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Term Paper
Annotating Barnabe Barnes's
“God's Virtue”

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1. Introduction

“God’s Virtue” by Barnabe Barnes (1569/9-1609) is one of the many poems that has not yet been considered in any scholarly annotated edition, let alone in the digital realm. It was first published in 1595 in Barnes’s collection *A Divine Centurie of Spirituall Sonnets* under the title “Sonnet LXXXVIII”¹ and has since received little attention. The entry on Barnabe Barnes in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* states critically that “[a]t his best his poems, particularly the madrigals, have exuberance and occasional felicity of language.” This little enthusiasm about Barnes’s works might be a reason why his sonnets, apart from his sonnet cycle *Partenophil and Partenophe*, are not very popular and scarcely edited. At first glance, the non-canonical poem is framed by Christian, mythological, and astrophysical images. Yet, at a second glance, the poem, written in a solemn and mellifluous tone, gives rise to more profound interpretations.

The present work strives at compensating the lack of scholarly analysis in order to counteract the restriction of annotations to canonical texts. Scholars on all fields and levels of knowledge encounter challenging literary texts and could profit greatly from respective annotations. Usually, editions of texts provide the reader with annotations to enrich their knowledge and thereby possibly facilitate the reader’s understanding. However, many of these annotations are not helpful at all or even add to confusion. Oftentimes, annotations are little comprehensible, making use of enigmatic abbreviations, or presuppose knowledge that only few readers have.

Bauer and Zirker take a closer look at phenomena like these in their article “Explanatory Annotation of Literary Texts and the Reader: Seven Types of Problems”. There, they deduce a system based on seven major problems that they want to avoid when writing annotations with their own digital annotating tool TEASys (Tübingen Explanatory Annotations System)². The aim of TEASys is to make use of advantages that the digital online medium offers and compile annotations while being aware of their potential effects on the reader. In their article, they argue that annotating digitally offers unlimited space and renders excessive shortness unnecessary (229). The possibility to choose from the range of eight different categories that they have established result in a more “systematic as well as individual and flexible” system that takes into account “readerly needs” (229). Explanations and possible interpretations are supposed to encourage readers to come up with ideas of their own based on the transparent annotating process

¹ The original version as printed by John VVindet [dwelling at Powles Wharfe at the signe of the Crosse Keyes and are there to be soulde], in London, 1595 and can be found online on the website of EEBO (Early English Books Online Text Creation Partnership, 2011), <<http://name.umdl.umich.edu/A04486.0001.001>>. Accessed 13 December 2019.

² The Website to the annotating tool is the following: <<http://www.annotating-literature.org/>>

(214). This schema serves to ensure relevance and logical differentiation of annotations ranging from “basic to expert knowledge” (229). Thereby, annotations are supposed to be explanatory rather than enriching, which would only be helpful at an already high level of literary proficiency (217). The possibility to link annotations with each other and with external sources makes it easier to access related content without having to read all annotations.

This elaborate structure, put down in a living styleguide³, provides the basis for the annotation of “God’s Virtue” to make them as profitable as possible to different kinds of readership. Hence, the annotations are determined by the styleguide in their categorial structure⁴ and indicate the sources after each category to make sure that the process of information retrieval is made transparent.

For readers to get a more profound understanding of “God’s Virtue” it is necessary to analyse and disentangle its complex syntactic structure to establish logical relations between units and identify possible ambiguities. Since the poem was written towards the end of the 16th century, there are several words and phrases that need to be analysed and defined in the context of this period (e.g. “prefixed compass” l. 3, “to their old quarters new resign” l. 12). Allusions to classical mythology (e.g. “Clear Hesperus” l.7) presuppose knowledge that was probably available at the time of composition but cannot be expected anymore. When reading the poem for the first time, one might further wonder about scientific developments that might or might not underlie the astrophysical issues mentioned (e.g. “Seas, with full tide swelling, ebb again” l. 11). It is also of interest to analyse the possible opposition of Christian and mythical imagery that might play a role in the poem. Since “God’s Virtue” was scarcely reprinted and there are no significant textual variants, there will not be any annotations of this particular category. However, the poem features very complex passages that might result in open annotations in the category “Question”.

Due to the limited range of this term paper, however, the annotation of “God’s Virtue” is by no means exhaustive and might leave questions unanswered. Since there is no single correct interpretation to arrive at, the aim of these annotations is, thus, to offer well-structured academic information to enrich the reader’s ideas and interpretations.

³ The complete guidelines are available online and can be downloaded here: <http://www.annotation.es.uni-tuebingen.de/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/Styleguide-2018_12_04.pdf>

⁴ For further information on TEASys, you may consult the article “Whipping Boys Explained” by Zirker and Bauer (2015), available online: <<https://dlsanthology.commons.mla.org/whipping-boys-explained-literary-annotation-and-digital-humanities/>>

2. Annotations

2.1. “God’s Virtue” (attached to title)

Level 1 – Form

The poem is a sonnet consisting of three quatrains and a rhyming couplet (ABBA ABBA CDCD EE) and written in iambic pentameter, i.e. with each of the lines consisting of 10 syllables. The complex syntactic structure of the poem and the reoccurring enjambment are features that may obfuscate the immediate syntactic connections and referents. The syntactic structure of the first sentence in stanza 1 seems confusing at first. The archaic word order, especially the postposition of the verb, and the insertion of subordinate clauses may disrupt the flow of reading and consequently impede the comprehension of the sentence for readers today.

Level 2 - Form

The first stanzaic enjambment connects the first two stanzas between line 4 and 5 (“And, as courageous giant, takes delight / To run his race and exercise his might”). The mid-phrase breaks make it necessary to disentangle the sentence in the second quatrain. “[H]im” in line 6 still seems to refer to “The world’s bright comforter” (l. 1), who is constantly being referred to with male pronouns (“His course” l. 3, “his race” l. 5) until a feminine pronoun is introduced (“her” l. 9) referring to “night” in line 8. A reordering of the different phrases could read as follows: “[D]own galloping the mountain’s steep” (l. 6) comes “Clear Hesperus” (l. 7), who is called the “smooth messenger of sleep” (l. 7). Being attributed with all these clauses, Hesperus eventually “views” (l. 8) the “world’s bright comforter” in the main clause.

The close connection between lines and stanzas is maintained until and including the final couplet. Despite the expectations of an English or Shakespearean sonnet to find a *volta*, if at all, after the last quatrain, it appears not until between line 13 and 14. Line 13 can, subsequently, be considered the last enjambment of the poem. Thematically, it still belongs to the third stanza but visually and in terms of rhyme it belongs to the last line.

Level 2 – Interpretation

The extensive enjambment in this poem, especially those cases spanning more than one stanza, mirror the presence of “God’s virtue” which fills all things of His creation and runs through the poem like a golden thread. The *volta*, thus, consists of the single-line statement that all the mentioned phenomena are filled with God’s virtue and driven by His force (l. 14) [“All in all things with God’s virtue filled” Level 2 - Interpretation].

2.2. The world's bright comforter [...] in prefixed compass keep

Level 1 - Form

The main clause (“The world’s bright comforter [...] his course doth in prefixed compass keep” ll. 1-3) is interrupted by two subordinate clauses “whose beamsome light / poor creatures cheereth” (ll. 1-2) and “mounting from the deep” (l. 2). While the first of these is a relative clause to “[t]he world’s bright comforter” (l. 1), the second clause can be read ambiguously concerning its syntactic reference, function, and its meaning [“Mounting from the deep” Level 2 – Interpretation].

2.3. The world's bright comforter (l. 1)

Level 1 – Language

A “comforter” might not only console spiritually but also physically. This notion of a comforter is amplified by the adjective “bright”, which is usually associated with the sun and stars (“comforter, *n.*” A. I. 1. a.) that comfort by giving warmth and light, two elements essential for life. The theological meaning of “comforter” refers to the “[t]itle of the Holy Spirit” (“comforter, *n.*” 1.b.). The adjective “bright” can change its meaning in this context to that of “happiness [...] or hope” as well as being “characterized by goodness, glory, honour, distinction” (“bright, *adj.* and *n.*” A. II. 10). The “bright comforter” in this reading suggests positivity and strength of spirit.

Sources:

"bright, *adj.* and *n.*" *OED Online*, Oxford University Press, December 2019, www.oed.com/view/Entry/23303. Accessed 09 December 2019.

"comforter, *n.*" *OED Online*, Oxford University Press, December 2019, www.oed.com/view/Entry/36897. Accessed 09 December 2019.

Level 2 – Form

The “world’s bright comforter” is an ambiguous periphrasis of the sun and God and could be an allusion to the “son/sun” pun which plays on the homophony of the two nouns and was popular in Renaissance literature (see Bross 35 and Wilcox 572). The pun plays with analogous readings that can refer to the son, Jesus, and to the sun. Since the pun is hidden in a paraphrase, it can be considered a secret wordplay. Bauer notes in his article “Secret Wordplay and What It May Tell Us” that “even quite obvious wordplay (such as the sun / son pun) may become secret in the sense that its specific [...] meaning (out of a range of possible meanings that are

evoked simultaneously) is not expressly referred to” (282). [“The world’s bright comforter”
Level 3 – Interpretation]

Sources:

Bauer, Matthias. "Secret Wordplay and What It May Tell Us." *Wordplay and Metalinguistic / Metadiscursive Reflection: Authors, Contexts, Techniques, and Meta-Reflection*, edited by Angelika Zirker und Esme Winter-Froemel. Berlin: de Gruyter, 2015, pp. 269-88.

Bross, Martina. “‘Equivocation will undo us’? Wordplay and Ambiguity in Hamlet’s First and Second Line.” *Wordplay and Metalinguistic / Metadiscursive Reflection: Authors, Contexts, Techniques, and Meta-Reflection*, edited by Angelika Zirker und Esme Winter-Froemel. Berlin: de Gruyter, 2015, pp. 25-45.

Wilcox, Helen, editor. "The Sunne." *The English Poems of George Herbert*, by George Herbert, Oxford UP, 2007, pp. 572-574.

Level 2 – Context

Jesus says “I am the root and the offspring of David, and the bright and morning star” (Rev. 22:16), which emphasises the analogy between Jesus, the morning star, and the “world’s bright comforter”. The tripartite identification can further be linked to Holy Spirit as mentioned in [“The world’s bright comforter” Level 1 – Language].

Sources:

The Bible. King James Version. Bible Gateway, Bible Gateway / Zondervan, 2016. Accessed 12 November 2019.

Level 3 – Intertextuality

Barnes uses the same imagery in Sonnet 72 from his collection *A Divine Centurie of Spirituall Sonnets*. In this sonnet, the first two lines read as follows: “T[h]e sunne of our soules light thee would I call, / But for our light thou didst the bright Sunne make” (ll. 1-2). The chiasmus in these lines takes up God’s superiority over the sun as its creator and His similar own characteristics.

Sources:

Barnes, Barnabe. “Sonnet LXXII.” *A Divine Centurie of Spirituall Sonnets*. 1595. Early English Books Online Database. University of Michigan. <https://quod.lib.umich.edu/e/eebo/A04549.0001.001/1:4.72?rgn=div2;view=fulltext>

Level 3 – Interpretation

The fact that the comforter is contrasted with the “world”, i.e. earth, further supports the reading of the “bright comforter” being the sun. The sun’s light reaches the whole surface of the earth, which can be seen as an analogy to God, who gives comfort and “exercise[s] his might” (l. 5) all over the world as well. Both have risen, the sun at dawn, Jesus at the day of his resurrection [“Mounting from the deep” Level 2 - Interpretation]. Both go their ways (“run his race” l. 5) and are mighty (l. 5), and both are symbolically opposing the evening star Hesperus [“Clear Hesperus” Level 1 - Context]: Jesus in the form of the morning star [“The World’s Bright Comforter” Level 1 – Context] and the sun by setting at dusk.

The hidden sun / son pun can be considered a demonstration of wit on the poet’s behalf to make the analogy between Christ and the Sun even more apparent.

2.4. Poor creatures (l. 2)

Level 1 – Language

The adjective “poor” here is ambiguous. On the one hand, it means “having few, or no, material possessions” (“poor, *adj.* and *n.*1” A.1.a). On the other hand, it can indicate a person’s inner disposition “usually with reference to a person’s soul, spirit” (“poor, *adj.* and *n.*1” A.1.c) or qualify somebody as being “of little excellence or worth; of a low or inferior standard or quality” (“poor, *adj.* and *n.*1” A.2.a). The latter sense may also include the now obsolete meaning of “[m]entally or morally inferior” (“poor, *adj.* and *n.*1” A.2.c †). The condition of health may be added, in which case “poor” can be read as “[i]n ill health, unwell” (“poor, *adj.* and *n.*1” 7.a). All these different readings can be said to provoke pity and compassion (“poor, *adj.* and *n.*1” 5).

The *creatures* generally refers to people, but in combination with the adjective “poor”, “creature” refers to a “type of person, [...] expressing [...] compassion or commiseration” (“creature, *n.*” 2.a). It may also be a “person who owes his or her fortune or position, and remains subservient to, a patron” (“creature, *n.*” 4), which makes particular sense in the religious framework of the poem and considering the first definition of *creature*, i.e. a “thing or being” created (“creature, *n.*” 1.a) by God.

Sources:

"creature, *n.*" *OED Online*, Oxford University Press, June 2020, [oed.com/view/Entry/44082](https://www.oed.com/view/Entry/44082).
Accessed 4 June 2020.

"poor, *adj.* and *n.*1." *OED Online*, Oxford University Press, June 2020, [oed.com/view/Entry/147749](https://www.oed.com/view/Entry/147749). Accessed 4 June 2020.

Level 2 – Interpretation

The “poor creatures” constitute a group of pitiful beings that are being cheered by the “beamsome light” (l. 1). For the different readings of “cheereth” in connection to the “poor creatures” see [“Cheereth” Level 2 – Interpretation]

2.5. Cheereth (l. 2)

Level 1 – Language

The verb is marked with a now archaic third person singular inflection “-eth” and its lexical root “cheer” is ambiguous in this context. It means “giv[ing] hope, comfort, or encouragement to (a person[...]) in a time of difficulty or sadness” (“cheer, v.1” 1.a). One of the verbs obsolete meanings is to “welcome, treat hospitably” (“cheer, v.1” †2) and to “warm [...], esp. with sunlight; to revive with warmth” (“cheer, v.1” 4.a†) [“The world’s bright comforter” Level 3 – Interpretation].

Source:

"cheer, v.1." *OED Online*, Oxford University Press, June 2020, [oed.com/view/Entry/31144](https://www.oed.com/view/Entry/31144). Accessed 4 June 2020.

Level 2 – Interpretation

Those “poor creatures” (l. 2) with little or no material possession are given a warm and hospitable welcome [“Cheereth” Level 1 – Language] in heaven once they have “mount[ed] from the deep” (l. 2) [“Mounting from the deep” Level 2 – Interpretation], i.e. from the earth and arrived in heaven.

Even the lowest in moral, spirit, and excellence receive hope and comfort [“Cheereth” Level 1 – Language] from the “beamsome light” of the “world’s bright comforter” (l.1) [“The world’s bright comforter” Level 3 – Interpretation].

The “world’s bright comforter” (l. 1) also cures illnesses in the sense of reviving something with the warmth of (sun)light [“Cheereth” Level 1 – Language].

2.6. Mounting from the deep (l. 2)

Level 1 – Language

The clause is not clearly attributable to one of the nouns within the sentence. It could either refer to the “world’s bright comforter” (l. 1), the “beamsome light” (l. 1) or the “[p]oor creatures” (l. 2), which all might be “mounting from the deep”.

Level 2 – Intratextuality

The lexical root of *mounting* (“mount-“) can be found in three of the four stanzas. The word “mountain” is repeated in the second stanza, line 6, and in the last couplet (l. 13). [“Mounting from the deep” Level 3 – Interpretation]

Level 2 – Interpretation

The first of the three possible linguistic agents of “mounting” is the “world’s bright comforter” (l. 1) whose upward movement can be transferred to both interpretations, the sun and Jesus [“The world’s bright comforter” Level 3 - Interpretation]. The sun rises every day from “the deep” behind the horizon and Jesus ascended for his resurrection from the realm of the dead up to God. The paraphrase for the “world’s bright comforter” as agent of “mounting from the deep” could read as follows: ‘The world’s bright comforter, whose beamsome light cheereth poor creatures, mounts from the deep and keeps his course in prefixed compass.’ In this case, the upward movement “from the deep” does not trigger the cheering of the “poor creatures” (l. 2), but the “beamsome light” (l. 1) does.

The second possibility are the “poor creatures” (l. 2) who are “mounting from the deep”. The “poor creatures” as agents change the sentence structures to ‘The world’s bright comforter, whose beamsome light cheereth poor creatures who mount from the deep, keeps his course in prefixed compass.’ According to this reading, the “poor creatures” are given hope by the “beamsome light”, cheering them up on earth. [“Cheereth” Level 2 – Interpretation]

The third possibility is the “beamsome light” (l. 1) that glows in the deep and sends its rays upward. The paraphrases for this case could be: ‘The world’s bright comforter, whose beamsome light cheereth poor creatures *by* mounting from the deep, keeps his course in prefixed compass.’ Here, it is specifically the upward movement to God that cheers the “poor creatures” (l. 2). For several possible readings of the “poor creatures” (l. 2) and the ways in which they can be cheered according to their distinct characteristics see [“Poor creatures” Level 1 – Language] and [“Cheereth” Level 2 – Interpretation].

Level 3 – Interpretation

The strikingly frequent use of the root “mount-” throughout the poem evokes an overall theme of height which can be connected to God’s highness. In the third stanza, this height is

represented by the firmament and the “stars past number” (l. 9).

2.7. His course in prefixed compass keep (l. 3)

Level 1 – Language

Despite the prevalent meaning of a *compass* being a “mathematical instrument [...] for taking measurements and describing circles” (“compass, *n.1, adj., and adv.*” III. 4. a.), the syntactic context of the word (to keep in compass) suggests other meanings. On the one hand, “in compass” can stand for “with regularity, regularly” in a temporal sense (“compass, *n.1, adj., and adv.*” A. I. †1.). On the other hand, “compass” describes “[a]nything circular in shape, e.g. the globe, the horizon” (“compass, *n.1, adj., and adv.*” IV. †5. †b.). Both definitions, used in Barnes’s time, however, are now obsolete.

Source:

"compass, *n.1, adj., and adv.*" *OED Online*, Oxford University Press, December 2019, www.oed.com/view/Entry/37466. Accessed 09 December 2019.

Level 1 – Intratextuality

This line is semantically connected to “run his race” (l. 5), “sun’s long borrowed splendour shine” (l. 10), and “All year to their old quarters new resign” (ll. 11-12) because all of these phrases describe celestial phenomena. Each of them can refer to a movement of the sun, planets or stars or describes their interaction.

Level 2 – Context

The scientific and especially astronomic discoveries of the 15th and 16th century certainly could have shaped Barnabe Barnes’s worldview and cosmovision. Scientists like Nicolaus Copernicus revolutionised the worldview in that he proposed, not for the first time, the heliocentric theory which stated that the earth, circuted by the moon, revolves around the sun (Westman). Copernicus’s theory *De Revolutionibus Orbium Coelestium* was published in the year of his death in 1543 (Westman), more than 20 years before Barnabe Barnes was born. Unlike other astronomers, Copernicus’ theory was widely accepted by the Church at the time (Westman).

Source:

Westman, Robert S. “Nicolaus Copernicus.” *Encyclopædia Britannica*, Encyclopædia Britannica, inc, 21 Nov. 2019, <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Nicolaus-Copernicus>. Accessed 13 December 2019.

Level 2 – Interpretation

The path that the “world’s bright comforter” keeps is a circular one and is regularly taken. Firstly, this applies to the sun which, observed from the earth, seems to wander across the sky in a regular pace, thereby determining night and day. Secondly, Jesus as the morning star regularly meets the evening star in the circle of day and night [“World’s bright comforter” Level 1 – Context]. The phrase also alludes to the verb *encompass* which means, according to the *OED*, “[t]o surround entirely, overlay as with an envelope or shell; to contain” (“encompass, *v.*” 4). It could be said that God encompasses everything [“His course in prefixed compass keep” Level 3 – Intratextuality].

Source:

"encompass, *v.*" *OED Online*, Oxford University Press, December 2019, www.oed.com/view/Entry/61766. Accessed 08 December 2019.

Level 3 – Intratextuality

God encompasses everything which links to the last line of the poem “all in all things with God’s virtue filled”. [“All in all things with God’s virtue filled” Level 2 - Interpretation]

Level 3 – Question

Considering the Context annotation [“His course in prefixed compass keep” Level 2 – Context] the question arises whether Barnes knew and understood the heliocentric theory by Copernicus. If so, why did he not include this knowledge into his poem. An answer could be that he did know about Copernicus’s theories and concealed his knowledge in his poem to avoid having to position himself in this debate about scientific truth. It might also be possible that he did not believe or support this new worldview. The fact that the sun can, from one point of view, be observed to move across the sky, does not hint at any astrophysical knowledge that Barnes might or might not have had. This could also mean that he wanted to keep his poem neutral by using ambiguity or simply did not know about Copernicus’s theories.

2.8. To run his race (l. 5)

Level 1 – Language

The noun “race” in combination with the verb “to run”, as it appears here, means “[t]he regular progress, movement, or journey of the sun or the moon” (“race, *n.1.*” III.9.c) and, therefore, diverges greatly from the prevalent modern association of “a contest of speed in running” (“race, *n.1.*” IV.13.a). [“His course in prefixed compass keep” Level 2 - Interpretation]

Sources:

"race, *n.1.*" *OED Online*, Oxford University Press, December 2019, www.oed.com/view/Entry/157030. Accessed 11 December 2019.

2.9. Down galloping the mountain's steep (l. 6)

Level 1 – Intratextuality

This phrase stands in antithesis to the upward movement described in line 2 "mounting from the deep".

Level 2 – Intratextuality

The movements in different directions also take up the motif of God's omnipresence. ["All in all things with God's virtue filled" Level 2 – Interpretation]

2.10. Clear Hesperus (l. 7)

Level 1 – Language

A now archaic meaning of the adjective "clear" is "vividness or intensity of light: Brightly shining, bright, brilliant" ("clear, *adj.*, *adv.*, and *n.*" A.I.1.a.). One meaning of "clear" that is in use until now is "the purity or uncloudedness of light" ("clear, *adj.*, *adv.*, and *n.*" A.I.1.b). Both definitions seem appropriate in this context. ["Clear Hesperus" Level 2 – Interpretation]

Source:

"clear, *adj.*, *adv.*, and *n.*" *OED Online*, Oxford University Press, December 2019, www.oed.com/view/Entry/34078. Accessed 12 December 2019.

Level 1 – Context

Hesperus is the personification of the evening star in Greek mythology (Jobes 765) and refers to the planet Venus in the evening (Linsky 515).

Sources:

Jobes, Gertrude (ed.). "Hesperus." *Dictionary of Mythology Folklore and Symbols*, The Scarecrow Press, 1962, p. 756.

Linsky, Leonard. "Hesperus and Phosphorus." *The Philosophical Review*, Vol. 68, No. 4, Oct. 1959, pp. 515-518.

Level 2 – Interpretation

The evening star Hesperus is the precursor of night. However, also the brightly shining evening star brings light into the darkness, as does God, and belongs to the many stars that shine “with sun’s long borrowed splendour” (l. 10). The purity, implied in “clear”, further alludes to the beauty of stars, which simultaneously reflect the beauty of God’s virtue.

Level 3 - Intratextuality

Night, darkness, and light are included in the motif that “all things [are] with God’s virtue filled” (l. 14) as He created them and still inhabits them. [“And all in all things with God’s virtue filled” Level 2 - Interpretation]

2.11. Views (l. 8)

Level 1 – Form

For a syntactic analysis [“The world’s bright comforter [...] prefixed compass keep” Level 1 - Form].

Level 1 - Context

If the “world’s bright comforter” is assumed to refer not only to God as the sun but also to Jesus as the morning star [“The world’s bright comforter” Level 1 - Context], it is to be noted that, traditionally, morning star and evening star were considered two separate celestial bodies although it is now common knowledge that this is not the case. Both names refer to the planet Venus (Cain). This is why it is possible in the poem that the two “stars” can see each other.

Sources:

Cain, Fraser. “Venus, the Morning Star and Evening Star.” *Universe Today – Space and Astronomy News*, 19 Dec. 2008. <https://www.universetoday.com/22570/venus-the-morning-star/>. Accessed 10 Nov. 2019.

Level 2 – Interpretation

Hesperus, the evening star [“Clear Hesperus” Level 1 - Context], sees the “world’s bright comforter” [“The world’s bright comforter” Level 3 - Interpretation], which symbolises the transition and, therefore, the endless circle from day to night.

Level 3 - Intratextuality

The circle of day and night adds the scope of time to the motif of “all things with God’s virtue filled” (l. 14). [“All in all things with God’s virtue filled” Level 2 – Interpretation]

2.12. All years to their old quarters new resign (l. 12)

Level 1 – Language

The “quarters” in this context might require a spatial definition which, in the *OED*, appears as follows: “four regions or quadrants into which the earth, sky, or horizon is conceived to be divided, corresponding to the four cardinal points of the compass” (“quarter, *n.*” III.14.a.).

There is also a temporal definition of “quarters” which is “fourth part of a lunar month” or “the state or astronomical position of the moon when halfway between new and full moon (first quarter) or between full and new moon (last quarter)” (“quarter, *n.*” I.2.c).

Sources:

“quarter, *n.*” *OED Online*, Oxford University Press, December 2019, www.oed.com/view/Entry/156027. Accessed 09 December 2019.

Level 1 – Form

The possessive pronoun “their” is not clearly attributable to a subject. Since it stands in the plural, it could either refer to “all years”, “the seas” (l. 11) or “the stars” (l. 9). The latter, however, are only mentioned in a subordinate clause, which is why they have to be ruled out as possible referents, although semantically, they would make most sense.

Level 2 – Interpretation

The reading based on “all years” as the subject receives the temporal meaning of “quarter” [“All years to their old quarters new resign” Level 1 – Language] and could be interpreted as the beginning and the ending of the year after which the moon has returned to its original position. It alludes to the many circular flows that take place within the year, e.g. the moon and its position, but also the years that repeat again and again eternally.

Level 3 – Question

Which connection do the seas have to “all years” (l. 13)? Is there an annual rhythm they follow and may this rhythm be linked to the notion of *quarter*?

2.13. All in all things with God’s virtue filled (l. 14)

Level 1 – Language

Virtue as a property of divinity is defined as the “power or operative influence inherent in a supernatural or divine being” (“virtue, *n.*” I.3.a.). In Christian contexts, it further means an “influence working for good upon human life or conduct” with the connotation of “miracle”

("virtue, *n.*" II.8.b.). The term can also be applied to "the spiritual force or influence of an event, as the Passion of Christ" ("virtue, *n.*" II.9.c.) Although these meanings are now archaic, they were used during Barnabe Barnes's lifetime.

Source:

"virtue, *n.*" *OED Online*, Oxford University Press, June 2020, www.oed.com/view/Entry/223835. Accessed 19 June 2020.

Level 1 – Context

In Psalm 24:1-3 many of the aspects that appear in "God's Virtue" are mentioned as well: "The earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein. For he hath founded it upon the seas, and established it upon the floods. Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord? or who shall stand in his holy place?" (KJV)

Source:

The Bible. King James Version. *Bible Gateway*, Bible Gateway / Zondervan, 2016.

Level 1 – Intratextuality

The poem is literally framed by God who is referred to as an entity in the first line ["The world's bright comforter" Level 1 - Language] and the last.

Level 2 – Interpretation

The twofold meaning of God and sun in the "world's bright comforter" is maintained throughout the poem until, in the last line, God is ranked in hierarchy above any celestial object, including the sun. He is visible in the light by day through the sun and by night through the reflection of His light in the stars (l. 10). His presence is not limited to earthly objects, but He also fills celestial bodies and abstract concepts such as time. It includes the creation and the movement of the sun, planets, and stars that determine the course of time. God created the sun and gave Jesus (the son) to comfort the world on earth ["The world's bright comforter" Level 1 – Language].

The passage from Psalm 24 ["All in all things with God's virtue filled" Level 1 – Context] confirms this reading, as it states that God fills the whole world and its inhabitants. God's ubiquity explains his connection to the Creation of the earth as much as to ebb and flood. Here, too, the upward movement is described as a way up to God to "his hill" (Ps. 24:3), which is the equivalent of the recurring "mountain" in "God's Virtue" ["Mounting from the deep" Level 1 – Language]. While "down galloping the mountain's steep" is antithetical in its movement, the

opposition of “Hesperus” (l. 7), harbinger of the night, and the “world’s bright comforter” (l. 1), harbinger of the day, [“Views” Level 1 - Context] show that God’s virtue can be found in every direction and from every point of view. Even change, e.g. from day to night and back, is intended and attended by God.

Source:

The Bible. King James Version. *Bible Gateway*, Bible Gateway / Zondervan, 2016

3. Conclusion – Methodology

As assumed in the introduction, the poem requires much explanation on the basis of which it opens up more layers of meaning than perceived at a first glance. To understand the basic coherence of the poem the first step was to disentangle the syntactic relations which turned out to be more complex than expected since some of the problematic passages (“mounting from the deep” l. 2, “All years to their old quarters new resign” l. 12) could not be related definitely to one agent but to several. In the case of line 12 “All years to their old quarters new resign”, I could not find a sensible explanation nor a satisfying interpretation because, to my knowledge, the seas are the most likely syntactical subject but do not have an annual rhythm. I included this uncertainty in the category question so that readers could consider that question and maybe even come up with a possible answer.

A general difficulty for overarching phenomena is the question of suitable anchorage to which the styleguide does not suggest a sufficiently satisfactory answer. One possibility, the one I opted for, is anchoring the general form with the title. The disadvantage of this option is that it is not expected to belong there. Readers will click on the items for knowing more about these, thus expecting the annotation anchored with the title to address the meaning of the title as such, rather than a general analysis. If one is interested in the annotation on enjambments, the title would probably not be the first annotated item to have a look at. However, the annotations thematically and analytically belong together, which strongly argues in favour of keeping the observations on enjambments and sentence structure together as an overall issue of the poem. If each enjambment and difficult sentence structure would be annotated separately, it would still be necessary to group them somehow for a final, overall interpretation. Scattering the different parts of one larger annotation and its anchors across the poem would diminish its explanatory function and probably confuse the reader even more through a tedious labyrinth of cross-references.

It makes little sense to mark the whole poem as an anchor for an annotation, for instance, on the enjambments across the stanzas in *God's Virtue*. Such an extensive anchor would reduce the visual clarity of the annotated poem significantly so that the other individually annotated items would not be immediately recognisable anymore. I encountered the same problem for the syntactic analysis of the first sentence (see 2.2), for which I could not find a suitable, short anchor.

A minor technical problem that arose in the process of annotating was that the styleguide does not explicitly indicate in which category syntactic relations belong. I included these annotations in the category "Form" since this category is mainly concerned with structural matters.

The next step was to find suitable definitions for the words used in the poem. The necessity of clarification was immediately apparent with some words of which the modern significance led to unlikely interpretations (e.g. "run his race" l. 5). Other words seemed plain at first but produced more appropriate meanings when browsing through entries in the *OED* (e.g. "clear" l. 7, "quarters" l. 12), which was usually due to now obsolete meanings. Especially "quarters" in line 12 can be read in many distinct senses, but it was difficult to find a plausible one that suited the context.

Considering my primary expectations about the contextual notes, I was surprised about the little connection the poem proved to have to astrophysics. Whereas my first intuition was that the frequent use of celestial imagery was evidence for the knowledge about physical links between natural phenomena (e.g. the movement of ebb and flood by the moon and gravitation), this was, in fact, not the case. It remains an open question, which I also included in the "Question" category, whether Barnabe Barnes was at all informed about or convinced of the heliocentric system. Assuming that the agent of "mounting from the deep" (l. 2) is indeed the sun and that it is also the sun that keeps "in prefixed compass" (l. 3), this could even hint at a non-astrophysically informed background of the poem. In the end, the field of astrophysics plays a far smaller role in the poem than I had expected.

The same applies to the coexistence of Christian and mythological images which resulted much less in opposition than I had at first presumed. On the contrary, the different fields harmonise very well and create an imagery that is even richer in meaning. The evening star Hesperus, however, was the only mythological feature that I could find. I had expected to find the solution to obscure expressions such as "down galloping the mountain's steep" (l. 6) or "The winds forsake their mountain-chambers wild" (l. 13) in classical myths but instead did not come up with any helpful information in this respect at all. These impenetrable passages in the

poem are still numerous and require further research in order to complete the annotations for “God’s Virtue”. Among these untouched passages are “courageous giant” (l. 4), “down galloping the mountain’s steep” (l. 6), “silver ornament of night” (l. 8) as well as “[t]he winds forsake their mountain-chambers wild” (l. 13).

4. Appendix

4.1. God's Virtue by Barnabe Barnes

God's Virtue (Son. 88)

1 The world's bright comforter, whose beamsome light

Poor creatures cheereth, mounting from the deep,

His course doth in prefixed compass keep;

And, as courageous giant, takes delight

5 To run his race and exercise his might,

Till him, down galloping the mountain's steep,

Clear Hesperus, smooth messenger of sleep,

Views; and the silver ornament of night

Forth brings, with stars past number in her train,

10 All which with sun's long borrowed splendour shine.

The seas, with full tide swelling, ebb again;

All years to their old quarters new resign;

The winds forsake their mountain-chambers wild,

And all in all things with God's virtue filled.

(Source: Davie, Donald (ed.). *The New Oxford Book of Christian Verse*, Oxford UP Reissued 2003, pp. 66-67.)

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Declaration:

Hereby I declare that I have produced the following text myself, with only the given sources and resources. All parts of the text that were based on or quote the words or ideas of other/others works have been made clear and are clearly cited.