A Theatre for Voluptuous Worldlings: Introduction

Attribution

In 1569 Henry Bynneman produced a slightly unusual octavo book, attractive in some ways and messy in others. After its unelaborate title-page, a commendatory poem addressed to Jan van der Noot, an Antwerp patrician (*Patricio Antuerpiensi*), taunts '*Haec Babylon legat*' ('Let Babylon read'), a challenge it will repeat before proceeding to the excited optative, '*Ut iaceant idola!*' ('Let the idols be cast down!'; *Theatre*, *Commendatory Poems* 1.0.4, 1.1, 1.9, and 1.18). Then another commendatory poem, again in Latin; an epistle dedicating the book to the 'righte Christian Princesse *Elizabeth*' (*Dedicatory Epistle* 0.3-0.4); six 'Epigrams' paired with six woodcut images; a seventh, unillustrated concluding epigram; then fifteen 'Sonets', all but the first paired with woodcut images; then 214 pages of vehement, largely anti-Catholic commentary on the 'visions' represented by these poems and images. Bynneman's book very closely resembles two others that had issued from John Day's press late in the previous year, one in Dutch and one in French. The basic organization of all three books is identical, although each has slightly different front matter from the others' and Day's books are illustrated with engravings instead of Bynneman's woodcuts. It bears noticing here, as it concerns a matter of editorial policy, that Spenser's name appears nowhere in the book Bynneman published.

Decades ago Michel Foucault asked, 'How can one define a work amid the millions of traces left by someone after his death? A theory of the work does not exist, and the empirical task of those who naively undertake the editing of works often suffers in the absence of such a theory' (1979: 144). In knowing resistance to this important bibliographic provocation 'the chalenge to define' (*FQ* IV.iii.3.9), the editors of the *Oxford Collected Works of Edmund Spenser* have chosen not to propound 'a theory of the work', nor to define 'a work'. Commencing our edition with *A Theatre for Voluptuous Worldlings*, on which Spenser left hundreds of traces, we choose to remark on the indefinition of those traces.

While several of Spenser's later works were published anonymously or pseudonymously, the *Theatre* is especially un-'Spenserian' in that neither Spenser's name, initials, nor any of his pseudonyms appear anywhere in the book. The work is attributed to someone else, and while several contributors are variously and explicitly acknowledged (for the *Theatre* is a work of many hands), Spenser's contribution was not. Attribution is performed thus: Spenser's *Complaints*, an omnibus collection of poems published in 1591, contains a sequence of seven poems, *The Visions of Petrarch*, which closely resemble a sequence of seven poems in the earlier *Theatre*, and because *The Visions of Petrarch* are described, laconically, as 'formerly translated', we take the poems in the *Theatre* that resemble those in *Petrarch* as translated by a much younger Spenser. Another sequence from *Complaints*, the fifteen poems of *The Visions of Bellay*, also closely resembles a second sequence of eleven poems in the *Theatre*, although in the case of *Bellay* nothing is said of former translation. The *Theatre* contains four more poems, sonnets based on visions from the book of Revelation, and no sequence of poems

closely resembling these was published in *Complaints*, nor did they circulate in proximity to Spenser's pseudonyms, initials, or name during his lifetime. Like many Protestant poets of the mid- and late sixteenth century, Spenser was fascinated by vision and apocalypse, but neither this fascination nor the proximity of these four poems to sequences transfigured in *Complaints* is sufficient warrant to secure them a place in the sort of edition that Foucault would have regarded as definitive. The four apocalyptic sonnets are sufficiently good that many godly poets could have proudly or humbly put their names to them; neither in rhyme (they are unrhymed), rhythm, nor syntax do they seem *securely* Spenserian. We will judge them, poetically, 'Spenserian enough' at the end of this introduction, but that is slightly beside the point. A *Collected Works of Edmund Spenser* undertaken without naiveté must include some works of indefinite, heterogeneous, and even errant authorship.[1] Like most modern editions of *The Shepheardes Calender*, ours includes the work of a contemporary commentator who presents himself as not the same person as the author of the poems. (This commentator, 'E.K.', may, in fact, be the same person as the author of the poems, but he presents himself only as 'privie to [the author's] counsell' [*SC*, *Epistle* 153].) Likewise, but not identically, our edition of the *Theatre* includes the work of a contemporary commentator, Jan van der Noot, who presents himself as not the same person as the author of (most of) the poems, although he hints that he wrote the four sonnets on the book of Revelation. For all the distinctiveness of much of his work and for all his concern with the toils of privacy and individuality, Spenser was a frequent and enthusiastic collaborator. It is therefore fitting that we begin with Spenser as a translator and as a late recruit to a group project—with 'him' as 'one of them'.

[1] Indefinite–e.g. *A Theatre for Voluptuous Worldlings*; heterogeneous–e.g. *The Spenser-Harvey Letters*, *The Correspondence*, *Astrophel*; errant–e.g. *Brittains Ida*, this latter available at *The Spenser Archive* (URL).

However indefinitely Spenserian, the *Theatre* exerts strong claims on the attention of scholars of Spenser and of English Reformation culture. The evidence suggests that Spenser first saw the traces of his own handwriting converted to print in *Theatre*, and the excitement of that experience kept the *Theatre* alive in his imagination for much of his literary career. *The Shepheardes Calender* suggests Spenser's embrace of the general biblio-graphic model of the *Theatre*, in which a sequence of poems are carefully paired with images, the pairings complemented and given polemical éclat by the erudite commentary that follows. If Spenser keenly adapted this model in the *Calender*, his enthusiasm for the *Theatre* did not persist unalloyed: the extent of the revisions he made to *Bellay* and *Petrarch* suggests that, at some point, he grew dissatisfied with his early translations. (This dissatisfaction will be taken up in our edition of *Complaints*.) That he did not revise or reprint the apocalyptic sonnets in 1591 is yet another problem: perhaps Spenser was embarrassed that van der Noot had betrayed the millennial urgings that would have made him seem so glamorous in the late 1560s. He had come to England as a Reformation hero, but when he returned to the continent a few years later, his zeal seems to have subsided, and when he returned to Antwerp in the 1580s, he did so as a Catholic. However embarrassing or infuriating this geographical and confessional traffic might have seemed to Spenser in long retrospect, it was hardly egregious. Only a decade later, a still-young Spenser would project his own career as that of a more resolute version of van der Noot's:

> *Quæsitum imus eam per inhospita Caucasa longè,*
> *Perque Pyrenæos montes, Babilonaque turpem,*
> *Quòd si quæsitum nec ibi invenerimus, ingens*
> *Æquor inexhaustis permensi erroribus, ultrâ*
> *Fluctibus in mediis socii quæremus Ulyssis.*
>
> We go off at length to seek our fortune through the inhospitable Caucasus, the rocky Pyrenees, and polluted Babylon. But if we shall not find there what we seek, having crossed a huge sea in endless wandering, we will seek it beyond, in the midst of the flood, in the company of Ulysses.
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> (*'Ad Ornatissimum virum', Letters 4.210-4*)

When an even older Spenser reread the *Theatre*, with its organizing motif of *vanitas*, the book might well have seemed, not millennial, but a lamentable prophecy of apostasy and of lapsed or failed ambition; but a Spenser in his late twenties, the Spenser of this 1580 epistle to Harvey, could imagine modeling his life and intellectual activity on that of van der Noot and of those Englishmen with whom van der Noot made common cause, men like John Bale and John Foxe, who also left hundreds of traces on the *Theatre*, rootless ideologues for whom vernacular literary activity was the best form of participation in a Reformation that was transnational in both principle and practice. Theirs is the unfixed environment from which the *Theatre*, and Spenser's career, both spring.

Jan van der Noot and *Het Theatre*

Van der Noot had lived through the early stages of an anti-Habsburg resistance that eventually manifested itself in the outbreak of the Eighty Years' War and the founding of the Dutch Republic in 1581. The Dutch insurgency might be simply explained as a tax revolt: the Dutch states were the economic powerhouse of northern Europe and Antwerp was preeminent among the Dutch trading centers, and both Charles V and his successor Philip II worked steadily to exploit Dutch prosperity dramatically to increase their revenues, eventually eroding the aristocratic loyalties that had provided Charles with his political base in the Low Countries (Marnef 1996: 3-7, 19-21). But however important the economic motive, the resistance had a strongly ideological character. In 1558, when van der Noot moved to Antwerp from his birthplace in Brecht, a Calvinist community was burgeoning in Antwerp, overshadowing an older Lutheran presence and competing with the well-established community of Anabaptists (Prims 1929: 605 and Marnef 1996: 78-82). In the fifties Antwerp became an important communications center for the Reformed Church and a place of refuge for Calvinists both from Flanders to the west and the Walloon region to the south; by 1562, when van der Noot, then in his early twenties, became an alderman in Antwerp, approximately a third of the city was identifiably Protestant, and the city had both a French-speaking Calvinist congregation and a Dutch-speaking one (Prims 1929: 606 and Jongenelen and Parsons 2008: 236). Despite his commitment to civic government – he served a second term as alderman in 1565-6 – van der Noot affiliated with the Calvinist consistory, a group whose rapid radicalization would soon prove quite disruptive to local civil order (Prims 1929: 606).

Shortly after departing the Netherlands in 1559, Philip II had established fourteen new dioceses and increased the episcopal presence in the States-General. It was widely believed that this was meant as prologue to the extension of Spanish Inquisitorial involvement in the Netherlands, although in point of fact native inquisitorial tribunals in Antwerp were meting out their own fierce punishments, executing some 103 heretics between 1557 and 1562. But Philip was hardly aloof from this persecution, promulgating a series of extraordinary ordinances that made adherence to the various heresies of Protestantism a capital offense. The Antwerp Calvinists countered by resolving to exercise force to free those of their brethren then in prison. On 5 April 1566, a league of 400 members of the lower nobility from across the Habsburg Netherlands petitioned Philip's regent, Margaret of Parma, for abolition of the Inquisition and the suspension of all edicts against heresy. The petition was forwarded to Philip II, but in the months before he responded, Antwerp erupted.

Across Flanders, open-air preaching fomented dissent. In July, between twenty and twenty-five thousand residents of Antwerp swarmed outside the city walls to hear the sermon of a Calvinist preacher; by August, the leaders of the Calvinist community demanded formal confirmation of a right of preaching within the city walls. The foreign merchants who anchored the prosperity of Antwerp were sufficiently alarmed that they threatened to leave the city if order could not be restored, but a wave of iconoclastic riot, the *Beeldenstorm*, was sweeping across Flanders. '*Ut iaceant idola!*': On 20 August, the Protestants of Antwerp destroyed a large portion of the interior of the Cathedral Church of Our Lady and, for the next few days and with strikingly disciplined efficiency, they defaced or destroyed images in churches across the city and its exurbs. Margaret appointed William of Orange, who held the title of Burgrave of Antwerp, to find a way to

maintain her authority, to accommodate the core demands of the Reformers, and to defend Catholic worship from interference, but despite his remarkable political skills, hostilities continued, eventually provoking Philip II to send troops under the Duke of Alva to 'pacify' the region. No surviving records indicate whether van der Noot was directly involved in the *Beeldenstorm*, but in March 1567, a Calvinist group attempted to depose the margrave of Antwerp and to instate van der Noot in his stead (Prims 1929: 611). The coup failed, the Calvinist forces disbanded, and before the end of the month van der Noot became one of thousands who fled the city and one of tens of thousands who fled the Netherlands before Alva's approaching army, some seeking refuge in the Huguenot cities of France, some in Wesel and Emden, and others in Norwich, Canterbury, Southampton, and, above all, in London.

By the beginning of the next decade, 5% of London's population was Dutch, and this proportion was kept so low only by means of sustained royal effort to disperse the enormous influx of refugees across a number of English cities. In the spring of 1567, London was a powerful magnet for van der Noot and many of his countrymen. While hardly as cosmopolitan or as economically advanced as Antwerp, it had an established Dutch community and a reasonably hospitable city government, so a Dutch Protestant ideologue in London might think of himself less as having gone into exile than as having secured a strategic retrenchment. Within a year of van der Noot's arrival, *Het Theatre oft Toon-neel, waer in ter eender de ongelucken ende elenden die den werelts gesinden ende boosen menschen toecomen . . . vertoont worden* (The Theatre or Stage wherein both the misfortunes and miseries that befall worldly-minded and wicked people . . . are shown) was ready for the press: van der Noot had composed Dutch translations of Joachim Du Bellay's visionary sonnet sequence, *Songe*, and of Clément Marot's rendering (in six douzaines and an envoy) of Francesco Petrarch's *Standomi un giorno* (*RS* 323); he had written 4 sonnets based on the Revelations; he had pulled together a commentary of nearly 40,000 words that aligned Petrarch's and Du Bellay's visions with those of Revelation and that took all these visions as occasions for anti-Catholic polemic; he had found a publisher and had rounded up commendatory poems and composed dedicatory epistles; and either he or his publisher had found an artist to produce the engraved illustrations for the poems, engravings probably copied, as we shall see, from woodcuts produced in anticipation of an English version of the *Theatre*.[2] Within yet another month, a French version of the volume was ready for printing, a somewhat easier task, since for this volume the engravings could be recycled, and Du Bellay's *Songe* could be used in its original French, as could Marot's rendering of Petrarch; still, the four sonnets based on Revelation and the long *Commentary* had to be translated. This work of translation from Dutch into French almost certainly fell to van der Noot himself.[3] The English *Theatre*, to be produced in a different print-shop, was a more substantial undertaking than was the French volume: the woodcuts were ready, but the text of the entire volume had to be translated: the verse, from French; the prose, from Dutch.

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[2] That van der Noot turned to John Day to produce the French and Dutch *Theatres* was not an accident, for Day had strong ties to the Dutch community in London; see Evenden (2008: 53-5).

[3] Van der Noot wrote French fluently: his incomplete epic poem, *Olympiades*, was first published in German, and then in a bilingual French-Dutch edition, but the German version seems to have been translated from the French original (Meijer 1971: 85).

Spenserians may wish to ascertain how van der Noot found and recruited the teenaged Spenser to prepare these translations from French into English verse, but if we take the volume as a serious collaboration (and not simply as an odd first item on a shelf of Spenser's works) this historical puzzle properly takes its place as one of several such puzzles: we know almost as little about how van der Noot enlisted the others, the publishers and artist or artists who worked to produce these three volumes, Dutch, French, and English.

Take Theodore Roest, an emigré crucial to the production of *The Theatre*.[4] We know very little of him, yet the heading of the *Commentary* for the English *Theatre* designates Roest as having produced the English translation for that section of the book; it also indicates that he translated it from French (*Commentary* 0.5-0.6), which seems not to have been the case. Since Roest's translation preserves a variety of features of *Het Theatre* not reflected in *Le théatre*, it seems fair to infer that he translated, instead, directly from the Dutch, this despite the testimony of the *Commentary*.[5] That said, both Roest's English text and *Le théatre* include a few cuts and elaborations, including glosses not featured in *Het Theatre*, which suggest that both French and English translators were working either from a revised copy of the printed *Het Theatre* or from a manuscript that diverges from the one that served as copy for *Het Theatre*.[6] While Van der Noot acknowledges Roest's assistance, he himself seems to take the credit for having translated the poetry (*Commentary* 375 and 413).[7]

Day's print shop had been busy, probably since late in 1568, with the preparation of the monumental second edition of Foxe's *Actes and Monuments* (finally published in 1570); Bynneman's shop was less encumbered with complex projects, although work on the Manutius Virgil, the first complete Virgil to be printed in England, no doubt made its claims.[8] It is therefore unsurprising that the three *Theatres* show evidence of haste: the glosses are often unhelpful and the translations sometimes inaccurate.[9] In the sestet of

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[4] Forster's account (1967:27-34) has not been replaced.

[5] This is also Forster's conclusion (1967: 30-2). The analysis of the transmissional chain is complicated by the glosses, which may very well have been prepared independently from the volume's commentary proper. See *Commentary* 679-83 [*glosses*] n, but see also *Commentary* 713-15 [*glosses*] n.

[6] For the fidelity of the English commentary to a version of the Dutch see *Commentary* 406 n, 442 n and 713-15 [*glosses*] n; for the Dutch text on which the French and English translations are based, see *Commentary* 334-5 n, 419 n and *SpA*2792 n.

[7] In fact, at each of the two junctures in which the 'speaker' of the *Commentary* claims to have translated the poems from Dutch into English, Roest seems to have mechanically transformed his Dutch source: where van der Noot has spoken of translating Petrarch '*in onse Brabantsche sprake*' (D7r) the English text speaks of having 'out of the *Brabants* speache, turned them [i.e. the poems] into the Englishe tongue'; where van der Noot speaks of having taken Du Bellay's poems and '*in Brabants ghemaect*' (D8r) the speaker of Roest's translation claims to 'have translated them out of Dutch into English'.

[8] Evenden's account of the heavy and risky commitment of resources to the production of the first edition of *Actes* is relevant to the second edition (2008: 69-73).

[9] Eager helpfully observes that whereas the front matter for the French and English versions spills over from the A to the B signature, the front matter for *Het Theatre* is confined to the A signature. Although this may be a coincidence, Eager suggests that the

the first of the apocalyptic sonnets, where attention turns from the Beast from the Sea to the Beast from the Earth (‘*Noch een beeste sach ick op comen wt de eerde*’; ‘Then I saw a Beast come from the Earth’; C2v), the French version, probably prepared by van der Noot himself, carelessly offers ‘*de Mer une beste sauvage*’ (‘a wild Beast from the Sea’; D2v).[10] The speed with which the production team was assembled and the haste with which they worked suggests the warmth with which London’s intelligentsia received a Dutch Protestant ideologue and his projects. Apparently, Reforming fervor was passport enough.

While the book may have been executed hastily, it is by no means incoherent. Van der Noot seems to have edited the sequence of poems with an eye to reducing their redundancy. Thus he drops the fourteenth of the poems in Du Bellay’s *Songe*, a sonnet in which Du Bellay recounts a vision of a city like the New Jerusalem (‘semblable à celle / Que uit le messager de la bonne nouuelle’; 1558: c5r), so as not to anticipate the final apocalyptic sonnet and thereby mitigate its force. He also suppresses Du Bellay’s previous poem, in this instance, it seems, because it overlaps one of the visions in the earlier Petrarch-Marot sequence, of a ship overthrown by a tempest.[11] While his *Commentary* indicates that all twenty visions concern themselves with ‘the vanitie and inconstancie of worldly and transitorie thyngs’ (356-7), van der Noot has transmuted them into a plot, an arc from Petrarch’s poems, in which the vision of inconstancy displays a plangent privacy, through Du Bellay’s, in which inconstancy grows more worldly, opening as it does to contemplation of the vulnerability of Roman imperial culture, to van der Noot’s own ecclesiological apocalypse.

Internationalism, Translation, and the Translators of the *Theatre*

concentration of the front matter in a single signature may have been necessitated by its copy having been written and set late in the presswork – as is often the case in first editions in which the introductory material is being composed at the last minute. She also offers a different kind of evidence for time-pressure. She notes that it made sense to print the text first and the engravings second in printed books that incorporate engravings, since plates were fragile and could be used to produce only a limited number of images; normally it was not worth the risk to print the images first and hope that no misprinted text rendered the printed images unusable. Eager offers physical evidence that shows that *Le Théatre* violates this norm, and argues that Day hurried the book out, arranging for the printing of the engravings–the plates were ready, having already been used for *Het Theatre*—prior to the completion of the French translation or, at least (as I would qualify her conclusion), prior to the setting of the French text.

[10] Another odd transmissional lapse occurs when two ‘generations’ in the Dutch genealogy of the Anti-Christ –*Wreetheyt heeft voortghebracht Wtnementheyt. / Wtnementheyt heeft voortghebracht Gewelt* (‘Cruelty begot Preeminence. / Preeminence begot Power’; L8v) – are transformed into a single French one – *Cruauté a engendré Domination* (‘Cruelty begot Domination’; M8r). This may be a calculated condensation or an inattentive lapse: whichever it is, the change may be as easily assigned to a translating van der Noot as to some different, unidentified translator.

[11] Du Bellay’s poem is a complex homage to Petrarch and Marot, its eleventh line repeating that which concludes the second stanza of Marot’s rendering of Petrarch.

Although nationalism may be theme and motive of much Elizabethan literary history – as it has especially been for the study of Spenser –the *Theatre* challenges us to reflect carefully on the character of Elizabethan nationality. That challenge begins in the epistle dedicating the work to Queen Elizabeth, where Van der Noot makes much of the welcome he has received. Praising the polyglot cosmopolitanism of the queen and her realm, van der Noot gratefully acknowledges that 'every countrey and nation that will live here according to [God's] holy worde, is received, and findeth good entertainement' (*Theatre, Dedicatory Epistle* 92-4). Van der Noot is celebrating an England rendered international by its piety. When C. H. Herford situates the *Theatre* in a national cultural history by describing it as 'the first English Emblem-book,' he slightly distracts us from the fact that the suite of Dutch, French, and English *Theatres* might more properly be described as an international, polyglot Protestant publishing effort, an alloy of image, verse, and prose, of Italian, French, Dutch, and English elements in service of a millenial European Protestantism (1886: 369). That van der Noot is addressing those who dwell in a northern Reformed spiritual zone and not the citizens of three Protestant proto-nations may be gleaned from the conclusion of the last of the sonnets.[12] There he describes the tree of life that grows in the midst of the heavenly city, *tot troost der gemeente* (C5v), translating the Vulgate's *ad sanitatem gentium* (for the health of the nations; Rev 22.3). The Dutch *gemeente* has a nice ambiguity, capable of indicating both secular polities and the congregations that make up a Church, but his French – *au profit de l'Eglise* – and Spenser's English – *unto the Churches good* – are unambiguous (*Theatre, Son.* 15.14). Elizabethan England is distinguished by its hospitality to the unity of this multi-cultural Church, and to the sort of unity enshrined in the *Het/Le/A Theatre* itself.

This multi-culturalism is by no means an ancillary feature of van der Noot's situation or his book. His early poetry, later gathered for publication as *Het Bosken* ('*The Grove*'; London 1570), is deeply indebted to the work of Ronsard and the Pléiade, with its doctrinaire commitment to the cultivation of French language and literature by deliberate imitation of Greek, Latin, and Italian models. Pléiade poetic theorizing was staged as a contest between the practice of Ronsard and that of Marot, between strategic imitation and incautious translation. This contest was perhaps more notional than actual; its primary effect was to electrify, for readers and writers, the relation of vernacular to international literary practice. A pen like van der Noot's, which moved within the energized literary force field of Pléiade practice, twitches in response to the pressures of a range of ancient, modern, foreign, and native influences.

The international traffic of that pen does not cease when the sequence of poems ends. The poems are followed by a commentary that, although translated from Dutch, has a surprisingly native English pedigree. After a general rehearsal of commonplaces on 'the vanitie and inconstancie of worldly and transitorie thyngs' (*Commentary* 356-7), van der Noot offers summary observations on the visionary sequences by Petrarch and Du Bellay and then proceeds to a much more sustained commentary on the four sonnets based on Revelations. Although the *Commentary* draws on 'holy scriptures, and dyvers Orators, Poetes, *Philosophers, and true historie*' (0.3-0.5), it does so indirectly, for, in fact, most of it is adapted from *Den standt ende bilde der beyden ghemeynten*, a Dutch translation (1555) by Carolus Regius (Karel de Coninck) of John Bale's *Image of Both*

[12] For another version of the distinction made here, see Parry (1999: 167-81).

Churches. A work of considerable influence – on John Foxe's *Actes and Monuments* and on the annotations that did so much to make the Geneva Bible a vector of Reformation – Bale's *Image* offers a reading of Revelations as a prophetic allegory of the struggle between the True Church and the bestial Church of Rome. Like van der Noot and his *Theatre*, Bale and his *Image* operate in a culture both of border-crossings (civic, national, and linguistic) and of trans-geographical, spiritual contest. Bale transmits to van der Noot a conception of spiritual history that combines the Wycliffite idea that Christ and Antichrist are locked in a sustained historical struggle and the Joachimist notion that the opening of each seal in Revelation inaugurates a specific period in church history, from the death of Christ to the End of Days. In Bale's framing, the struggle between Christ and Antichrist has an urgent historicity: it is specified to the period of the fourth and fifth seals, the era in which the Church falls into a worldliness from which it is soon to be violently redeemed.[13] Instead of Eusebius' unitary history of a Church occasionally challenged, Bale transmitted – to van der Noot, Foxe, and Spenser -- a history dualistic to the core, a history of two churches, the False having secured its long, but temporary ascendancy by virtue of its rapacious duplicity.

Bale began drafting the *Image* in 1541 in Antwerp, having fled England after his patron, Cromwell, fell out of favor; parts 1 and 2 of the Image were published in Antwerp in 1545; the expanded, three-part version was completed and published in London shortly after Bale's return to England in 1547. We could say that the *Theatre* and the *Image* were both multi-cultural books published in their final form in London; we might also speak of them as books written in London-Antwerp; we might most aptly speak of them as having been written in a Reformed Christendom, a northern regime not unlike that of Spenser's Legend of Justice, whose most eminent inhabitants – Marot, Foxe, Luther, Knox, and Calvin – were persistently itinerant, their linguistic errancy a fact of confessional life.[14]

The Reformation of the Image

An apparent paradox: van der Noot's sympathies with iconoclasm, his involvement with the notorious *Beeldenstorm* in the Low Countries, forced his flight to England; there he published a suite of books each of which concludes with contentious religious images. The paradox is perhaps only apparent, since iconoclasm and religious and ecclesiological art are locked together in sixteenth-century Reformation culture – witness the great *Allegory* (c. 1566) in which Marcus Gheeraerts, the artist most likely responsible for the

[13] The urgent historicity of Bale's understanding of Revelation, and the urgently institutional focus of his imagination becomes clear when one compares the *Image* to Augustine's *City of God*, which frames human history as a struggle between two cities: Bale's book is far less centered on individual moral and spiritual life, more concerned with the Church itself, and much urgently apocalyptic. For more on Bale's historiography, see Firth (1979: 42-55) and Bauckham (1978: 38-53).

[14] The bibliographic tether of Antwerp and London dates from the 1490s, when Antwerp began producing English books for export to England. Around 1526, when the tide of books began to include Reforming ones – including the second complete edition of Tyndale's New Testament – some effort was made to restrain the imports, but Protestant work came in as contraband.

images in van der Noot's three *Theatres*, celebrated both the exuberances and the spiritual complexities of a culture of iconoclasm.[15] A complex relation to the image had characterized–and sometimes unsettled—the Reformation since the 1520s. Andreas Karlstadt, Ulrich Zwingli, and especially Calvin took firm positions on the removal of painting and sculpture from places of Christian worship, whereas Luther argued that images must not be proscribed if they have devotional utility.[16] Luther developed a close association with Lucas Cranach, whose press at Wittenberg published some forty of Luther's works between 1520 and 1526. For the '*September Testament*', the first of the Luther Bibles, Cranach designed and executed his twenty-one woodcuts illustrating the Book of Revelation.

Images *in books* seem to have been generally tolerable. According to Christoph Walther, Lufft's press-corrector for many years, Luther insisted on a few principles for illustrating the Bible: that the figures should be large enough to be easily recognized, that marginal grotesquerie should be eliminated, and that the content of texts should be depicted in the simplest (*einfeltigst*) way possible.[17] But even this last and unsurprising principle of subordination of image to text is subverted in Luther's *Passionalbüchlein* of 1529, in which the brief texts of condensed bible stories merely supplement the fifty full-page woodcuts that organize the book.

Illustration thus found a place within the culture of the English printed Bible from the beginnings. There were counter-tides, of course. The Great Bible of 1539 is unillustrated (although its title page has an elaborate iconographic program) and the program of illustrations in the Geneva Bible (New Testament, 1557; complete Bible, 1560) is fairly austere in comparison to that of the Coverdale and Matthew Bibles. The approach to imagery in the Geneva Bible may well reflect a heightened iconophobia in the aftermath of the reign of Mary Tudor; Bishop Parkhurst's inclusion of 'bokes' among the material surfaces which were to be inspected and certified as image-free during the Norwich visitations of 1561 may reflect the same post-Marian vigilance, further braced by his experience of five years of Marian exile in Zürich.[18] Yet many of the committed Reformers who returned to England at the accession of Elizabeth brought with them, not a Calvinist iconoclasm, but an enriched experience of Protestant iconography, biblical, ecclesiastic, and, above all martyrological.

The experience of John Foxe is exemplary. He was in Strasbourg in 1554, when he completed his *Commentarii*, the first version of what would become the *Actes and Monuments*. Like the contemporary martyrologies of Jean Crespin, working in Geneva,

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[15] For searching accounts of iconoclasm see Koerner 2002 and 2004.

[16] See *WA*, 10:3, 30 and 32.

[17] *Von unterscheid der Deudschen Biblien und anderen Büchern*, 1563: B2v. Luther did not, finally, stand in the way of illustrations of God or the Trinity where they might serve explanatory purpose: his revised catechism of 1529 was illustrated by Cranach. Cranmer follows suit, though his catechism of 1548 is illustrated by Holbein.

[18] A similar scruple operated a few months later when the queen chastises Alexander Nowell, the dean of St. Paul's, for leaving at her customary seat, as a New Year's gift, a richly bound prayer-book, with illustrations tipped in next to various scriptural passages: 'You know I have an aversion to idolatry; to images and pictures of this kind. . . . Have you forgot our proclamation against images, pictures, and Romish relics in the churches?' (Strype 1824: I.i.409).

and Adriaan van Haemstede, in Emden, Foxe's Latin *Commentarii* was an austere unillustrated book; Rabus's vernacular *Historien der Heyligen* is distinguished by its program of illustrations. It is well-known that Rabus would borrow heavily from Foxe's book for the narratives of English Lollard martyrs that would appear in his third volume, but the influence was reciprocal, for Foxe's subsequent expansions on the *Commentarii* would take inspiration from Rabus' use of illustration. Nor was it an isolated vector of inspiration. While Ingram and Ashton have traced the images in *Actes and Monuments* to a few native English models, they have shown that the iconographic repertoire on which the program of illustrations in the *Actes and Monuments* depends was largely imported (1997: 66-142): the 1563 edition testifies to the fact that the Protestant ideologues who returned to England at the accession of Elizabeth were accompanied by an appreciable number of émigré craftsmen; the substantially enriched iconographic program of the 1570 edition testifies to the increased productive capacities made possible by the new influx of artists who fled the Low Countries in 1567 (Evenden 2008: 95-7). The same may be said of other productions of Day's press in the late 1560s, the richly illustrated *Bishops Bible* of 1568, Queen Elizabeth's Prayerbook (*Christian Prayers and Meditations*) and the *Theatre for Voluptuous Worldlings* of 1569: their iconophilia was at least partly nourished by a sudden transformation of a skilled labor market that Day, Bynneman, and their authors, the likes of Foxe and van Der Noot, had the media savvy to exploit.[19]

The Illustrations

Michael Bath has argued convincingly that the engravings in the Dutch and French *Theatre* volumes derive from the woodcuts and that the woodcuts for the first six images, those illustrating the epigrams taken from Marot's Petrarch, are based on a set of watercolours in a manuscript now housed at the University of Glasgow (SMM2).[20] The watercolourist has not been identified and there has been disagreement over the identity of the artists involved in the illustration of van der Noot's books – of the designer and the cutter of the woodcuts for *The Theatre*, if indeed there were two figures involved in producing these illustrations, and of the artist who produced the engravings for *Het Theatre* and *Le théatre*. While it has frequently been proposed that Lukas de Heere, a painter and poet who wrote one of the commendatory poems for *Het Theatre*, designed and perhaps executed the images, Bath aligned himself with a number of other scholars who believe that Marcus Gheeraerts at least designed the images.[21] Bath points out that

[19] For an account of Day's deep involvement in the production of illustrated books, and for the involvement of foreign craftsmen in the production of those books, see Hodnett (1982: 27-44).

[20] To summarize Bath's argument. The watercolours and woodcuts share many details that the engravings do not, so the watercolours and the woodcuts seem genetically related. The argument for the priority of the watercolours to the woodcuts is based on the fact that the images in the watercolours and in woodcuts are reversed in most instances, which is usually the case when prints are copied from paintings, whereas paintings copied from prints are seldom reversed. So the stemma seems to proceed from watercolour to woodcut to engraving (1988: 73–105).

[21] Luborsky, Van Dorsten, most vehemently, Friedland, and, most cautiously, Eager have

the design of the woodcuts shares several features with other series of images more securely attributed to Gheeraerts, and while Bath has nothing to say about whether Gheeraerts is likely to have cut the blocks for Bynneman's English *Theatre*, he does propose that the Gheeraerts executed the engravings for Day's Dutch and French volumes. The artist had arrived in London in the spring of 1568, having fled Bruges almost a year after van der Noot left Antwerp; if Bath's attribution and stemma of the images are correct, Gheeraerts would have designed (and perhaps cut) the woodcuts for Bynneman and executed the engravings for Day in about six months. He is likely then to have proceeded to work on the series of vivid woodcuts on the virtues and vices that illustrate Bateman's *Christall Glasse of Christian Reformation*, which issued from Day's press sometime in 1569. A few years later, van der Noot brought the *Theatre* woodcuts with him to Cologne, where they were used to illustrate a German translation of the *Theatre* published in 1572 and a bilingual French-German edition published in 1574, the latter now lost. The abridgement of the German translation changed the character of the book, reducing its vehemence by removing its anti-papal core.

Day and Bynneman deployed these images with considerable typographic grace. At the aesthetic core of the *Theatres* lie 21 openings containing the 22 poems and 20 illustrations – the single unillustrated opening contains the envoy to the sequence of Petrarchan epigrams and the prologue to the sequence of sonnets by Du Bellay – and the layout of the illustrated openings is such that the text block of the poems is of almost identical size to the illustrations. The illustrations have been placed on rectos, where they catch the eye first as one pages through the octavo, and the poems on the versos, a retrograde gloss on the image.[22]

With the exception of the illustration for the fourth epigram, the illustrations of the epigrams from Petrarch condense the imagery of two of the twelve watercolours in the Glasgow manuscript and thereby establish a structural norm for the imagery of *Theatre*, a bipartite structure of before and after in which ship, tree, deer, bird, lady, temple, obelisk, and triumphal arch appear in their fullness or pride and in a state of despair, ruin, or failure. These bipartite images are usually imbalanced, with the fulsome image dominant and the image of collapse squeezed into right-hand side or the background of the image. That bipartite norm established, the illustrations of unified competition are rendered more arresting in their ideality – the grove of *Epigrams* 4, Father Tiber in *Sonets* 7 – in their anguish – the wailing nymph of *Sonets* 8 and routed nymphs of *Sonets* 10 – or in the conclusive grandeur of the illustrations for the last five sonnets.

While the immediate models for the illustrations of the epigraphs from Petrarch have been established, no particular models for the illustrations to the Du Bellay poems have been identified. The iconographic components of these images were hardly mysterious: the iconography of Rome – Father Tiber with Romulus and Remus nursing at

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been the partisans of de Heere; besides Bath, Hind, Smit, Popham, and van Gelder (as consulted by Smit) regarded Gheeraerts as the most likely artist. Hodnett (1982: 38-40) regards the assignment of these illustrations to Gheeraerts as beyond question.

[22] This is also the pattern of the relationship of text and image in the two editions, Latin and German, of Dürer's folio *Apocalypse* (1498), although in the Latin edition the full text of the Vulgate faces the images and, in the German version, Dürer uses the Koberger translation.

the Roman Wolf at *Sonets* 7, Roma Victrix at *Sonets* 11 – was easily recognizable, and the images of Roman monumental culture – temple, obelisk, and arch at *Sonets* 2, 3, and 4 – were also familiar. But the illustrations for the four sonnets based on Revelations had a different kind of typicality: they very closely resemble four of the illustrations in the printed Bibles that had flourished since Luther's September Testament. Cranach's 21 woodcut illustrations of Revelation, augmented by five more illustrations for the 1530 Testament (and for subsequent Luther Bibles), constituted a kind of canon of apocalyptic illustration – all but the third and the seventh served as models for the tiny woodcuts that illustrate the 1545 edition of Bale's *Image of Both Churches*. A reader of one of the *Theatre* volumes who reached the woodcuts of engravings of the Whore of Babylon, the Horseman from whose mouth comes a sword, or the new Jerusalem would have arrived at images that, however strange in subject, had the closural force of biblical sanction and familiarity.

Because the artists who illustrated Reformation Bibles cleaved so closely to Cranach's designs, it is difficult to identify the particular models for the four final illustrations in the *Theatre*. The first of the four follows the design of Cranach's thirteenth Revelation woodcut, although the worshipper of the Beast who kneels in the left foreground of the *Theatre* image is more recognizably episcopal than in Cranach's version. In this regard the artist may seem to be taking some influence from Cranach's own model, the comparable twelfth woodcut in Dürer's fifteen-image *Apocalypse* of 1498, or from one of the other followers of Cranach who had recourse to Cranach's model. Dürer's influence may be felt in the final woodcut as well: just as Dürer had relinquished the compositional turbulence of his earlier images for the lucid rendering of the heavenly city in his final illustration, so the illustrator of the *Theatre* concludes with St. John gazing on an even more open, foursquare model of urban design, an angel more schoolmasterly than hierophanic at his side. Both of these features – the insistence that it is churchmen who worship the Beast and the rectilinear order of the heavenly city – are also distinctive features of the woodcuts in Hans Sebald Beham's *Typi in Apocalypsi Joannis* (Frankfurt, 1539), a much-reprinted set of images that had fairly wide-ranging influence. The *Theatre* illustrator seems to have taken the image of Faithful and True in the penultimate image, either directly or indirectly, from Beham; unlike Cranach and most of his followers, Beham (and Hans Burgkmair before him) takes the occasion to render the detail of the sharp sword issuing from the rider's mouth (Rev 19.15) and the Theatre illustrator does so as well, while generally reinvigorating Beham's oddly static composition. It may be observed that the illustrator is perhaps more responsive to the resources of the pictorial tradition in which he is working – and his biblical source in general -- than to the poems he is illustrating: van der Noot's poem makes no mention of the oral sword, nor does the first of the apocalyptic sonnets mention the woman clothed with the sun (Rev 12.1), yet the illustrator has squeezed her into the upper right corner of the image, thus managing to gather together the most impressive features of both the eleventh and twelfth images in the 1522 Cranach canon.[23] The illustrations return the

[23] The upper portion of the image for the first of these sonnets is in fact crowded with details from Rev 12: not only the woman clothed in the sun (12.1-2), but also God's rescue of her newborn child from the ravening dragon (12.4-5), and the beginnings of the angelic attack on the dragon (12.7). The accompanying poem makes no mention of these narrative details.

reader to a rich, familiar iconographic culture, a culture to which the poems only allude.

According to the scholarly tradition initiated by Herford, the *Theatre* might be taken as the first English emblem book.[24] The case has been a strained one, for the images in the emblem tradition are usually mysterious, sometimes even esoteric, whereas the plangent illustrations in the *Theatre* have very little of the tang of mystery, of complex truths on tantalizing display. (The final, apocalyptic images are no exception, really: the illustrator of the *Theatre* would have had warrant to inscribe the very name of Mystery on the forehead of the woman throned on the Beast, but to have done so would have broken aggressively with the Luther-Cranach tradition of illustration, and, as we have seen, the sequence of images in fact entails a process of familiarization.) Emblem texts seldom take the form of narrative, as the poems of the *Theatre* do, nor do the images in emblem books serve the merely illustrative function of those in the *Theatre*, which simply articulate a stage or two of the narrative laid out in their companion poem. Only in a very casual sense, by featuring twenty openings that pair discrete texts and discrete images, does the *Theatre* resemble the work of Alciati or Whitney; its more intimate kinship is with the ambitious illustrated books moving through the godly press at this time, the Bishops Bible and *Actes and Monuments*. Indeed, van der Noot, and Spenser, might properly imagine the *Theatre* as a kind of complement to these complementary, if more consequential, undertakings in scholarship, design, and Reform.

Spenser and the *Theatre*

If Spenser had the image of Faithful and True before him, he might well have shaken his head over van der Noot's failure to seize the opportunity that the illustration and the biblical text behind it afforded, the occasion to imagine the fierce potency of the apocalyptic word. At the key juncture, the French poem before him is disappointing—*La parolle de Dieu rendoit son nom exquis* (D4v)—and Spenser translates it with faithful blandness: 'The worde of God made him a noble name' (*Son*. 14.4). We must assume either that van der Noot's Dutch original was unavailable, or beyond Spenser's grasp, or that it never occurred to him to probe the Dutch text that stands behind the French poems he had been given to translate: his version shows no trace of van der Noot's much racier description, '*Een scherpsnydende sweert quam wt synen mont bouwe*' (A sharp-edged sword came from his fearless mouth; C4v; *ed. trans.*), nor does his poem capture any of the conclusion of the Dutch original which distinguishes from the fate of the Beast and its prophets the fate of the kings who fought for the Beast (the French version having simply dropped it):[25]

En d'ander sijn gedoot deur syns monts sweerts scherp snijden

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[24] Herford (1886: 369) followed by de Vries (1916: 193), Selig (1955: 600), etc. Crewe refers to the illustrations, without hesitation, as 'emblems' (1986: 95).

[25] Forster supposes Spenser to have translated van der Noot's apocalyptic sonnets, not from the French, but from a draft translation that, he suggests, Roest had prepared, working from van der Noot's Dutch original (1967: 33). Given that the discrepancies between Spenser's poem and van der Noot's Dutch correspond to similar discrepancies between van der Noot's Dutch and the French version (most likely produced by van der Noot himself), Forster's hypothesis seems unpersuasive.

> *En de vogelen syn versayt van heur vleesch t' eten.*
>
> (And the other [i.e., the army of the kings) is slain by the cut of his mouth's sharp sword
> And the birds sate themselves on them, devouring their flesh; C4v; *ed. trans.*)

Spenser seems to have translated, not from manuscript, but from a printed copy of *Le Théatre*. In the tenth sonnet he gives us 'a naked rout of Faunes' (*Son*. 10.11) in an attempt to translate an uncorrected misprint in *Le Théatre*, the phrase 'de faunes nue suyte' (C8v), which should read 'de faunes une suyte'. (When he later revised these translations, Spenser must have had recourse to a better copy of Du Bellay, for he corrected his error.) That he was translating from printed copy does not require that he had the images before him – the copperplate illustrations for *Le Théatre* would have been printed separately from the letterpress printing, and Spenser could have been given imageless sheets from which to work – but whether he was given sheets with engravings or sheets left blank for later printing with engravings, the recruitment of an engraver and the printing of the French poems sets the *terminus ab quo* for Spenser's labor, presumably sometime after Gheeraerts arrival in England in the spring of 1568.[26] Spenser could easily have taken his draft translations with him when he moved to Cambridge in April the following year, but he is more likely to have completed his commission before he left – and before 25 May 1569, the date attached to the English version of the dedicatory epistle which had carried, in the French original, the date of 28 October 1568. So it took Spenser no more than a year to prepare these translations – and, most likely, he prepared them between October of 1568 and April of 1569.

To explain why someone like Spenser was recruited for the task in the first place, we must suppose that neither van der Noot nor Roest was capable of translating French verse into English, and that it seemed foolish to attempt to translate from the Dutch renderings of Du Bellay and of Marot's Petrarch. (Roest translated the *Epistle* and *Commentary* from Dutch, but seems to have had no competence in French; van der Noot's French was quite good, but the enlistment of Roest suggests that van der Noot's English was inadequate to the task.) It has long been supposed that van der Noot found his way to Spenser by way of van der Noot's prosperous, well-connected cousin, Emmanuel van Meteren, who had been living in London since 1550 and counted among his friends and associates Abraham Ortelius, Jacobus Acontius, Adriaan van Haemstede, Joris Hoefnagel, Lucas de Heere, and such Englishmen as Daniel Rogers, the poet and diplomat, and Richard Mulcaster, headmaster at Merchant Taylors' School. Rogers would have been ideal, for his French was excellent and he had strong connections with members of the Pléiade, but his commitments as a poet were to Latin and, moreover, he was living in Paris when van der Noot arrived in England. The educator, Mulcaster, could have pointed van Meteren's cousin to his student Spenser.

If Spenser knew anything of the ideas about literary practice that would feature in his headmaster's later writings on education, Mulcaster's recommendation would have been especially flattering. Mulcaster had the humanist educator's usual interest in

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[26] Since the printing of engravings requires a rolling press, almost certainly not part of Day's battery of equipment, the text and images for the Dutch and French *Theatre* volumes would have been printed separately, although we have not established priority.

developing his pupils' skills in the classical languages, and quite an unusual interest in developing their use of English: the most distinguished scholar in Spenser's academic cohort was Lancelot Andrewes, perhaps the greatest preacher in Spenser's generation and the mastermind behind the King James translation of the Bible. So Mulcaster would not have taken English translation lightly. Moreover, Renwick argues convincingly that Mulcaster's ideas about the cultivation of English entail the direct influence of Du Bellay's *Deffence et illustration de la langue francoyse*; again, if Spenser were aware of Mulcaster's admiration for Du Bellay, then the commission to translate Du Bellay would have had special piquancy. And while the assignment might have struck Spenser as having the honorific tincture of a valedictorian's graduation exercise, it would surely have seemed much more than an academic undertaking, for his headmaster had introduced the teenaged scholar to a bustling community of cultural activists. Van der Noot – the glamorous, perhaps self-important emigré, the poet-polemicist-politician who adumbrates the figure who would mean so much to Spenser a decade later, Philip Sidney; Gheeraerts, as one of the few engravers working in London, effectively a pioneer of a new medium; Day and Bynneman, ideologically committed to a godly press, and, especially in Day's case, cunningly professional in the pursuit of commercial advantage. These ambitious men had offered him the challenge of Petrarch, Marot, Du Bellay, and the visionary John.

There are satisfying signs of Spenser's scholarly engagement. As he worked through the first sequence, Spenser seems to have clarified uncertainties about his French source by glancing at the Italian that stands behind it. Yet like the others on the production team for the three *Theatres*, Spenser's work here can sometimes be disappointingly mechanical. Translating the apocalyptic sonnets, he does not consult his own knowledge of the biblical source when his French original departs from it: thus, when the French version of the first apocalyptic sonnet mistranslates the account of the appearance of the beast *wt de eerde*, describing it as a beast *de Mer*, Spenser perpetuates the error in his French original. When he is confounded by lexical difficulties in his original, as when the French version of the second apocalyptic sonnet employs the slightly recondite *migrainne* (a term for a less-than-rich scarlet), Spenser settles for 'orenge' (*Son*. 13.2) instead of recurring to what he presumably knows of the biblical source, with its woman clothed in purple and scarlet (Rev 17.4).

The scholar-poet John Hollander once warmly celebrated a line in Spenser's translation of the fourth of the Petrarch-Marot epigrams (1988: 173-4). The poem describes a secluded *locus amoenus*, the first of many secret bowers and springs to which Spenser's poetry will withdraw

> Within this woold, out of the rocke did rise
> A Spring of water mildely romblyng downe
> Whereto approched not in any wise
> The homely Shepherde, nor the ruder cloune,
> But many Muses, and the Nymphes withall,
> That swetely in accorde did tune their voice
> Unto the gentle sounding of the waters fall.
> (*Epigr*. 4.1-7)

Hollander noted the last of these lines with special pleasure. He observed that the line initiates Spenser's recurrent attention to song that is both nourished (and sometimes tainted) by its imitative accord with the gush of falling water. He also noticed that the line violates this poem's pentameter norm. The last line of the stanza Spenser devised for *The Faerie Queene* is similarly attenuated – softened or lingered, satisfied or worried: Hollander supposed that here in one of 'Spenser's' first, but unattributed published poems, the young poet stumbled upon an effect that would become one of his signatures.

Stumbled upon: Hollander did not put it this way, but there is a degree of stumbling, although not perhaps an uncharacteristic clumsiness. Some of the rhyming – 'in any wise', 'withall' -- is mere convenience and the padding in these lines weakens one's confidence that the effect Hollander celebrates appears before us as something more than an accident. The uncertain good fortune of this seventh line haunts and graces virtually all the poems of the *Theatre*. Spenser accepts the constraints of the douzaines that Marot had adopted, save in the first and third of the epigrams, in which Spenser turns to the sonnet. This may very well be an achievement rather than a failure to meet the terms of Marot's metrical contract: to make a sonnet of Marot's douzaine on the 'fresh and lusty Laurell tree' (*Epigr*. 3.2) might be an homage, a way of forging Petrarch's own signature form, and the same may be said of the decision to open the sequence with a sonnet – yet the concluding couplet of that initial poem is so ham-fisted as to reduce any homage, if it be homage, to failed compliment:

> Cruel death vanquishing so noble beautie,
> Oft makes me waile so harde a destinie.
> (*Epigr*. 1.13-14)

When Spenser turns to Du Bellay and van der Noot, to translating sonnets *as* sonnets, he chooses not to rhyme, a technical decision arguably daring or arguably desperate.[27] There is good reason to eschew rhyme in trying to translate rhymed French (or Italian) into English, for the morphology of the source language makes rhyming quite easy and, therefore, a matter of easily sustained euphony, whereas rhyme in English is difficult – hence Keats's famous observations on the ways in which rhyme fetters the sonnet: 'the legitimate [sonnet form] does not suit the language well, from the pouncing rhymes'.[28] Having set aside rhyme, Spenser manages to capture some of Du Bellay's gravity, the dampened surges of muted fear and the small ritardandi of awe. The rhythms of admiration are themselves admirable –

> On hill, a frame an hundred cubites hie
> I sawe, an hundred pillers eke about

[27] These are not the first blank verse sonnets in English, although it is difficult to have confidence that he had seen the blank verse sonnet that Thomas Jeney had written as a commendatory poem to a collection of translations from Ronsard published in Paris the year before. See Peter Ronsard [sic], *A Discours of the Present Troobles in Fraunce* (Paris [with a false imprint of 'Andwerpe', 1568), reprinted as Appendix I in van Dorsten (1970: 93).

[28] I refer here, both to Keats' sonnet 'If by dull rhymes' and to his letter of 3 May 1819 to George and Georgianna Keats.

(*Son*. 2.1-2)

as is the vocalic effect at the line break–*hie / I*—which perhaps stumbles upon a visionary patience that both contributes to and transforms the visionary tradition as it descends from John to Petrarch to Du Bellay. Yet 'eke about' is regrettable. Unburdened of the pounce of compulsory rhyme, Spenser allows himself some easier half-rhymes in what follows, and he handles the line break with a variety which he will seldom attain in his later verse

> But shining Christall, which from top to base
> Out of deepe vaute threw forth a thousand rayes
> Upon an hundred steps of purest golde.
> Golde was the parget: and the sielyng eke
> Did shine all scaly with fine golden plates.
> (*Son*. 2.6-10)

After the compact profundity of 'deepe vaute', the stair-steps are an achievement, recovering regularity without monotony. Familiar Spenserian poetic habits take shape here, firming up the attribution of these translations to the young man who would become 'Immerito' and then 'Spenser': the use of 'golde / Golde' at the border of octave and sestet anticipates the many devices that Spenser will invent both to mark and bridge units within his larger prosodic forms. But 'golde / Golde . . . / golden': the limited palette is dictated by his source (and Spenser has restrained Du Bellay's egregious *dorez du plus fin or d'Afrique* ['gilded with finest gold of Africa'; B8v]), yet it must be conceded that Spenser's later achievement involves acceptance—his acceptance and ours—of just such a narrowed vocabulary. And the padding of 'sielyng eke' is also a habit, and cannot be explained away–as it sometimes is explained away in Spenser's verse from *The Shepheardes Calender* and after–as an imitation or embrace of rusticity. The excuse of rusticity is unavailable to the translator of Du Bellay.

These poems augur a complex future–of poems that claim their authority on the basis of the vision they can report and that derive at least some of their affective power from the fragility of those visions, of literary activity fervently ambitious for spiritual renewal, of anti-Catholic zeal, of poems bound to images and to scholarly commentary, of a biblio-graphic imaginative life in which smaller literary units energize and are energized by the larger printed composites into which they are inserted. Subtending all this is what might be called the predicament of willing service: that Spenser's (or 'Spenser's') condition and habit would be an ambition to write in others' stead, as Immerito and Colin Clout, as Lord Grey (when he writes on this employer's behalf), as various Muses, or Clorinda, or Chaucer. This predicament begins in counterfeiting, in English, the visions of Marot, Petrarch, Du Bellay, John of the Apocalypse, and Jan van der Noot.

Appendix: **The Structure of Van der Noot's Commentary**

The bulk of the *Theatre* is an attack, in prose, on the Roman church. Van der Noot's

conceit is to mount the attack within the loose structure of a commentary on the visionary poems that precede this much larger prose section. After a brief introduction, in which he explains the symbolism of the *Epigrams* and *Sonets* derived from Petrarch and Du Bellay, van der Noot turns his attention to the four final sonnets, those based on chapters 12-13, 17-19, and 21-2 of Revelation, but as he turns to the apocalyptic sonnets, the pretense that he is explaining a set of poems recedes and commentary gives way to prophetic denunciation of papal, curial, and monastic abuse.

Our selection is a slightly abridged version of the introductory pages of van der Noot's prose and of that portion of the anti-Catholic polemic organized around the imagery of the first of the four apocalyptic sonnets. The full text of the *Commentary* is available at [URL].

Van der Noot's *Commentary*: Outline

Introduction ll. 1-338
- [*available in the printed edition*]
  - The restless ambition to change social station
  - The transitory character of worldly things, which wise Christians will avoid (*abridged*)
  - On human error and its three causes: greed, lust, and ambition
  - The poems chosen to give a lively illustration of the vanity and inconstancy of worldly things

Commentary on Epigrams and Sonets ll. 339-491
- [*available in the printed edition*]
  - On Petrarch's visions
  - On Du Bellay's Roman visions

Commentary on Revelation and the Apocalyptic Sonnets ll. 492-3289
- [*selection available in the printed edition*]
  - On the decline of Rome; signs of corruption in the Early Church (*abridged*)
  - The Beast from the sea
    - Its ten crowns: Roman church sovereignty
    - Its ten horns: the falsehoods of the Roman church
    - The names of Blasphemy: titles and rules of the Roman church
    - Leopard, Lion, and Bear: the Roman Church as a summation of wicked kingdoms

      [*end of printed selections*]
    - The Dragon's gifts to the Beast: the infernal analogues to God and Christ
    - Wounding the Beast: the Reformation
    - The wounds healed: failures of Reform
    - The continued charisma of the Roman church
    - Roman cultishness

Modern oppressors of the True Church; their eventual punishment

The Beast from the Earth
- Its horns like the Lamb's: the tradition of imposture and false prophecy
- Modern idolatry, willing and compulsory
- Enlisting modern monarchs in support of Roman idolatry
- Numbering the Beast: the obligation to see through Roman imposture

The Woman on the scarlet Beast
- On corrupt magistracy
- Van der Noot's apology for his own magistracy
- The attributes of the scarlet Beast
- The Woman's robes, cup, and name
- The intoxicated blindness of the adherents to the Roman church
- The disgust of those no longer deceived by the whorish church
- Divine inspiration for Reforming violence against the whorish church
- The abhominations of the Roman church call forth Reforming violence
- Secular rulers and the Roman church have joined forces in cruelty against the righteous
- The violence of revenge multiplies the violence of the whorish church
- The complacency of the Woman
- The lamentations of the adherents of the whorish church; the Woman repudiated by people of all stations

Faithful and True on the white Horse
- The manhood of Christ
- The warriors of Christ; their weapons
- Injunctions to the righteous in the days of vengeance
- Eating the flesh of the wicked
- Religious violence in northern Europe
- True chastity
- The Beast, the false prophet, and their adherents cast down

The heavenly Jerusalem
- First heaven and first earth wiped away
- The newness, cleanliness, and peace of the new Jerusalem
- The design of the heavenly City
- The precious materials from which the walls and the twelve foundations of the new City will be built
- The City's River, the Tree of life beside it, and the healing leaves of the Tree.

Conclusion

The persecutions of those that seek the heavenly Jerusalem
How the righteous are perverted
The Infernal Begats: descendants of the Devil
The animosity between the adherents of Christ and those of the Devil
Exhortation to take up the armor of light
Righteous marriage, service, and mastership
Patience, vigilance, philosophical self-restraint

[Expanded version of 'The Reformation of the Image']

An apparent paradox: van der Noot's sympathies with iconoclasm, his involvement with the notorious *Beeldenstorm* in the Low Countries, forced his flight to England; there he published a suite of books featuring contentious religious images. The paradox is perhaps only apparent, since iconoclasm and religious and ecclesiological art are locked together in sixteenth-century Reformation culture – witness the great *Allegory* (c. 1566) in which Marcus Gheeraerts, the artist most likely responsible for the images in van der Noot's three *Theatre*s, celebrated the exuberances of a culture of iconoclasm. A complex relation to the image had characterized – and sometimes unsettled – the Reformation since the 1520s.

Protestantism had an undeniable affinity with iconoclasm: many reformers adopted a principled commitment to the ban in the Hebrew Bible on the worship of graven images and that commitment reinforced and was reinforced by similarly renewed commitments to the New Testament ethic of poverty; both of these principled positions were braced by popular resentment of the wealth of the clergy. Influential thinkers such as Karlstadt, Zwingli, and especially Calvin took firm positions on the removal of painting and sculpture from places of Christian worship. Andreas Karlstadt became the first important ideologue of Reformation iconoclasm early in 1522, when, exploiting his position as chancellor of Wittenberg, he persuaded the municipal council to ban the use of images in churches; three days later, he published a treatise, *On the Removal of Images* (*Vom Abtuhung der Bilder*), protesting the sluggishness with which the ban had been executed. Although Luther was Karlstadt's colleague at the university in Wittenberg and the two had been together threatened with excommunication in *Exsurge domine* (1520), the Wittenberg iconoclasm set them on separate paths. In cautious retreat at Wartburg Castle, Luther held aloof from the Wittenberg campaign, as he would from all later instances of iconoclasm. In the fourth of the Lenten sermons he delivered upon his return to Wittenberg, he is meticulously restrained, insisting that images ought to be abolished only if they are going to be worshipped, and going on to stipulate that their use must not be proscribed if they have devotional utility (*Und sonderlich von den Bildern hab ich am nehsten also gered, das man sie solle abthun, wenn sie angebet, sonst mag man sie wol leiden . . . dannocht künden wir das nit verdammen und sollens auch nit verdammen, das noch ein mensch irgent kan wol brauchen*; *WA*, 10:3, 30 and 32). Indeed, he was more than merely tolerant of religious imagery: during the 1520s, he

developed a close association with Lucas Cranach, whose press at Wittenberg published some forty of Luther's works between 1520 and 1526. While Luther translated the New Testament into German, Cranach designed and executed his own contribution to this, the first of the Luther bibles – twenty-one woodcuts illustrating the Book of Revelation. Seven months after the publication of Karlstadt's *Removal of Images*, the apocalyptic imagery of the '*September Testament*' claims the image as a central prop to Reformation piety.

For many, Luther's condition that images were to be tolerated as long as they were not to be worshipped was a stipulation not to be taken lightly. Foxe quotes Stephen Gardiner's self-consciously Lutheran defenses of images at length in *Actes and Monuments*, but treats those defenses with derisive scorn.[29] For Gardiner, as for Luther, when an image 'worketh a godly remembraunce in us, by representacion of the thinge signifyed unto us, then we use it worshipfully and honorably, as many do the priest, at mas, whom they little regarde all the day after', but for Foxe the comparison of image to priest betrays the argument: it is, simply, 'one idoll well compared with an other' (Foxe, *Actes*, 1563: XX4v). Foxe goes on to quote Protector Somerset's response to Gardiner, a defense of firm iconoclasm; Somerset was one of Foxe's heroes and Foxe encumbers none of Somerset's response with the sort of hectoring marginalia with which he trammels Gardiner's defense of religious images.[30] Another apparent paradox, then, for *Actes and Monuments* is itself a book notoriously reliant on illustration – 53 woodcuts in the first edition of 1563, 105 in the second (many of them appearing more than once in the book), most of them images of the depredations of papistry and of the torments of the Marian martyrs.[31] In the second edition, the ninth book, on the reign of Edward VI, is introduced with a woodcut showing the papists sent packing, while their images are fed to the flames: what warrants the iconophobe's unabashed commitment to illustration?[32]

Images *in books* seem to have been generally tolerable. The September Testament of Luther and Cranach had joined a tradition of German-language bibles printed with woodcut illustrations (and was quite obviously affiliated with Dürer's great illustrated folio *Apocalypse*), but challenges to biblical illustration from the Karlstad flank would

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[29] For Gardiner's appeal to the authority of Luther, see Foxe, *Actes*, 1563: TT5r and XX4r.

[30] Somerset defends secular imagery – coinage, coats of arms, royal portraiture – and concedes that religious images are not constitutively corrupt, but he insists that they are more likely to be venerated or to be misconstrued than sacred writ and that their wholesale removal is therefore prudent (Foxe, *Actes*, 1563: TT5v-6r).

[31] According to Evenden and Freeman, 'None of the physical aspects of the book are more important or more conspicuous than the scores of woodcut illustrations that accompanied the text of each edition' (2011: 186). For sustained discussions of the tactics of illustration in Foxe, see King, Chapter 3, 'Viewing the Pictures,' (2006: 162-242), and Aston and Ingram, 'The Iconography of the *Acts and Monuments*' (1997: 66-142). Ashton and Ingram shrewdly quote the Jesuit Robert Parsons's iconophobic strictures on Foxe's book, his charge that its 'fayre pictures and painted pageants . . . delighteth many to gaze on, who cannot read' (1997: 70).

[32] A far richer, and more richly ambivalent, depiction of iconoclasm may be found in the *Allegory of Iconoclasm* usually attributed to Marcus Gheeraerts, the Flemish exile long thought to have provided the engravings for *Het Theatre*.

nonetheless occasionally erupt in circumstances of special rigor – as, for example, when Bishop Parkhurst prepared interrogatories for a visitation at Norwich in 1561. Parkhurst instructed the visitants to inquire 'Whether al aulters, images, holiwater stones, pictures, paintings, as of Thassumption of the blessed virgin, of the descending of Christ into the virgin in the fourme of a lytle boy at Thanunciacion of the Aungell, and al other supersticious and dangerous monuments especiallie paintings & Imagies in walle, boke, cope, Banner or els where, of the blessed trinitie or of the father (of whom ther can be no Image made) be defaced and remoued out of the churche and other places and are destroyed' (*Iniunctions exhibited by Iohn by gods sufferance Bishop of Norwich in his first visitacion*, 1561: B2r-B2v). It will be noticed that 'Imagies' in books go unmentioned in the opening list of altars, fonts, and other church decorations, although they are adduced in the concluding list – and the context of wall, banner, and cope suggests that the books here proscribed are pulpit bibles, the contribution of book illustration to a culture of spectacular worship. Similarly, although Parkhurst expresses passing concern with 'other places', his scruples are principally oriented to the purification of the church environment. The goal of iconoclasm was to remove the visual apparatus of cult, hence the terms of Edward VI's injunctions, on the occasion of his visitations of 1547, in which he called for the destruction of 'all shrines, coveringe of shrines, all tables, candlestickes, tryndilles or rolles of waxe, pictures, payntynges, and all other monumentes of fayned miracles, pilgremages, Idolatry, and supersticion'.[33] But Edward does not proceed to Parkhurst's afterthought; his proscriptions do not to extend to book-illustration.

He does, however, proscribe certain subjects of illustration. The banning of illustrations of the Annunciation and Assumption is plainly intended to disable veneration of the Virgin Mary. The ban on representation of the Trinity seems differently motivated, not only an insistence on the ineffability of divinity, but also an effort to guard against reductive treatment of what remained a theological difficulty, despite the Protestant will to theological plainness. It has been alleged that Luther himself made distinctions between allowable subjects of illustration, that, for example, he scrupled over illustrations for the September Testament, allowing them only for Revelation, and only because, doubting its canonicity, he regarded it as somehow non-biblical and therefore available for illustration.[34] Yet in the very next year, his translation of the Pentateuch was printed in Wittenberg, with eleven woodcut images; in 1524, his translation of the books from Joshua to Esther appeared, with 23 illustrations; and as he proceeded with the rest of his translation, so the work of illustration continued until, in 1534, the translation issued from the press of Hans Lufft with 124 illustrations. According to Christoph Walther, Lufft's press-corrector for many years, Luther insisted on a few principles for illustrating the bible, none of them specific to topic: that the figures should be large enough to be easily

[33] *Injunccions geven by the most excellent prince, Edwarde the Sixte*, 1547, STC 10089, c2v. The king also anticipates Parkhurst's concern with 'other places', enjoining the clergy to 'exhorte all their parishioners, to doo the lyke within their severall houses' (c2v-c3r). As David Davis points out, English reformers inherit a Lollard tradition of iconoclasm that focused less on the fact of representation than on a gaudiness that induced idolatrous affect; most book illustration obviously lies outside this focus (2013: 49-50).

[34] See Edwards, 1994: 113 and 122-3.

recognized, that marginal grotesquerie should be eliminated, and that the content of texts should be depicted in the simplest (*einfeltigst*) way possible.[35] But even this last and unsurprising principle of subordination of image to text is subverted in Luther's *Passionalbüchlein* of 1529, in which the brief texts of condensed bible stories merely supplement the fifty full-page woodcuts that organize the book. This 'picture bible', a Protestant appropriation of the traditions of the *Biblia pauperum*, resists iconophobia on the grounds that the disciplined religious image can serve as a bible of the illiterate. This attitude to the biblical image was widely, if cautiously diffused. Thus, in his 1538 injunctions for York Diocese, Archbishop Edward Lee concedes that visual images are 'as the book to them that cannot read in other books', and he therefore enjoins the clergy to instruct their charges in the right use of images, which should 'be suffered only as books, by which our hearts may be kindled to follow the holy steps and examples of the saints represented by the same.' Whether because of a credulity attributed to the unlettered, or because of a special power attributed to images, Lee stipulates that the response to the depicted must be tamed, so that they have no more affective power over the unlettered than the written has over the literate: 'as we do not worship our book when we have the saints' life, so likewise, we shall not worship the images' (VAI 1910: II.48).[36]

Tyndale, very much Luther's protegé, embraced the use of illustration in bible publications. His English New Testament, printed in Worms, appeared in 1526 with 12 woodcut illustrations. A decade later, Coverdale's complete English Bible is even more richly committed to illustration, with 158 woodcuts, many of which are recycled in the Matthew Bible of 1537. Both of these issued from printing houses in Antwerp, and most of their woodcuts are copies from those of a picture bible produced in Frankfurt in 1534. Illustration thus found a place within the culture of the English printed Bible from the beginnings. There were counter-tides, of course. The Great Bible of 1539 is unillustrated (although its title page has an elaborate iconographic program) and the program of illustrations in the Geneva Bible (New Testament, 1557; complete Bible, 1560) is fairly austere in comparison to those of the Coverdale and Matthew Bibles. The approach to imagery in the Geneva Bible may well reflect a heightened iconophobia in the aftermath of the reign of Mary Tudor; Bishop Parkhurst's inclusion of 'bokes' among the material surfaces which were to be inspected and certified as image-free during the Norwich visitations of 1561 may reflect the same post-Marian vigilance, further braced by his experience of five years of Marian exile in Zürich.[37] Yet many of the committed

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[35] *Von unterscheid der Deudschen Biblien und anderen Büchern*, 1563: B2v. Luther did not, finally, stand in the way of illustrations of God or the Trinity where they might serve explanatory purpose: his revised catechism of 1529 was illustrated by Cranach. Cranmer follows suit, though his catechism of 1548 is illustrated by Holbein.

[36] The issue remained controversial, of course. In Leo Jud's Short Catechism of 1541, published in an English translation nine years later, the catechist tests the depth of his charge's commitment to the ban on graven images: 'May we not bring the children and unlearned to God through images?' to which the catechumen is to reply 'In no wise. For images draw men from God and cause them to forget him' (cited in Dyrness 2004: 91).

[37] A similar scruple operated a few months later when the queen chastises Alexander Nowell, the dean of St. Paul's, for leaving at her customary seat, as a New Year's gift, a richly bound prayer-book, with illustrations tipped in next to various scriptural passages:

Reformers who returned to England at the accession of Elizabeth, brought with them, not a Calvinist iconoclasm, but an enriched experience of Protestant iconography, biblical, ecclesiastic, and, above all martyrological.

The experience of John Foxe is exemplary. Foxe was in Strasbourg in 1554, when his *Commentarii*, the first version of what would become the *Actes and Monuments*, went through the press of Wendelin Rihel; shortly thereafter, and probably before the *Commentarii* was completed, Rihel's son-in-law Samuel Emmel began presswork on the second volume of the eight-volume Protestant martyrology of Ludwig Rabus. Like the contemporary martyrologies of Jean Crespin, working in Geneva, and Adriaan van Haemstede, in Emden, Foxe's Latin *Commentarii* was an austere unillustrated book; Rabus' vernacular *Historien der Heyligen* is distinguished by its program of illustrations. It is well-known that Rabus would borrow heavily from Foxe's book for the narratives of English Lollard martyrs that would appear in his third volume, but the influence was reciprocal, for Foxe's subsequent expansion on the *Commentarii* would take inspiration from Rabus' use of illustration. Foxe prepared the expanded martyrology, the *Rerum*, in Basel, in the printing-house of Johannes Oporinus where, together with John Bale, he served as a press-corrector. An ex-professor, Oporinus had a reputation as a producer of scholarly books, many of them strenuously Protestant: Foxe and Bale were no doubt involved in the production of the first of the *Magdeburg Centuries*, the thirteen-volume Protestant church history by Matthias Flacius that resonates so strongly with Foxe's and Bale's historiographic interests. But the *Magdeburg Centuries* are only the second most influential publication to issue from Oporinus' press: it was Vesalius' *Fabrica* that secured Oporinus' reputation as one of Europe's most important publishers of illustrated books. The *Fabrica* was going through its second edition when Foxe arrived in Basel, and if its concerns pull in different directions than those of the English martyrologist, its poignant attention to the visibilia of human corporeality would leave its mark on the *Actes and Monuments*.

Yet neither Foxe's experiences in Strasbourg or Basel, nor the earlier productions of John Day, who published the *Actes and Monuments*, can quite explain the depth of its investment in illustrations. While Ingram and Ashton have traced the images to a few native English models, they have pointed to a much more considerable range of continental ones – to anti-papal satiric prints, especially Cranach's *Passional Christi und Antichristi*; and to even pre-Reformation martyrological prints by Cranach, Dürer, and others (1997: 66-142). The technical and iconographic repertoire on which the program of illustrations in the *Actes and Monuments* depends was largely imported: the 1563 edition testifies to the fact that the Protestant ideologues who returned to England at the accession of Elizabeth were accompanied by an appreciable number of émigré craftsmen; the very substantially enriched iconographic program of the 1570 edition testifies to the increased productive capacities made possible by the new influx of artists who fled the Low Countries in 1567. The same may be said of other productions of John Day's press in the late 1560s, the richly illustrated *Bishops Bible* of 1568, Queen Elizabeth's Prayerbook (*Christian Prayers and Meditations*) or the *Theatre for Voluptuous Worldlings* of 1569: their iconophilia was at least partly nourished by a sudden

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'You know I have an aversion to idolatry; to images and pictures of this kind. . . . Have you forgot our proclamation against images, pictures, and Romish relics in the churches?' (Strype 1824: I.i.409).

transformation of a skilled labor market that Day, Bynneman, and their authors, the likes of Foxe and van Der Noot, had the media savvy to exploit.[38]

[38] For an account of Day's deep involvement in the production of illustrated books, and for the involvement of foreign craftsmen in the production of those books, see Hodnett (1982: 27-44).