury, Mary Talbot, who was one of Constable’s most esteemed relations. She would have been around 18 and unmarried at the time Constable was at court, in 1588–89.
16. The sonnets in MS Dyce 44 were copied by the miscellany compiler; despite being removed from the lost holograph, their integrity as a sequence is beyond doubt.
17. This career perspective rests on Lipking’s statement that ‘every major Western poet after Homer . . . has left some work that records the principles of his own poetic development’. Lipking extrapolates the argument to so-called minor poets, who, perhaps, had to prove themselves not only to merit a laurel garland but also to survive in the highly competitive world of patronage and thwarted ambitions (*Life of the Poet*, viii).
18. Parker focuses on Constable’s concern with numerology as an organising principle in his sequence and discusses the significance of the numbers 63 and 21 (*Proportional Form*, 147–67).

19. See Cheney, 'Literary Careers', 179.
20. Prescott, 'Divine Poetry as a Career Move', 228 n.15, 223. Ferry mentions Petrarch's collection and its narrative 'development in distinctions between poems to Laura in life and in death', and Sidney's *Certain Sonnets* and Barnes's sequences as version of Petrarch's 'pattern' (*The 'Inward' Language*, 217). Cheney centres on Spenser's renunciation of erotic poetry in *Fowre Hymnes* (*Spenser's Famous Flight*, 195). Constable was heavily influenced by French poets, and Du Bartas's 'L'Uranie' offered another secular-to-sacred poetic career model.
21. Cheney, *Spenser's Famous Flight*, 12.
22. Ovid was banished to Tomis by Augustus in 8 CE for obscure reasons that were at least partly related to the circumstances surrounding the *Ars amatoria*. Banishment interrupted Ovid's career trajectory, which had been one of ascent in terms of literary genres, following the Virgilian model; he stepped backwards from the epic *Metamorphoses* into the elegiac poetry with which he had started out, and his post-exile poetics has been termed one of 'unending lament'. See Barchiesi and Hardie, 'The Ovidian Career Model', 59–60; also, Hardie and Moore, 'Introduction', 6.
23. Barnes, *A Divine Century*, sig. A3v. As there is no contemporary edition of this collection, quotations are from the original edition. Further references are given parenthetically in the text by sonnet and line number. Prose is cited parenthetically by signature.
24. Catullus's poems on his lover Lesbia's sparrow were well known and the bird itself was often interpreted as a symbol for the intimate relationship that the poet longed for. See Mulroy, 'Introduction', in *Complete Poetry of Catullus*, xxviii.
25. In a recent essay, Vuillemin has stressed the continuity between Barnes's profane and spiritual sequences. He views the poet's 'recantation' as 'a strategic move the purpose of which was to modify his image as a poet' regardless of what Barnes's feelings 'about his life or about the subject matter of his poetry' might have been ('Barnabe Barnes's Sonnet Sequences', 133).
26. On the immediate publication context of Barnes's book, of which no manuscript survives, see Earl, 'Late Elizabethan Devotional Poetry', 223–4. This context included an array of Protestant devotional works but also some pertaining to the genre known as the literature of tears, eminently Catholic in character, by Jesuit priest Robert Southwell.
27. North, 'The Sonnets and Book History', 214.
28. Earl, 'Late Elizabethan Devotional Poetry', 225. A longer hymn serves as conclusion to the one hundred sonnets.
29. Marotti has pointed out that the manuscript medium favoured Catholic writers whose works could not easily fit into 'the censored public sphere of print' (*Manuscript, Print*, 44).
30. The sacred number three lies at the core of the sequence; an example of the hierarchical principle at work is the fact that the sequence opens

- with three sonnets to the Trinity and the next follow the order in which the Virgin and the saints are mentioned in the Confiteor. The number 21 is also a third of 63, which seems hardly coincidental.
31. The numbers given are the order in which the sonnets appear within the sequence, as they are not individually numbered.
 32. Lewalski, *Donne's Anniversaries and the Poetry of Praise*, 126.
 33. This idea is emphasised by Earl: 'The Hebrew God who can achieve more lasting victories than his rivals has become the Protestant omnipotent Deity who alone, to the implicit exclusion of the Virgin and saints, deserves the ascription of might and majesty' ('Late Elizabethan Devotional Poetry', 238).
 34. Halewood, *Poetry of Grace*, 54.
 35. Christ's own wound is also invoked in contrast with sinners' 'wounded soules' (45.14), as He purchased the redemption of humankind with His blood.
 36. Serjeantson observes that 'the individual sonnets of the *Divine Centurie* draw on the language and imagery of the psalms' and 'the sequence presents itself as a model of the Psalter' ('The Book of Psalms and the Early Modern Sonnet', 635).
 37. The metaphor of the heart as a temple goes back to 1 Corinthians 6:19. Donne also employs it throughout *Holy Sonnets*, as in 11.3–4: 'How God the Spirit, by angels waited on / In Heav'n, doth make his temple in thy breast'. See Donne, *Complete Poems*, ed. Robbins, 556.
 38. As a trend, 'biblical poetics' has been regarded 'exclusively as a component of Protestant poetics' since the 1970s. See Lewalski's discussion of biblical tropes in the third chapter of *Protestant Poetics*, 72–110. Nevertheless, even she admits that these tropes are not 'peculiar . . . to Protestants' (87).
 39. Manley, 'Introduction', 27.
 40. Papazian, 'The Augustinian Donne', 81.
 41. *Ibid.*, 82. Halewood notes that, in Protestant doctrine, 'emphasis on sin is not in itself morbid or negative . . . To recognize man's inherent sinfulness is to cease self-blame for failure to achieve righteousness and to appreciate the immense generosity of the gift of grace' (*Poetry of Grace*, 53).
 42. This legend has its roots in the ninth century. After Christ's Ascension, 'Mary Magdalen fled to the solitude of the desert and for thirty years lived as a hermit without food or clothing' (Jansen, *The Making of the Magdalen*, 37–8). The image evoked in this sonnet is perhaps more poignant considering that Constable was living in literal self-exile at the time.
 43. Earl, 'Late Elizabethan Devotional Poetry', 238, 235.
 44. An important influence at work here is St Bernard, who draws an analogy between carnal and mystical union in his exegesis of the Song of Songs; see, for instance, Wimsatt, 'St. Bernard, the Canticle of Canticles, and Mystical Poetry', 80.

45. Serjeantson, 'The Book of Psalms', 644.
46. Wickes, 'Henry Constable's Spiritual Sonnets', 33.
47. Cheney, *Spenser's Famous Flight*, 5.
48. For an overview of the publication of Du Bartas's works in Scotland and England in the late 1580s and 1590s, see Shell, *Catholicism, Controversy*, 65–6.
49. See, as an instance, Milton's sonnet 'When I consider how my light is spent', which refers to poetic talent as God's gift, in Milton, *Complete Shorter Poems*, 304.
50. Shuger, *Sacred Rhetoric*, 235–6, 239.
51. Earl, 'Late Elizabethan Devotional Poetry', 230. On aphasia and figures of speech that attempt to portray disruptions of language, see Amelang, 'Figuring Ineloquence', this volume.
52. See Braudy, *Frenzy of Renown*, 172, 169.
53. *Ibid.*, 169.
54. Three final sonnets honouring the late Mary, Queen of Scots, render the *Spiritual Sonnets* a far more politically charged collection than it might appear. See Pérez-Jáuregui, 'A Queen in a "Purple Robe"'.
 55. He could have been involved in the activities of the Essex circle abroad; see Dodds, 'Barnabe Barnes', 24.
56. See Grebe, 'Why Did Ovid . . .?', 508.
57. See Shagan, 'Introduction: English Catholic History', 2.