One of the unwritten arts underpinning sixteenth-century poetics was logic. This was the subject that gave substance, form and, crucially for this chapter, causation and agency to the world and all of its beings and entities; but without becoming acquainted with its technical apparatus, its operations are easily overlooked by modern readers. That technical apparatus was so ingrained in early modern readers and writers that it was almost automatic; it was the lens through which, since their schooldays, people were taught to analyse or to ‘read’, and subsequently write, the world and everything in it. I say almost automatic because there is manuscript evidence of people such as Andrew Marvell’s preacher father specifically marking up his writing with analytical terms from logic textbooks, and that kind of trace evidence allows us, all too briefly, to inhabit a mindset which understood the world in terms of its logical properties and their work.¹ Early modern logicians recognised the potency of their art: repeatedly referred to as the ars artium, or ‘art of arts’, the instrument responsible for directing the mind and thoughts effectively and for finding ideas, its principles provided the foundation for all forms of eloquence and expression, but as so often happens with truly fundamental things, such as cells, micro-organisms, nerve synapses and so on, if you do not know what to look for, its elemental work goes undetected.²

The challenge of teaching fundamental principles was one familiar to sixteenth-century logicians: their textbooks are characterised by a flurry of innovations aimed at enhancing pedagogy, from compact digests of key principles and vernacular manuals to explorations in visual learning such as the famous branching diagrams (usually referred to as Ramistic, but in fact found in reforming logic textbooks...
across the pedagogical and confessional spectrum), printed Porphyrian trees, and experiments with different colours of ink to aid with memorisation. In a period of heady reforms reorienting this subject at the heart of the *trivium* from a descriptive art to an art that could change the world through its actions, one of the key features used by logicians to teach their art was the poetic example. These were perhaps most famously called upon by reforming logician and pedagogue Petrus Ramus and his legions of followers, imitators, adaptors and even some competitors in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries; but earlier work by Rudolph Agricola and Philip Melanchthon also found poetry useful as a means of explaining and illustrating logical principles. In the context of this volume, we are pursuing the ways in which these ‘silent’ arts affect, inflect, some might say infect, and shape and drive poetry and poetic innovation in the early modern period. If logicians were interested in poetry, which they certainly were, this chapter asks how, in turn, poets were interested in and used logic.

In his vernacular manual called the *Lawyers’ Logike* in 1588, Abraham Fraunce included both the Latin text and his own English hexameter translation of Virgil’s Second Eclogue; he then presented a synthetic tree diagram analysis of the logic at work within the eclogue. Fraunce claimed to have based his analysis on the work of Ramus’s disciple, Johann Thomas Freige, although no direct source has been identified to date, and Zenón Luis-Martínez has convincingly demonstrated specific points of contact linking Fraunce’s analysis with Ramus’s own (non-tabulated) logical examination of Virgil’s text in his 1555 *Bucolica, praelectionibus exposita*. The tables in The *Lawyers’ Logike* divide the Eclogue into two parts: the argument ‘of the incontinency of a lover lamenting his love in solitary places’ and ‘the complaint and lamentation of Corydon the lover’. In the analysis of Corydon’s complaint, Fraunce (and by extension, Freige and Ramus) identifies the lover as ‘speaking’ – this is a tiny point in the context of extensive unfurling tables detailing Corydon’s adjuncts, his qualities and the logical functions which inform us about these things. But it is crucial that all of this information, this substance, depends upon an action: it leans upon a cause, which is Corydon himself ‘speaking’. In these diagrams, a logician uses poetry to demonstrate the principles of its unwritten art at work; poetry is transmuted into a branching tree of adjuncts, logical comparisons, qualities, contraries and corrections, and suddenly, through a poetic work which was itself a touchstone of the sixteenth-century classroom, logic itself floats up to the surface of conscious thought. It is revealed as the substrate sustaining
and enabling the poetic vision, and when logic emerges as a life-giving force in poetry, we can begin to think not only about how poetry was helpful in teaching logic, but also how poets found logic to be one of the unwritten arts necessary for them to achieve their aesthetic visions.

This chapter reads sixteenth-century poetry in light of the principles of logicians, acting in effect as a twenty-first-century version of the Ramistic synthetic tree analysis of Virgil’s eclogues. But in doing so it reveals the ways in which sixteenth-century poets used logic to inject a new kind of agency into their poetry. This agency has its roots in the reorientation of discursive logic in the sixteenth century which resulted in the prioritisation of personal ability, responsibility and accountability, and poetic form played a key role in generating distinctive, individualistic voices capable of creating and sustaining complex and multifaceted arguments by both fictional characters and narrative personae in verse. Logic might seem like a stultifying, fundamentally unpoetic art, but reforms in this period led to its transformation into something dynamic, invested in finding and leveraging agency and possibility. It is that poetics of agency and possibility which we can recover when we learn to read sixteenth-century poetry through the lens of logic as one of its unwritten arts.

**Reforming the Unwritten Art of Logic**

When Petrus Ramus reoriented discursive logic in the sixteenth century, he did so by putting logical ‘cause’ front and centre. In a call to action (literally), the first technical logical operation which his textbooks and those of his followers explained is ‘cause’, insisting upon the necessity of knowing who or what is making things happen: what is the root of the root and the bud of the bud of a branch called Ramus? This decision marks a clear break from Aristotelian logic texts in the period: these perennially began by taking their readers through the descriptive operations of logic (predicaments, definitions, places, etc.), only later considering active functions such as cause, which make these things come to life. In other words, Aristotelianism can be characterised as a logic of stasis, in comparison with a Ramist logic of dynamism.

The focus on cause represents not only a reordering of a standard set of principles but rather a change in worldview: a Ramist world is one predicated upon a person’s ability to take action, to *cause* change, as opposed to describing a static universe and accepting his or her fate.
This chapter examines the ramifications of this reorientation towards cause for writers, whether of prose, poetry or drama, in late sixteenth-century England, tracing the evolution of the principles of logical cause in discourse manuals from early innovations by Agricola to the widely adopted reforms of Melanchthon and Ramus, and Thomas Wilson's English vernacular interpretation of this emerging culture of logical analysis and creation. Training in logic was the keystone of the trivium, and all writers working in the period learned their craft through studying a range of these textbooks. I refer to it as an ‘invisible art’, because it has no inherent vocabulary which must be present in order for its force to be at work in a piece of writing; it is an art concerned with identifying and characterising activity and passivity, cause and effect, and those might be declared in an almost infinite number of ways using an almost infinite combination of words. However, this is not to say it is undetectable: it certainly was detectable to sixteenth-century writers and readers versed in its methods, and we can likewise see it at work in their poetry if we follow in their footsteps to make connections between the discursive principles set forth in pedagogical works from the period and the ways in which writers put those ideas to use in creative contexts. We are familiar with noticing particular word orders and constructions to identify particular kinds of rhetorical technique in sixteenth-century verse: the opening ‘O’ of an exclamation, or the symmetry of a chiasmus. This chapter explores how similar markings indicate particular types of logical activity being used by a writer in a poetic passage, aiming to make this art which would otherwise remain invisible to us visible, and to help us understand how its methods were used by poets in this period to generate meaning.

For poets, having an art purposefully designed to inject and emphasise agency and dynamic change enabled a new kind of poetics of activity and potentiality, which this chapter explores. Cause plays a key role in showing agency and motive on the part of both the speaker(s) in a poem and also the writer, and the chapter concludes by witnessing this culture of logical causation and invention in specific poems by Edmund Spenser, Philip Sidney and Christopher Marlowe. As the ‘art of arts’, logic is potentially detectable in any poetry from this time period, but these texts were chosen because, as love complaints, they represent a genre which is by its very nature invested in identifying and decrying agency and blame. ‘It’s not me, it’s you’ is the core refrain of all three poems, and because each writer puts questions of agency and causation in the foreground of these texts, they offer an instructive way for us to start acquaintance with logic and its cues in various modes.
While logic is ubiquitous in sixteenth-century writing and its tuition, that is not to say that all writers were simply implementing a preordained schema to produce identical results. All Renaissance logic texts teach the four causes – efficient, matter, form and end – but their order and emphasis represent very different philosophies and consequently theories of discourse. The result is a practical poetics of action, shown here through several representative examples that witness the causal reorientation taking place at this time, as a theoretical prioritising of dynamic action manifests in a poetics of agency and possibility. As is demonstrated many times over in this volume, the unwritten arts of poetry – its logic, its conscious eloquence and ineloquence, imitation, inspiration, grace and physiology – are constitutive of poetic praxis, rather than official poetics. The rules for this practical poetics are unwritten in textbooks about poetry itself from the period, appearing rather, in this instance, in logic books; sixteenth-century poets harnessed this different, arguably inherently unpoetic, apparatus to create a potent form of dynamic poetic praxis.10

Early Reforms

Before Ramus reoriented logic in the sixteenth century, in 1485 Rudolph Agricola set a new, dynamic standard for the process of invention in his *De inventione dialecticae*.11 In Agricola’s logical invention, matter and form are grouped beneath ideas of definition and description that are in and of themselves fundamentally static processes: the loci of *genus* and *species* capture the world in a photograph or at least a woodcut, freezing its players and places in names and characteristics. The activity of definition and description is inherently an attempt to see and to arrest a world of things rather than a world of actions and motions. However, there is a more active relationship at work between matter and form in Agricolan invention: matter might sound like a load of inactive ‘stuff’, but in Agricola’s treatise we have a matter that empowers *generatur primum*, ‘first generation’ or ‘first creation’ (sig. 19r). This matter might not be active in and of itself, but it has the latent potential to enable the first, fundamental step of creation, and that ability endows it with a philosophical power and energy that belong to a world in motion. Form, too, might lack its own active creative capacity, but it holds the key for the world of things, for all of that matter, to take on specific identities and qualities and through these to lay claim to
particular names (sig. 19r): *forma, est modus quidam materiae, quo sibi contingit, ut huius vel illius speciei capiat nomen* (‘form is the specific type of matter by which something constitutes itself, in order that we may call it by this or that specific name’). Agricolan form holds the tacit power for everything in the world to have a name and thereby to have a particular role.

Agricola’s place logic reoriented the role of loci within discursive theory and practice: he rehabilitated the places from having a final probatory role in *iudicium* to taking on an active position in creative argumentative invention. This reorientation gives a dynamic impetus to loci in the art of reasoning, taking these dialectical components from the realm of the post mortem to the birth of all forms of discourse. Agricola demonstrates his process at work not only in generic or prosaic examples, but also in poetry. Peter Mack has discussed in detail the way that, for instance, Agricola calls upon Virgil’s depiction of Dido’s lament to illustrate the importance of ‘argumentation’ in ‘arousing emotions’ in a reader. In this example, Agricola uses Virgil’s text not only to demonstrate that argumentation can be effective in inspiring a strong response in a reader, but rather to show that it is the chief, most powerful active principle making Dido’s appeal effective. By calling upon poetry as well as prose and generic examples, Agricola presents a vision of a truly *universal* dialectic, applicable to and at work within any and every type of discourse in the world.

In following a Ciceronian and Boethian structure for his place logic (while also, as Marc van der Poel has pointed out, elaborating on Aristotle’s predicables in an inheritance from Aristotelian manuals), Agricola treats efficient and final cause as external loci. They are *cognata*, or ‘related things’, necessarily entwined with the existence and nature of any subject under discussion, but coming to it, not from within but from without. Agricola cites Aristotle to explain the relationship that causes have with one another (sig. 28v): *materiam, ex qua res sit: formam, per quam est: efficientem, a qua sit: finem, propter quam sit* (‘matter is that out of which a thing is; form, that through which a thing is; efficient cause, that by which something is; the end, for which something is’). These latter two, efficient cause and end, are the causes *cuius vi evenit aliquid* (‘through whose power everything happens’). Each cause gets its own gerund, associated repeatedly and concertedly as being integral to *agendo*, or ‘doing’ (sigs. 28v–29r). Agricola’s text is quite unusual in assigning any particular logical component a gerund, suggesting an attitudinal element to this decision. Agricola declares that *est autem potissima causarum*
omnium, finis (‘end is the most powerful of all of the causes’). Matter and form rudis est et inculta (‘are rude and uncultivated’); the efficient cause might precipitate things, but it is the end which is the cause for the sake of which everything is done – *is enim cuius gratia omnia agunt* (sigs. 28v, 30r).

In 1535 Philip Melanchthon published the *Dialecticae Philippi Melanchthonis libri tres*, in which he references Agricola regarding *inventio* and the loci.¹³ Like Agricola, Melanchthon sets great store by the loci: he fulfils the promise of his three-book title with the sections ‘Terminus’ [‘Terms’], ‘De propositione’ [‘Of Propositions’] and ‘De argumentatione’ [‘Of Argumentation’], and then goes a step better to add a fourth, ‘De locis argumentorum’, in which he examines all four causes just before discussing the process of invention. The rationale for Melanchthon’s structure becomes evident in this final part of his text: under ‘Terminus’ we learn about Aristotle’s categories, predicates and predicaments in preparation for a broader discussion of definition, the principal function of all of the preceding categories. Book two covers propositions by explaining different propositional modes and division, while book three sets forth the formulaic components of argumentation, syllogisms and enthymemes. The fourth book is a synthesising move, explaining the large-scale processes of logic that demand all of the preceding components: invention, questions and demonstration. Melanchthon superadds the rhetorical *locus personarum* in this section, suggesting his participation in the humanist community that saw boundaries between logic and rhetoric as pliable or porous.

Melanchthon treats cause late in his manual, subordinating it to definitions, propositions and other static components. When efficient cause is afforded its own chapter, Melanchthon associates it with people: this is the cause *a quo primo sit motus* (‘the thing by which a thing is first moved’), and because of this he defines *efficiens* as *vivendum est*, giving examples such as ‘the architect who makes his building’ – *Architectus cum vult aedificat* (sig. 65r). This is a cause that, Melanchthon argues, occurs naturally in people, which, in the context of his incorporation of the Aristotelian rhetorical *locus personarum*, perhaps suggests a persuasive association with *efficiens*. Melanchthon’s depiction is a particularly vivid imagining of the principle of efficient cause as something living, something that brings life to all those static products of the Aristotelian categorical descriptive and defining process. This rhetorical connection, rooting these precepts in not only the rational probatory qualities of dialectic but also the persuasive qualities of its sister art, is confirmed when Melanchthon
discusses final cause (sig. 65v): *et sumuntur hinc loci Rhetorici, Honestum et utile* (‘they are taken from the places of Rhetoric, honest and useful’). This is a clear difference between Melanchthon’s text and Ramist logics, which do not entertain this idea in their discussions of types of cause.

And Then There Was Ramus

It was Petrus Ramus who inverted the order of logic to give the causes prime position at the beginning of his treatise, the *Dialecticae partitiones*, in 1543. Ramus has been critically renowned and reviled for overhauling the relationship between logic and rhetoric, assigning *inventio* and *dispositio*, or *iudicium*, to logic, and *elocutio* and *pronuntiatio* to rhetoric, and removing altogether the traditional fifth component of oratory, *memoria*. However, when it comes to understanding the early modern imagined intellectual community of logic, that through which all educated people in the period filtered their world, more important than his rearrangement of the parts of oratory is his alteration of the orientation and composition of logic.

The most striking change that Ramus makes is to bring the four causes to the forefront of his treatise. Ramus’s English-language translators Roland MacIlmaine, Abraham Fraunce and Dudley Fenner open their reformed logics with only short prefatory remarks before launching into lean, clear and short chapters on cause, matter, form and end, meaning that this rearrangement is immediately apparent. Readers familiar with these texts may be caught off-guard when tracing their steps back to Ramus’s first formal published treatise on dialectic, the *Dialecticae partitiones*, which begins with a lengthy 60-plus-page preface. Only after this does Ramus reveal his new way of thinking about logic, reorienting it permanently as a dynamic art based first and foremost on motion and action. If you come primed to the early editions of Ramus’s textbook from an English background, it does not immediately conform to expectations of concision and clarity. It is necessary to understand the *Partitiones* as a watershed moment in which Ramus calls for an inversion of the unwritten art of arts, and that dramatic change is the reason for his lengthy and painstaking preface.

When it comes to detailing the causes themselves, while the fundamental functions remain constant (making things be; being the stuff that they are; being the particular shape that makes things individual; being the reason for things being and happening), Ramus is innovative
once again in his emphasis. Whereas Agricola and Melanchthon place weight on the finis or end cause, Ramus gives most air time to efficient cause. Defining it in its basic form simply and efficiently as causa est, cuius vi res est (‘cause is that by whose force a thing is or comes to be’), Ramus proceeds to identify different types of efficient cause. He begins with sections on de efficiente proceante and conservante, the kinds of efficient cause which create ab initio and those which sustain. This creative and generative capability goes a long way towards explaining why Ramus argues that cause is the most important component of logical invention: these are the precepts that will allow you to make something, to do something with it, and to realise your purpose in doing so. In the 1592 posthumous edition of the Dialecticae libri duo, Virgil is called upon to bring auctoritas to Ramus’s prioritisation of cause with his wisdom from the Georgics (2.490): Felix, qui potuit rerum cognoscere causas (‘lucky is he who can understand the causes of things’). On the one hand, this is a helpful classical touchstone supporting Ramus’s idea, but on the other, its introduction to the 1592 edition might indicate that this is an idea that is still in need of support. As Ramus emphasises efficient cause, he breaks it down into its different varieties and capacities, including when it works alone (sola) and with other causes (cum aliis), when it functions in and of itself (per se) or by happenstance (per accidens). Ramus refers to these latter as the internal and external efficient causes respectively in a move that anticipates and perhaps seeks to participate in an uptick of interest in these two different types of agency that we can see in prominent early seventeenth-century logics by Bartholomaeus Keckermann (1602), his disciple Franc Burgersdijck (1626), Christopher Airay (1628) and more.

The Middle Man: Friedrich Beurhaus and the Consolation of Philippo-Ramism

The question of mediating between schools of logical thought was a common sixteenth-century pursuit. In 1586 music theorist and Ramist logician Friedrich Beurhaus created a dual edition and comparative commentary on the dialectics of Melanchthon and Ramus. He opens with a reflective proem which assigns the sin of our first parents as the fundamental cause requiring us to learn and to lean on the art of logic in an attempt to redeem our fallen faculties. Beurhaus’s text takes a bibliographic approach to logical instruction: on the verso of each page, he prints Ramus’s Dialecticae libri duo, and this is faced on the recto by corresponding extracts from Philip
Melanchthon’s *Dialecticae*. Alongside each text Beurhaus provides his own printed marginal annotations, thereby providing mediation to help us to negotiate between potential discrepancies or nuances distinguishing the two treatises. Melanchthon presented his text in a markedly different order to that invented by Ramus: Beurhaus’s decision to produce a parallel comparative edition inherently, therefore, involves choosing between the authors’ organisational philosophies and priorities, and in the opening chapter, Ramus wins the day with a definition that prioritises cause and that reads differently from Melanchthon’s explicit definitional and argumentative discussion.

The first chapter begins with Ramus’s opening question, *quid est Dialectica?* (‘what is dialectic’), answered with the phrase that dominated logics in the second half of the sixteenth century: *dialectica est ars bene disserendi* (‘dialectic is the art of discoursing well’; sig. B1v). Facing this remark, Melanchthon’s *Dialecticae* is extracted to answer the same question with the statement *dialectica est ars recte, ordine, & perspecui docendi* (‘dialectic is the art of teaching correctly, exactly and transparently’), which is elaborated upon to say that dialectic involves *recte definiendo, dividendo, argumenta vera connectendo, & malo cohaerentia refutando* (‘correctly defining, dividing, constructing true arguments and coherently refuting the bad’; sig. B2r).

Beurhaus’s annotations function in part by providing simple glosses. He also highlights and elaborates upon key points in his source texts, and in these we have one Renaissance reader’s interpretation of these two leading theorists. Beurhaus comments that Ramus’s dialectic relies upon and enables us to comprehend the essential causes of a thing, what makes it begin and come into being, the precise shape that it has (*forma*), and its goal. This is Beurhaus’s first direct annotation to Ramus’s text, and it immediately underscores the primary role of cause in this logic. His gloss on Melanchthon is very different, not least because he begins by glossing dialectic as *bene disserere, Logicae artis* (‘to discourse well is the art of Logic’); this renaming might have its own significance, or it might speak to a broader view in the later sixteenth century that these terms were increasingly if not entirely interchangeable (sig. B1r). Due to his source text, Beurhaus’s commentary debates whether definitions and divisions belong properly to invention or judgement, excluding any direct discussion of causes. However, Beurhaus seems to be making significant efforts to reconcile his duelling logics, suggesting ways in which Melanchthon’s vision of an art of defining and dividing and making correct arguments fits within a Ramist umbrella of method (sig. B2v). Equally, he refers tacitly to Melanchthon’s longer discussion of the role
of dialectic as a tool enabling us to discourse *probabiliter* (‘probably’), something that those texts by Ramus printed during his lifetime do not mention. This mediated conversation, opening lines of dialogue and contrast between two leading theorists, shows Ramus’s innovation in his causal prioritising while also conjuring vivid links between that and a Melanchthonian ideal of defining and dividing. It is probably (pun intended) no coincidence that Beurhaus uses the language of defining and dividing in his commentary on Ramus in this comparative context, and here we gain a clear perspective on his reconciliatory mission to show not two competing schools of thought but two different perspectives on *the same art*.

Although Beurhaus starts by following the order of Ramus’s textbook, he openly addresses the problem of the discrepancy between the structures of the two treatises in the B gathering, in a note on signature B4v, where he parallels Melanchthon’s discussion of predicable and categories with an explanation that there are no dedicated chapters on these concepts in Ramus’s *Dialecticae*. In the interests of fairness, Melanchthon is given the lead in the C gathering to discuss predicables. Beurhaus’s notes work hard to forge a link between Melanchthon’s Aristotelian predicables and Ramus’s opening causal precepts. Alongside Melanchthon’s discussion of *genus*, Beurhaus argues that *Ramus docet genus esse symbolum caussarum essentiae* (‘Ramus teaches that genus is the emblem of essential causes’; sig. C2v). Melanchthon’s text dominates the ensuing gatherings until signature H4v, and the only mention of cause is as the sixth part of a ten-part list documenting the appropriate *methodus* or method to follow when conducting logical investigations and analyses. The result of this highly interventional rearrangement of both treatises ends up skewing to Melanchthon’s structure, in spite of opening with a declaration of Ramus’s dynamic investment in this art. Consequently, Beurhaus’s hybrid commentary text at least begins by demoting causation beneath predicables and categories.

**Cause and the English Aristotelians in the Sixteenth Century**

If cause is the star of the reformed logic show, it ascended to that position from a much lowlier role in Aristotelian texts, where it was at best the understudy locus to the far more important categories and predicates. Vernacular treatises might not be institutionally significant, but they do provide a useful distillation of prevailing trends
in the two main competing logical factions. In 1551 Thomas Wilson was one of the first scholars to use the term ‘logique’ to refer to his treatise in his title, associating it explicitly with ‘reason’.

It is not too flippant to note that he uses the noun ‘reason’ rather than the verbal form ‘reasoning’, and that interest in fixed and fixing description goes hand-in-hand with the Aristotelian structure of his textbook. However, his is a good example of the ways in which a textbook can be simultaneously innovative in some aspects and traditional or even conservative in others, contributing to a larger view of logic as a global imagined intellectual community more united by what it holds in common than divided by its differences. The choice – and choosing is an important concept in Wilson’s text – to create a vernacular logic text indicates an interest in reform, and although Wilson subsumes causation beneath a heavy pile of Aristotelian categories, when he reaches it he does so with an investment not only in the ways in which it manifests, but also in why it does so, investigating its origins in the fleshy tables of the heart.

Wilson treats causes in the second part of his book, which he titles ‘Inventio, that is to saie, the fyndyng out of an argument’ (sig. 14v). Anyone immersed in reading Ramist logics will find Wilson’s positioning of invention in the second half of his book counterintuitive, and to an extent it is the same for a modern reader: surely if we are investigating something, do we need to ‘fynd’ it first? But to appreciate this approach from an Aristotelian and specifically Wilsonian point of view, you could not find anything, or at least not thoroughly and correctly, without knowing what kind of thing you were looking for: you had to learn the categories, predicates and predicaments before you could do anything involving motion, because otherwise you would not know what you were looking at. Wilson sees causes as types of loci, allying his approach with that of Agricola. It is telling that in his preface, in a rather tortured ‘declaration in meter, of the vii liberal artes’, he explains how ‘Logique by art settes further the truth, / And doth tel what is vayne. / Rethorique at large paintes well the cause’ (sig. B2r). In this formulation, Wilson follows Agricola’s coalition of causes as belonging to logic and rhetoric, or logic in a rhetorical way, but his stipulation also speaks to Melanchthon’s idea of dialectic or logic as a means of establishing truth.

The four causes are explicitly associated with truth processes by Wilson, as he calls on examples both from natural philosophy and scripture to illustrate them. Wilson treats efficient cause first, and also accords it the most time in his manual. He glosses it as the ‘workyng cause, by whose meanes, thynges are brought to passe’, and that
The logical cause of an early modern poetics of action definition draws attention to the potency and dynamism of this locus in a way that challenges the stasis implied by that geographical motif (sig. L1v). Understanding efficient cause as something that does work, either because of the innate power and capacity of an agent or by compelling someone or something else to act, is to understand it as something that makes things happen. The ‘workyng cause’ is the mover and shaker in Wilson’s treatise, yet that same potency makes it difficult to capture in its entirety, and that difficulty comes through as the terminology that Wilson uses to define it shifts. Initially, Wilson divides efficient cause into three varieties: that which functions ‘by nature’, ‘by advisement’ and ‘by a fore purposed choyse’. The efficient causes working ‘by nature’ are internal causes which function because of the innate qualities and capacities of their agents. Wilson’s examples of these causes all come from the natural world: ‘the sonne, even by nature, geveth light to the daie, and cannot otherwise doo’. So too ‘herbes’ have their ‘vertue’ (although it says something about sixteenth-century medicine that Wilson does not dwell on what that might be), ‘Adamant draweth Iron’ and ‘the bloud stone stoppeth bloud’ (sig. L2r) – we will come back to that medical problem.

The key idea in Wilson’s understanding of causes is whether efficient cause works on or through entities which do or do not possess ‘knowledge to chuse this, or that’, and which do or do not ‘have judgement to discerne thynges’ (sig. L2r). It is hard to read that claim without hearing a forerunner of Milton’s later stipulation in his lessons in heaven that ‘reason also is choice’. While the predominant arrangement (and, depending on your translation, all Ramist and many other hybrid logics devoted entire books to dispositio, or arrangement) in The Rule of Reason is Aristotelian, Wilson’s interest in the psychological and the internal workings and motivations propelling causal bodies allies him with logical reforms that originated with Agricola and Ramus before taking on an actively self-reflective character in the seventeenth-century works led by Keckermann. For Wilson, something may have causal dynamism from its innate qualities, but only when that dynamism emanates from a place of choosing. In the case of the ‘naturall’ efficient cause, Wilson argues that ‘the effecte must nedes folowe’: ‘if the Sonne shine, the daie must nedes be, which is the effecte, or workemanship of the Sunne’; ‘take away the cause, and theffect [sic] can not be at al: for if there be no fire, there can bee no flame, nor burning neither’. However, as soon as we reach causes through which ‘thynges are dooen by advisement, and by choyse’, there is no longer any ‘necessitie’ compelling particular outcomes (sig. L2v). In these causes, ‘thynges maie aswell not bee
doen, as be doen’, and as soon as there is the possibility that a cause can have different effects by dint of choices made by its agent, Wilson insists that his students perceive the psychological dimension of causality. It is easy to miss the force of Wilson’s claim, as he chooses a sartorial example that reads oddly today: ‘if there be a Shomaker, there maie be a soue [sic] made, and contrary, if there by no Shoemaker there can be no shone [sic] at all’ (sigs. L2v–L3r). If cause is all-important, the driver that determines each and every happening in the world either through dumb necessity or reasoned choosing, it is hard to see that urgency in whether or not a pair of Prada shoes is created.

The quotidian example, intended presumably to allow a reader to see this conception of efficient cause at work in their everyday life, runs the risk of minimising the power of this kind of psychological motivation, but it is a lesson not to overlook the ‘ordinary’ examples in logic texts. For Wilson’s examples of the ‘voluntary’ efficient cause escalate rapidly from the fickleness of a shoemaker and a carpenter who might or might not build a house to the improving qualities of books: ‘if one reade good authors, and herken to the readyng of learned men, he maie come to good learnyng’ (sig. L3r). When this kind of example is presented to someone who is currently reading what we might presume to be the work of one of those ‘learned men’, suddenly that internal psychological and emotional motivation has become our problem: what kind of reader are we each going to be? Will I learn from Wilson’s learning, and succeed in my journey to ‘good learnyng’? Or will I get to that shoemaker example and think, Oh, I get it, no need to read the rest of those examples, while entirely missing the gravitas that choices like this have. In a sucker punch to a cocky reader, Wilson explains ‘the maner of reasonyng’ underlying the voluntary efficient cause by saying that ‘Christe hath reconciled mankind to his father, by suffering death upon the Crosse, Ergo suche as beleve in this saving health, shall live for ever’ (sig. L3r). Now the voluntary cause determines not only whether I am clothed and housed, but the eternal clothing and housing of my immortal soul. Wilson dwells not on Christ’s causal behaviour in this example, but on that of the person who chooses to believe or not believe in Christ-given divine salvation. When that example begins, there seems to be the possibility that we will be asked to understand Christ himself as exemplifying voluntary causation, but that consideration is deferred to humanity. One way to read this deferral is to question whether Wilson would see Christ’s actions as voluntary, or whether these happened through necessity by his very make-up. Alternatively,
perhaps as fledgling logicians we are not ready to turn our reasoning power to the choices made by divine beings, and Wilson’s extended example reads as a version of ‘physician, heal thyself’, meaning that we need first to attend to our own internal motivations before questioning their unimpeachable equivalents in three-personed God.

Wilson firmly places the causal responsibility for salvation on each individual person under the umbrella of voluntarism, and in doing so he makes a crucial argument about the relationship between efficient cause and free will. He goes on to elaborate upon other divisions of efficient cause which explicitly deny or subjugate any such freedom, the ‘commaundyng’ and the ‘obedient’ causes. ‘The Kyng is the commaundyng cause to his subjecte to doo this or that’, and while rebellion is possible, it is not an option that Wilson entertains actively in his text (sig. L3r). Efficient causes ‘as do obey’ represent another facet of causes operating by necessity, but these are ones that derive not from a natural necessity but from necessity dictated by the free will, advisement and choosing of another agent, ‘as the Mason worketh upon the stone, the Carpenter upon wood’ (sig. L3v). In these instances, it is quite hard to parse the logical operations at work: it can seem as if Wilson is arguing that the stone and wood are the entities responsible for the efficient cause, as they are where its results will manifest. However, those results are products of the will (and skill) of the mason or carpenter working upon them, meaning that causal agency rests with the mason or carpenter; but Wilson does not accord them free will or voluntary power, positing them instead as ‘obedient’ causes who simply ‘doo their woorke’ in accordance with their ‘maisters commaundement’ (sig. L3v).

Ranked below the commanding and obedient causes is the instrument: ‘hatchettes, hammers, [and] pike axes’ ‘are obedient’ because they ‘are but instrumentes of dooyng’, exercising no choice and therefore no reason in their causal actions, even though they may wreak havoc (sig. L3v). These instruments, and even Wilson’s workers, align with Graham Greene’s blind leper with a bell roaming the world and meaning no harm. Wilson sets this causal hierarchy in a military context: ‘the captain’ in battle is the ‘efficient commaunder’ choosing – that is, reasoning – what actions his workers will take with their instruments. The soldier is the ‘efficient obeyer’ following the commander’s reasoning by using his ‘instrumentes of dooyng’, the ‘gunnes, dartes, bowes, and billes’ to accomplish the captain’s logical end or goal (sig. L3v). Wilson is unusual in dissecting agency to this degree, particularly among vernacular logics which are typically more concise than their Latin compatriots: his is a theory of logical
causality in which the buck stops with the human agent. We are each responsible for the force and potency we hold. If we use that force to sin, albeit as an ‘efficient obeyer’ or perhaps even as an ‘instrument of dooyng’ acting at the will of a persuasive or coercive devil, we still in fact did that action. The devil can’t be damned again – but we can.

Wilson’s theory of causation is devoted to understanding personal agency and to asserting it: ‘good hede ought to bee had, that in all causes wee make a difference, not confoundyng one with another’ (sig. L3v). There is no danger that an attentive reader of Wilson would want for categories to distinguish different causes from one another: we are whirled through the gamut of nigh causes, farther causes, ‘principall causes’, causes of ‘the inclinacions in man’ and ‘helpyng causes’, and Wilson admits that ‘there be other divisions, but I leave to rehearse them, for feare I should be over long’ (sig. L4r). However, even this more minimal list of causes reinforces the role that these play in our moral lives. The ‘nigh causes and the farther causes’ are exemplified by a disturbingly quick, Tarantinoesque example of a man killing his neighbour over a disagreement. The ‘nigh’ cause of the neighbour’s death is the fact that a man dealt him ‘a dedly wounde’, but the man did this deadly deed because he ‘fell out with his neighbour’, and that act began a swift and toxic spiral of unfortunate causal consequences as ‘fallyng out bryngeth chidyng, chidyng bryngeth hatred, hatred causeth fightyng, fightyng geveth blowes, blowes sone dispatche, sone dispatchyng is ready death’ (sig. L3v). And just as soon as that, we have caused our own fall into perdition. Similarly, causes of the ‘inclinacions’ may be ‘good or eivill’, and which of these we will pay ‘good hede’ to depends upon our ability to intuit and respond to ‘principall causes’ such as ‘the holy ghoste’ ‘stirryng our nature’ (sig. L4r). If our causal radar is working well, we will detect the stirring of the Holy Ghost and act accordingly, heeding our best ‘inclinacions’ and thereby pursuing virtuous acts, and this is why Wilson takes such pains to educate us about how efficient cause works and what its power is, so that a good reader can appreciate its importance and wield it appropriately to lead a good life.

What Effect Do All These Causes Have upon Sixteenth-century Poetry?

Ramist logics are famous for incorporating poetic examples, and many scholars including Rosemond Tuve, Zenón Luis-Martínez and
Steven May have used these to illuminate the relationship between logic and literature in the sixteenth century. Critics have also examined the role which Ramist logics played in the education and consequently the creative works of various prominent sixteenth-century poets, including Sidney and Spenser, whose poetry actually furnishes exempla for Abraham Fraunce’s *The Shepherds’ Logic*. Tamara Goeglein has called on William Temple’s Ramist logic text to argue that, in their creative process, poets are not calling on a privileged form of *inventio* unavailable to all others, but rather that they are making a very particular use of the general category of invention found in *dialecticae artis facultiate* (‘the faculty of the art of dialectic’). Goeglein argues that ‘logicians are fiction-makers’, following Temple’s explanation that dialectical invention can create or find both truth and fiction. By seeing cause at work in poetry and understanding it as a type of style, we can bear witness to the emergence in the sixteenth century of a dynamic unwritten poetics which originates in reformed logic texts.

Cause washes up and down the strand in Spenser’s ‘Amoretto 75’, shifting agency between the hand writing a lover’s name and the ceaseless sea erasing that work. For the first two quatrains humans struggle, but are ultimately subject to the greater efficacy of nature’s causal power. Only when cause is in the hands of a poet does that power dynamic shift back in favour of human creativity, as Spenser introduces another tier to the causal hierarchy of his poem, which privileges poetic invention above other human and natural activities. Spenser’s sonnet begins by detailing the efficient cause, matter and form in question as he states,

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One day I wrote her name upon the strand,
but came the waves and washed it a way:
agayne I wrote it with a second hand,
but came the tyde, and made my paynes his pray. (1–4)
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In this opening, the speaker acts as the efficient cause working upon the matter of his lover’s ‘name’ in the form of writing upon the sand, but logic aficionados will immediately notice that we are missing the fourth part of causality: the speaker does not disclose his logical end or reason for inscribing his lover’s name on the beach. Instead, he encounters causal competition as the ‘waves’ ‘came’ and acted in turn as an efficient cause upon the writing in the sand with their own end of washing it away. This pattern repeats in a wavelike causal sequence as once more the poet writes ‘with a second hand’ but is
again defeated by the ‘tyde’, which denies his efforts as nature overpowers humanity in its role as efficient causal agent.

It is only in the second and third quatrains that it is made explicit that the tidal causation acts as a microcosm for a person’s quest for immortality, as they work through the quarrel between the lover and her poet:

Vayne man, sayd she, that doest in vaine assay,
   a mortall thing so to immortalize.
   for I my selve shall lyke to this decay,
   and eek my name bee wyped out lykewize.
Not so (quod I let baser things devize
   to dy in dust, but you shall live by fame:
   my verse your vertues rare shall eternize,
   and in the hevens wryte your glorious name. (5–12)

Initially, it seems that efficient causal power and end belongs to the universe, as the speaker’s lover sides with the waves. She and the waves parse the causal trajectory of her immortality in the same way: the name in the sand and her body are the only substance she thinks she will ever have, and are aligned in their material form to suffer the same fate. The logical poesis entwines the lover’s and the sea’s causal impetus, as the sea takes the name ‘away’, taking the upper hand to make the speaker his ‘pray’, and the lover likewise accuses the speaker of making ‘vaine assay’ to immortalise one who must ‘decay’. The speaker, however, takes back logical and poetic control in the final quatrain and couplet: he creates a hierarchy of causal impetus in which ‘baser things devize / To dy in dust’, whereas his love ‘shall live by fame’. The logical ends of dying and living are set not so much in opposition as in a hierarchy of the base and the elevated. The speaker casts ‘baser things’ as the architects of their own demise, as they are the ones acting as efficient causes on their own matter in order to reduce it to the logical form of dust. There is an available reading of that logic that says it is false, and that the speaker is introducing a material prejudice which taunts baser things as causing their own fall, when in fact they are victims of powers beyond their control. However, the speaker’s lover is the matter and form acted upon initially ‘by fame’, with the end that she ‘shall live’ by dint of her superior material properties. Momentarily, the speaker affords logical control to fame, which selects which things are high and low. By extension, he also affords that control to poetry, as this acts as the efficient cause giving life to his love. Yet the next line reveals fame to be merely one of Thomas Wilson’s helping causes,
aiding his ‘verse’, which emerges as the principal efficient cause working to ‘eternize’ his lover’s ‘name’ (which it also makes ‘glorious’). To press on this logical genealogy, the speaker might be also using fame’s power as an efficient cause as a cat’s paw: if he argues successfully that it immortalises only the higher things, that material causation means that his poetry is of the highest order. The speaker’s logic is evident in the progression of the rhyme scheme in this final quatrain, as he consigns base things to ‘devize’ to die while his verse shall work as the efficient cause to ‘eternize’ in the countermanding rhyme. This opposition in the rhyme scheme is a good example of logic both defining and also being complemented by poesis.

Spenser prioritises efficient cause as the key logical battle occurs between the competing drives of nature and poetry. In this way, his can be seen as a Ramist text, as that competition between the forces generating and shaping actions and outcomes not only provides the chief drama but also shapes the poesis as it manifests in the concatenated rhyme scheme. However, there is also a clear understanding of the Agricolan, Melanchthonian and Aristotelian conception of matter as something malleable that will ultimately be corrupted as time passes. By the closing couplet, we can see efficient cause working to counteract the corruptibility of matter by successfully challenging death and, indeed, inspiring future, generative loves. Yet in spite of the speaker’s claim that it is love that makes this conquest, Spenser’s logical apparatus indicates a different cause at work, as the form which that love takes is, of course, poetry. In this way, Spenser’s poetic logic serves to promote and amplify the power of his theory of poetry itself.

Philip Sidney also experiments with causation to express the power and longevity of poetry in his sonnet sequence Astrophil and Stella. Like Spenser, Sidney ostensibly puts poetry into service to declare and immortalise love. However, a causal analysis of both poets’ lyrics reveals poetry as their ultimate agent and motivation. While Spenser’s sonnet builds to the revelation that he and his poetry are the wonders keeping the stars apart, Sidney’s opening sonnet culminates in the same revelation being experienced by Astrophil and perhaps even the poet himself, as his Muse bids him write – in other words, to take up his own efficient cause. The sonnet opens with a logical misapprehension by Astrophil:

Loving in truth, and faine in verse my love to show,
That the deare She might take some pleasure of my paine:
Pleasure might cause her reade, reading might make her know,
Knowledge might pitie winne, and pitie grace obtaine,
I sought fit words to paint the blackest face of woe,
Studying inventions fine her wits to entertaine:
Oft turning others’ leaves, to see if thence would flow
Some fresh and fruitful showers upon my sunne-burn’d braine. (1–8)^26

Astrophil occupies an efficient causal role in seeking to show his love to Stella. Like Agricola, Melanchthon and Wilson, Astrophil initially prioritises his end causes. These are defined at the end of his lines like a kind of logical rhyme scheme as he seeks first ‘in verse my love to show’, then hopes that the right verse might make Stella ‘know’ that love, and that knowledge might lead to ‘pitie’, and pity might ‘grace obtaine’ to make her reciprocate his emotion. In pursuit of these ends, Astrophil employs a series of Wilson’s supporting efficient causes, from verse to pleasure to reading to knowledge to pity. While these do not achieve his desired end when Astrophil calls on them to be applied through poetry written or inspired by others, when read retrospectively this description shows what a formidable armoury of efficient causes the poet is equipped with. Here, the relationship between logic and poesis is not only one shaping this specific verse; it also informs a theory of poetry that promotes its originating power and capacity for change.

In the middle quatrain of the sonnet, Astrophil has to learn the hard way that he must be his own source of inspiration. He ‘stud[ies] inventions’ in the writings of others, hoping that this form of poetry will achieve his end. However, a dissection of the matter of ‘Nature’ (10) which generated ‘invention’ reveals another facet of the poet-ics underlying the sonnet sequence. Sidney and Astrophil identify invention as a natural phenomenon which is opposed in its very logical matter to artificial ‘Studie’. Here, Sidney makes his argument in verse in favour of the privileged, untaught poetic invention which William Temple would contradict in his advocacy of logic. Yet as much as Sidney separates studied from natural poetic invention, the logic which he uses to make that separation speaks to his years of ‘expensive, athletic, and prolonged’ education.27

Reading his sonnet through the forbidden lens of studied logic raises another dimension to Sidney’s dichotomy between the natural and the studied.28 For the lesson that Astrophil learns in the final line is not to abandon his own erudition, but rather to embrace it and ‘looke in thy heart and write’ (14). The Muse issues Astrophil a causal instruction: draw on your own internal or, as the seventeenth-century theorists would term it, proegumenic capacity, and trust in it enough to use it to act as your own efficient cause producing
your own original poetic matter and form, and that process of causal responsibility is what will allow you to achieve your end. There is a delicious irony in the fact that Astrophil must learn to rely on his inner inventive resources by being instructed and acted upon by the external cause of his Muse. Yet the Muse working as efficient cause on Astrophil with the end of showing him the innate power of poetry serves as a divine endorsement of both poet and poetry. It also represents a shift over the course of the sonnet from a focus on ends to a focus on efficient causes, speaking to a logical poetics of action very much in keeping with Ramist theories of causation and their potency as an agent of change.

Cause in Longer Sixteenth-century Poetry

There is a similar causal impetus at work in longer late sixteenth-century poetry. In his student translation of Ovid’s *Amores* composed during his time at Cambridge in the early 1580s, Christopher Marlowe similarly plays upon causal tactics to summon and work with his Muse, and his strategy aligns with that of Spenser and Sidney to suggest a vision of poetry and poetic inspiration as agents of change.

Drawing on Peter Mack’s formative reading of Agricolan invention, Robert Cockcroft has considered the ways in which Marlowe’s logical training at Corpus Christi College, Cambridge, can be seen in the ways his characters combine emotional pathos and apprehension of effect at climactic moments in his plays. Cockcroft explains that John Seton’s *Dialectica* and Agricola’s *De inventione dialectica* were probably the standard texts at Corpus Christi, though of course he notes Marlowe’s familiarity with Ramus’s works given his portrayal of the logician’s brutal tripartite murder in his final play, *The Massacre at Paris* (1593). Scholars including Sarah Knight, Tamara Goeglein, John Ronald Green, myself and others have spent much ink examining Marlowe’s explicit engagement with Ramus in that famous scene, but here I wish to suggest his wider participation in the active logical causal culture of later sixteenth-century poetry by looking at one of his student creations, the translation of Ovid’s ‘Elegia I’ from the *Amores*.

In a poem ostensibly about attributing causal accountability – that is, blaming – for poetic creation and its problems to external agents, Marlowe turns necessity into opportunity to claim his space as a light-footed innovative love poet:
With Muse upreard I meant to sing of Armes,
Choosing a subject fit for fierce alarmes.
Both verses were alike till Love (men say)
Began to smile and tooke one foote away.
Rash boy, who gave thee the power to change a line?
We are the Muses Prophets, none of thine. (5–10)\textsuperscript{13}

This example differs from those considered earlier in this chapter because it is a translation. Here, if Marlowe is to insert his own sense of dynamic poesis, he must do it as part of a negotiation with his Latin counterpart, but that complication provides us with an unusual opportunity to understand some of the earliest ways in which Renaissance writers could experiment with causality and agency – by proxy. Translation of Ovid was, of course, a staple of the Renaissance classroom; here, in Marlowe’s quite faithful rendition of ‘Elegia I’ there are small shifts in the poet’s precise use of logical techniques to create a translation which both captures its inheritance but also enables the creation of a new, distinctive poetic voice.\textsuperscript{34} The unwritten art allows Marlowe to satisfy the dual desires of fidelity in translation and innovation in poetic creativity. We can see this authorial negotiation in one of the lines which Marlowe changes, as he takes us from \textit{quis tibi, saeve puer, dedit hoc in carmina iuris?} (‘Savage boy, who gave thee the right over poetry?’) to a ‘rash boy’ who has gained not the ‘right’ but the ‘power’ over poesy.\textsuperscript{35} Perhaps that poetic power is what Marlowe himself is asserting through his translation, and a logic of agency would certainly advance that goal. Initially, Marlowe’s Agricolan training seems to be the dominant mode, as the poet prepares to act at the behest of his ‘Muse upreared’ with the end ‘to sing of armes’, positioning both efficient and final cause as external loci working upon him. As the matter of the verse takes shape, another external efficient cause arises as Cupid interfered and ‘tooke one foote away’, shifting the form and the motivation of the poem from war to love. In both scenarios, the poet positions himself and, by extension, all poets as mere instruments being acted upon by divine external agents, lacking any causal impetus of their own. Even the identity of Cupid himself comes to the poet only through the things ‘men say’, not from direct experience or knowledge, seeming to make all poetry a second- or third-hand business. The only pushback comes as the poet tries to reassert his own instrumental qualities over Cupid, arguing that poets ‘are the Muses prophets, none of thine’, but this still leaves them stuck with the wills and motives of Agricola’s external causal agents.
With Cupid causing creative differential chaos, the poet casts himself in a topsy-turvy world in which Ceres takes Diana's bow and Diana tills the plain, while Mars plays the Aeolian harp. He conjures this list of mismatched efficient, material, formal and final causes to show the disarray which the world would have to be in for Cupid to have the right to act on the matter of poetry in the form of altering its feet with the end of changing its subject matter and aesthetic format. This central part of the translation represents a shift in agency for Marlowe's speaker, for although he is arguing that he must be subject to the Muses’ causal desires, he crafts that argument with his own very compact, dense causal concatenations depicting the putative effect of Cupid's meddling. He may be claiming allegiance to a higher power, but he may also be protesting too much of his own causal helplessness. This subtle shift in causal mood begins the closing negotiation between the poet and Cupid:

When in this workes first verse I trod aloft,
Love slackt my Muse, and made my numbers soft.
I have no mistris, nor no favorit,
Being fittest matter for a wanton wit,
Thus I complaind, but Love unlockt his quiver,
Tooke out the shaft, ordained my hart to shiver:
And bent his sinewy bow upon his knee,
Saying, Poet heers a worke beseeming thee.
Oh woe is me, he never shootes but hits,
I burne, love in my idle bosom sits.
Let my first verse be sixe, my last five feete,
Fare well sterne warre, for blunter Poets meete.
*Elegian Muse*, that warblest amorous laies,
Girt my shine browe with sea banke myrtle praise. (21–34)

This part of the poem is an exercise in logical retrospection. At the start of writing, the poet moans that Cupid acted as an efficient cause to ‘slack’ his Muse with the effect of making his ‘numbers soft’: so far, so Agricolan, and the poet remains powerless at the mercy of external agents. However, turning inward, he considers the causal resources at his disposal to create poetry, and concludes that with ‘no mistris, nor favorit’, he lacks the ‘fittest matter’ for amorous poetry. The fact that he even inventories the matter and form which he might work on for his verse suggests an elision in causal power between the external inspiration (be it Muse or Cupid) and the maker himself, with the poem itself as a kind of syllogistic outcome resulting from their talents combined.
In thinking about his lack of ‘matter’ to empower ‘a wanton wit’, the poet turns towards Thomas Wilson’s efficient causes which act by ‘nature’, dependent upon the innate qualities of their agents, suggesting a greater degree of causal independence and capability than we saw at the beginning of the elegy. However, Cupid is a dangerous person to equip with logical matter or its absence, as he immediately pulls out his bow and, with deadly accuracy, shoots our poet through the heart to give him ample of the ‘fittest matter’ to allow him to act as ‘a wanton wit’. In this logical conflict, the poet is transparently the loser, becoming subject to yet another causal agent as ‘love’ ‘sits’ in his ‘idle bosome’, making him ‘burne’ in a precursor of Donne’s active passivity in the holy sonnets in the next century. However, from ashes comes victory: for in what seems like a moment of abject causal defeat and subjugation, suddenly the poet steps forth to claim his creative role. He exclaims, ‘let my first verse be sixe, my last five feete’, and in doing so takes possession of the new matter and form that will constitute his innovative verse. He is driven by the love burning within him, and by finding (or inventing, if you will allow it) his own ‘fittest matter’, that once-external cause is transmuted to what Wilson would see as a causal ‘inclinacion’, an innate characteristic driving agency and action. As he embraces this new creative power, the poet is able to act directly as an efficient cause, bidding ‘fare well’ to ‘sterne warre’ and condemning it to the matter and form of ‘blunter Poets’, and in a final step to ascend the poetic throne it is now he, the poet, commanding the ‘Elegian Muse’ to ‘girt my shine browe with sea banke myrtle praise’. This precipitous causal reorientation and sublimation is the magic of Marlowe’s translation, building the elegy’s climactic revelation that, when the poet understands and accepts his ‘inclinacions’ he, not his Muse, is the ultimate creative agent.

All three poets play with causation to elevate the active role of the poet as an agent of change in the world. They are able to do so by using the principles of reformed logic which they studied at school and university, and in doing so participate in a poetic revolution that prioritised change, dynamism and the exploration of personal agency. It might not be too much of an extension to see the very early glimmers of the explorations of the self that were championed centuries later by the Romantic poets in these sixteenth-century logico-poetic experiments in agency, cause and blame. The apparatus and operations of logic can be hard for us to detect with twenty-first-century vision, but this unwritten art both used and was used by poets to create a new kind of aesthetics and practical poetics which
prioritised dynamic change and thereby energised invention as the prime creative strategy.

Notes

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1. See Wilson, ‘Marvell and Education’.

2. For a brief cross-period survey of this kind of definition, see Eck, Elementarius dialectice (1518), sig. A2v; Keckermann, Systema logicae (1602) 1–2; Du Moulin, Elementa logica (1603), 42; Airay, Fasciculus praeceptorum logicorum (1628), 1; Scheibler, Opus logicum (1651), sig. A2r; Heereboord, Ermmheia logica (1657), 7; Du Trieu, Manductio ad logicam (1678), 1; De Vries, Logica compendiosa (1684), 3.

3. Ramus’s Partitiones dialecticae (1543) and its successive editions as the Dialecticae libri duo represent the first significant wave of abridged, reoriented ‘modern’ logics for the sixteenth century; Roland MacIlmaine’s The Logike of the Moste Excellent Philosopher P. Ramus Martyr (1574), along with the English-language works of Dudley Fenner, The Artes of Logike and Rethorike (1584) and Abraham Fraunce, The Sheapheares Logike (c. 1580s), are examples of vernacular volumes; Eck, Elementarius dialectice, Pedro da Fonseca, Institutionum dialecticarum (1597), and Keckermann, Systema logicae, are among those including bracketed diagrams, while Airay’s 1628 textbook and several sixteenth-century Aristotles have Porphyrian tree diagrams. Friedrich Beurhaus’s edition of Ramus and Melanchthon’s texts, P. Rami dialecticae libri duo (1586), alongside others, uses different colours of ink to aid with readability and usability.

4. For one of the keystone articles on this topic, see Mack, ‘Rudolph Agricola’s Reading of Literature’; these ideas are expanded upon in Mack, Renaissance Argument.


6. Fraunce, Shepherds’ Logic, 162; Ramus, Bucolica, praelectionibus exposita.

7. Fraunce, Shepherds’ Logic, 170.

8. The emphasis on personal responsibility and capacity is closely linked to Protestant ideas about salvation sola fide, by faith alone, in which
a believer is responsible for their own spiritual progress. Ramus was a famous convert to Protestantism, which resulted in his murder during the 1572 St Bartholomew’s Day Massacre, and the vast majority of his later followers, editors, adapters and imitators were also Protestant. Much has been written on the confessional contexts of Ramism; see Meerhoff, ‘Petrus Ramus and the Vernacular’; Hotson, Reformation of Common Learning; Reiter, ‘William Perkins: The Imagination in Calvinist Theology’.

9. Ong, Ramus, Method, is the seminal work bringing to modern scholarly attention the challenge made by Ramus and his followers to established scholastic Aristotelian theories of logic, rhetoric and the discursive arts in the early modern period. Feingold, ‘English Ramism’, discusses this division specifically in the context of early modern England, while Schmitt addresses the question of English Aristotelianism in John Case and Aristotelianism. More recently, Sgarbi, Aristotelian Tradition, surveys the relationship between Aristotelianism and empiricism in England. For an examination of Ramist and Aristotelian logical dynamics, see Wilson, ‘International Nature of Britannic Ramism’.

10. My thanks to Zenón Luis-Martínez for his extremely helpful editorial dialogue on this point.

11. See van der Poel, ‘Ramus and Agricola’; Mack, Renaissance Argument. Agricola’s work appeared in manuscript during his lifetime, and in numerous printed editions posthumously in the sixteenth century (as we will see, up to and including the period of Christopher Marlowe’s training at Corpus Christi College, Cambridge). The 1554 Paris edition of Agricola’s De inventione is cited parenthetically in the text by signature.

12. Mack, ‘Rudolph Agricola’s Reading of Literature’, 28. This indispensable article details several of Agricola’s interpretations of Virgil’s Aeneid as well as some of his discussions of Cicero, Juvenal, Horace and Plato.

13. Melanchthon, Dialecticae, sig. 55v. Further references are cited parenthetically in the text by signature.


15. Ramus, Dialecticae, 2. Ramus’s text went through numerous editions, revisions and adaptations; for a full listing of these, see Ong, Ramus and Talon Inventory.


17. Beurhaus, P. Rami, sig. 4r. Further references to this work are cited parenthetically in the text by signature.

18. T. Wilson, Rule of Reason, Contenying the Arte of Logique (1551). Further references to this work are cited parenthetically in the text by signature.


22. Ibid., 85.
27. I am indebted to Stella Gibbons for this ideal phrase from *Cold Comfort Farm*, 1.
29. On the Muse, see Zunino-Garrido, ‘Thomas Lodge’s “Supple Muse”’, this volume.
30. For detailed readings of the role of grace in sixteenth-century poetics, see Curbet Soler, ‘Justified by Whose Grace?’, and Pérez-Jáuregui, ‘From Favour to Eternal Life’, this volume.
32. Knight, ‘Flat Dichotomists and Learned Men’; Goeglein, ‘Wherein hath Ramus been so offensious?’; Green, ‘Martyrdom of Ramus’. It may be more obvious to seek Marlowe’s Ramism in his passages about Ramus, but the precise importance of these causal innovations is their ubiquitous presence.
34. Marlowe and others would experiment with that voice in the epyllia of the 1590s (for example, in *Hero and Leander*). For further discussion of this practice in early modern pedagogy, see Enterline, *Shakespeare’s Schoolroom*.
36. ‘What if thy mother take Dianas bowe? / Shall Dian fanne, when loue begins to glowe? / In wooddie groves ist meete that Ceres Raigne, / And quiver-bearing Dian till the plaine: / Who’le set the faire trest sunne in battell ray / While Mars doth take the Aonian harpe to play?’ (11–16).