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Holy and Profane Love in Sylvia Townsend Warner's *Mr Fortune Fictions*

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Abstract

Focussing on *Mr Fortune's Maggot* and 'The Salutation', the essay argues that dialogues with Platonic philosophy and Pauline theology are finely threaded through Warner's fictions. It suggests that Warner strips the ideas of *agape* and *eros* of their divine pretensions, confines them to the earth, and sees them in a profane light.

Keywords Warner, *Mr Fortune's Maggot*, 'The Salutation', *agape*, *eros*, Plato

Contemporary reviewers failed to realise that Sylvia Townsend Warner's novel *The True Heart* (1929) was a reworking of the Cupid and Psyche myth, as told in the *Asinus Aureus* (c. 160 AD) of Apuleius. The Platonist philosopher's allegory, originally inspired by the philosophy of love expounded in Plato's *Symposium* (c. 385–370 BCE), was reimaged by Warner as a Victorian marriage plot set in the south of England. In her 1978 preface to the novel, Warner noted that her modern 'disguises' of the Apuleian characters had been 'so efficient that no reviewer saw what [she] was up to'.¹ Two works written either side of the novel, *Mr Fortune's Maggot* (1927) and 'The Salutation' (1932), have unfortunately suffered a similar fate, as Warner's engagements with antiquity in these works have also failed to be remarked upon in criticism.

In these two works, Warner resumes ancient debates over the value of holy and profane love. In the later novella, when the unnamed stranger (who can with reasonable safety be identified as the eponymous Mr Fortune of the earlier novel) falls upon two statues of the Madonna in his hostess's local church, his imagination allegorises them respectively

as *Aphrodite Urania*, ‘Sacred Love’, and *Aphrodite Pandemos*, ‘that Love which is profane’, in remembrance of their contrast in the *Symposium*.² This reference to Plato is complemented by similar allusions to Sappho, Socrates, Aristotle and Xenophon at other points in both novel and novella.³ Strangely, however, Warner’s engagement with ancient literature and its legacies has not been thoroughly investigated in criticism thus far. Her allusions to the Pauline Epistles, and the great works of Christian antiquity, have fared only slightly better.⁴ Rather than attending to Warner’s use of ancient philosophies of love, critics have long been preoccupied with relating her fiction to our modern *scientia sexualis* and to queer theory.⁵ I will here discuss the much neglected dialogues with Platonic philosophy and Pauline theology that are finely threaded through Warner’s fictions.

Though at least nominally excluded from the establishments in which her male relatives received a classical education, Warner read the classics deeply as an autodidact.⁶ Somewhat laughably, her grandfather, George Townsend Warner, neglected study while at Cambridge, and confessed to a ‘strong aversion to Plato in any shape’.⁷ Sylvia’s loose relation to established institutions cannot thus be understood solely in terms of privation; the amateur is allowed freely to choose her objects of erudition, untroubled by any sense of required reading.⁸ Nowhere is this freedom more evident than in Warner’s idiosyncratic critique of the *Symposium* in the Mr Fortune fictions; her work is free from the idealising Hellenic tendencies that one tends to find in her classically educated male contemporaries.⁹ Warner alludes to sacred and profane love in ‘The Salutation’, but inverts Plato’s preference for the holy in the *Symposium*.

Aphrodite Urania was celebrated at the expense of her profane sister in the tradition that followed Plato. In the *Symposium* itself, the dinner guests of Agathon’s banquet ostensibly favour sacred love, though different speakers have varying conceptions of it. Pausanias first makes the contrast between the two loves but it is Socrates, traditionally regarded as Plato’s mouthpiece, who elaborates most philosophically on that which distinguishes sacred from profane.¹⁰ For Socrates, erotic appreciation of the body can enable an intellectual progression from the sensual to the ideal. After an elevation in understanding, the lover will come to an appreciation of the idea of Beauty ‘in itself and by itself, constant and eternal’ (210a–211b). After this ascent, the lover will understand that the beauty of beautiful things derives from the metaphysical ideal. Though this ideal lends physical things their loveliness, Beauty ‘remains entirely unaffected by their coming or ceasing to be’

(211b). In this ascent, the precariousness of profane love, which has a mortal individual as its object, is transformed into a love for the divine. As this divine ideal is ‘unchanging’, lovers cannot lose their object of adoration through death, or by the changeability of individual affection.

Four hundred years later, in the first century CE, St Paul developed a rival Christian conception of holy love, *agape*. Scholars generally agree that Paul, deeply immersed in Hellenic philosophy, is implicitly defining *agape* against Platonic *eros* in the First Epistle to the Corinthians.¹¹ In the same years that Warner was writing ‘The Salutation’, the Protestant theologian Anders Nygren was attempting to discern the essential differences between the two forms of holy love in his study *Agape and Eros* (1932). For Nygren, Plato’s philosophy of *eros* is fundamentally ‘egocentric’, albeit ‘a form of self-assertion of the highest, sublimest kind’, as it is based upon a ‘desire of good for the self.’¹² Conversely, Paul asserts that *agape* ‘seeketh not its own’ (1 Corinthians 13:5). Christian *agape* forms the love of God for man and the love of man for man through God. Moreover, Paul understands *agape* as descending downward from God, whereas Platonic philosophy imagines *eros* as man’s way to ascend to the divine. Despite their dissimilarities, both Paul and Plato are united in their suggestion that holy love has to descend from, or ascend to, an otherworldly divinity, in some sense above the material world.

In Warner’s fictions, both of these flights are cancelled; *agape* and *eros* are stripped of their divine pretensions, confined to the earth and profaned in the process. In opposition to Plato’s Socrates, the profane erotic attachment is seen as an end in itself; moreover, this attachment is esteemed for its precarious nature, rather than demoted for it. What’s more, the acts of *agape*, or charity, performed by Warner’s characters are shown as originating in the profane, human and egocentric, in direct defiance of St Paul’s teaching.

Warner’s reassessment of traditional judgements is at its clearest in the church scene of ‘The Salutation’ (pp. 176–8). Under ekphrastic allegoresis, the two Madonnas in the church are transformed by the stranger’s imagination into parodies of the most famous representation of the binary loves in the history of painting: that is, Titian’s *Sacred and Profane Love* (c. 1514), shown in Figure 3.1.¹³ In this painting, Titian contrasts the ‘Twin Venuses’ through two allegories of the female form: while Aphrodite Pandemos slouches distractedly, dressed in heavy clothes, her upright, nude twin, Aphrodite Urania, rises above with airy grace, such that she seems to float upon the sarcophagus they both lean upon. Erwin Panofsky memorably commented: ‘The lofty-minded



Figure 3.1 Titian, *Sacred and Profane Love* (c. 1514). Image public domain.

nude does not despise the worldly creature whose seat she condescends to share but with a gently persuasive glance seems to impart to her the secrets of the higher realm'.¹⁴ The glowing nudity of Sacred Love, moreover, particularly distinguishes her on Titian's canvas. Her pale nudity contrasts to the darkened hills behind and the more shapeless figure of her clothed sister beside her.¹⁵

In terms of the space she allots to each figure, Profane Love is awarded a far more prominent place in Warner's ekphrasis, reversing Titian's obvious partiality for sacred over profane. More tellingly, Sacred Love is depicted by a single detail, which is far from favourable. She is depicted as casting her eyes up to heaven with a look of 'bland assurance', which suggests she no longer condescends to commune with the worldly, as her painterly original seemed to: 'If the Immaculate Conception, so life-like and life-size, clasping her blue scarf to her bosom and looking upwards with an expression of bland assurance, was Sacred Love, then the other, thought he, must surely be the Love which is profane' (p. 176). The first Madonna shares the 'assurance' of the lover who has completed the ascent prescribed by Plato; her object of devotion is God, who is eternal and immutable, and so she need not worry over the world below.

By contrast, the other 'old, sad, and worldly' Madonna, whom the stranger allegorises as the 'love which is profane' (p. 176), is tenderly and substantially depicted:

Her wooden cheeks still showed signs of painting, and she wore a ragged yellow velvet petticoat where the foil that had once glistened like dew now sagged limp and blackened from the cotton threads. Anxious and bedizened, she stared straight in front of her, as though she were still watching the space of empty

air where a lover had stood and said farewell, powerless to move her eyes from the gaze which had last held him. There she stood and would stand, frozen in steadfast desperation while her finery mouldered about her, as though by a spell of watching she could watch him back again. (p. 177)

Warner's flowing prose reminds us of the beauty in the passing of beauty. Though the Madonna is described as 'bedizened', or gaudily dressed, Warner's archaic diction lends the statue a sense of nobility even when describing her as tawdry. Socrates of the *Symposium* saw only weakness in the desperation of profane lovers (210d), but Warner sees steadfastness in the humanity of their limitations.

Later in 'The Salutation', Angustias reminds the stranger of this Madonna while she reprimands her bullying grandson on the way to the fireworks (p. 222). As in this scene, throughout the novella Angustias is presented as a force for good in the world despite the fact her acts of *agape*, or 'charity' in the stranger's terminology (p. 208), always derive from profane origins. For example, when providing the stranger with hospitality through performing works 'in his honour', the narrator wryly notes that her 'honour' is also 'involved' in her being so busy (p. 165). Whereas St Paul stressed that the performer of *agape* 'seeketh not her own' (1 Corinthians 13:5), the narrator observes that Angustias does, to some degree, seek honour by her good deeds, though there is no implication that their profane origin renders them worthless. As with the stranger's interpretation of the Madonna, there is virtue in the profane love that Angustias performs.

Furthermore, Angustias seems perfectly aware of the profane origin of her good deeds and therefore cannot be charged with hypocrisy. She suggests rather irreverently that the Pauline conception of *agape* is unworkable in reality. She thinks to herself that it is 'impossible not to puff oneself' (p. 162) when doing good for someone, shrewdly doubting St Paul's definition of *agape*: 'charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up' (1 Corinthians 13:4).

In light of the other representations of *agape* in the fictions, Angustias' claim should be taken seriously. Paul's conception of *agape* seems just as ungraspable to the all-too-human characters of *Mr Fortune's Maggot* as well. The old lady whom Mr Fortune presumes will be his second convert is a clear example. The missionary attempts 'to teach her the love of God, and the Christian belief' (p. 44) but soon he realises that she cannot understand the supposed disinterestedness of Christian love. Her reasons for wanting to be converted are

egocentric. She desires 'eternity like an interminable piece of string' (p. 45) so that she may live forever; she thus fundamentally misunderstands the Christian conception of eternal life. Warner's satire is not solely directed towards the incomprehension of the old lady, though it seems so at first. Later, Mr Fortune finds it no less impossible to enact the Christian love he espoused. The *agape* propounded by Mr Fortune is more the object of ridicule than the supposed naivety of the native in the long run.

In Mr Fortune's case, the holy love of Paul seems to slide all too easily into the profane *eros* of Aphrodite Pandemos. Their confusion becomes most apparent when Lueli absents himself from Mr Fortune's company for a short time and in the undue amount of anxiety this causes the missionary. Initially, Fortune imagines himself as a 'pastor' worrying for a member of his flock. Yet after a 'passion' comes over him, he becomes 'angry with himself for being ridden by what was little better than an infatuation', as he interprets it. Mr Fortune tellingly deems his feelings 'unworthy of a man' as well as 'unworthy of a missionary, whose calling it is to love all God's children equally' (p. 28). Mr Fortune realises that Christian love, as Nygren has identified, requires one to love all equally regardless of their merit, but Mr Fortune loves Lueli in another sense, which cannot be classified as *agapeic*.

Unlike Platonic love, Christian love has no discriminatory basis of value.¹⁶ One must love one's enemies as well as one's neighbours.¹⁷ As Gregory Vlastos has explained, the Platonic lover must love persons 'so far, and only insofar, as they are good and beautiful'. As Vlastos has identified, there is therefore a 'cardinal flaw' in such a theory: as no one can truly attain perfection in body, mind, and soul, Platonic love 'does not provide for whole persons, but only for love of that abstract version of persons which consists of their best qualities'; as a result, 'the individual, in the uniqueness and integrity of his or her individuality, will never be the object of our love'.¹⁸ Mr Fortune's love for Lueli in the novel cannot be justifiably classified as either *agape* or Platonic *eros*. After Lueli runs away a second time, Mr Fortune breaks into a fit of laughter and affectionately appreciates the flightiness of Lueli's individual personality 'by a vivid realisation of his convert's personality, of Lueli no longer a convert but a person, individual, unexpected, separate' (p. 33). In its attachment to the realities of individual love, Mr Fortune's affection can only be classed as profane.

At this point of the novel, Mr Fortune has not yet become fully aware of the profane nature of his attachment. Warner ironises

Mr Fortune's lack of self-awareness through an allusion to the following fragment of Sappho:

Most beautiful of all the stars
O Hesperus, bringing everything
the bright dawn scattered:
you bring the sheep, you bring the goat,
you bring the child back to her mother.¹⁹

Mr Fortune is said to have a 'peculiar affection' for the lamp that illuminates his hut. The narrator suggests that his feelings for the lamp are approximate to the affection that 'Sappho felt [for] the evening star' (p. 43). It is ambiguous whether this allusion is focalised through Mr Fortune and whether the connection is made in his mind or the narrator's. Yet, given his public school education at Rugby, which allows him to allude to Euclid (p. 105) and *Paradise Lost* (p. 120) elsewhere, an allusion to the poetry of Sappho is in keeping with his character. Nevertheless, whether focalised or not, the allusion hints towards repressed undercurrents. Hesperus, the star Sappho praises, was the Greek personification of the evening star; as Pythagoras first realised, the star was actually the appearance of the planet Venus when east of the sun.²⁰ This lamp shines 'with a kindness upon everything [...] dear' to Mr Fortune, including 'Lueli's sleepy head'. Yet, through this allusion to Sappho, distant associations of Aphrodite faintly tint its beam.²¹ The subsequent description of 'stars trembling with the intensity of their remote fires' adds further to the erotic suggestiveness of the allusion (p. 43).

The purpose of Warner's irony is not simply to mock Mr Fortune's obtuseness; however much Warner deplored the 'moral purpose',²² which she saw resurface again and again in her fictions, she could not escape from it; it is clear here that Warner's ironic profanations do more than amuse or mock. Mr Fortune's deluded understanding of his erotic motivations causes him to do serious harm to Lueli. Although Mr Fortune sporadically mocks himself for his 'priestly rage against the relapsed heretic' (p. 33), he repeatedly relapses into what he later terms 'interfering' (p. 120) in Lueli's life. Mr Fortune imagines his interference is divinely ordained through his role as a missionary. For example, he cites the authority of St Paul (1 Corinthians 7) in his attempts to marry Lueli to a girl of the island when the boy displays no wish to marry (p. 9). Mr Fortune's efforts rely on the assumption that he is performing *agape* through fulfilling his duties as Lueli's pastor, which prevents efficacious self-criticism of his actions and thus leads on to tragedy (pp. 65–6).

After a misguided mathematics lesson on the beach, which recalls similar pedagogical scenes involving Socrates in Plato's dialogues, Lueli attempts to take his own life (p. 116). Only when Mr Fortune presumes Lueli is dead after his suicide attempt does he begin to slowly comprehend that his actual love for Lueli has not been agapeic, nor any form of holy love, but another kind of love which he cannot name nor clearly describe:

...‘I loved him,’ he thought. ‘From the moment I set eyes on him I loved him. Not with what is accounted criminal love, for though I set my desire on him it was a spiritual desire. I did not love him as a father loves a son, for that is a familiar love, and at times when Lueli most entranced me it was as a being remote, intact, and incalculable’. (p. 119)

Mr Fortune finds he can only define his love apophatically, and cannot suggest what his experience corresponds to. Though he defines it as ‘spiritual’ rather than ‘criminal’, Mr Fortune’s love for Lueli does not correspond to the Sacred Love who has her eyes turned up to heaven with a look of ‘blank assurance’ in ‘The Salutation’, or either of the Christian or Platonic holy loves. Mr Fortune’s realisation does not make him in any way self-satisfied. Instead his realisation dispossesses him of all self-assurance. His first sentence shows his love is not agapeic, as Christian love requires one to love all of humanity prior to meeting them, whereas Mr Fortune loves Lueli from first sight.²³ His later acknowledgement that his interferences were the workings of his own desires, ‘man’s will’ rather than God’s will, does so too (p. 119). His last clause invalidates the type of love expounded by Socrates in the *Symposium* because ‘intact’ implies he loves Lueli as an individual and not solely as the partial reflection of some lofty metaphysical ideal. Mr Fortune’s spiritual–criminal binary therefore cannot be thought analogous to the sacred and profane loves mentioned in ‘The Salutation’. Paradoxically, Mr Fortune’s love cannot be imagined solely physical or metaphysical in character. His love is both spiritual and profane.²⁴

There is a comparable paradox in a detail of the stranger’s allegorising of the Madonna depicted as Profane Love in ‘The Salutation’, one which bizarrely contradicts any straightforward reading of the Platonic tradition: ‘Stiffly, on one arm, she held a very small child with a stern grown-up face. But it was so inappropriate, she was so obviously a virgin...’ (p. 177). Aphrodite Pandemos is associated

with anything but chastity and virginity in Pausanias' speech in the *Symposium*; instead, the goddess is said to inspire indiscriminate lust (180d–181d). Similarly, Alcibiades rails against the chastity of Socrates, and by implication his philosophy of sacred love, for denying lovers the pleasures of the body (217c–219e). At first then, it would seem more 'inappropriate' for Profane Love to be a virgin rather than vice versa. Yet, by the sheer density of her allegory, Warner can still assert that Profane Love is more of a virgin than her celestial sister because she is drawing upon the strange metaphorical mental pregnancy described in the speech of Socrates.

In Socrates' speech, 'every human being' is described as 'mentally pregnant' with 'virtue and wisdom' as their potential 'offspring' (208e–209c). When someone has been particularly 'pregnant with virtue from an early age', they long to find a partner with whom they can 'procreate' virtue (209b). Comparable to couples that physically procreate in order to achieve immortality by carrying on their bloodline, the mentally procreative lovers produce offspring that are actually immortal: virtuous works whether in the form of poetry, laws or other noble institutions (209c–209e). To procreate this virtue, the older lover takes on their younger lover's 'education' (209c).

When Warner describes the Profane Love as 'so obviously a virgin', she plays on the fact that Mr Fortune's love is virginal in a double sense: his relations with Lueli were not realised physically, and, moreover, his love failed to procreate virtue and wisdom with Lueli, as Socrates imagined holy love would. Just as the Mr Fortune figure of 'The Salutation' thinks 'nothing will come' of his sadness whether 'good or bad' (p. 193), 'nothing will come' of Mr Fortune's love either.

'The Salutation' and *Mr Fortune's Maggot* seek to understand the tragic quality of a profane love from which 'nothing will come' but a sense of loss and anguish. The title of Warner's later story alludes to the Visitation in the Gospel of Luke, the ultimate scriptural celebration of generation, which casts an ironic shadow over the stranger's fruitless love and bootless cares. Mary, pregnant with the Christ Child, salutes an elderly Elizabeth, who though 'well stricken in years' is miraculously pregnant with John the Baptist, who leaps with joy in his mother's womb on hearing the Virgin's greeting (Luke 1:39–45). In the Gospel, the figure of pregnancy is pregnant with joy, hope and futurity. The blessed fruit of Mary's womb will die so that mankind might live.

The parallel salutation heard by Angustias in Warner's story, the rasping cough of the wayfaring stranger who has been wandering half-dead in the hot sun, is anything but salutary. All the springs of

life seem to have dried up in Mr Fortune, including the Christian faith that once sustained him as a missionary. Notably, the allusion to the Visitation in the Gospel of Luke is made most explicit in a description of the 'old rusty seal of the House of the Salutation', which Angustias uses to seal the corks of brandy bottles. The narrator explains that the seal 'had once been used for branding slaves, printing into their flesh the small outline of the two cloaked and haloed holy women, Mary and Elizabeth' (p. 174), which drives home Christian complicity in colonialism and the brutalities of the slave trade.²⁵ With both Platonic and Christian traditions found futile or malign, how can one live an ethical life?

After realising that 'nothing' good can come from Mr Fortune's profane love, the 'moral purpose' of Warner's fiction reaches an impasse. After Mr Fortune loses his faith and realises he must leave the island to avoid further harming the one he loves in the earlier novel, there seems no other convincing alternative moral life he can lead. When he tried to live an ethical life on the island, he only made things worse. The mournful envoi that ends the novel encapsulates this aporia: 'My poor Timothy, goodbye! I do not know what will become of you' (p. 152). When Warner revisits this impasse in 'The Salutation' she makes it feel far more consequential. Whereas in *Mr Fortune's Maggot* only accidental evil seems at issue, in the later novella the actions of Alfredo, the sadistic grandson of Angustias, show the desperate necessity for an ethical system that can thoroughly confront evil while acknowledging that love is rooted in the desires of the self.²⁶

The necessity is most apparent in Alfredo's killing of the rhea. The character that we can, to all intents and purposes, identify as Mr Fortune had been gazing at the bird sympathetically up to the point of the killing. After his realisation on the island, Mr Fortune appears wary of his own interference to the extent that he even refrains from interacting with the animal. He says to himself: 'I will not disturb it by going nearer' (p. 199). In order to avoid interference, he restricts his actions to gazing sympathetically. Inhibited from any actual interaction, the character recalls the plight of the profane Madonna in the church whose only attempt to recall her lover was through 'watching the space of empty air' (p. 177) where they once stood. When Alfredo's shot slays the rhea, Mr Fortune is only able to rush towards the dying beast with a 'confused impulse of compassion' (p. 199). Even on identifying its murderer, Mr Fortune can imagine no ethical action that would lead to justice. He naturalises the murder in his mind as sad but ineluctable: 'Opposite slays opposite, as fire and water writhe in their combat, as lion and lamb wage their implacable enmity' (p. 200). An essential part of Jesus' commandment of

agape, loving one's enemies (Matthew 5:44), is presented as ineffectual, when they are driven by their very nature to kill you.²⁷

Warner manages only partially to overcome this ethical impasse and resolve the troubling ethical implications that result from her profanation of *agape*. The character of Angustias provides a third way in the novella. Though she never doubts that the charity she performs is profane in origin, as evidenced above, she nevertheless manages to convincingly stand up to the evil of her grandson through an ethics firmly rooted in the profane. In 'honour' (p. 221) of her erotic attachment to her dead English husband, Angustias offers hospitality to Mr Fortune and any other Englishmen that may pass by the House of the Salutation. Out of love of a particular individual, Angustias manages to create an ethical investment that performs charity for persons other than that individual. Unlike the Platonic philosophy of *eros*, which transcends individual affections in admiration of a greater good, Angustias never forgets the profane inspiration of her original erotic attachment. When she stands up to her bullying grandson in the car, Mr Fortune admires her 'proud patience' (p. 222). For St Paul 'charity is patient' but not 'puffed up' (1 Corinthians 13:4–6); but Angustias offers a profane version of *agape*, which far surpasses in goodness the priestly efforts of Mr Fortune as a missionary and the impossibilities of its sacred Pauline original.

In conclusion, Warner profanes the two holy loves of Western antiquity. Her fiction critiques Platonic philosophy and Pauline theology for their denials of the worldly character of human love. Her profanations, however, seem to lead her to an impasse. Yet, through the character of Angustias, Warner hints at a potential alternative, albeit not a perfect one, as her charity seems to extend only to individuals that remind her of her husband. If profane, erotic attachment makes for genuine, efficacious ethical behaviour, free from hypocrisy, it unfortunately does not seem to be able to offer its efforts to all.

Notes

- 1 Sylvia Townsend Warner, 'Preface' to *The True Heart* (Virago, 1981), p. ii. Cited by Maud Ellmann, 'Sylvia Townsend Warner', *Oxford Handbooks Online*, 2016 <<https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199935338.013.31>>, unpaginated. See also P. G. Walsh, 'Introduction' in Apuleius, *The Golden Ass* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), pp. xi–xlix (p. xiv).
- 2 The stranger is not named as Mr Fortune but Warner clearly intended him to be recognisable as such to readers of the original novel. Sylvia Townsend Warner, 'The Salutation' in *Mr Fortune* (New York: New York Review Books,

- 2001), pp. 153–225 (p. 177–8). All subsequent references to *Mr Fortune's Maggot* and 'The Salutation' will be cited by page numbers from this edition.
- 3 Sylvia Townsend Warner, 'Mr Fortune's Maggot' in *Mr Fortune* (New York: New York Review Books, 2001), pp. 1–152 (pp. 41–3, 83).
 - 4 For Warner's engagement with the Church Fathers, see Pauline Matarasso, 'A Recurrent Modulation: Religious Themes in the Poetry of Sylvia Townsend Warner', *The Journal of the Sylvia Townsend Warner Society*, 17.1 (2017), pp. 35–64, <<https://doi.org/10.14324/111.444.tw.2017.04>>, p. 36, p. 54.
 - 5 Gay Wachman, *Lesbian Empire* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2001), pp. 94, 97, 99. Margaret Sullivan, "'Until I Have Given Lueli Back His God": Queer Religion in Sylvia Townsend Warner's *Mr Fortune's Maggot*', *Literature and Theology*, 25.2 (2010), pp. 157–71 <<https://doi.org/10.1093/litthe/frq057>>, p. 167.
 - 6 My thanks to Prof. Jan Montefiore (email correspondence with Dr Howard Booth, 16 January 2017) for confirming my suspicions as to the profound reach and depth of Warner's reading. Clare Harman notes that Sylvia's 'natural erudition' was aided by many 'private lessons' with her father, George, a housemaster at Harrow School. Claire Harman, *Sylvia Townsend Warner: A Biography* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1989), p. 20.
 - 7 George Townsend Warner quoted in Harman, *Sylvia Townsend Warner*, p. 16.
 - 8 On Virginia Woolf as 'female amateur' see Lambrotheodoros Koulouris, "'Love Unconquered in Battle' and Other Lies: 'Virginia Woolf and (Greek) Love'", *Interdisciplinary Literary Studies*, 8.2 (2007), pp. 37–53.
 - 9 Ann Ardis, 'Hellenism and the Lure of Italy' in *The Cambridge Companion to E.M. Forster*, ed. David Bradshaw (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), pp. 62–76 (p. 65). The *Symposium* was important for a number of modernist writers in the early twentieth century, including Woolf and Forster. See Koulouris, p. 40. Howard J. Booth, 'Maurice' in *The Cambridge Companion to E.M. Forster*, ed. David Bradshaw (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), pp. 173–87 (p. 178).
 - 10 Pausanias declares that Aphrodite Pandemos is attended by a 'common' form of eros, which inspires the sexual passion for the body of one's lover regardless of their mental characteristics. This eros inspires love for young boys and women in Pausanias' account, as he deems both mentally inferior to grown men. This love is seemingly random in its attachments and lacks commitment. By contrast, celestial love commits to a single virtuous man based upon his mental characteristics. Plato, *Symposium*, trans. Robin Waterfield (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), pp. 13–19, 180a–185c. All subsequent citations will be solely referenced by the Stephanus pagination of the passage. See Martha C. Nussbaum, *The Fragility of Goodness* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), p. 167.
 - 11 Anders Nygren, *Agape and Eros*, trans. Arthur Gabriel Herbert (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1932), p. 106.
 - 12 Nygren, *Agape and Eros*, p. 165.
 - 13 This painting had become so well known in the early decades of the twentieth century, presumably through reproductions, that in 1912 one reviewer could comfortably suggest that 'Everyone knows Titian's great picture, "Sacred and Profane Love," now in the Borghese in Rome'. Frank Harris, 'The History of Painting by Haldane Macfall', *The Academy and Literature*, 82.2071 (1912), p. 9. Descriptions of the painting also surfaced in prose ekphrasis numerous times in nineteenth-century fiction, see for example J. V. Huntington, *Alban* (London: Colburn and Co., 1851), pp. 94–6. Titian's representation of the binary has its origin in Florentine Neoplatonism, which attempted a fusion of *agape* and *eros* into a single understanding of sacred love. See Erwin Panofsky, *Studies in Iconology* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1939), p. 152.
 - 14 Panofsky, *Studies in Iconology*, p. 152.
 - 15 The nudity of holy love is explained by Panofsky as relating to the *nuda veritas*, or naked truth, iconographical tradition; her shameless simplicity is unfallen. Panofsky, *Studies in Iconology*, p. 150.
 - 16 Nygren, *Agape and Eros*, p. 165.
 - 17 Nygren, *Agape and Eros*, p. 72.

- 18 Gregory Vlastos quoted in Nussbaum, *The Fragility of Goodness*, p. 166.
- 19 Sappho, LP 104 b & a, *The Poetry of Sappho*, trans. Jim Powell (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), p. 26.
- 20 'When Venus is to the west of the sun, she is to be seen before the sun rises, and is then called the morning star; but when she is to the east of the sun, she is to be seen after he is set, and is then called the evening star. When in the former of these situations, she was called by the Greeks Phosphorus, and in the latter Hesperus', George G. Carey, *Astronomy, as It is Known at the Present Day* (London: Printed for I. Chidley, 1835), p. 23.
- 21 The Sapphic, lesbian resonances to this allusion resonate with Wachman's contention that Warner may, in some sense, be 'crosswriting' in the novel: Wachman, *Lesbian Empire*, p. 83.
- 22 'I see my moral purpose shining out like a bad fish in a dark larder': *Letters*, ed. William Maxwell (London: Chatto & Windus, 1982), p. 203; to William Maxwell, 16 September 1962.
- 23 In *Lolly Willowes* (1926) Warner ironises the 'duty of every marriageable young woman to be charming, whether her charm be distributed towards one special object or, in fault of that, universally distributed through a disinterested love of humanity', *Lolly Willowes* (London: Virago Press, 2012), p. 24. One need only think of Dostoyevsky's doctor to remember how fraught can be the relation between loving individuals and loving all mankind: "The more I love humanity in general the less I love man in particular. In my dreams," he said, "I often make plans for the service of humanity, and perhaps I might actually face crucifixion if it were suddenly necessary. Yet I am incapable of living in the same room with anyone for two days together. I know from experience. As soon as anyone is near me, his personality disturbs me and restricts my freedom. In twenty-four hours I begin to hate the best of men: one because he's too long over his dinner, another because he has a cold and keeps on blowing his nose. I become hostile to people the moment they come close to me. But it has always happened that the more I hate men individually the more I love humanity", Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov* (1880), trans. Constance Garnett (New York: Signet, 1957), p. 60.
- 24 Ackland described Warner's spirituality in comparable terms. In a letter to an inquisitive friend, Ackland wrote that though her partner was always 'serenely determined to declare that there IS no Spirit', she had never met anyone who more consistently followed what she calls 'the dictates of the Spirit'. Perhaps approving or perhaps amused, the author asked her lover to preserve this paradoxical description by writing it down in her diary. See Harman, *Sylvia Townsend Warner*, p. 248.
- 25 Warner's description suggests familiarity with the painterly iconographical tradition of the Visitation; see Ghirlandaio's 'Visitation' (1491) in the Louvre, Paris, for a possible source.
- 26 See Howard J. Booth, 'Colonialism and Time in Sylvia Townsend Warner's *Mr Fortune's Maggot*', *Literature Compass*, 11.12 (2014), pp. 745–53 <<https://doi.org/10.1111/lic3.12204>>, p. 751.
- 27 Nygren, *Agape and Eros*, pp. 72–3.

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