

THE WEeping WOMAN OF THE PSALMS: MARY MAGDALENE
AND THE 'ANGELL SPIRIT' OF THE SIDNEY PSALTER

A Thesis

by

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ABSTRACT

This thesis consists of an essay which examines the psalm translations by Mary Sidney Herbert, the Countess of Pembroke. Recent scholarship has examined Mary Sidney Herbert's treatment of grief in her psalms, as well as her role as Sir Philip Sidney's literary executor and heir. Working at the intersection of this scholarship, this paper considers Herbert's translations and editorial decisions in her psalter (called the *Sidney Psalter*), as well as Sidney's printed works, in the context of the period's shift in attitudes about grief. With the emergence of a diminished level of anxiety surrounding female complaint and weeping, the prominent female figure of the Magdalene began to take precedence in early modern print culture, evidenced by a prolific output of work which takes the weeping Magdalene as its subject. Herbert herself is featured in such works by the poet Nicholas Breton. Compared to the Magdalene by these contemporaries, the possibility that the Magdalene may be legible in Herbert's editorial project needs to be considered. In that context, this paper examines Herbert's dedicatory poems and translations of psalms 69, 88, 102, and 130, comparing her adaptations to vernacular psalm translations, as well as Mary Magdalene poetry. I argue that in these psalms, Herbert's poetic and metrical devices heighten the lamentary tone of the psalmist. In these moments, the Magdalene weeping tradition is legible according to contemporary Magdalene depictions. I then consider the potential role that the Magdalene plays in Herbert's larger aims in promoting a thriving, vernacular literary project as part of the Sidney legacy.

DEDICATION

To my nieces and nephews: Kiano, Teddy, Rorick, Amelia, Miles, and Vera.

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1. INTRODUCTION

In this thesis, I examine the psalm translations by Mary Sidney Herbert, the Countess of Pembroke, known collectively as the Sidney Psalter. With the emergence of a diminished level of anxiety surrounding female complaint and weeping, the prominent female figure of the Magdalene began to take precedence in early modern print culture, evidenced by a prolific output of work which takes the weeping Magdalene as its subject. Herbert herself is featured in such works by the poet Nicholas Breton. Compared to the Magdalene by her contemporaries, the possibility that the Magdalene may be legible in Herbert's editorial project needs to be considered. In that context, this paper examines Herbert's dedicatory poem "To the Angell Spirit of Sir Philip Sidney," and her translations of Psalms 69, 88, 102, and 130. I compare her adaptations to other vernacular psalm translations, as well as Breton's Mary Magdalene poetry. I argue that in these psalms, Herbert's poetic and metrical devices heighten the lamentary tone of the psalmist. In these moments, the Magdalene weeping tradition is legible according to the contemporary Magdalene depictions.

Whether or not Herbert is deliberately invoking the image of the Magdalene in these spaces, imagining the way that this image functions in the Sidney Psalter can help us better understand Mary Sidney Herbert's approach to her larger editorial project as she managed her late brother Sir Philip Sidney's work. I suggest that an invocation of the Magdalene in Herbert's psalms serves as a "bridge" that connects Mary Sidney Herbert's translations of the psalms to her project of promoting a thriving, vernacular literary tradition in England. This project is based in Sir Philip Sidney's *Defence of Poesy*, which argues for the merit and value of English poetry and promotes a tradition of "English letters" that could rival the literary cultures on the continent.

Philip died before he could see that dream realized, but his post-humous literary reputation spurred a lively literary culture in the vernacular in the decades that followed. I argue that, although the influence of a single writer is difficult to trace, Herbert's invocation of the Magdalene may have helped in promoting the literary culture Philip dreamed of.

While scholarship has amply outlined Herbert's role as Sir Philip's executioner and heir by examining the editorial battles she fought over his literary corpus, very little work has considered the impact that the Sidney Psalter had on this project. Further, this analysis adds a new angle to that examination by considering the way that the image of the Magdalene may have served that project. By invoking the image of the Magdalene in her psalms, I argue, Herbert could have been tapping in to the saint's "spiritual sight," conjuring the spirit of Sir Philip. By doing this, Herbert may have been commenting on her role in resurrecting Sir Philip's literary inspiration, and in reproducing his "word."

Finally, I conclude by suggesting that some of Herbert's contemporaries and successors recognized Herbert's role in promoting Sir Philip Sidney's literary "resurrection." Evidence of this lies in Aemelia Lanyer's dedicatory poem to Mary Sidney. Lanyer mimics the imagery of the resurrection in this dedication, suggesting that to Herbert's contemporaries and successors, her posture as a Magdalene figure was recognizable. That idea is further supported by the repeated references to Herbert as the Magdalene by poets like Nicholas Breton.

This thesis is composed of two sections. In the first subsection I provide the background on Mary Magdalene and her medieval hagiography, explaining how she transforms as an image after the Protestant Reformation in early modern England. Then, in the second subsection I show the connection between Mary Magdalene and Mary Sidney Herbert. To do this I provide an analysis of moments of heightened lamentary expression to demonstrate the ways that a

Magdalene image is legible. Through this analysis, I demonstrate how the Magdalene's presence in the Sidney Psalter would have benefited Herbert's larger literary project of promoting a thriving, vernacular literary practice in England.

Finally, in Appendix A, I present the results of a Stylometry analysis that I performed using R that shows that the authorial signals of Mary Sidney Herbert and Sir Philip Sidney are distinct in the Sidney Psalter. In Appendix B I present an annotated bibliography containing brief descriptions of a selection of some of the most helpful sources that I consulted during my research.

2. THE WEeping WOMAN OF THE PSALMS: MARY MAGDALENE AND THE 'GHOSTLY POETICS' OF THE SIDNEY PSALTER

2.1. The Early Modern Context

In *The Countesse of Penbrookes Loue*, Nicholas Breton invites his patron and subject, Mary Sidney Herbert, to imagine herself in the posture of Mary Magdalene:

Looke on thy Mary with her bitter teares
That washt thy feet and wipteth with her heares.¹

These lines represent a common theme for Breton. He has been recognized by scholars as a notable example of the early modern poetic preoccupation with the Magdalene because he returns to her image repeatedly throughout his work. Interestingly, his work which features the Magdalene is often dedicated to Mary Sidney Herbert, the Countess of Pembroke. In fact, the lines cited above are characteristic of Breton's tendency to posture Herbert in the Magdalene's representational form, which I will describe in more detail momentarily. For example, earlier in *Penbrookes Loue*, the speaker cries out "with that worde proceeding from her heart / The trickeling teares distilled downe her eies."² Amidst these 'trickling tears,' the speaker declares that his subject's 'soule is sick,' because "she cannot be with thee."³

The subject of this poem is, of course, Mary Sidney Herbert. However, looking at the lines of this stanza, Breton's intention to conjure the image of the Magdalene seems clear. These few short lines pull together an image of the Magdalene that refers to not one, but several biblical passages which are associated with the Magdalene either directly or indirectly. Some of these

¹ Nicholas Breton, *The Pilgrimage to Paradise, joynd with the Countesse of Penbrookes loue*, (Oxford, 1592), 92.

² Breton, *The Countesse of Penbrookes Loue*, 83.

³ Breton, *The Countesse of Penbrookes Loue*, 83.

biblical scenes do not refer to the “real” Mary Magdalene,⁴ but are instead the stories of other biblical Marys or unnamed women who have come to be associated with the Magdalene.⁵ However, all of the images that these lines conjure would have been recognized by an early modern reader as references to the Magdalene. This is because by the early modern period, a composite Mary Magdalene figure had rooted itself so deeply in the cultural reproductions of her image that the scenes which feature her by name and those which she has simply been conflated with are no longer separable into individual figures.⁶

This is due in large part to the complicated history of the medieval Magdalene. Emily Ransom informs us that the “chief influence on the saint as she developed in medieval piety was Gregory the Great’s conflation of three biblical women, in a sermon from 591.”⁷ Thus, through the medieval period, the Magdalene comes to be known as all of the following images: the penitent sinner and former prostitute, the contemplative listener to Christ’s words, and woman who is present at Christ’s crucifixion and burial. This Magdalene is the first witness of his resurrection and his selected messenger to the disciples.

⁴ Mary Magdalene is featured in the canonical gospels by name in four places:

- 1) Christ’s crucifixion (Matthew 27:55-56, Mark 15:40, Luke 23:49, John 19:25)
- 2) Christ’s burial (Matthew 27:61, Mark 15:47, Luke 23:55-56)
- 3) As the first witness of the resurrection (Matthew 28:1-10, Mark 16:1-11, Luke 24:1-11, John 20:1-18)
- 4) As being healed of seven demons (Luke 8:2, Mark 16:9). This scene is typically interpreted as implying that Mary Magdalene was a sinful woman (i.e., a prostitute). For more about the implications of demons/sinfulness, see Cynthia Bourgeault, *The Meaning of Mary Magdalene*, 13.

⁵ Mary Magdalene is conflated with the following biblical women:

- 1) The woman who anoints Christ’s feet or head with costly perfume – also known as a penitent, sinful woman (Matthew 26:6-13, Mark 14:3-8, Luke 7:36-47, John 12:1-8). In Matthew and John this woman is identified as Mary of Bethany.
- 2) Mary of Bethany as the woman who sits at Jesus’s feet as he speaks; contemplative listener (Mark 14:1-10, Luke 10:38-42).

⁶ For more on the conflation between these images of the Magdalene, see Ann Brock, *Mary Magdalene, the First Apostle* (Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 2003), 168-9.

⁷ Emily Ransom, “Redeeming Complaint,” (University of Notre Dame, 2016), 36.

The conflation of these biblical women becomes “ubiquitous throughout the medieval tradition,” and is central to the development of the Magdalene as a literary type.⁸ Ultimately, the medieval Magdalene is available for a variety of interpretations, uses, and appropriations. As Breton’s poetic focus on the composite Magdalene shows, the medieval preoccupation with the all-encompassing Magdalene image continues into the early modern print practices. Breton was just one of many poets who participated in the period’s rich reproduction of the Magdalene in all of her multifarious identities.

Because of her complex history, in this subsection I will discuss three of the main Magdalene “types” of early modern print and manuscript culture as they develop out of the medieval traditions. I will first deal with the Magdalene as her composite image shifts due to Protestant Reform and Calvinist piety, then discuss the appropriation of the Magdalene of the sepulchre scene of John 20, and finally her association with Mary of Bethany and a contemplative attentiveness to the word. This will set the stage for a more focused discussion of the Magdalene as she relates to Mary Sidney Herbert’s psalm translations, known as the *Sidney Psalter*. As I mentioned at the beginning of this paper, Herbert is invited to imagine herself in the posture of the Magdalene by the poet Nicholas Breton. In order to understand fully what he is inviting her to do, we must establish a fuller understanding of the ways that the Magdalene image is perceived and reproduced in this period.

Of course, this discussion must begin with the Protestant Reformation. The reformation ushered in a period of hotly contested shifting religious ideologies. Among these ideologies was a shift in the way that grief came to be understood and perceived by early modern writers and

⁸ Ransom, “Redeeming Complaint,” 37.

audiences. This was, in many ways, accompanied by a shift in belief away from the idea of a physical, tangible accessibility to the divine. For example, as Donna Spivey Ellington demonstrates, in medieval traditions, the Virgin Mary, “through her participation in the Incarnation, had made it possible to encounter the Divine by means of the human and the material.”⁹ Similarly, the medieval Magdalene is also known for her ability to physically interact with Christ. Even beyond her assumed physical and erotic relationship with him,¹⁰ the Magdalene’s privileged status as the chosen witness to the resurrection gives her a special way of “seeing” Christ, which is often denoted by her ability to “perceive” him as a ghostly figure due to the strength and power of her love.¹¹

However, with the shifting tide of the Reformation, that which was physical and tangible in medieval traditions was no longer viewed as a valid way to communicate with the divine. Deborah Shuger informs us that “[i]n Reformed theology, [...] this preference for the body over the text is reversed.”¹² Thus, the Virgin’s tangible experience of Christ’s suffering at the crucifixion “was overthrown [...] by a theory of worship in which the divine retreated to the heavenly and transcendent realm,”¹³ thus making the experiences of both the Virgin Mary and the Magdalene no longer possible. That which was godly was suddenly inaccessible to the

⁹ Donna Spivey Ellington, “Impassioned Mother or Passive Icon: The Virgin’s Role in Late Medieval and Early Modern Passion Sermons,” *Renaissance Quarterly*, 48, no. 2 (1995), 229.

¹⁰ See Patricia Badir, *The Maudline Impression*, (Notre Dame, University of Notre Dame Press, 2009), 28-40 especially. See also Debora K. Shuger, *The Renaissance Bible*, (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1994).

¹¹ Patricia Badir describes the way that Christ is manifested in the heart of Mary Magdalene in post-Reformation Catholic and Conformist work. See *The Maudlin Impression*, 17, 59-89.

¹² Debora K. Shuger. *The Renaissance Bible: Scholarship, Sacrifice, and Subjectivity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994): 174.

¹³ Ellington, “Impassioned Mother or Passive Icon,” 227.

physical, human experience.¹⁴ Amidst these new developments, “the spoken or written word [was] the only point of contact between heaven and earth.”¹⁵

Along with this move away from the body’s ability to access God or the divine, an accompanying negative view of physical bodies—especially feminine ones—began to emerge. These negative perceptions formed in conjunction with what is known as the “masculinization” of grief and piety in the wake of the Protestant Reformation.¹⁶ This masculinization has its origins in the long-standing belief that men’s bodies are more rational and spiritual than the feminine body in all of its irrational excess and materiality.¹⁷ All of this relates to the issue of grief in the period because grief and physicality are intrinsically connected in the sacred images of the medieval period generally, and in the representations of the Magdalene specifically.¹⁸ In more than one of her biblical associations, the Magdalene is depicted as a weeping, grief-ridden woman, and her representations in medieval cultural productions such as art, literature and sermons, reflect and intensify the power and association of those tears. And thanks to the long-held beliefs about the excessive, material nature of women’s bodies, it’s no wonder that “grief’s otherness was certainly sometimes cast in gendered terms as a hyperbolic extreme of effeminacy.”¹⁹

Despite this attack on grief and the excessive feminine body, the image of Mary Magdalene continued to be reproduced in post-Reformation England. Patricia Badir writes that

¹⁴ For more about this shift, see Ellington, “Impassioned Mother or Passive Icon,” 227-232.

¹⁵ Ellington, “Impassioned Mother or Passive Icon,” 230.

¹⁶ Patricia Phillippy, “Sisters of Magdalene: Women’s Mourning in Amelia Lanyer’s *Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum*” *English Literary Renaissance* 31, no. 1 (2001): 80.

¹⁷ See Ellington, “Impassioned Mother or Passive Icon,” 230. See also Carlos M. N. Eire, *War Against the Idols: The Reformation of Worship from Erasmus to Calvin* and Deborah Shuger, *The Renaissance Bible*.

¹⁸ Ceri Sullivan, “The Physiology of Penitence in 1590s Weeping Texts,” *Cahiers Élisabéthains: Late Medieval and Renaissance Studies* 57, no. 12 (2000): 43.

¹⁹ Elizabeth Hodgson, *Grief and Women Writers in the English Renaissance*, (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2015), 7.

in early modern print culture the “literary reproduction of the Magdalene story never ceased; in fact, it may have intensified.”²⁰ This seemingly counterintuitive fact may be the result of the space left open for certain types of grief by a Calvinist-inflected Protestantism. In his commentaries, Calvin sanctions certain types of lamentation. He argues that “Christ’s example alone should be sufficient for rejecting the unbending hardness of the Stoics.”²¹ However, he explains that one’s emotionality, particularly in terms of grief and mourning, should be moderated and appropriate. This moderation should be carefully managed to avoid the trappings of the material and worldly. Thus, he cautions his readers that “[o]ur feelings are sinful because they rush on unrestrainedly and immoderately; [...] The vanity of our mind makes us sorrow or grieve over trifles, or for no reason at all, because we are too much devoted to the world.”²²

Calvin’s critiques and commentaries run contrary traditional medieval views on that which is pious and holy and that which is not. For example, because Mary, the mother of Jesus, weeps for her personal loss at the crucifixion, Calvin criticizes her as an inappropriate model for women and Christians generally.²³ This particular critique overthrows the Virgin Mary of the medieval period, where she once represented a “feminine model for the highest devotion.”²⁴ She was held out as a “standard of perfection in love for Christ,” and importantly, that love was represented through her posture of excessive, inconsolable grief.²⁵ But with the shifting ideologies of the Reformation, the image of the Virgin Mary in all her feminine, maternal excess and grief was no longer accessible as an ideal figure for piety.

²⁰ Badir, *The Maudlin Impression*, 3.

²¹ Jean Calvin, *The Gospel According to St. John: 11-21 and The First Epistle of John*. Trans, ed. David W. Torrance and Thomas F. Torrance, trans. T.H.L. Parker (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1994), 13.

²² Calvin, *The Gospel According to St. John*, 12.

²³ For more about Aristotelian and neo-Stoic moderation in grief, see Ransom, “Redeeming Complaint,” 212-219.

²⁴ Ransom, “Redeeming Complaint,” 211.

²⁵ Ransom, “Redeeming Complaint,” 210.

The place where immoderate grief is productive for Calvin—and this, I think, is the space that allows for the Magdalene’s continued literary reproduction— is as an aid for repentance. For Calvin, weeping is “important as a sign of repentance from sin, but not the grief of loss, even in the Magdalene’s case when it was Christ’s own death that she mourned.”²⁶ Thus, while he cautions against grief and mourning practices for the loss of loved ones because it signals a lack of faith, weeping for one’s sins is appropriate, and even encouraged. Thus, rather than jettison the literary culture of the image of the blessed weeper, early modern poets and writers instead shifted their attention to a biblical Mary whose image could more easily survive the scourges of Calvinist piety against grief and mourning: Mary Magdalene.

The Magdalene has long been associated with the posture and emotionality of penitence. In the medieval tradition, the Magdalene was famous for her position as a penitent, mourning woman. And that popularity survived into early modern print culture. The sheer volume of literary works featuring the penitent Magdalene is telling: “[m]ore than one hundred poems, biographies, homilies, sermons, and one play on the subject of the ‘blessed sinner’ were published in English between 1550 and 1700.”²⁷ Although Calvin criticizes the Magdalene of the resurrection scene, her reputation as a weeping, repentant sinner complies with his doctrine on the “right kind” of lamentation. The significance of the Magdalene’s survival in this reformed context is evidenced by the fact that she is the “only remaining female saint in the 1549 Book of Common Prayer.”²⁸ Thus, the diverse nature of the Magdalene’s composite image allowed for a

²⁶ Ransom, “Redeeming Complaint,” 214.

²⁷ Badir, *The Maudlin Impression*, 3.

²⁸ Shuger, *The Renaissance Bible*, 169.

weeping figure that Calvinist piety approved of, while also leaving room for other representations.²⁹

Up until now, my point has been to establish how Mary Magdalene maintained her literary prominence in a post-Reformation theology that was resistant to certain kinds of (especially feminine) grieving. I will now turn to the implications of the Magdalene's survival. As I discussed in the first part of this essay, the Magdalene image is a composite. While different facets of her form can be singled out (for example, her posture as the weeping sinner), those individual images cannot be completely extricated from the composite whole. Thus, while the Magdalene's posture as a penitent may have been the subject of focus for many writers and poets, the fact that her image remained in the dominant literary culture allowed for the eventual return of her other images. That notion is demonstrated by the fact that, while the image of the repentant Magdalene certainly surges in this period, "poets were at least as interested in the Magdalene's tears of abandonment at the tomb as they were with her tears of repentance."³⁰

Indeed, amidst the staunch resistance among English Reformers to the feminine grief of medieval iconography, "sorrow was also prized as a sign of spiritual sensitivity, prophetic insight, and proper self-awareness."³¹ And as poets and artists took up the image of the Magdalene, they typically incorporated not only her "proper" position of repentance, but also her "intensely lachrymose scene from John"³² and her posture as a contemplative reader. In fact,

²⁹ Ransom, "Redeeming Complaint," 212.

³⁰ Ransom, "Redeeming Complaint," 213.

³¹ Hodgson, *Grief and Women Writers*, 8.

³² Ransom, "Redeeming Complaint," 213.

The scene from John that Ransom mentions here refers specifically to John 20: 1-18. The resurrection story according to this gospel depicts Mary Magdalene going to Christ's tomb after his crucifixion to anoint his body. However, upon arriving she finds that his body is missing. She summons two disciples, who, upon seeing that Christ's body is in fact gone, flee. Mary Magdalene stays behind, however, looking into the tomb and weeping. Christ then appears to Mary, who at first mistakes him for a gardener. He forbids her from touching him ("noli me tangere") and tells her to go spread the word of his resurrection to his disciples.

these different images of the Magdalene were “gathered up by English writers and retold in a bewildering array of literary genres.”³³ Ransom writes that as the Magdalene imagery began to include more images of the Magdalene of the resurrection scene, a decrease in Calvinist anxiety towards non-repentant weeping was occurring. This period of more lax attitudes about grief “historically coincides with the growing interest in literary complaint in England, particularly with female complaints of abandoned women.”³⁴ In these depictions of the Magdalene, “Mary weeps not only as a penitential sinner [...] but also now as an abandoned lover.”³⁵

Of course, the Magdalene’s third primary image also serves an important purpose in the poetics that begin to emerge in this moment. In all of Mary Magdalene’s excessive grief at the sepulchre scene, another Magdalene image arises: “in a familiar segue that links the Magdalene of the sepulcher with Mary of Bethany, comfort can be found in listening to the words of Christ.”³⁶ The final of the three major postures of the Magdalene is one that completes the composite image of the attentive lover of Christ. Mary of Bethany is typically figured as contemplative due to her association with the scene in which Mary of Bethany listens attentively to Christ’s words. A convenient way to think about this Magdalene would be as the “Reading Magdalene,” as Patricia Badir aptly names her.³⁷

This Magdalene represents proper piety particularly for her “‘choice’ to listen to Christ’s words.”³⁸ This image is taken from the book of Luke, when Jesus comes to house of Mary and

³³ Badir, *The Maudlin Impression*, 15.

³⁴ Ransom, “Redeeming Complaint,” 214. Although this essay does not interact with complaint poetry specifically, the Magdalene image is suffused throughout that literary genre.

³⁵ Ransom, “Redeeming Complaint,” 211.

³⁶ Badir, *The Maudlin Impression*, 122. This quote refers to a 1620 Easter sermon given by Lancelot Andrewes as described by Badir.

³⁷ Patricia Badir, “Medieval Poetics and Protestant Magdalenes,” in *Reading the Medieval in Early Modern England* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2017), 206.

³⁸ Patricia Badir, *The Maudlin Impression*, 18.

Martha. As Martha serves him, her sister Mary “[sits] at Jesus’ feet, and hear[s] his word.”³⁹ Jesus apparently approves of this posture, who says that out of the two sisters, “Mary hath chosen that good part.”⁴⁰ This biblical scene of the attentive, listening Mary transforms easily into the image of the reading Magdalene. Badir explains that the “image of the reading Magdalene has a long history traceable back to Gregory,”⁴¹ and that image also becomes “a common figure in the devotional poetry of the seventeenth century.”⁴² This image is typically tied together with that of the weeping Magdalene at the sepulchre scene, and also given the spiritual power of her counterpart as their images converge: “The lecherous eyes of the sinner become, through Christ’s mercy, contrite, tearful eyes and tearful eyes, in turn, become contemplative or reading eyes.”⁴³

And with this shift towards a poetic preoccupation with the weeping, contemplative lover of Christ, the figure of the Magdalene that becomes central Mary Sidney Herbert’s psalms begins to emerge. As poets focus more on the contemplative, weeping woman and as “the Magdalene bemoans her abandonment by her lover Christ, her personal grief valorizes her suffering and implies a certain agency within it.”⁴⁴ This poetry thereby reopens the medieval Magdalene’s spiritual power in her feminine lamentation.

Badir explains that there is a “Post-medieval, Protestant fascination”⁴⁵ with this newly invoked Magdalene. Because of the depth of her love for Christ, this Magdalene is eventually given the special privilege of witnessing his resurrection. In medieval representations of this

³⁹ Luke 10:39 (King James Version).

⁴⁰ Luke 10:42.

⁴¹ Patricia Badir, “Medieval Poetics and Protestant Magdalenes,” 212.

⁴² Patricia Badir, “Medieval Poetics and Protestant Magdalenes,” 206.

⁴³ Badir, “Medieval Poetics and Protestant Magdalenes,” 212.

⁴⁴ Ransom, “Redeeming Complaint,” 216.

⁴⁵ Badir, “Medieval Poetics and Protestant Magdalenes,” 210.

scene, the Magdalene's eyes are often imbued with a mystical kind of "seeing" and experiencing Christ. It is this kind of mystical power that drives in part the reproduction of the weeping Magdalene. The "[p]otency of Mary Magdalene's access to Christ" makes her attractive for writers seeking the kind of agentic authority behind Magdalene's pure and powerful love.⁴⁶

2.2. Mary Sidney Herbert and the Magdalene

The three Magdalene "types" that I discussed in Section 2.1 coalesce into this supernatural early modern Magdalene, whose ability to "see" and conjure the image of Christ reflects both medieval and post-Reformation ideologies. Evidence of this can be found by looking at the poets who take the Magdalene as their subject. For example, Nicholas Breton, who is quoted at the beginning of this essay, often invokes images of not only the Magdalene as the penitent sinner: "My sinnes too greuous, and my grace is gone,"⁴⁷ but does so simultaneously (in this case, in the same stanza) with the abandoned Magdalene of the sepulchre scene: "And what should I but weepe to liue to see, / I cannot see where my sweete Lord may be."⁴⁸ But what is most intriguing about this Magdalene representation by Breton is that, as Patricia Badir explains, the Magdalene's tears "provide a kind of optic lens for a spiritual insight,"⁴⁹ suggesting that the Magdalene here has a kind of spiritual connection to Christ.

While it might seem that this supernatural capability runs contrary to the previously established Reformation ideologies on physical access to the divine, this Magdalene's spiritual sight allows her to conform to both the old and the new contexts. The crux here lies in the

⁴⁶ Badir, "Medieval Poetics and Protestant Magdalenes," 207.

⁴⁷ Nicholas Breton, "The Blessed Weeper" in *A Divine Poeme diuided into two Partes: the Rauisht Soule, and the Blessed VVeeper*, (London, 1601), 22.

⁴⁸ Breton, "The Blessed Weeper," 22.

⁴⁹ Badir, "Medieval poetics and Protestant Magdalenes," 216.

transformative power of the Magdalene's tears. For example, the early modern Magdalene originates out of medieval depictions of the sepulchre scene of John 20. These medieval resurrection scenes often depict Christ's body as ghostly rather than corporeal or tangible. Thus, the "only tangible body is that of the Magdalene, whose sight [...] is privileged as a record of the resurrection while her person becomes the pliable material upon which Christ's ghostly [...] presence is impressed."⁵⁰ The "impression" left behind by Christ on the Magdalene's body is physical – often manifested in tears, accompanied by "trances" and other external expressions of grief.

However, those tears, as they sometimes work in penitential writing, serve to mediate between that which is inaccessible and divine and that which is human.⁵¹ The way that this works is perhaps best described by Badir, who explains the way that the Magdalene serves as a mediator between Christ and those who are not as privileged to receive his spiritual presence. For those listening to the Magdalene's news of the resurrection, they will not be able to "[experience] Christ until [they], in some sense, see Mary Magdalene."⁵² And importantly, this Magdalene is able to transfer this experience of Christ's ghostly presence and the lasting "impression" it leaves behind within and on her body into the word. This capability connects back to the "Reading Magdalene," and her contemplative attention to the word of God.

This process is illustrated in the paintings of the Magdalene in this period. In these paintings, she is often holding a book in her arms outside of the sepulchre in a contemplative posture. This image and transfiguration process "draws upon a medieval iconography in which

⁵⁰ Badir, "Medieval poetics and Protestant Magdalenes," 206-7.

⁵¹ See Badir, *The Maudlin Impression*, 60-5 and Badir, "Medieval poetics and Protestant Magdalenes," 210-14.

⁵² Badir, *The Maudlin Impression*, 24.

Christ, the Word, is figured as a book.”⁵³ Thus, this Magdalene can transfer the spirit of Christ “which has been sculpted into her soul”⁵⁴ into the physical book that provides others access to Christ’s “spirit” directly. This image marries the medieval preference for the body and the Protestant preference for the word. But most importantly, this image marries the supernatural powers of the Magdalene. She is able to physically receive Christ’s spirit not only because of the incredible power of her love –exemplified by her tears and grief-stricken state—she is also able to mediate Christ’s spirit due to her saintly, contemplative attention to his word.

Going back to the poem quoted at the beginning of the first subsection of this thesis, Breton figures Mary Sidney Herbert in *The Countesse of Penbrookes Loue* in a posture that looks very much like the process described above. The grief-stricken Mary/Magdalene’s “trickling tears” signal a union between divine spirit and word. That union is complete when the speaker allows the reader to experience Christ with “that worde proceeding from her heart.”⁵⁵ Because *The Countesse of Penbrookes Loue* is intended to be heard as the voice of Mary Sidney Herbert, and “purports to portray Pembroke’s experience,”⁵⁶ the Magdalene-esque depictions suggest that in Breton’s point of view, Herbert is “ventriloquizing” Magdalene.⁵⁷ With these depictions, Nicholas Breton is clearly figuring Mary Sidney Herbert as a contemporary Magdalene. As Reghina Dascal notes, in “Breton’s dedication to Lady Penbrooke, [...] we can read that she served as Breton’s personal Magdalene, a model of self-reflection and stillness for the production

⁵³ Badir, “Medieval poetics and Protestant Magdalenes,” 212.

⁵⁴ Shuger, *The Renaissance Bible*, 174.

⁵⁵ Breton, *The Countesse of Penbrookes Loue*, 83.

⁵⁶ Trill, “Engendering Penitence,” 31.

⁵⁷ I borrow this term and its context from Reghina Dascal, who introduces it in “Appropriating a Female Voice: Nicholas Breton and the Countess of Pembroke,” *Gender Studies* 13, no. 1 (2015).

of his own godly words.”⁵⁸ For Breton, Mary Sidney Herbert looks very much like a Magdalene type herself.

The process of mediating the spirit of Christ into the word can be seen once again in Breton’s *The Blessed Weeper*. In this poem, an attentiveness to the scriptures that is often associated with Mary of Bethany is coupled with the weeping images of Magdalene at the sepulchre scene of John 20. This work is also dedicated to Mary Sidney Herbert, and implies that Breton’s intended readership here is his own personal Magdalene. In this poem, which takes the resurrection scene as its setting, after Christ orders the bereaved Magdalene not to touch him, she cries:

“I will not presse one foote beyond the line
Of thy loues leaue, vouchsafe me but a looke
Of that sweete heavenly holy eye of thine,
Of my deere Loue the euer-[l]iuing Booke:
Wherin my teares haue such t[...] comfort tooke.”⁵⁹

For this Magdalene, though she cannot experience Christ physically, her “body is the site upon which an image, or idea, of Christ begins to materialize.”⁶⁰ She transfers that experience into something she can hold physically, taking comfort in the book she is now holding. By comparing Christ to the “ever-living Booke,” Breton is conjuring the image of the Magdalene’s spiritual powers of transfiguration.

⁵⁸ Reghina Dascal, “Appropriating a Female Voice: Nicholas Breton and the Countess of Pembroke,” *Gender Studies* 13, no. 1 (2015): 58.

⁵⁹ Breton, “The Blessed Weeper,” 25.

⁶⁰ Badir, “Medieval poetics and Protestant Magdalenes,” 211.

Like Breton's conflation between Mary Sidney Herbert and the Magdalene, the process of figuring powerful women in the posture of the Magdalene dates to the medieval period. Emily Ransom writes that "biographers of medieval holy women drew on her legend for their construction of sanctity, establishing her characteristics as paradigmatic for female holiness."⁶¹ Margery Kempe is a prime example of a medieval woman writer using this tactic in her writing. In *The Golden Legend*, Kempe invokes the Magdalene, speaking through her. Consequently, her eloquence is "derived from her intimacy with Christ."⁶² Her words "gain the force of Christ's own life: piercing the hearts of her listeners [...], her mouth like a baptismal font, issuing forth the living water of rebirth"⁶³ This kind of imagery, which might be thought about as another kind of transfiguration of the spirit to the word, continues into the early modern reproductions of the Magdalene. That fact bears some implications for Mary Sidney Herbert. Given the repeated comparisons between Mary Sidney Herbert and the Magdalene by her contemporaries,⁶⁴ this analysis will consider the ways that Mary Sidney herself may be readable as a Magdalene in her literary project, *The Sidney Psalter*.

Like Margery Kempe's experience of a flooding of inspiration from one soul to another, like an issuing forth of the "living water of rebirth," Mary Sidney Herbert experiences something similar to this in her dedicatory poem *To the Angell Spirit of the Most Excellent Sir Philip*.

Herbert describes this process as a kind of divine inspiration: "This coupled work [...] / First

⁶¹ Ransom, "Redeeming Complaint," 53.

⁶² Ransom, "Redeeming Complaint," 71.

⁶³ Ransom, "Redeeming Complaint," 71.

⁶⁴ Nicholas Breton is not the only contemporary writer who compares Mary Sidney Herbert to the Magdalene. Abraham Fraunce also does this. See Abraham Fraunce, *The Countesse of Pembrokes Emanuel Containing the Nativity, passion, buriall, and resurrection of Christ* (London, 1591).

raised by thy blest hand, and what is mine / Inspired by thee, thy secret power impressed.”⁶⁵

Herbert emphasizes that this work is inspired by Philip and imbued with his “secret power,” which is now “impressed” on her. This imagery invokes a familiar image: Magdalene’s transfiguration of Christ’s spirit into his word. Herbert hints at a similar kind of “divine inspiration” that Kempe experiences in her derivation of the word from Christ, as well as Breton’s Magdalene’s transformation of the spiritual impression of Christ into the manifestation of her “ever-living Booke.”

This interpretive possibility is strengthened in the third stanza of this dedicatory poem. Herbert describes the bloody and violent death Philip suffered in gory detail: “This half-maimed piece had sorted with the best. / Deep wounds enlarged, long festered in their gall, / Fresh bleeding smart; not eye – but heart – tears fall.”⁶⁶ Significantly, as for the Magdalene, weeping is the passion that allows Herbert to receive Philip’s divine spirit, and tears mark the union between her physical body and the word.

Furthermore, this scene mimics the descriptions of a passion-like death, and invokes the Magdalene’s preoccupation with the physical body of Christ, Philip’s spiritual presence here is key. This is the essence “impressed” on her body which inspires her work in translating his psalms: “So dared my Muse with thine itself combine, / As mortal stuff with that which is divine; / Thy light’ning beams give lustre to the rest.”⁶⁷ Just as Julian of Norwich, who emulates the Magdalene because she “longs for her forerunner’s immediate and intimate access to the

⁶⁵ Mary Sidney Herbert, “To the Angell spirit of the most excellent Sir Philip Sidney,” in *The Collected Works of Mary Sidney Herbert, Countess of Pembroke*, vol. 1, ed. Margaret P. Hannay, Noel J. Kinnamon, and Michael G. Brennan (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998). 110, lines 2-4.

⁶⁶ Herbert, “To the Angell spirit,” 110, lines 18-20.

⁶⁷ Herbert, “To the Angell spirit,” 110, lines 5-7.

suffering body of Christ,”⁶⁸ in Herbert’s descriptions of Philip’s passion-like death, she describes the same “impression” that the Magdalene experiences when she witnesses Christ’s resurrection. Filled with the divine inspiration issued forth by Philip, Herbert experiences her own kind of passionate swoon: “I call my thoughts, whence so strange passions flow, / How works my heart, my sense stricken dumb.”⁶⁹ What’s more, the “light’ning beams” that give “lustre” to Herbert’s work on the psalms is once again similar to the “baptismal font, issuing forth the living water of rebirth” that Kempe’s Magdalene experiences.

Often recognized for its political and personal charge, this dedicatory poem exemplifies something that I think is happening throughout Herbert’s psalter. Just as in the poem, in moments throughout Herbert’s psalm translations, a posture of the weeping lover of Christ is conjured. That is, she invokes not only the Magdalene’s image, but also her special spiritual and physical relationship with him. Regardless of whether Herbert is deliberately invoking the Magdalene in her psalms, it is a worthwhile investigation to examine whether there are any “ghostly impressions” in the psalms, and to consider the ways that readers might have seen Mary Sidney in this posture due to the cultural and literary contexts that held the Magdalene as a primary figure of interest.

This investigation will examine a few moments of heightened lamentary expression in the psalms, where imagery that typically invokes the Magdalene is legible. I see this happening specifically in Psalms 69, 88, 102, and 130. In these psalms, the measured and eloquent voice of the speaker gives way to one that is often abrupt and inconsolable. Furthermore, this inconsolable grief is often described in terms that are very physical and feminine. These

⁶⁸ Badir, “Medieval Poetics and Protestant Magdalenes,” 207.

⁶⁹ Herbert, “To the Angell spirit,” 111, lines 45-6.

moments mirror the kind of physical Magdalene depictions that we have seen in this essay with Breton. And, as I argue, the Magdalene image that is invoked may be capable of the same supernatural transfiguration of Christ –in this case, Sir Philip –into the tangible, readable word.

For example, in her translation of the penitential Psalm 130, Herbert intensifies the emotionality of the psalm, which lends an exaggerated power of sorrow to the voice of the speaker, who cries out:

From depth of grief
Where drowned I lie
Lord, for relief
To thee I cry:
My earnest, vehement, crying, praying,
Grant quick, attentive, hearing, weighing.⁷⁰

Herbert's enjambment of these six short lines builds a tone of desperation in the speaker. Importantly, the sporadic, panicked voice is elevated compared to some of the other contemporary vernacular translations in print during this moment. Herbert would have been familiar with these translations, and along with other Italian and Latin psalters and bibles, vernacular translations served as important sources for her project.⁷¹ Two of these sources would

⁷⁰ Mary Sidney Herbert, "Psalm 130" in *The Collected Works of Mary Sidney Herbert, The Countess of Pembroke*, Vol. II, ed. Margaret P. Hannay, Noel J. Kinnamon, and Michael G. Brennan (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), 221-2, lines 1-6.

⁷¹ Some of Herbert's vernacular sources include The Coverdale Psalter, the 1560 Geneva Bible, and the commentaries by Beze and Calvin. Some scholars suggest that traces of the popular vernacular psalms that Herbert may have sung herself (such as the famous Sternhold and Hopkins psalter) can also be found. For more on Herbert's sources, see Hannibal Hamlin, Michael G. Brennan, Margaret P. Hannay, and Noel J. Kinnamon, introduction to *The Sidney Psalter: The Psalms of Sir Philip and Mary Sidney* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), xviii.

have been the Coverdale Psalter and the 1560 Geneva Bible, which I will use as comparison texts throughout this analysis.

In Coverdale's 1548 rendering of Psalm 130, the speaker much more calmly declares "Out of the deep have I called unto thee, O Lord; Lord hear my voice. O let thine ears consider well the voice of my complaint."⁷² Lacking Herbert's quick, hurried lines, Coverdale's rendering of this psalm does not produce the same kind of emotionality. The significance of Herbert's rendering of this psalm is highlighted further when we look at other popular renditions, which tend to lack the "psychological depth" that scholars have noted in Herbert's translation of Psalm 130.⁷³ The Sternhold-Hopkin's speaker, for example, although penitent, does not accentuate his grief to the same extent as Herbert's speaker:

Lord to thee I make my mone,
when daungers me oppresse:
I call I sigh, playne and grone,
trusting to finde release.
Heare now (O Lord) my request,
for it is full due tyme:
And let thine cares aye be prest,
unto this prayer myne."⁷⁴

⁷² Miles Coverdale, Psalm 130 in *The psalter or boke of the Psalmes where vnto is added the letany and certayne other deuout prayers* (London, 1548), 155.

⁷³ Hamlin, Brennan, Hannay, and Kinnamon, Notes to Pages 254-259 in *The Sidney Psalter*, 331.

⁷⁴ T. Sternhold, W. Whittingham, J. Hopkins, Psalm 130 in *The Whole Booke of Psalmes, collected into Englishe Metre by T. Sternhold, W. Whittingham, I. Hopkins, and others: Conferred with the Hebrue, with apt notes to sing them withall*, (London, 1584), 365.

The voice of Herbert's speaker is decidedly more panicked than Sternhold's. That panicked tone is particularly evident in the last two lines of Herbert's stanza. In this couplet, each line contains a feminine rhyme, which serves as a brief but bold departure from the masculine rhyme throughout the rest of the psalm. This contrast serves to highlight the couplet, which accentuates the breathless, restless kind of sorrowful weeping. This is a tactic that Herbert returns to throughout several of her psalms, and one that looks and feels much like the Magdalene "type" as used by Breton.

One of the most intriguing examples of this lies in Psalm 102. Herbert's adaptation contains a notable expansion of the Coverdale version's personification of the speaker as a pelican or an owl. The Coverdale version states "For the voice of my groaning, my bones will scarce cleave to my flesh. I am become like a pelican in the wilderness, and like an owl that is in the desert."⁷⁵ In her adaptation, Herbert expands the voice of the speaker, who cries:

And so I bray and howl,
As use to howl and bray
The lonely pelican and desert owl,
Like whom I languish long the day.⁷⁶

For Herbert to have aligned the voice of the speaker with an animal's "howling" and "braying" bears some implications. Animalism implies a lack of rationality and moderation. Calvin instructs that passion should be "founded on reason and sound judgement," and that "vicious and perverse" feelings cause passions to be "carried away in wild confusion."⁷⁷ Thus, this is not only

⁷⁵ Miles Coverdale, Psalm 102 in *The Psalter or Boke of the Psalmes, where unto is added the Letany and certayne other deuout prayers* (Londone, 1548), 117.

⁷⁶ Herbert, Psalm 102 in *The Collected Works of Mary Sidney* Vol. II, 152, lines 13-18.

⁷⁷ Calvin, *The Gospel According to St. John*, 12.

a bold expansion of the voice of the speaker, but a notable example of Herbert's seemingly deliberate invocation of an immoderate, inconsolable griever.

Breton's Magdalene is similarly uncontrollable and irrational in his depictions of her. In the *Blessed Weeper*, after Magdalene discovers Christ's empty tomb, the excesses and physical manifestations of her grief begin to take over:

The monefull cause of this her mourning cheere,
Wherefore she wept, and what she sought for so;
Briefely she thus her greefe beganne to shewe
(Wringing her hands, with many a bitter teare)
Her Lord was stolne, and laid she knew not where.⁷⁸

That her grief 'begins to show,' coupled with her wringing hands, implies a lack of agency in this Magdalene's sorrow. This aligns with Herbert's choice to expand the animalistic expressions of Psalm 102, and also mirrors the uncontrollable voice in Herbert's rendition of Psalm 88. In this psalm, which has been noted by scholars as a "much freer paraphrase than most of Pembroke's Psalms,"⁷⁹ the speaker seems to be out of breath, full of agony:

My God, my Lord, my help, my health,
To thee my cry
Doth restless fly,
Both when of sun the day
The treasures doth display,

⁷⁸ Breton, "The Blessed Weeper," 24.

⁷⁹ Hannay, Kinnamon, and Brennan, Table of Verse Forms in *The Collected Works of Mary Sidney*, Vol. II, 473.

And night locks up his golden wealth.⁸⁰

In contrast, the Geneva Bible's speaker in this psalm has a relatively calm, meditative voice: "O Lord God of my salvation, I crye day and night before thee. Let my prayer enter into thy presence: incline thine ear unto my crye."⁸¹

That same breathless and overcome speaker goes on to exclaim that her soul's ill and woe "So flows, so overflows," then cries:

Aye me, alas, I faint, I die,
So still, so still,
Thou dost me fill,
And hast from youngest years,
With terrifying fears,
That I in *trance* amazed do lie.⁸²

Herbert tends to avoid unnecessary repetition, so her use of it to describe the state of her soul ("So flow, so overflows") and later in the stanza (So still, so still) is probably intended to emphasize this moment in the psalm, which seems to be the stanza's gradual elevation of the speaker to a trance-like state. This is certainly an important departure from the 1560 Geneva Bible's rendition of this psalm. This "trance" calls to mind the stunned body of the Magdalene after receiving Christ's spirit in her body. After witnessing his resurrection, the impression left by Christ leaves her in a state of spiritual seeing. This kind of metaphysical, internal insight is also visible in this psalm between the first and last lines of the stanza. An internal rhyme in the

⁸⁰ Herbert, Psalm 88 in *The Collected Works of Mary Sidney* Vol. II, 128, lines 1-6.

⁸¹ *The Bible and Holy Scriptures Conteyned in the Olde and Newe Testament. Translated according to the Ebrue and Greke, and conferred With the best translations in divers langages* (Geneva, 1560), 254.

⁸² Herbert, Psalm 88 in *The Collected Works of Mary Sidney* Vol. II, 130, lines 61-66.

first couplet causes the speaker's voice to take on a quick, panicked tone, which indicates not moderation, but irrationality and restlessness in the line.

In this case, I would argue that given Herbert's choice of form which emphasizes the sorrow of the psalm, coupled with the speaker's claim to be in a trance, the image of the speaker begins to coalesce into a recognizable Magdalene figure that Breton invokes. That Magdalene figure is also recognizable in Psalm 69. The speaker in Herbert's rendition cries out:

Troublous seas my soul surround:
Save, O God, my sinking soul,
Sinking, where it feels no ground,
In this gulf, this whirling hole.
Waiting aid, with earnest eyeing;
Calling God with bootless crying"⁸³

What is particularly interesting about this stanza is the final couplet. The speaker is waiting "with earnest eyeing," which conjures an image that looks very much like the desperate, abandoned lover Mary Magdalene, who is desperate for the sight of Christ. The intensity of emotional and psychological desperation here matches the state of grief that Breton's Magdalene suffers from, as we have seen. Interestingly, the couplet that contains this line ends with a feminine rhyme. This not only calls attention to this part of the stanza, but it also signposts the feminine invocation of the Magdalene through poetic form, as Herbert did in Psalm 130.

It seems, then, that a pattern of the physically overcome, feminine, tearful body continues to be reproduced in Herbert's psalms via manipulations of poetic form and a heightened

⁸³ Herbert, Psalm 69 in *The Collected Works of Mary Sidney* Vol. II, 81, lines 1-6.

lamentary tone. Eloquent and masterful in word and form, Herbert's skill as a poet renders these moments of abrupt and excessive lamentation in her psalms all the more recognizable as moments that could invoke the image of the Magdalene.⁸⁴ And while some critics have argued that Herbert dramatizes the sorrow of the speaker as a way of participating in a mourning practice for her late brother, I would argue that something much more subtle and far-reaching is going on.

This "far-reaching" consequence has to do with the spiritual, supernatural Magdalene that Breton illustrates. Badir explains that for many of the early modern Magdalenes, the power of her love and her privileged position with Christ imbues her with a supernatural ability to "see" and experience the non-corporeal, absent Christ's presence. If Mary Sidney Herbert is invoking the Magdalene in her psalms, Herbert could in fact be "articulat[ing] a ghostly poetics of presence" of Sir Philip Sidney,⁸⁵ conjuring and channeling his ghostly spirit. Like Magdalene, that process is enacted primarily through her privileged position with Sir Philip due to the power of her love. She is chosen as his first "witness" to his resurrection ("first rais'd by thy blessed hand, and what is mine").

If Herbert is Philip's Magdalene, receiving his "Angell spirit" and spiritual presence, then what comes next is necessarily the transformation of divine essence to physical word. Because the Magdalene is the chosen messenger of the resurrection, she is "compelled to copy and circulate [Christ's] impression."⁸⁶ In this case, it is the Magdalene who transforms her supernatural experience with Christ into the spiritual effect on her soul. Thus, when we read the

⁸⁴ It should be noted that Herbert was savvy in all things related to status and public perception. She would have recognized the benefits of using a proxy for her literary production, specifically one that postures her in the appropriate, penitential position like the Magdalene.

⁸⁵ Badir, "Medieval Poetics and Protestant Magdalenes," 211.

⁸⁶ Badir, "Medieval Poetics and Protestant Magdalenes," 214.

Magdalene's physical experiences with Christ's shadowy, ghostly presence –which leaves her stunned and in a trance-like state at times –readers are then able to “find comfort in the image of Christ they see impressed upon the pliant pages of her soul.”⁸⁷

Thus, in the case of Mary Sidney Herbert and the psalms, reading the dedicatory poem and psalms, we are reading the effect of Herbert's Magdalene-like transformation of his divine spirit and his inspiration. In other words, we are reading the impression left by him on Herbert's body, on the page. Thus, if we read the Magdalene in the context of the Sidney Psalter, these psalms become the key to accessing the literary spirit of Sir Philip as it is mediated through his literary executioner and heir, Mary Sidney Herbert.

This key also enacts the larger, “far-fetching” consequence that I mentioned earlier. It has long been noted that Herbert's psalter was not her only contribution to “spreading” Philip's good word. Herbert's invocation of the Magdalene in her psalms seems to mirror some of the work she does for her brother's literary resurrection generally. In other words, if by promoting Philip's legacy and spirit in her psalms by “resurrecting” his literary presence, that work may also be important for her work in reviving his other literary work, as well as promoting her larger literary project, which she inherited from her brother. And regardless of whether that posture is intentional, viewing Herbert's editorial work after her brother's death from this perspective may help us understand the way she viewed herself as a vital participant in promoting Philip's larger literary dreams as they are articulated in his *Defence of Poesie*.

⁸⁷ Badir, “Medieval Poetics and Protestant Magdalenes,” 214.

Kimberly Anne Coles suggests that Herbert is a self-conscious participant in determining “the emergent notions of what properly constituted the literary.”⁸⁸ In fact, according to Coles, Herbert’s timing of the circulation of the psalter in manuscript was consciously designed as part of a larger plan: “the internal agreement of the two works –as well as their synchronised public release [...] was an orchestrated effort on the part of the Countess of Pembroke to situate lyric poetry within a Protestant cultural context.”⁸⁹ In fact, evidence suggests that many of her editorial decisions for Philip’s works were strategically planned and timed.⁹⁰ One major piece that was left unprinted was the collaborative *Sidney Psalter*. Despite remaining in manuscript form, the work circulated widely according to custom. As the key to reading Philip’s spirit, that circulation in conjunction with his printed works would have been extremely important.

And that circulation played a crucial role in Herbert’s larger project in promoting a Sidneian dream of English letters. Circulating widely by 1594, a year before the *Defence of Poesy* would be put to the press, the Sidney Psalter was present among a literary culture which was crucial to the proper reception of Philip’s work.

Furthermore, Coles argues that Pembroke’s completed psalter was “the technical demonstration of Sidney’s *Defence*.”⁹¹ I would argue that Herbert’s psalter not only demonstrates in practice Sidney’s views on devotional poetry, but promoting the larger Sidney literary project of promoting a thriving English literature. By managing Philip’s posthumous publications and having complete, autonomous control over them and their final edits, Herbert

⁸⁸ Kimberly Anne Coles, “[A] pen to paynt’: Mary Sidney Herbert and the problems of a Protestant poetics,” in *Religion, Reform, and Women’s Writing in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 76.

⁸⁹ Coles, “[A] pen to paynt,’” 76.

⁹⁰ Philip’s other works, *The Countess of Pembroke’s Arcadia* and *Astrophil and Stella* were published in 1590 and 1591, respectively.

⁹¹ Coles, “[A] pen to paynt,’” 76.

would have been responsible for much of the fame that Sidney's reputation enjoyed after his death. Scholars have long recognized Herbert's central role in the development of Philip's posthumous legacy. If we view Herbert working out of this larger literary project, then Herbert's psalms lend even more significance to the invocation of a Magdalene-esque voice throughout its pages.

Mary Sidney Herbert's psalms become, I argue, the site where Philip's literary and spiritual body comes back to life. As his "witness" and messenger, Mary Sidney Herbert is successful in spreading the ghostly image of Sir Philip among their contemporaries. She is known for enacting his widely celebrated image after his death. Even more importantly, as a result of Herbert publishing his most impactful works, *Astrophil and Stella*, *the Defence of Poesy*, and *The Countess of Pembroke's Arcadia*, Philip's literature (his *word*, if you will) inspired and "shaped the wide and widely influential circle of late Elizabethan writers."⁹² This is particularly important because Philip's dream for English letters before his death, as is articulated in his *Defence*, is to "demonstrate that the English language was [...] 'capable of any excellent exercising of it'" in a period when "England's literature seemed negligible by comparison to Italy's or to France's."⁹³

Thus, Herbert's invocation of the Magdalene's voice in her psalms serves a subtle but extremely important function for the Countess's larger literary goals in promoting this project of English letters. She not only demonstrates this in her own metrical form – that is, after all, what allows this Magdalene image to be conjured in the first place – but she also invites her reader to

⁹² Nandra Perry and Robert E. Stillman, "Philip Sidney and Mary Sidney Herbert: Piety and Poetry," in *The Oxford Handbook of Early Modern English Literature and Religion* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 326.

⁹³ Perry and Stillman, "Philip Sidney and Mary Sidney," 327.

see the ghostly presence of Philip's influence in the psalms, and in his own posthumously printed work.

And the Magdalene also allows for a mediated self-presentation. By invoking Magdalene, it's not on her own authority that she is promoting Sir Philip's word; the Magdalene creates a bridge between Herbert's psalms and Sir Philip Sidney. With Herbert's invocation of a recognizable, Magdalene-esque voice in her psalms, the implication is that Herbert's "Christ" in this context is in fact Sir Philip Sidney himself. Thus, Herbert's choice to emulate Magdalene in the psalms, if that is what she's doing, appears to be a deliberate contextualization of her larger project after the death of Sir Philip.

3. CONCLUSIONS

Ultimately, Pembroke's active role in managing Sidney's literary reputation is evident in the preface to the reader in the 1593 edition of the *Arcadia*, which asserts itself as the proper, complete version of Philip's work. Addressing Greville's "disfigured" 1590 edition, Hugh Sanford (who wrote the letter prefacing the text "To the Reader," makes it clear that only Pembroke herself could oversee the printing of Philip's works, which, as his dedicatory letter suggest, was entrusted into her care. This letter states that "The disfigured face, gentle Reader, wherewith this worke not long since appeared to the common view, moued that noble Lady, to whose Honour consecrated, to whose protection it was committed, to take in hand the wiping away those spottes wherewith the beauties thereof were vnworthely blemished."⁹⁴ This preface further establishes that the editorial decisions that were made for this edition were "most by her doing, all by her directing," so that it "is now by more then one interest *The Countesse of Pembrokes Arcadia*: done, as it was, for her: as it is, by her."⁹⁵

In finishing Philip's literary project in translating the psalms according to his example, Herbert revives and completes his literary body, allowing the reader to experience, through her, the presence of Sir Philip's spirit. Ultimately, Herbert was recognized by her contemporaries for the "literary reincarnation of her brother,"⁹⁶ and she certainly played an important role in creating the image and discourse surrounding Philip's literary resurrection. However, it seems that this Magdalene posture may have been evident to some of her peers and successors.

⁹⁴ Sir Philip Sidney, To the Reader in *The Countess of Pembroke's Arcadia*, (London, 1593), 4.

⁹⁵ Sidney, To the Reader in *The Countesse of Pembroke's Arcadia*, 4.

⁹⁶ Perry and Stillman, "Philip Sidney and Mary Sidney," 336.

Evidence of this can be found in a dedication to her in Aemelia Lanyer's *Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum*. In this work, Lanyer writes about Sir Philip that "beeing dead, his fame doth him suruiue, / Still liuing in the hearts of worthy men; / Pale Death is dead, but he remains aliue, / Whose dying wounds restor'd him life agen."⁹⁷ Lanyer is sure to note the legacy of Pembroke herself in Philip's surviving memory: "So that a Sister well shee may be deemd, / To him that liu'd and di'd so nobly." Certainly, Sir Philip is presented as a Christ figure in this dedication. Despite his "dying wounds," he lives on in the worthy hearts of men. This Christ-like imagery is made even more interesting by the emphasis she places on Herbert in this context:

She sils the eies, the hearts, the tongues, the eares
Of after-comming ages, which shall reade
Her loue, her zeale, her faith, and pietie.⁹⁸

Here, Lanyer emphasizes that Philip's resurrection and subsequent legacy after his death is secured for the "after-coming ages" because of Mary's "zeale," "faith," and "piety." Thus, in Lanyer's emphasis on Herbert's role in creating Philip's Christ-like image, the image of Magdalene certainly begins to appear.

And it seems that as the Philip's resurrection messenger, Herbert was successful in spreading the "good word" of Philip's intended literary message. As I have argued, Mary Sidney Herbert's translations in the Sidney Psalter play an important role in promoting Philip's larger literary aims –including promoting and praising lyric poetry. The effect of the circulation of the Psalter on Philip's reputation is telling. The Sidney Psalter's "privileged early readers

⁹⁷ Aemilia Lanyer, "The Authors Dreame to the Ladie *Marie*, the Countesse Dowager of Pembroke" in *Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum* (London, 1611).

⁹⁸ Lanyer, "The Authors Dreame" in *Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum*.

acknowledged it as a masterwork.”⁹⁹ And after circulating in conjunction with Sidney’s other important works, a slew of devotional poetry began to appear. Critics have long recognized that “there is ample evidence [...] not only that the Sidney-Pembroke psalter was widely known among poets of the early seventeenth century and highly respected by them but that it actually exercised considerable influence on the religious lyric of the period.”¹⁰⁰ Thus, it seems that Herbert’s project in spreading not only Philip’s work, but his ideas about (devotional) lyric poetry, were successful in their aim and scope.

Furthermore, scholars have noted that the Sidney Psalter is a “conscious attempt to ‘better grace’ those Psalms” than other vernacular translations had done.¹⁰¹ This attempt fits in with Philip’s praising of the psalms as the most perfect form of poetry, as well as his promotion of poetry more generally. Philip’s work, which “transformed the English literary landscape,” is, as Nandra Perry and Robert E. Stillman suggest, “perhaps equally the brainchild of [...] Mary Sidney Herbert.”¹⁰² Responsible for the editorial project following Philip’s death, Herbert’s role in promoting the martyr that Sir Philip becomes is central. Responsible for the posthumous print publications of his work, Herbert shares in at least, if not more, an equal portion of the success awarded Sir Philip, whose “*Arcadia* would remain the most popular work of English prose fiction for some two hundred years.”¹⁰³

Certainly, critics recognize that Sidney’s success was reliant on his posthumous editor. Looking at the dedications and works of some of the writers she supported, the level of respect

⁹⁹ Hamlin, Brennan, Hannay, and Kinnamon, introduction in *The Sidney Psalter: The Psalms of Sir Philip and Mary Sidney*, xv.

¹⁰⁰ Richard Todd, “‘So Well Attyr’d Abroad’: A Background to the Sidney-Pembroke Psalter and its Implications for Seventeenth-Century Religious Lyric,” *Texas Studies in Literature and Language* 29, no. 1 (Spring 1987): 74.

¹⁰¹ Hannay, Kinnamon, and Brennan, Literary Context in *The Collected Works of Mary Sidney* Vol. II, 9.

¹⁰² Perry and Stillman, “Philip Sidney and Mary Sidney,” 326.

¹⁰³ Perry and Stillman, “Philip Sidney and Mary Sidney,” 326.

for her literary skill and learning is pronounced. While these dedications are designed to flatter, the essence of Herbert's ability to exact respect and awe from her writers is evident.

Furthermore, and perhaps most importantly, these dedications and works tend to emphasize the good nature of her piety. And specifically, Nicholas Breton describes not only her pious state, but compares her to an epitome of female piety: the saint Mary Magdalene.

On the surface the psalms themselves perhaps do not seem to fit into the printed publications of Philip's fiction works, namely the *Arcadia and Astrophil and Stella*, as well as his notorious defense of his use of English Letters, *the Defence of Poesie*. However, as scholarship has acknowledged, the *Sidney Psalter* also represents her role in developing Philip's literary reputation and goals.¹⁰⁴ And its influence on poetry is a testament to Herbert's success as Philip's Magdalene in completing this project, and spreading his good word.

Thus, just as medieval writers produced theatrical reenactments of Christ's passion and resurrection because audiences were "hungry for evidence of Christ's living presence,"¹⁰⁵ Mary Sidney Herbert's psalter allows an audience eager for Sir Philip Sidney's exaltation as martyr and literary figure to imagine his own kind of resurrection, and to access his spirit through the words he himself inspired. Philip is Mary's "source, her subject, and the shadow interlocutor who defines her conversations," and in turn, as his Magdalene, she witnesses and plays a vital hand in his resurrection story.¹⁰⁶ Thus, with Philip as Herbert's Christ figure, who with his "light'ning" beams pours forth the "baptismal font of divine inspiration," Mary Sidney Herbert becomes his Magdalene. Seen in this light, she plays a vital role in story of his resurrection,

¹⁰⁴ Perry and Stillman, "Philip Sidney and Mary Sidney," 328.

¹⁰⁵ Badir, "Medieval poetics and Protestant Magdalenes," 208.

¹⁰⁶ Perry and Stillman, "Philip Sidney and Mary Sidney," 342.

thereby promoting Philip's literary project of a thriving, vernacular English poetry tradition. In any case, Philip's literary body certainly rose through the ashes of his death in a form more lasting and more impressionable than he could perhaps have hoped for in his life. And the role that Mary Sidney Herbert plays in that reincarnation is undeniable.

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APPENDIX A

STYLOMETRY WITH R: VISUALIZATIONS OF THE SIDNEY PSALTER

Stylometry is a package available in R that computes the differences between texts based on word frequency and usage, even in translations. For this investigation I ran multiple analyses using various tools and algorithms available in the Stylometry package to determine the differences between Mary Sidney Herbert's translations of the psalms and Sir Philip Sidney's.

Although the psalms are not optimal for this method's intended corpus (novels), I accounted for this problem by grouping the psalms into larger sample sizes of 15-20 or more. I grouped Philip's psalms into two groups, and Mary's into four. I used these grouped texts as my corpus for this analysis. For each of these analyses I used Cosine Delta as my method of choice because it is currently considered the most consistent and accurate algorithm.

To first determine the stylistic similarities and differences between the input texts based on MFW (most frequent word usage), I first performed a Cluster Analysis. I used an input value min/max of 100 MFW and a Classic Delta distance. The result can be seen in Figure A.1.

Figure A.1 reveals that based on word frequency usages, Mary Sidney and Sir Philip's translations as they have been grouped are distinct from one another in style. In stylometry, "style" is determined by the author's usage of common words, which is typically distinct enough so that the package can pick up on authorial "signals."

As this Cluster Analysis shows, Sir Philip's psalm groups are pretty tightly correlated, suggesting that Philip's psalms 1-21 and 22-43 are giving off similar signals. Similarly, Mary Sidney's later psalms are closely related. However, her earlier psalms (Ps. 45-65) fall somewhere

in the middle, though still have more word patterns in common with Mary Sidney's psalms than with Philip's.

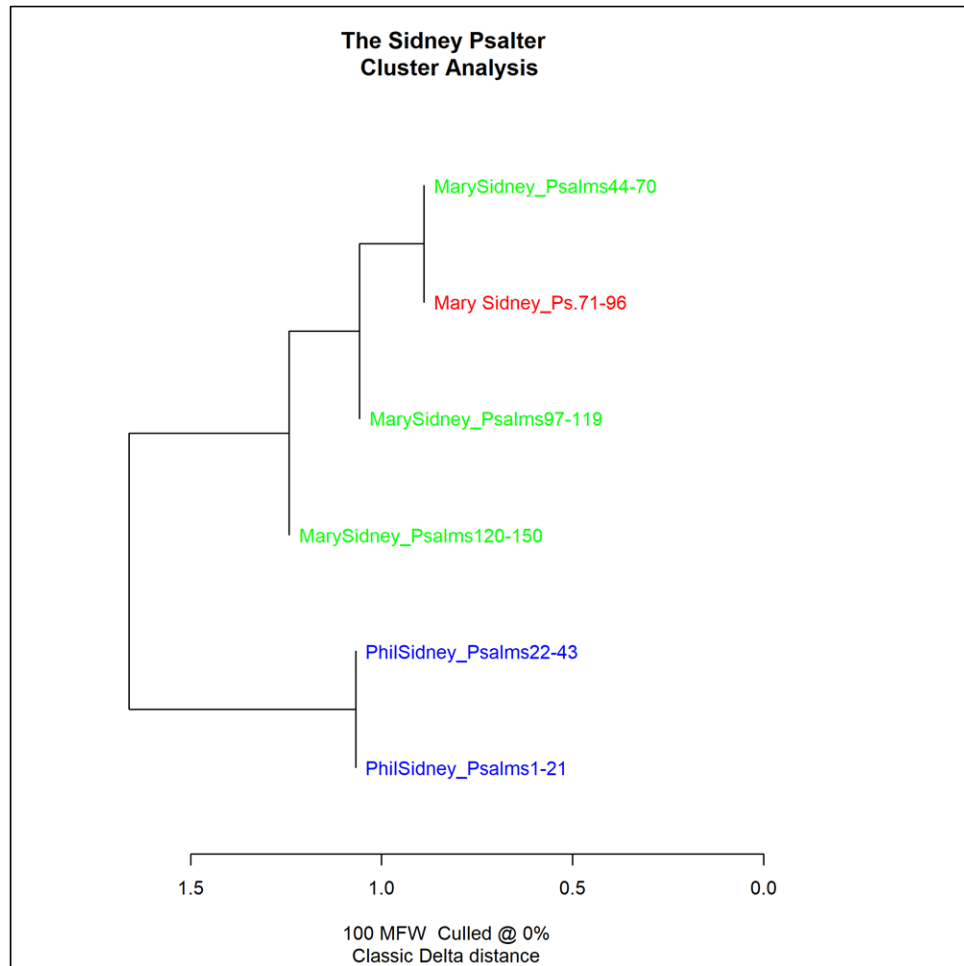


Figure A.1 Cluster Analysis at 100 MFW

Interestingly, the distinction between these texts becomes even more drastic when one reduces the MFW to 10 (the ten most frequent words are typically made up of non-meaning words like “the,” “and,” “of,” etc.) (see Figure A.2).

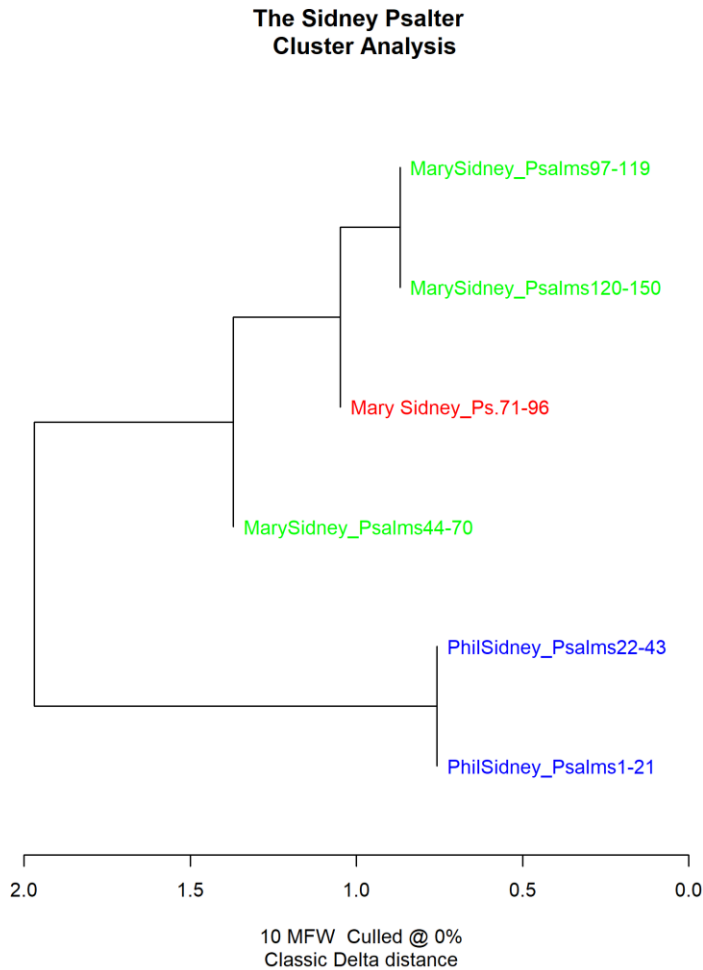


Figure A.1 Cluster Analysis at 10 MFW

Although these types of words may seem insignificant, one of the primary assumptions in stylometry is that the frequency of usage and clustering of non-meaning words varies from author to author and is a good indicator of authorship style.

Thus, for large or for small MFW values, the authorial style of Mary Sidney Herbert in the psalms is distinct from Sir Philip's. This finding is supported by the results of the Multidimensional Scaling analysis, which visualizes on multiple dimensions the word usage frequency across multiple words (in this case 100) and multiple texts, plotting them for word usage frequencies, looking for similarities and differences in usage.

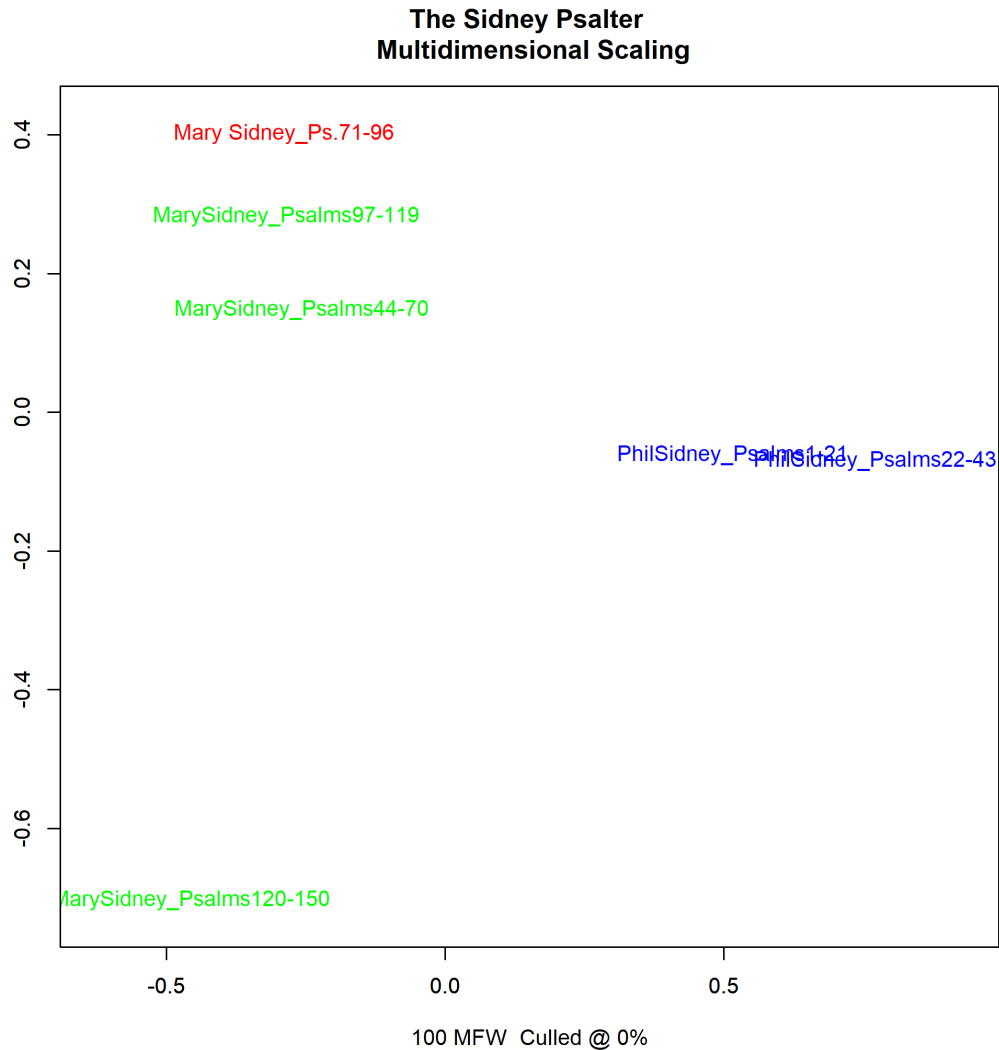


Figure A.3 Multidimensional Scaling at 100 MFW

MDS is another tool that attempts to compute the distances using a table of frequencies using statistical methods. MDS calculates these distances for every single text in the provided corpus. This produces a table of computed distances between Mary Sidney’s psalms and Sir Philip’s as shown in Figure A.3.

As Figure A.3 clearly shows, Sir Philip’s psalms are extremely similar to one another stylistically. On the other end, Mary Sidney’s psalms once again seem to show some strong

distinction of style, with her word frequency usage more strongly related in her earlier psalms than in Psalms 120-150. Most importantly, Sir Philip's psalms lie almost completely opposite of Mary Sidney's across the 0 value of the x-axis of this graph, which means that their styles are distinct enough to be categorized with a high degree of confidence as separate authors.

Using the Principle Components Analysis tool, I found similar results (see Figure A.4).

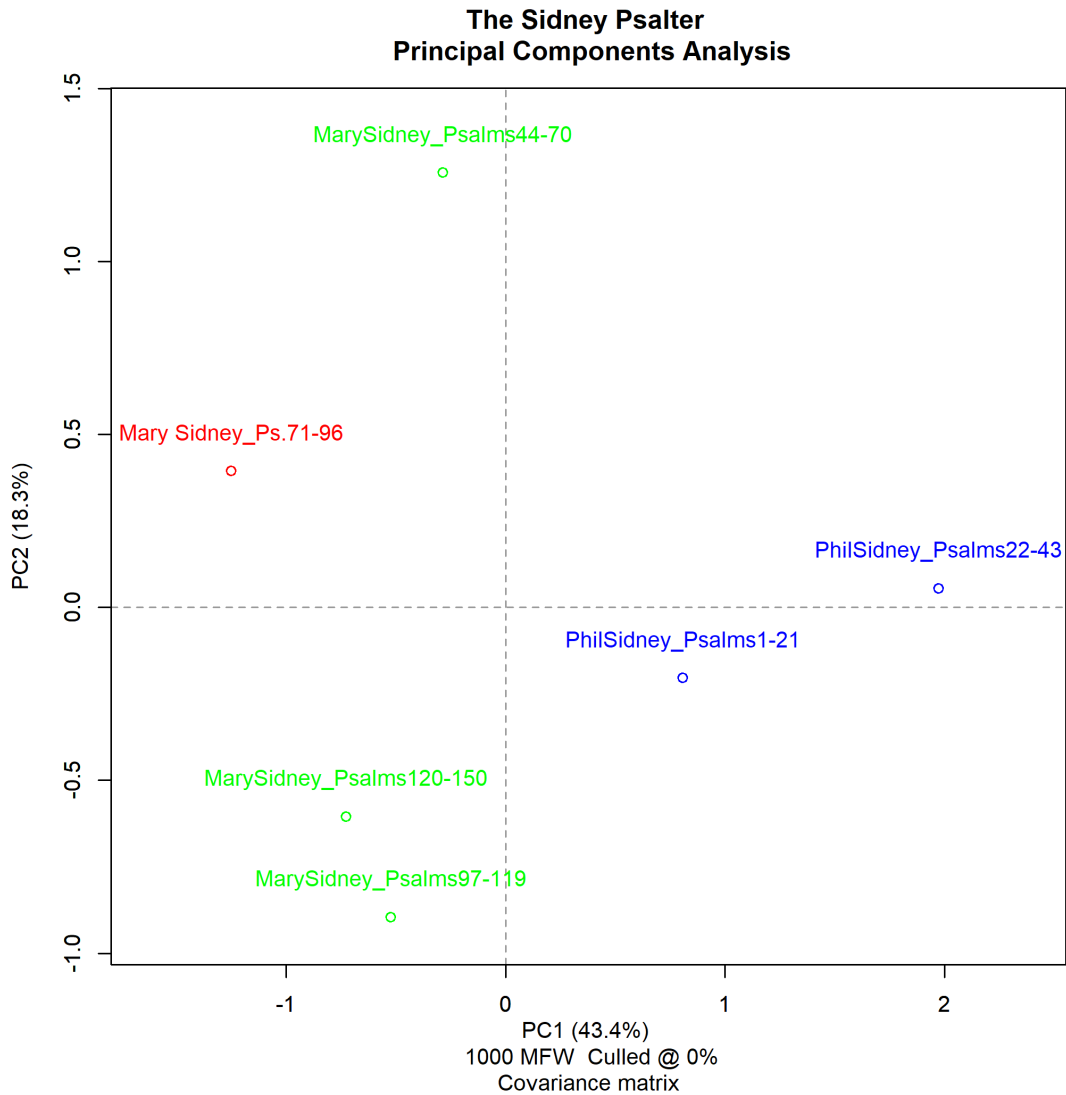


Figure A.4 PCA at 1000 MFW

For 1000 MFW, there is a distinct difference between Philip's psalms and Mary Sidney's. While PCA tries to find the most optimal position for viewing the information provided, in general it's not very reliable for drawing conclusions. However, together with other tools, PCA can operate as a convenient recognition technique for similarities and differences between texts' word usages.

Ultimately, both PCA and MDS are simply tools used to calculate and visualize the distance between the words and texts that are provided in the corpus. Combined with the cluster analyses, these methods suggest that via matrix and multidimensional space, the distance between Philip's certain degree of confidence that Mary Sidney has a distinct authorial style than her brother, at least according to their psalm translations.

Bootstrap Consensus:

Although these findings have been consistent, for the sake of robustness I also ran a bootstrap consensus computation with cosine delta statistics in R which can be seen in Figure A.5. Here I found further evidence that Mary Sidney Herbert and Sir Philip Sidney's authorial styles are distinct from one another:

As this tree suggests, there is a strong distinction between Philip's most frequent word usages, and thus his authorial "signal" as it has been picked up by the Stylometry calculations and Mary Sidney Herbert's.

Together, these findings have visualized the extent of Mary Sidney Herbert's distinct writing style in her psalm translations. Further analysis will need to be performed in order to determine the degree of significance in Herbert's somewhat broad range of signals between her earlier and later psalm translations. While this could simply be due to the methodology of this analysis (the fact that her corpus consisted of larger samples could be a potential reason for these

results), an investigation using a second text analysis software will be required to draw any definitive conclusions.

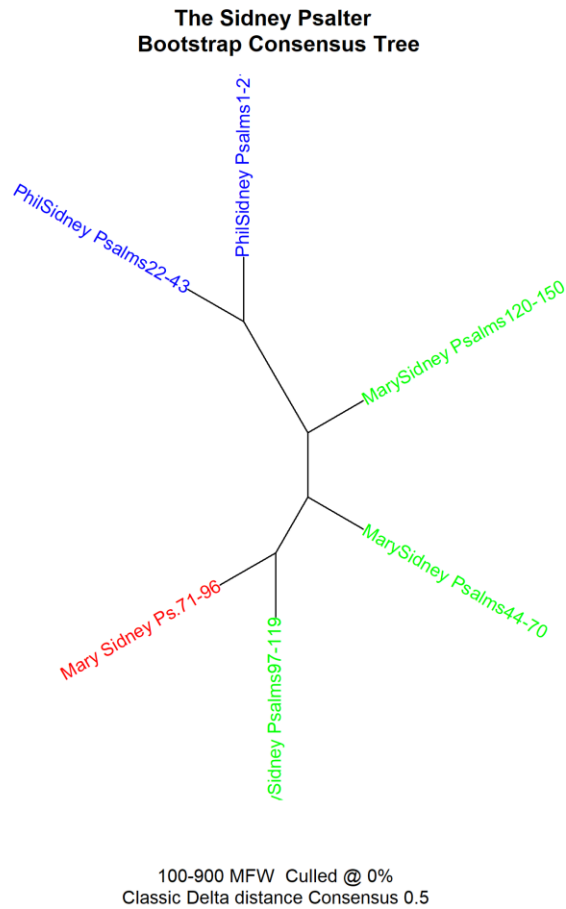


Figure A.5 Bootstrap Consensus Tree at 1000 MFW

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APPENDIX B

ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY OF FURTHER READING

This document contains a partial list of the books, articles, and chapters that I found to be particularly useful in my research. With each entry I have provided a brief description of each of the sources, outlining the points that I found to be most useful.

Badir, Patricia. “Medieval poetics and Protestant Magdalenes” in *Reading the Medieval in Early Modern England*. Edited by Gordon McMullan and David Matthews, 205-219. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007.

This chapter focuses on the tradition of Magdalene in the Medieval period as it resonates with the Protestant Magdalene of early modern England. Badir begins by explaining the medieval Magdalene’s supernatural capability of experiencing Christ in a way that has a lasting effect. In post-Reformation England, the early modern Magdalene’s primary abilities and functions mirror the medieval Magdalene, specifically in terms of her ability to “see” Christ where he isn’t. Thus, the way that the sepulchre scene of John 20 is reimagined in medieval literature lays an important foundation for the Magdalene literature of early modern England. Badir then discusses these elements of the medieval Magdalene as they are mapped on to seventeenth-century Protestant writers. She takes as her primary example the works of Nicholas Breton, and his tendency to depict Mary Sidney Herbert, the Countess of Pembroke, “*a la Madeleine*.” This has implications for the Countess’s role in contributing to literature of spiritual insight, as well as Breton’s

views regarding the Eucharist as it is no longer a physical exchange but is replaced by a figurative way of seeing and experiencing.

——. **The Maudlin Impression: English Literary Images of Mary Magdalene, 1550-1700.**

Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2009.

In this work, Patricia Badir takes on the task of explaining the evolving nature of the treatment and attitudes revolving around the Magdalene figure in response to the Protestant Reformation. Badir develops a nuanced conversation of Mary Magdalene's complex place in the literary traditions of both Protestant and Catholic works, tracing the new meanings attached to the Magdalene, as well as identifying the lingering medieval meanings. As part of this project, Badir sets out to identify the ways in which Protestant writers such as Nicholas Breton altered the figure of the Magdalene to promote his own religious and political leanings. In this way, Mary Magdalene is used in this period as a model saint for a modern world.

Brock, Ann. *Mary Magdalene, the First Apostle*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003.

Brock's book considers the question of why the image of Mary Magdalene has developed into such a complex and at times, completely at-odds figure in Christian texts. She argues that her status as the "apostle to the apostles" was either given to the Magdalene or withheld from her based on the politics of the early Christian text which took her as its subject. In that way, the Magdalene image in all of her variety could be used as a tool of persuasion in these texts based on the ways she was presented. This book begins with establishing the etymology of the term "apostle," and discussing the ways that Magdalene either qualifies

or does not qualify as an apostle. It then collates the differences in the ways that apostolic authority is presented in the Gospels of Luke, John, Mark, Matthew, and Peter. It also considers the ways that the Magdalene's authority has been eliminated or replaced in various texts and traditions.

Clark, Danielle. *The Politics of Early Modern Women's Writing*. Essex: Pearson, 2001.

Clark's book explores writing and gender in the early modern period, taking into consideration the social, historical, and political contexts. Clark sets out to read the early modern woman writer in her own historical context, and resists reading early modern work written by women as a genre. Instead, she argues, when one engages with these kinds of works, one should consider the specific choices that the author makes, including the type of circulation, timing, articulation, genre, etc. In the first chapter Clark discusses women's education in the early modern period, focusing on how they learned to read, write, and how to use language generally. She then goes on to discuss the political context in which women were writing in more generally, and finally turns to examining in the latter half of the book closet dramas, devotional texts, and secular poetry. These examinations consider the ways that women writers dealt with questions of authority, biblical interpretation, and how women writers manipulated forms of literature in their work.

Coles, Kimberly Anne. "[A] pen to paynt': Mary Sidney Herbert and the problems of a Protestant poetics" in *Religion, Reform, and Women's Writing*.

In this chapter, Coles examines the influential role that Mary Sidney Herbert has played in developing our current constructions of literature as they formed out of the post-Reformation literary culture. Coles uses *The Sidney-Pembroke Psalter* to demonstrate the shifting hermeneutics and literary expectations amidst shifting Reformation ideologies. Coles asserts that Herbert's completed *Sidney Psalter* is in fact the technical demonstration of Sir Philip's *Defense of Poetry*. These assertions of course have important implications for the role that Herbert played not only the literary realm of Elizabethan England, but also in the development of religious ideals. This chapter falls in line with Coles' examinations of the influential role that women's writing had on the development of religious devotional literature in early modern England.

Dascal, Reghina. "Appropriating a Female Voice: Nicholas Breton and the Countess of Pembroke." *De Gruyter*. DOI: 10.1515/genst-2015-0004.

This article explores the ways in which Nicholas Breton ventriloquizes a female voice in his work. Dascal suggests that Breton often associates Herbert with Mary Magdalene, and thus performs this appropriated female voice through the presentation of her. This Magdalene-mediated presentation of the Countess sets her up as a paragon of female religious devotion, and this kind of presentation is also evident in Aemelia Lanyer's *Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum*. As Dascal explains, Breton's comparison between Magdalene and Herbert reveals the anxieties and paradoxes of gendered roles in religious devotion in this moment.

Davis, Joel. "Multiple 'Arcadias' and the Literary Quarrel between Fulke Greville and the Countess of Pembroke. *Studies in Philology*, vol. 101, no. 4, 2004. pg. 401-430.

This article considers the complex subject of the printed publications of Sir Philip Sidney's *Arcadia*. The first copy was printed in 1590 by Fulke Greville, and the second was printed in 1593 by the Countess of Pembroke, Sidney's sister. Davis begins by outlining the differences between these two printed editions. Due to the incomplete nature of Sidney's working papers for the new *Arcadia*, Greville and Pembroke were in contest with one another as to which editorial decisions should have been made on Sidney's behalf, and who had access to the most authoritative manuscript. Ultimately, between 1593 and 1907, the Countess's edition was the one that became recognized as Sidney's *Arcadia*. After establishing this book history, the conflict between Greville and Pembroke takes prominence in Davis' discussion. Greville's edits to Sidney's *Arcadia* were created in the context of another project: *Letter to an Honourable Lady*, as well as in the rise of Essex. A departure from the militant Protestant tendency to align themselves with Neostocism began to become evident in the 1590s. Davis notes that Sidney's *Arcadia* is infused with this neostoic Taciteanism. These observations are important to consider when examining the feud held between Greville and Pembroke. Pembroke's swift response to Greville's edition of Sidney's work was primarily due to his recasting of Sir Philip in his edits. After taking over and publishing Philip's *Arcadia*, Pembroke reestablished herself as an important figure, closely tied to Huguenot Neostoicism in England.

McAvoy, Liz Herbert. *Authority and the Female Body in the Writings of Julian of Norwich and Margery Kempe*. Cambridge, D.S. Brewer. 2004.

This book focuses on the writings of Julian of Norwich and Margery Kempe. For these writers, medieval attitudes about the female body in particular and women in general are reflected in the way they present their mystical experiences in their writing. McAvoy discusses the three “types” of women in the medieval period here, describing them as the “mother,” the “whore,” and the “wise woman.” McAvoy discusses the ways that these medieval writers appropriated all three of these representations in their work in order to authorize themselves as writers and as speakers. The first chapters of the book focus on the trope of motherhood in the works of Margery Kempe and Julian of Norwich, then moves to the topic of prostitution in *The Book of Margery Kempe* and the “holy whore” in Julian of Norwich’s work, and finally discusses the voice of wisdom, authority, and female utterance.

Osherow, Michele. “Mary Sidney’s embroidered psalms.” *Renaissance Studies* 29, no. 4. 2015. doi: 10.1111/rest.12166.

This thoughtful analysis springs from a comment made by some of the Countess of Pembroke’s modern editors in the Oxford edition of the *Sidney Psalter*. As Osherow explains, these editors pick up on Pembroke’s use of the term ‘embroid’ry’ in Psalm 139, attributing the choice to her experiences as a woman in the Renaissance period. Osherow then establishes that Pembroke’s choice to use this term in fact reflects her awareness of the original Hebraic translation’s rendering, which uses the hebraic word *rekamah*, which means embroidery or needlework. Osherow explains Herbert’s own experience with

needlework and demonstrates the ways that the *Sidney Psalms* exhibit an intertextual play between embroidery and verse. Herbert's psalms mirror the needlework used in embroidery in both literal and figurative ways. This is particularly significant, because it demonstrates the connection between needlework and writing for women in the early modern period, and the associations between women's texts and textiles. Demonstrating this process at work in examples throughout the *Sidney Psalter*, Osherow explains how such Psalms as 140 and 55 replicate in verse the stitching process of embroidery stitches such as the Tent stitch and the Cross stitch. Osherow's observations are not only well wrought; they shed light on the interplay between women's productions, both textual and textile.

Phillippy, Patricia. "Sisters of Magdalen: Women's Mourning in Amelia Lanyer's *Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum*." *English Literary Renaissance* 31, no. 1 (Winter 2001): 78-106.

Phillippy's article stems from a fourth century critique of women's mourning by St. John Chrysostom, which is representative of the attitudes surrounding women as grievers in the English Protestant Reformation. Phillippy suggests that this sermon reveals four points of interest about women's mourning: that it is group activity formed by a community of women, that it is designated "women's work" because of its excessive nature, that is presumptively physical and violent, which calls attention to the centrality of the body in women's lamentation, and finally, that it is linked with women's sexuality. This violent, sexualized, excessive weeper can easily be mapped on to images of the Magdalene, whose excessive love for Christ is at once sexual and violent in nature

according to a long tradition of cultural representation. After establishing this image and cultural context, Phillippy maps the Magdalene onto the poetry of the early modern writer Aemelia Lanyer. This work is occurring within the context of the post-Reformation's "masculinization of piety," a process which rejects the traditional modes of feminine mourning.

Ransom, Emily. "Redeeming Complaint in Tudor and Stuart Devotional Lyric." (PhD

Dissertation, University of Notre Dame, 2016) ProQuest (order number 10308182).

Ransom's dissertation thoroughly addresses the way that devotional complaint emerged as a literary preoccupation in Tudor and Stuart poetry. Ransom discusses this poetry as it emerges in the voices of several biblical figures, including Mary Magdalene, the Virgin Mary, Peter, and Christ. For the purposes of my reading, I found Chapter 4, which discusses the tears of Mary Magdalene, to be most intriguing. This chapter takes into consideration the turmoil and shifting dynamics resulting from the Reformation. Ransom considers the ways that the Magdalene, with all of her medieval meanings being either ignored, recycled, and reproduced, is used as a meaning-making image in this period. Ransom examines a healthy collection of sermons, written works, both in print and manuscript, and secondary critical sources to inform her analyses. Following the developing of Magdalene's meaning from the medieval ages, Ransom goes on to explore the shifting theologies, expectations, and images for the Magdalene. She considers the ways that this figure may inform our understanding of the impact that the Reformation and shifting theological ideologies had on women in this period.

Sullivan, Ceri. “The Physiology of Penitence in 1590s Weeping Texts.” *Cahiers*

***Élisabéthains: Late Medieval and Renaissance Studies* 57, no. 12 (2000): 31-47.**

This article considers the role that the physiological nature of penitence plays in the theological and literary context of the early modern period. Taking on the issues of sight, speech, tears, blood, and sweat, Sullivan suggests that each of these physical manifestations of penitence in the poetry negotiates with agency and spirituality differently. To make this claim, Sullivan examines five Catholic texts. As she argues, these works reveal the ways that these poets and writers use these rhetorical devices to help them establish or determine the spiritual state of their soul, and often emphasizes the lack of human interference in this process. For example, the literature typically reverses the agentic nature of sight in the secular poetry and instead emphasizes those penitence postures which are not controllable, indicating a spiritual preoccupation which is divinely inspired.

Trill, Suzanne. “Engendering Penitence: Nicholas Breton and ‘the Countesse of

Penbrooke.’” In *Voicing Women: Gender and Sexuality in Early Modern Writing*, edited by Kate Chedzoy, Melanie Hansen, and Suzanne Trill, 25–44. Pittsburgh: Duquesne UP, 1997.

Trill’s chapter considers the question of an appropriated female voice by a male writer through the double lens of feminist literary criticism and post-structuralist critical theory. Trill analyzes Breton’s appropriation of different kinds of gendered voices in his work, specifically his tendency to use Mary Sidney Herbert, the Countess of Pembroke, as his model for female penitence. In conducting these examinations on Breton’s work, Trill is

interested in revealing anxieties about the gender, penitence, and religious expression in early modern England. Trill acknowledges that Breton often associates the Countess of Pembroke with Mary Magdalene. Furthermore, Trill suggests that based on the patterns of Breton's work, his use of a female vs. a male voice varies. This carries some important implications regarding expectations towards self-repentance, confession, and self-examination. In Breton's works, the speaking woman, as opposed to the speaking man, is focused primarily upon her sense of her own sin. In contrast, a male voice is instead focused on the sinfulness of others. Trill reads these trends as Breton's literary embodiment of attitudes and expectations for penitence and sinfulness for women and men.