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TRANSFORMATION AND CLOSURE IN RENAISSANCE LYRIC POETRY

by

LISA MICHELLE ULEVICH

Under the Direction of Stephen B. Dobranski, Ph.D.

ABSTRACT

Closure is one of the most important putative goals for highly structured Renaissance verse. Elements of structure—for example, sophisticated prosody or the embedding of a poem within a web of intertextual relationships—determine how poets work toward closure. This project explores how verse forms and genre manifest poets' attempts to create resolution, and, significantly, how often the challenges of the process instead become the object of focus. Developing a New Formalist approach that focuses on how literary forms are inherently responsive (both to the social conventions that inform various genres and to the expressive goals of individual authors), I examine texts in four important Renaissance poetic genres: epyllion (William Shakespeare's *Venus and Adonis* [1593]), satire (Joseph Hall's *Virgidemiae* [1598, 1599]), religious lyric (George Herbert's *The Temple* [1633]), and pastoral elegy (John Milton's

Epitaphium Damonis [1639] and *Lycidas* [1637, 1645]). These works illuminate some of the most significant strategies of authors who often meditate on the appeal of definitive, resolved conclusions and also on the complex ways their works become conditioned by the hope and struggle for resolution.

INDEX WORDS: Closure, Resolution, Lyric, Poetry, Prosody, Genre, Appropriation,
Renaissance, Early modern, Shakespeare, Hall, Herbert, Milton

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by

LISA MICHELLE ULEVICH

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Georgia State University

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DEDICATION

To Mark and Cindy Ulevich, with love.

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1. INTRODUCTION: RENAISSANCE “ACT[S] OF FORM”

“[S]o long as there is daily progress, there cannot be perfection” (John Calvin, *Commentary on Ephesians 5:27*).

“And in things artificiall, seldome any elegance is wrought without a superfluous wast and refuse in the transaction. No Marble statue can be politely carv’d, no fair edifice built without almost as much rubbish and sweeping” (John Milton, *Reason of Church-Government 796*).

Even ostensibly straightforward lyric situations can spawn alarmingly plural goals. In *Astrophil and Stella* 1, Astrophil is very clear about his emotional state—he “Lov[es] in truth”—but his plan of action jumbles together his objective and the means he wants to pursue. “[M]y love to show” is at once a goal and, as the subordinating beginning of the following line shows, only a step in the process: “Loving in truth, and fain in verse my love to show, / That she, dear she, might take some pleasure of my pain” (1-2). The incremental *gradatio* in the rest of the octave presents necessary steps in Astrophil’s wooing agenda. This agenda seems to reach its goal with the “grace” (4) that will bloom from Stella’s pity, and the arrival of the main verb at last lends some security: in order to achieve this purpose, “I sought fit words” (5). But even this objective, to seek and find fit words, becomes in turn a means to an end. Astrophil “sought fit words” (5) from the “inventions fine” in “others’ leaves” (6, 7), but his plan is to write, not just to read; he must “paint the blackest face of woe” (5). And this goal in turn has at least two faces, to represent his own emotional state and “her wits to entertain” (6). As the octave progresses, Astrophil’s objectives are repeatedly demoted to elements in a procedure, and the sestet shows a stymied writing process, Astrophil “great with child to speak, and helpless in [his] throes” (12). The sonnet’s conclusion, the muse’s direction to “look in thy heart and write” (14), is not the straightforward command or decisive plan of action it seems to be—or at least, it is one goal among many. The verb “write” lacks a single object, and, as the sonnet sequence unfolds by

degrees, we see that plurality develop: even wooing Stella is a mission carried on in tandem with others—to document his own envy, discontent, optimism, delight (and so on), to quash critics, and to praise Stella’s beauty and lament her collusion with Cupid (e.g., *Astrophil and Stella* 17, in which an angry Venus has destroyed Cupid’s armament but Stella supplies him with replacements—eyebrow-bows, eye-arrows). Considered in this light, the hexameters of *Astrophil and Stella* 1 signal more than the ambition to extend beyond the conventions of sonnet-writing. They open the sequence with a gesture of bursting at the prosodic seams, illustrating the pressure I describe above: this sonnet, and the sequence, have much more to accomplish than wooing, and this plurality demonstrates how Sidney pushes the limits of the Petrarchan sonnet tradition.

In a poem with relatively firm closure, too, the elements that resist conclusiveness can illuminate aesthetic or philosophical priorities. Herbert’s “Love (III)” concludes the central section of *The Temple*, and its own conclusion is comparatively determinate. Every wavering hesitation of Herbert’s speaker, who calls himself “the unkind, the ungrateful” (9), is parried by the sociable coaxing of Love. His soul draws back, “But quick-eye’d Love, observing me grow slack / From my first entrance in, / Drew nearer to me” (3-5). His self-deprecation is answered by Love’s reassurance of reciprocity (“Who made the eyes but I?”), and his averted gaze (“I cannot look on thee”) is kindly overcome by the intimacy of Love taking his hand (10-12). The speaker’s hesitations and retreats, in short, tend not only toward incompleteness but inability to begin; the quasi-allegorical scene of “Love (III)” shows the speaker’s dithering at the door of Love’s feast, fearful that he is not ready and not worthy. Love’s welcome overcomes his hesitation wholly; the poem’s concluding lines relate acceptance and accomplished action: “You must sit down, says Love, and taste my meat: / So I did sit and eat” (17-18). The eucharistic

character of this feast expresses genuine conclusiveness—the speaker shows the active, willful choice to participate in the feast and acceptance of Love’s invitation. Yet the evocation of the Eucharist also points us to the complexities of this conclusion: the speaker’s readiness to participate and his participation itself are complete, but neither is a spiritual goal (in the sense that the pursuit of faith does not come to total fruition through the participation in a sacrament). Rather, the accomplished act, “I did sit and eat,” whether taken literally or metaphorically, reminds us that the participation in Love’s feast is necessarily ongoing and reiterated: we do not sit and eat only once, whether at table or communion rail. The completion of “Love (III)” is a discrete instance of completion, both for the poem in isolation and because it ends the central section of Herbert’s volume of lyrics. Its closure is not false, then, but exists as a resolution among thematically ongoing currents. These currents include the architectural metaphor of *The Temple*’s structure, which emphasizes steps taken as part of a larger process, and “Love (III)” exists in the midst of that discursive architecture. Likewise, as I will discuss in Chapter 4, many of *The Temple*’s lyrics dwell on the need to repeat and reaffirm the devotional processes they describe.

This project focuses on struggles toward resolution in Renaissance lyric poetry. A complex relationship exists between, for instance, the *ending* of a poem and the ways it brings its subjects toward closure, which, following Barbara Herrnstein Smith, I define as “sense of stable conclusiveness, finality, or ‘clinch’” (2), not a point where a poem merely drops off or ceases. The lyrics I explore reflect a variety of attempts to create closure through formal structures, such as prosodic patterns and repetition that produce that “clinch,” and authors’ use and modification of recognizable generic patterns that juxtapose their textual predecessors with their own unique attempts to resolve their subjects. To *resolve* is, among other things, “to settle . . . to reconcile

opposing elements or tendencies” (III.17.d) and “to break up or separate (a material thing) into constituent parts” (II.8.a): resolution can involve either separation or reconciliation. It can also suggest both clarification (III.17.b) and the conversion, transformation, or alteration of a thing (I.10.a), to confirm one’s understanding of something and also to acknowledge its mutability.

The highly structured verse of the Renaissance balances multiple goals, including proficiency in versifying, successful imitation of contemporary and classical sources, and the invention of novelties in prosody and in the rhetorical disposition of the poet’s materials. Because engagement with poetic predecessors and existing literary conventions was so central to the compositional process, the shaping of an original, compelling resolution was an especially important challenge for early modern poets—a challenge that entailed attention to endings, thematic and prosodic, as well as to the paths of development that led to them. Closure and the ways one might try to create it are among the most important preoccupations for the poetry of this period. As authors shaped new material and reinvented their sources, they had to find ways to give their works coherence and integrity—to figure out the “clinch” that could arise from the blend of new and recycled material. In this project, I explore how elements of poetic structure reflect authors’ efforts to create closure and register the difficulties they find themselves facing in the attempt. Developing a New Formalist approach that focuses on how literary forms are inherently responsive (both to the social conventions that inform various genres and the expressive goals of individual authors), I examine texts in four important Renaissance poetic genres. In the following chapter, I address the popular erotic verse form of epyllion through a reading of William Shakespeare’s *Venus and Adonis* (1593). Shakespeare’s poem, which adapts a number of classical intertexts and mingles the drive of narrative with the pause of lyric, explores the mechanisms of delay and thwarted fulfillment through Adonis’s resistance of

Venus's overtures. I then turn to the self-proclaimed first English satirist, Joseph Hall, and his books of satires, the *Virgidemiae* (1598, 1599). Hall delivered contentious verses to a contentious audience; the satires register the proliferation of critical responses that troubled Hall as well as Hall's ultimately futile wish to enforce sympathy from his readers. While the prospect of ongoing responses troubled Hall, George Herbert found reflections on ongoing processes a valuable aid to religious meditation. In the lyrics of *The Temple* (1633), he frequently dwells on habit—clothing and repeated behavior—as a metaphor for productive spiritual process and a source of insight into divine creativity. Finally, I address elegy, the poetic form that contends with enforced closure—a life has ended—by exploring John Milton's two pastoral elegies, *Epitaphium Damonis* (1639) and *Lycidas* (1637, 1645). Looking backward at the lives of Charles Diodati and Edward King, evaluating his own present compositional challenges, and peering hopefully into the future of poetic achievement, Milton used poetry that mourns endings as an occasion to contemplate what he might yet be able to achieve. The poets I consider here rarely find their way to closure, but their works testify to the ways that structured poetic forms can be used to articulate the appeal of resolution and the variety of strategies that might lead to it.

1.1 New Formalism and Closure

The most extensive study of the resources of poetry to strive toward finality, not mere stopping, remains Smith's *Poetic Closure* (1968). She draws predominantly on lyric poetry for her examples, and likewise predominantly from English Renaissance authors, but addresses a larger historical scope than I undertake to cover. Her bias toward lyric and the work of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century poets implies, however, that this type of composition and this historical period offer especially fertile ground for an exploration of the principles of closure.

Smith's critical approach is colored significantly by reader-response theory, and to a lesser extent by a performative understanding of poetry: she argues that a poem is a representation of an utterance (and so performative in J. L. Austin's sense of the term), and her study draws frequent analogies from the composition and performance of music.¹ Although her audience-centered approach is carefully qualified—she does not seek recourse to an ideal reader, whether competent or inept—her argument entails the liabilities of speculation that reader-response criticism often faces (e.g., that a rhetorical maneuver in a lyric from *The Temple* necessarily produces a “reversal of . . . expectation” [70] in a reader's mind). My critical approach in this project, informed by both aesthetic and historical awareness, can illuminate what Smith's temporally broader sampling of works and sometimes straitened ahistorical interpretation cannot. Contrary to her claims, a poem cannot be “unmoored [and] isolated from the circumstances and motives that might have occasioned it” (15), in favor of the immediacy of a reader's or auditor's reception of the poem being performed (16). She deals ably, though generally, with the thematic, organizational, and structural elements that shape closure in poetry; my work is attuned more closely to what such elements can show about Renaissance poets' compositional priorities.

Smith's study, while an important foundation for my discussion of closure in lyric, is almost 50 years old; subsequent books and articles that have addressed closure have often steered away from lyric in favor of exploring other genres. Patricia Parker, for example, addresses closure through romance because, she argues, one of the distinguishing features of the romance form is that it “simultaneously quests for and postpones a particular end, objective, or object”

1 For Austin's discussion of speech acts, see *How to Do Things with Words* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1962).

(4). Elizabeth J. MacArthur, beginning with the precepts that “closure is one of the defining elements of a narrative” and that it is necessarily backward-looking, enclosing all the preceding events, explores the “series of present moments” in eighteenth-century epistolary narratives as a significant exception to these generalizations (3). And Alessandro Barchiesi considers the political and poetic implications of the structural relationships within and between the *Metamorphoses* and the *Fasti*, explaining how, particularly in the former text, “So many strategies of closure are exhausted one after another: recapitulation . . . , anticipation of modernity . . . , thematic inversion . . . , deification and panegyric . . . , a prayer for the ruler, a prophecy of literary fame . . . —all these rival strategies invite the reader to negotiate a new idea of closure that controls the form of the text” (197).

More recently, Rachel Cole has reconsidered lyric closure by analyzing the capacity of lyric “to imagine and offer satisfaction” (384). Lyric is not a solipsistic or self-indulgent form, but a potential paradigm for ethical interaction between people; as she argues, “contentment shapes human relationships,” and the contentment created through lyric resolution can model, for example, the “ethics of accord” (385, 387). Drawing on the work of Jonathan Culler in her definition of lyric, Cole articulates a valuable reminder that an excessively categorical mindset limits critics’ ability to perceive the nuances of individual poetic works: “[o]ur ‘normative models’ of lyric poetry should ‘proliferate’ as we catalog the genre’s formal structures, creating a complex taxonomy of lyric features and their variant effects” (396). The works I discuss in the following chapters are certainly products of culture, ideology, and historical circumstance—but they are also crucially, literally, the products of authors who deliberately shaped their texts’ form and aesthetics.

In my analyses, I focus frequently on the versification and other structural choices of each author. Nevertheless, I adapt the theoretical structure of each chapter according to the quirks of the texts. My analysis will, in different chapters, foreground different aspects of the poems: the mechanics of prosody, the appropriation and adaptation of intertexts, cultural and literary precedents that inform the poets' approaches to their subjects, biographical context, and the reception of the poems by their early modern and twenty-first-century readers. Employing a variety of approaches has allowed me to elucidate the preoccupations and distinctive circumstances that a single methodology might partially obscure.

My attempt to balance questions of form with questions of each text's creation and reception reflect recent theorizations of New Formalism. As Cole's remarks show, critics have cautioned against critical habits that categorize too strictly both texts (through, for example, genre labels) and schools of literary theory (through analysis that gives overwhelming priority to a single aspect of a text, whether that be its formal features, its place in cultural or textual history, or its manifestation of an ideology). After surveying important late twentieth- and early twenty-first-century critics who have contributed to the development of New Formalist literary criticism, Marjorie Levinson observes that many of the scholars she examined are "wary of the new formalist label, and I share their bias against the categorical thinking encouraged by such labels, which have been legion over the past half century" (568). Levinson characterizes New Formalism as "a movement rather than a theory or method" (560), a distinction that productively resists reducing New Formalism to a single, prescriptive program of critical process. Verena Theile echoes Levinson's sentiment in her own characterization of New Formalist practice, which encourages interpretations that are sensitive to the mutual interplay between a text's formal features, an individual author's compositional priorities, and cultural context:

New Formalism recognizes the form literature has taken and the aesthetics it has appropriated, and it is these that New Formalist critics examine in order to comment on that literature's unique contribution to the canon and to the culture in which it was composed, consumed, and collected. New Formalism, in all its incarnations, be they intrinsic, lyrical, or historical, seeks to understand the way in which form is reinvented and reshaped and reinterpreted, and it does so against a historically and politically charged background. (8)

Theile's description illuminates the living, active quality of form. A New Formalist can therefore examine textual form as the dynamic creature it is, and can adjust the subjects of her focus according to the contexts that shape them and that they shape in return.

Thus, my critical approach in the following chapters alters when it alteration finds. In my analysis of *Venus and Adonis*, Shakespeare's adjustments to his Ovidian intertext is essential for an informed reading of the hapless youth's fate. My close reading and use of adaptation theory reflect my conviction that Shakespeare's exploration of closure and fulfillment is contingent on minute formal structures like the couplet of a sixain as well as the much broader, systematic structures of adaptation, which can reshape the generic contours of a text even as they reproduce the themes or narrative patterns of existing works. Similarly, both the generic precedent of Elizabethan controversial discourse and Juvenalian satire are important aspects of my discussion of Joseph Hall's *Virgidemiae*. But a complete understanding of the defensive satirist's works requires attention to the ways he negotiates with his frequently hostile readers within the satires themselves, responding in his text to the audience whose reactions (he wishes to believe) are within his control. Because Hall is a minor figure in the twenty-first-century literary canon, my

discussion also examines the reception of his satires at one of the only points where he becomes practically visible to current criticism: in his conflict with John Milton.

While Hall's satires are best appreciated within a variety of historical contexts (among the Elizabethan satirists, as a discursive target for Milton, and as juvenilia insignificant to modern criticism in comparison with Hall's devotional and utopian works), the religious lyrics of Herbert require a more specific exploration of historical and doctrinal circumstances. Focusing on Herbert's recurring use of clothing metaphors in *The Temple*, I examine the Elizabethan controversy over the social and theological significance of priestly vestments that informs his imagery. My analysis highlights the importance of the subtlety and inventiveness of his prosody and also the doctrinal debates that suggest why Herbert found clothing to be such a powerful metaphorical vehicle. Finally, my discussion of Milton's pastoral elegies reflects the emphasis that Milton himself placed on engagement with precedent (the conventions of classical pastoral and the representation of his own youth) and with a projected future (the epic adumbrated by his choice to embrace Virgilian pastoral). Just as Milton meditated on the place of pastoral within his career, my analysis is likewise attuned to the how the pastoral genre and articulations of personal ambition interrelate through Milton's early and late works.

The virtue of a New Formalist approach is to understand a poem in part as the bearer of a set of imprints, and such traces include the concerns highlighted by New Historicist scholarship, namely, the significance to poetic creation of political and ideological pressures, social norms, economic influences, and the material circumstances that condition the production of texts in both manuscript and print. New Historicist methodology also opens up a wide variety of non-literary texts for analysis (a freedom I embrace in my discussion of Herbert, for example, as I consider his prose manual for priestly behavior, *The Country Parson*, alongside the canonical

lyrics of *The Temple*).² As Paul Alpers has recently quipped, “those who forget historicism are condemned to repeat it” (309). Drawing attention to “lyric situations” rather than using the historicizing vocabulary of “context” and “circumstance,” Alpers suggests that a reading of lyrics as an author’s “purposive utterance” can include the acknowledgment of historical realities as well as appreciation for the artistic specificity of an individual poem (328). Aesthetic concerns remain central to my discussion because a literary creation in a disciplined form like lyric verse exclaims through the very conspicuousness of its constructed nature that its medium is not merely a disposable vehicle. The idiosyncratic content of a poem “gets to count as

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- 2 New Historicism has also illuminated how the self-consciousness characteristic of lyric is responsive in many ways to cultural factors unique to the early modern period. Stephen Greenblatt’s iconic *Renaissance Self-Fashioning* invited readers to see how authors’ concerns with self-fashioning blurred the “distinction between literature and social life” and how authors as well as their lyrics were “cultural artifacts” (3). Many influential studies following in Greenblatt’s wake have offered valuable explorations of the historical contingency of early modern lyrics, including discussions of manuscript and print culture (Arthur Marotti, *Manuscript, Print, and the English Renaissance Lyric* [Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1995]), the tensions of social classification (Christopher Warley, *Sonnet Sequences and Social Distinction in Renaissance England* [Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2005]), the disruption of gender norms (Catherine Bates, *Masculinity, Gender, and Identity in the English Renaissance Lyric* [Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2007]), and the evolving early modern understanding of social order, family values, and sensuality (Catherine Belsey, “Love as Trompe-l’oeil: Taxonomies of Desire in *Venus and Adonis*,” *Shakespeare Quarterly* 46.3 [1995]: 257-76).

material in the first place by virtue of its relationship to an act . . . of framing, an act of form” (Kaufman 135).³ The pressures that shape a poet’s formal choices are always both historically and aesthetically situated, and my analysis accounts for the former while centering on the latter, the “act of form.”

1.2 Narrative and Lyric

Although I focus on lyric in this project, narrative elements often shape individual poems’ development. Narrative tends to drive toward a *telos*, and while the arrival there may be fraught with problems of causality or a sense that the ending only concludes one episode in a larger, still incomplete drama, plot progression usually offers an identifiable objective—something comes to an end or to fruition: an event, an attitude, a life. Lyric poetry, with its emphasis on the reflection of a moment, an idea, or a psychological state, is a much more recalcitrant beast. The opposition between lyric and narrative is useful in the way that all classifications are useful: systematic comparison can produce lists of definitive and relatively clear-cut traits. Lyric is the domain of description, and highly-wrought prosody; narrative moves in time through a series of events. Even thorough classification is reductive, however; as I

3 Robert Kaufman’s discussion of Blakean formalism draws on the Kantian distinction between material (non-universalizable) and formal (universalizable) principles. In poetics, Kaufman argues, formalism is not necessarily the imposition of hegemonic constraint, but can be “a name for commitments to the modes by which formal dynamics enable perception and critical thought” (135).

suggested above, classification omits idiosyncratic details in favor of generalization, and the boundaries between even theoretically opposed categories can be permeable.

Lyric and narrative elements interpenetrate in many of the poems I consider in the following chapters. Although an intermittently significant element of development in the works of Hall, Herbert, and Milton, this interpenetration is particularly evident in *Venus and Adonis*. It can be useful to distinguish narrative from lyric by the presence or emphasis on events unfolding in temporal sequence, and qualities related to such a sequence—linearity, progression—can serve as points of contrast by which to characterize lyric, which has, as Heather Dubrow puts it, a “predilection for circularity . . . manifest above all in its refrains” (50). The lyric mode, which is “associated etymologically with *versus*, the Latin word whose principle denotations include ‘turning,’ involves process and lability. . . . [R]ather than impeding narrative, lyric often turns to it or turns into it” (13). If the tendency not to move steadily forward is a hallmark of lyric, then *Venus and Adonis* certainly participates in this quality. Lauren Shohet remarks dryly that “the poem’s so-called ‘action’—Adonis’s sporadic bursts of motion away from Venus and toward the hunt—moves briskly forward precisely whenever Venus stops talking” (91)—and because Venus’s discourse occupies the majority of the poem, the narrative is at rest more often than it is in motion. The “blocked chronological progressions” (Dubrow 50) that often characterize lyric are central to the tantalizing delay and deferral that make Shakespeare’s epyllion so lively.

Narrative is not immune to the pause of lyric; rather, the momentum of narrative progress is often conditioned by it. In her study of poetic narrative, Clare Regan Kinney notes that the way a narrative unfolds is a matter of pacing; just as in a novel, “the long narrative poem is . . . an exercise in the controlled release of significance” (5). The act of reading a narrative poem involves evaluation of how the poem’s *fabula*, the literal events it contains, is developed into its

szujet, the deployment of those events “to create an aesthetically satisfying whole” (5). The drive of narrative, she argues, is “counterpoint[ed]” and shaped by prosody: “complicating the linear impulse toward the cumulative production of meaning . . . are the local pressures of poetic form” (6). The formal qualities that characterize a narrative poem, including the metrical and rhythmic features of stanzas, can redirect focus from the “aesthetic and didactic ends of narrative” to “the rhetorical moment” (9-10). Kinney’s view illustrates that narrative is as much characterized by what slows or halts it as what drives it forward; *Venus and Adonis*, with its repeatedly thwarted action and allusions to Ovidian transformation, invites readers to dwell on the peculiarities of successive “rhetorical moment[s].” In *Lycidas*, the “higher mood” and “dread voice” (ll. 87, 132) of artistically lofty and apocalyptic concerns, signaled respectively by the intrusions of Phoebus and St. Peter, momentarily redirect but do not derail the elegy’s pastoral mood. There is no reason, then, to insist on a stark opposition between the poetics of lyric and narrative. The interplay of the two, an arrangement of forms and the process by which a reader encounters them, amounts to an interpretive guidepost.

1.3 Organization and Texts

I center each of the following chapters on a poetic mode and the uses to which the individual poets put prosodic and other textual forms. Organized chronologically, the chapters address poems composed within a span of approximately 50 years. I begin in the 1590s because the end of the sixteenth century represents a crucial period in English lyric-writing, as

demonstrated most clearly by the vogue for sonnets.⁴ Animated by the publication of *Astrophil and Stella*, authors sought the wide scope of audience afforded by print as they experimented with the motifs of Petrarchism and different kinds of self-representation, from the conventionally love-lorn admirer (Sidney's *Astrophil*) to the laboriously learned laureate (the quasi-autobiographical speaker of Drayton's sonnet sequence *Idea*). The popularity of sonnets testifies to a widespread conviction that the adept management of prosody was a key skill for a poet. Even more important, the structure of a sonnet, which entails tracking an idea through at least one turn of perspective (and possibly more), shows that lyric poets were carefully attuned to the value of articulating process and change as well as asserting resolution or lamenting its absence. While the obsession with sonnets calmed in the early seventeenth century, the values that had underlain the form's popularity continued to influence poets strongly—particularly through an appreciation for the ways lyric can unfold different aspects of an issue or an attitude, and perhaps serve as a vehicle to envision, if not to accomplish, closure. This legacy of late Elizabethan sonnet-writing extends at least through the middle of the seventeenth century, when Milton still found the form compelling enough to sublimate it into the structure of *Lycidas* (as I discuss more fully in Chapter 5) and to include sonnets in the 1645 volume that signaled his laureate ambition.

While I treat sonnets only occasionally in the following chapters, then, the form is an important catalyst for the applications of lyric explored by Shakespeare, Hall, Herbert, and Milton. In the first half of the seventeenth century, the focused interest in sonnets ramified into

4 Fourteen sonnet sequences were published between 1591 and 1609 (Hutchison 35), and, if we count the multiple revisions and reprintings from poets like Michael Drayton, that figure increases.

appreciation for other complex poetic forms, including, for instance, the stanza Spenser invented for his epic romance. After its initial publication in the 1590s, the *Faerie Queene* was republished in 1609 and 1611 in a collected volume impressively titled *The Faerie Queene: The Shepheardes Calendar: Together with the other Works of England's Arch-Poët, Edm. Spenser* (Bateson 417). Donne had composed his lyrics during the last decade of the sixteenth century and the first decades of the seventeenth century, and many of these verses circulated in manuscript; once published in 1633, the *Poems, by J. D.* remained popular, and went through three editions by 1639 (Bateson 441).⁵ Of the authors I discuss in the following chapters, Hall is perhaps the least invested in prosodic experimentation, although his use of sixains in the prefatory poems to his satires show that he found it worthwhile to gesture toward his awareness, if not mastery, of a stanzaic form with intertwining rhyme. In general, the poets composing in the early seventeenth century were eager to explore self-conscious and formally sophisticated lyrics, and their audiences were eager to see the fruits of their labors. In the latter half of the seventeenth century, however, less ornately twisted rhyming patterns became the norm for the lyrics of, for example, Katherine Philips (1678) and Andrew Marvell (1681), and serious interest in complex lyric forms lapsed until the Romantics revived it approximately a century later. The chronological organization of chapters and the treatment of diverse forms composed by authors

5 Even less widely popular volumes reflected interest in prosodic skill, e.g., the poems of Aemelia Lanyer (*Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum*, 1611) and Lady Mary Wroth (*The Countess of Montgomery's Urania*, in which the sonnet sequence *Pamphilia to Amphilanthus* appears, 1621).

with a range of expressive goals allows us to see how the preoccupations with form persistently interested authors and readers from the 1590s through the 1640s.

In different ways, each author tests the appeal of formal closure, e.g., the fulfillment of prosodic patterns and the appropriation of recognizable textual elements to create in a reader's mind the satisfaction of mingled familiarity and novelty. Ultimately, for these poets, resolution does not spring from the fulfillment implied by prosodic inventiveness or the ingenious reworking of an existing text. Instead, their texts' accomplishment lies in skilfully articulated aspiration. Whether the aspired goal is the conclusion of mourning and fulfillment of poetic ambition, as with Milton's pastoral elegies, or a private revelation of the divine, as in Herbert's devotional lyrics, the poets I analyze shape their art out of the processes, both aesthetic and psychological, that aim toward closure.

In the first chapter that follows, I argue that adaptation, which calls attention to intertextuality, likewise foregrounds process and development as an audience evaluates the adapted text against its source(s). Shakespeare's disposition of preexisting Ovidian material and his changes to it are essential to the form of *Venus and Adonis*, and the mechanisms of transformation are central to the poem's resolution. Adonis is preoccupied with process, dwelling on delay and his own immaturity. I emphasize that his response to Venus is not rejection, but a conditional acceptance predicated on his awareness of his own developing form, which is not yet ready for the role she wants him to play. Unfortunately, no amount of clever formal positioning—whether Venus swiping Adonis into an amorous embrace or the finality of each sixain's epigrammatic concluding couplet—can synthesize resolution and fulfillment. Shakespeare's epyllion offers satisfaction in its dramatization of tantalizing delay, and in this

respect we can locate the poem's objective not in the ending taken from Ovid but in the act of adaptation itself.

Building on my discussion of the responsiveness of early modern texts, I consider in Chapter 3 the relationships between satirists, the topics that provoke them to write, and the reactions of their readers. While external stimuli (such as love of a person or of God) occasion poetry in many lyric subgenres, the object of satire is liable to be a much less sublime or ineffable matter, and the response it elicits from its targets is likely to be hostile. Reflecting a Juvenalian model of aggressive and allusive satire, Hall's topical poems, the six books of the *Virgidemiae* (1598 and 1599), attempt to create a decisive sense of closure. However, an offended audience may not be so willing to let go of a topic or the satirist who raised it: I argue that Hall's self-conscious meditations on the targets of anger and satiric laughter reflect the struggles of a young poet trying to reconcile his nascent aesthetic with the sometimes hostile readers who imitated and attacked his work well after he himself stopped responding. Invoking laughter as a tool to define and condemn what he considers unacceptable, Hall ultimately suggests that restrained silence is necessary to close off an ever-escalating rhetorical duel between an angry satirist and an offended audience.

Although Hall found the prospect of persistent responses to his satires discomfiting, Herbert regarded ongoingness as a key resource to religious devotion and a vital way to access the divine. I argue in my fourth chapter that, in the lyrics of *The Temple*, Herbert explores this principle of continual action through clothing metaphors. The discussion begins with a contextualization of Herbert's clothing metaphors through the Elizabethan vestiarian controversy, which entailed debate over the symbolic implications of church ceremony and the conventions of priestly dress. I then explore *The Temple*'s opening section, "The Church-porch,"

which attempts to teach its readers spiritually productive self-scrutiny through vanity about dress, and I address a selection of lyrics from *The Temple* that develop an aesthetic of piety expressed through the shedding or dissolution of garments. The chapter concludes with an examination of Herbert's lyrics that describe the opposite process, the assumption of priestly clothing. Herbert uses the renewal of human habit—clothing and repeated actions—symbolically mimics the ongoing quality Herbert ascribes to divine creation.

In my final chapter, I examine the resources of the poetry of mourning to achieve closure. Elegy offers one of the most useful poetic environments in which to study closure because the ending of a life, whether abruptly premature or mournfully anticipated, is fundamentally that, an *end*. The labor of the elegist is to find or to create closure from that rough cutting-off. This chapter addresses Milton's two pastoral elegies, *Lycidas* and *Epitaphium Damonis*, both of which lament premature, tragic deaths and which attempt to create consolation and closure by focusing intensely on the subjectivity of the grieving poet. Dwelling mournfully on the unfulfilled and unfulfillable lives of the dead Edward King and Charles Diodati, Milton refocuses the pastoral elegies to meditate on his own as-yet-unfulfilled poetic ambitions, which he hopes *can* come to fruition. Although Milton anticipates the composition of epic in these two lyrics, they reflect more uncertainty than critics have recognized about the place of pastoral within his career. In the late works *Paradise Lost* and *Paradise Regained*, Milton shows that he was unwilling to estrange himself from elements of his intellectual past and continued to draw on his early poetry in his later career.

All of the chapters that follow dwell on static prosodic forms—the architecture of verse that preoccupied so many early modern poets and that they turned to such diverse expressive uses. Ultimately, however, this project studies form in motion: lyric stillness counterpoised with

unfolding narrative; preexisting stories adapted and transformed to express new ideas; the destinies of poetic selves asserted and brooded upon through the fiction of lyric speakers. The heart of the texts I explore is in such “act[s] of form,” the processes of articulation that reflect, on one hand, the manifold ways that resolution is contingent on factors beyond the poet’s control, and, on the other, an exploration of the resources of language to understand, if not to overcome, those challenges. Thematic closure—some kind of arrival at a goal—*is* often present and substantive, yet because the teleological drive that characterizes narrative poetry operates less strongly in lyric, the lyric form invites a consideration of which elements in a poem have come to rest and which have not. What *can* be brought to an end is much more liable to be earthly, accessible, human, concrete. By drawing out elements of ongoing process and local completion together, Shakespeare, Hall, Herbert, and Milton explore closure in many permutations: when is it possible? How near can I get to it? Can I arrive there only to find resolution taken away from me? What resolution can I count on? Eliot’s Prufrock, fearing and failing to seize the day, must ask, “Then how should I begin?” (69). The lyric poets of the Renaissance, often facing a similar burden of full and adequate expression, must ask, “How should I end?”

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2. PLUCKING GREEN PLUMS: BAD TIMING AND DEATH IN *VENUS AND*

ADONIS

“Adaptation is repetition, but repetition without replication.” (Hutcheon 7)

“Where did I leave?” “No matter where,” quoth he;
 “Leave me, and then the story aptly ends.”
 (*Venus and Adonis* 715-16)

Denied resolution may be tantalizing, but so too, paradoxically, is a foregone conclusion. For early modern as well as modern authors, the act of adaptation offers a rich opportunity to reshape elements of preexisting narratives so that it is possible to say something new—even when the adapted work preserves the ending of its literary forebears. Transformation is at the heart of adaptation: a work conspicuously in dialogue with a source text, as Shakespeare’s *Venus and Adonis* is, foregrounds the possibility of change (will this narrative proceed as it does in the version already known to us?) and the nature of the changes that do occur (how are the preoccupations unique to Shakespeare’s *Adonis* significant to early modern poetics and gender politics?).

An audience’s sensitivity to change also entails a sensitivity to process. The speed and route of narrative progression will always contribute to an evaluation of closure, but in a narrative poem that retells a familiar story, the quality of a plot’s unfolding motion is especially significant, since it constitutes part of the text’s engagement with its sources. Such emphasis on process is thematically crucial in *Venus and Adonis*. *Adonis*’s insistence on delay—in his resistance of Venus’s overtures, the deferral of love in favor of the hunt, and especially his status as an appealing but immature youth—underscores the poem’s meditations on transformation, a motif that is central to the content of Shakespeare’s Ovidian sources and to the status of *Venus and Adonis* as an adaptation. Shakespeare’s primary source, the story of Venus and Adonis in

book 10 of the *Metamorphoses*, ends in Adonis's death. Maintaining this conclusion, Shakespeare shapes his poem to foreground the poetic and interpersonal mechanisms that lead to—although not necessarily cause—Adonis's fate. As a work of adaptation, Shakespeare's epyllion exists in dialogue with various intertexts, classical and early modern.⁶ It is simultaneously an independent and a contingent work, and so it offers us a useful means to explore the limits of an author's control over his text and in whose hands, if anyone's, the ability to effect closure lies.

In *Venus and Adonis*, transformation and plot resolution are intimately connected.⁷ Venus only possesses her beloved youth through the proxy of the anemone he becomes, and, in contrast with Ovid's goddess, she does not cause the metamorphosis. Like his immaturity, Adonis's mortality is a changeable status wholly beyond her control, and no amount of clever formal positioning—whether Venus swiping Adonis into an amorous embrace or the finality of

6 The genre labels typically used in modern literary criticism for *Venus and Adonis*, and which I will use here—epyllion, minor epic, and more broadly, narrative poem—are not terms contemporary to Shakespeare. Early modern readers would have referred to the poem as a “pamphlet,” or they would have characterized it by a descriptive epithet derived from the sensuousness of its verse,” such as “honey tongued” (Burrow 15).

7 As I noted in my introduction, one of the meanings of “resolve” available in early modern English is “transform”: the latter sense is alive to Shakespeare not only in *Venus and Adonis*, as I will discuss, but also in *Hamlet* (in the flesh that the prince imagines “resolv[ing] itself into a dew” [I.ii.130]) and *Timon of Athens* (“The sea's a thief, whose liquid surge resolves / The moon into salt tears” [IV.iii.437-38]).

each sixain's epigrammatic concluding couplet—can synthesize resolution and fulfillment: closure will not come by fiat. The satisfactions of Shakespeare's epyllion are in its dramatization of tantalizing delay, and in this respect we can locate the poem's objective not in the ending taken from Ovid but in the act of adaptation itself, the conspicuous adjustments of form that suggest that the *means to* resolution are essential for the *meaning of* resolution.

2.1 Adaptation as Responsive Form

An author who conspicuously engages with a preexisting literary form invites attention to imitation—the source and what he does with it. It is difficult to describe this phenomenon in neutral language: the difference between homage and plagiarism can be a matter of perspective.⁸ Beyond a certain—very fuzzy—threshold of borrowed material or form, a work becomes susceptible to interpretation as an adaptation. At what point it counts as adaptation, however (rather than an original work that borrows a lot of material), is subject to interpretation. Thomas Leitch summarizes a catalogue of terms from Gérard Genette to describe subtly different textual relationships: intertextuality, paratextuality, metatextuality. The problem with even a thorough taxonomy of this kind, he observes, is that it does not distinguish between adaptation and allusion: the “frontiers” of the latter are disputable. He offers as an example the public spectacle of the wedding between Prince Charles and Princess Diana: that the event was a choreographed theatrical performance is certain, but do Diana's modest origins qualify it as an adaptation of the

8 For an exploration of the traits that can give rise to such divergent interpretations, see, for example, Julie Sanders's discussion of the relationship between Graham Swift's *Last Orders* and William Faulkner's *As I Lay Dying* (32-41).

Cinderella story (94)? Such a determination is distinctly subjective, as is an evaluation of whether the later work (whatever label it may bear—“extensively allusive” or “adapted”) did justice to its source(s). Such judgments spring from an evaluation of both the source alone and the dynamics of the intertextual relationship, as well as an interpretation of the thresholds of genre, as the wedding example illustrates.

It is not surprising, then, that scholars of adaptation have developed a beautifully diverse vocabulary that spans from the derogatory to the laudatory.⁹ Jonathan Bate calls Shakespeare a “creative imitator” (“Sexual Perversity” 82) who draws on both his source material and his own synchronic context: “Like all good imitators, Shakespeare enters into the same arena as his model, but does his own turn there” (87). Linda Hutcheon defines adaptation as “an act of appropriating or salvaging, and this is always a double process of interpreting and then creating something new” (20). “Imitation” may be neutral or derisive depending on context (Bate’s adjective “creative” deflects the potentially negative connotation); “salvaging” is complimentary, although perhaps at the expense of the author’s source. To what degree a work is new and freestanding or derivative, salvaged, contingent, is a common concern shared by studies of poetic form, genre, and adaptation. Heather Dubrow’s observation that “at times the [lyric] mode operates reactively and dialogically” (18) offers a constructive formulation for an analysis of adaptation as well: a literary “reaction” at once acknowledges intertextual indebtedness as well as the historically contingent authorial subjectivity that informs the response.

9 Addressing only terms used to describe film adaptations of literature, Hutcheon summarizes a wealth of insulting epithets, which include “tampering,” “interference,” “violation,” “betrayal,” “deformation,” “perversion,” “infidelity,” and “desecration” (2).

Although a substantial body of criticism has addressed Shakespeare's debts to Ovid and to early modern adaptors of erotic myth, this work has not been discussed as an adaptation per se. The field of adaptation studies has often centered on the use of film to retell or reinvent preexisting texts. This focus explores the challenges and resources of a text's transformation into a significantly different medium, but tends, of course, to address the creative output and priorities of artists from the twentieth century and after. Adaptation studies offers an extremely valuable method for the examination of precisely the kinds of intertextual creation that Shakespeare and other early modern poets effected with materials already familiar to their audiences; in this chapter, I wish to highlight the applicability of adaptation to our understanding of *Venus and Adonis*: the relationship between Shakespeare's poem and its intertexts is far richer than a mere tally of Ovidian echoes would reveal. Intertextuality shapes both form and content in *Venus and Adonis*. Almost every study of the poem glances at Ovid (or speculates about other potential sources), but most do so briefly or use the discussion as a springboard to address some distinctive aspect of Shakespeare's text. William Sheidley, for example, argues that Shakespeare "restructure[s]" Ovid's myth to suggest more strongly the causal link between Adonis's refusal and his disastrous fate (5). Burrow observes that Shakespeare may have been tempted to compose his epyllion in order to outdo John Clapham's 1591 *Narcissus*, a "creaky" Ovidian allegory dedicated, as *Venus and Adonis* would be, to Henry Wriothesley, Earl of Southampton (11-12). A few studies address intertextuality more comprehensively. A. D. Cousins, for one, offers a substantial comparison of Shakespeare's poem with Lodge's *Scylla's Metamorphosis* (13-15) and Shakespeare's Venus with differing ancient versions of the goddess: *Venus Mechanitis* (a figure "practiced in love's verbal and other [rhetorical] artifices"), *Venus Vulgaris* (the representation of physical love), and *Venus Victrix* (a figure of love's ability to overcome

discord) (17-22). Bate, showing careful attention to the multiple Ovidian intertexts in conversation with Shakespeare's poem, highlights the importance of the Salmacis/Hermaphroditis myth as part of his argument that audiences are meant to see "Adonis's *potential* to participate in an ideal Salmacian/Hermaphroditic union," although Adonis does not manage to do so because of the coerciveness of his relationship with Venus ("Sexual Perversity" 91-92). Bate and Carter both note the juxtapositions of sexuality and infancy at the poem's conclusion, citing Venus's placement of the anemone flower in the "cradle" between her breasts and her "rock[ing]" it soothingly (Carter 158). This scene is, as Bate argues, an instance of Shakespeare's Adonis being "forced to re-enact, with gender and generational roles reversed, his mother's incestuous affair" ("Sexual Perversity" 85), an aspect of his genealogy that is part of the larger narrative of the *Metamorphoses* but not explicitly related by Shakespeare. Such an interpretation, that Adonis is "forced" to reenact his family history because Shakespeare employs important motifs from Ovid in the description of Adonis's death, suggests that the adapted text is much more constrained than it really is.¹⁰

10 The process of adaptation reflects an author's ability to shape a genealogy for his text. Just as Shakespeare and his contemporaries adapt Ovid, later authors such as John Milton engage with different aspects of both classical and early modern precedent as they create their own works. Maggie Kilgour discusses Milton's use of Spenser's and Shakespeare's Adonis figures in *A Mask*, and points out that Milton and his predecessors each found ways to "experimen[t] with ways of Englishing the Latin poet." Milton's use of his nearer contemporaries' work illustrates the act of "choos[ing] his line of descent" (82): this selective activity is at the heart of adaptation.

The Shakespearean character is in many respects re-living the fate of his classical and early modern antetypes, death and metamorphosis. Yet Shakespeare's Adonis is also an idiosyncratic creature. If resistance is his chief distinguishing characteristic, then the different narrative that that trait produces (i.e., the tete-a-tete with Venus, not calm submission to her) is substantive and significant to Shakespeare *even though* the early modern poem follows Ovid in its relation of the broad arc of Adonis's life and fate. In other words, Shakespeare's Adonis dies on the tusk of the boar just as Ovid's does, but the attitudes and actions of Shakespeare's Adonis prior to that death are meaningfully different, and the fact of that difference should invite us to ask whether the death of Shakespeare's character signifies something distinct from his predecessor's fate. Assessing reversals in attitude or gender roles forces a reading of Adonis as a contingent element of Shakespeare's sources. But the Shakespearean youth is not merely the product of adjustments to Ovidian source material; what sets apart the early modern Adonis from his analogues is less important than the ways his traits impact the unfolding dynamics with Venus. The poem is responsive to classical and early modern contexts and also develops original elements of form and theme, as the studies I survey above rightly acknowledge; these traits make *Venus and Adonis* an ideal subject for analysis as an adaptation. To read Shakespeare's poem in this light, as I propose to do, can clarify the frames of reference by which we judge what is unique to the early modern Adonis. Our focus should not only center on the poem as an instance of retelling, but also as an invitation to reconsider the nature of the characters' identities and their relationship with one another.

Ovid's tale of Venus and Adonis is one of several sung by Orpheus after he loses his wife Eurydice (among other signs of his bereavement, he "taught the Thracian folke a stewes of Males to make / And of the flowring pryme of boayes [boys] the pleasure for to take" [X. 84-85?]).

The tales that Orpheus tells in book 10 warn against the dangers of desire; these include the narratives of Ganymede, Hyacinth, Pygmalion and his statue, Myrrha, Venus and Adonis, and, nested within the last of these, Atalanta. The introduction to the tale of Venus and Adonis includes a commentary on the swiftness of time that unfolds between Adonis's birth and his alluring youth: "Away slippes fleeting tyme unspyde and mocks us to our face, / And nothing may compare with yeares in swiftnesse of theyr pace" (X. 596-97), an invocation of unfolding process that is significant to my reading of Shakespeare's Adonis. Grazed accidentally by one of Cupid's shafts, Venus falls in love with Adonis and companionably hunts harmless prey with him. She hates dangerous quarry like the boar and lion, and when he asks why, she proposes that they rest in the shade while she tells him the tale of Atalanta and Hippomenes. Intermingling her narration with kisses ("in her tale shee bussted him among" [X. 647]), Venus concludes her story by warning Adonis to avoid aggressive animals. Undeterred, he still hunts a wild boar that gores him in the groin and kills him. In grief, Venus decrees that "Of my greefe remembrance shall remayne / (Adonis) whyle the world doth last" (X. 848-49), and she sprinkles nectar on Adonis's spilled blood. A flower grows there with delicate leaves and petals tinted like blood, short-lived like the slain youth.

Shakespeare pares away the introductory context of Orpheus's tale of Venus and Adonis, beginning instead with the goddess's importunate seizure and attempted seduction of the youth. Shakespeare also eliminates the interpolated story of Atalanta, inventing the ongoing argumentative wooing that is absent and needless in Ovid's text, where Adonis is evidently content in Venus's company. Adonis's resistance is the trait that most conspicuously differentiates Shakespeare's youth from Ovid's, and all the specific descriptions of Adonis's beauty and his dialogue are Shakespearean additions. Adonis's death and its direct cause are the

same in the two texts, but while Ovid's Venus creates a flower to memorialize her mourning for the lost youth, Shakespeare's Venus laments the miseries of future lovers, and by the time she stops speaking, the corpse has transformed spontaneously into the anemone flower.

Shakespeare was far from the first to reconstitute the story of the goddess and her beloved youth. For Roman authors, a necessary step in establishing authority as a poet was to "insert [oneself] into an existing tradition and use [one's] predecessors as points of reference" (Galinsky 185). Ovid himself adapted elements of the Venus and Adonis story from older sources including Bion, Hyginus, Apollodorus (Emeljanow 69-70), and Theocritus (Bate, "Sexual Perversity" 87), and early modern editions of Ovid often included annotations that identified both classical and early modern intertexts (Kilgour xiii). As Julie Sanders notes, "Mythical literature depends upon, incites even, perpetual acts of reinterpretation in new contexts, a process that embodies the very idea of appropriation" (63). In sixteenth-century England, schoolboys, dramatists, and poets imitated not just Ovid's narratives but his role as adapter. Sarah Carter emphasizes the significance of Ovid to both education and popular entertainment: "As sources for a variety of myths and exemplars in poetic style, the *Metamorphoses*, *Fasti*, *Heroides*, and *Tristia* were central to humanist education" (2). The motifs that govern the *Metamorphoses*, "desire, mutability, and mortality," were "eminently resonant to early modern thinkers" (3). Grammar school education ensured, moreover, that students were required to internalize Ovidian narrative: boys memorized passages from the *Metamorphoses* "at the rate of twelve lines a week, five hundred lines a year, for two or more years" (Joseph, qtd. in Wilson 22). Ovid permeated the early modern mind.

The concerns specific to a culture and historical moment will determine what use authors make of the texts they adapt.¹¹ The act of borrowing itself, however, was regarded as an essential skill for early modern poets. While idiosyncratic priorities might govern the transformations they wrought on their models (e.g., Shakespeare's use of conventionally feminine Petrarchan blazon to praise the beloved young man in the *Sonnets*), poets were expected to be able to appropriate recognizable elements of other texts—subject matter, prosodic forms, modes of development—and recast them in fresh ways. In *Discoveries*, Ben Jonson stipulates that a poet must “bee able to convert the substance, or Riches of an other *Poet*, to his owne use” (2467-69). For Jonson, the art of selecting material to imitate is as much a part of poetic craft as the act of turning it to a new purpose: the poet must “draw forth out of the best, and choisest flowers, with the Bee, and turne all into Honey, worke it into one relish, and savour: make our *Imitation* sweet” (2476-79). He enjoins poets to learn good imitation from good imitators: “observe, how the best writers have imitated, and follow them” (2479-80). In this respect, Roman and early modern English poetic values coincide; for Shakespeare, as for Ovid,

11 Historically sensitive speculation about the priorities of early modern authors can coexist peacefully with genre study. Bate, for example, argues that although epyllia often end with “tragedies of love,” they are not tragedies but etiologies, “more interested in the beginnings than the ends of love,” a preoccupation characteristic of the Renaissance (“Sexual Perversity” 80-81). Catherine Belsey agrees that *Venus and Adonis* is “a poetic record of the originating moment of desire” (258) and connects Adonis's quibbling distinctions between love and lust with the development of a system of family values in the late sixteenth century (266). These studies respond to cultural history as much as to literary history.

“belatedness is a source of power, . . . [and] imitation is the path to innovation and liberation” (Kilgour xiii). Thus Ovid and Shakespeare in some measure participate in the same processes of adaptation.

Shakespeare was among many contemporary authors to expand tales from the *Metamorphoses* into fuller narratives (Burrow 16). Such rewriting is essential to Ovidian poetry in the 1590s: poets would “take a detail and weave ornaments around it, and in the process . . . rewrite the priorities of an earlier writer” (18). Early modern audiences judged such adaptations on the originality of the author’s *treatment* of the text, not the degree to which the subject matter was unique (as I noted above, the subjects were already likely to be familiar).¹² Even outside the early modern classroom, the retelling of a tale from Ovid was an intensely rhetorical exercise. The function of the epyllion, Bate suggests, is to use *copia* to examine the origins of love and the rhetorical strategies used for seductive persuasion (“Sexual Perversity” 81). Other scholars have recently argued for a more strictly moralistic function: Anthony Mortimer discusses how the merging of bodies suggested by the story of Salmacis and Hermaphroditis was interpreted as a “dreadful warning against effeminacy” (99). Jim Ellis suggests similarly that epyllia “show the

12 Early modern audiences did not expect or privilege originality of subject matter. An imitation perceived as too close to its original, however, could draw criticism for that quality, as did Thomas Heywood’s *Oenone and Paris* (1594), a plagiaristically close imitation of *Venus and Adonis* (Carter 137). Ovid himself drew criticism from Quintilian for “grandstanding,” which, G. Karl Galinsky observes, “goes to show that the reading public of the *Metamorphoses* fully understood the poet’s aim of drawing considerable attention to himself and his technique” (19).

dangers for a male of being the object of desire” (52). These morals are related to but distinct from the story of Venus and Adonis in Ovid, a tale among many told by Orpheus to illustrate the dangers of “destructive passion” (Sanders 70). The moralizing tendency of the epyllion springs from specifically early modern, not classical, concerns. This quality of contemporaneity is essential to *Venus and Adonis*, and it is one of the most important justifications for a reading of this poem as an adaptation. The poem’s allusions, characterization, and imagery reflect Shakespearean and early modern preoccupations with maturity, and these qualities require analysis on their own terms rather than solely vis-a-vis Shakespeare’s classical and contemporary sources.

Recent work in adaptation studies has focused on the two precepts that I adumbrate above. First, adaptations are the product of social phenomena such as popular tastes and trends in interpretive theories (e.g., a fondness for postcolonial reinterpretations of canonical texts), not just literary history. Second, criticism that only measures an adaptation by how well it mimics its source(s) necessarily does an injustice to the adaptation. My discussion in this chapter draws significantly on the second precept, as I wish to stress the role of authorial agency in determining the contours of the adapted text. Three important monographs in adaptation studies, all published in 2006, reflect these priorities. In *Film Adaptation and its Discontents*, Thomas Letich characterizes adaptation as an “incessant process of rewriting as critical reading” that operates as interpretation and criticism, not the “transcriptio[n] of canonical classics or [an] attempt[t] to create new classics” (16). He notes that only understanding an adaptation in terms of its source text does an injustice to the new work’s artistic integrity: “Taking fidelity as the decisive criterion of an adaptation’s value is tantamount to insisting that it do the same job as its source text without going outside the lines that text has established, even though adaptations

normally carry heavier burdens and labor under tighter restrictions than we would ever impose on any novel” (17).

Linda Hutcheon also situates her study, *A Theory of Adaptation*, as an attempt to dislodge the “fidelity criticism” (6) that she argues has, in the past, been “critical orthodoxy” (7). This view considers adaptations principally as derivative, “inferior[,] and secondary creations” (4). She refines a definition of the adapted text’s “double nature”: an adaptation is “created and received in relation to a prior text,” but it is also autonomous (6). She acknowledges that some criticism has unsettled the “orthodoxy” of interpretation based on fidelity, and she works to continue the trend by dealing with adaptation as an end product, a process of creation and transformation, and a process of reception (8), a triad that renders the adapted text as a manifestation of the comprehensive rhetorical triangle of text, author, and audience. Sanders echoes Hutcheon’s sense that adaptation needs to be considered as a social phenomenon (21). Sanders’s *Adaptation and Appropriation* deals principally with film, television, and theatrical adaptations of canonical literary works; she argues that “adaptations and appropriations are impacted upon by movements in, and readings produced by, the theoretical and intellectual arena as much as by their so-called sources” (13). She stresses the value of “discussing adaptation and appropriation [so that critics can] register influence but not assume it is a stranglehold” (158).

Each of these studies enjoins audiences not to consider works of adaptation as inferior creations. Shakespearean texts do not usually suffer under such a label; as a corpus of texts, Shakespeare’s works have traditionally been as unassailable as any in the Western literary canon (although of course adaptations and performances of them carry no such immunity). Yet even Shakespeare himself is not wholly above scrutiny and occasionally irreverent attack. In *Shakespeare’s Surrogates: Rewriting Renaissance Drama* (2013), Sonya Freeman Loftis

responds to Hutcheon's observation that audiences can have a mingled reaction to appropriated work—pleasure in recognition as well as disdain for imitation. Loftis explores modern and postmodern playwrights' ambivalent attitudes toward canonical Renaissance drama. As she observes, Shakespeare himself becomes a focus of obsession for dramatists such as George Bernard Shaw, who aligned himself and his dramatic adaptations with Shakespeare and yet expressed the wish to “dig him up and throw stones at him,” to destroy and then replace the bard (3). This complex attitude reflects the adaptor's struggle with preexisting art and artists: they enable but may also stifle new creation.

The motivations and priorities of adaptors themselves offer rich matter for study, as Loftis's study suggests. Elements of this kind of analysis are present in the criticism on *Venus and Adonis* and the present discussion aims to develop them further. Cousins, for example, calls the poem indebted to Lodge's *Scylla's Metamorphosis*, but construes the debt positively, as an “opportunity” for Shakespeare to adjust the genre for a new audience—the literary patron to whom Shakespeare dedicated *Venus and Adonis*, Henry Wriothesley, as well as a wider public readership, not primarily the witty young male lawyers at the Inns of Court (14). Rather than speculate about Shakespeare's intentions, however, I propose a reading of his epyllion that reflects a fact that the text itself confirms: he saw aesthetic or commercial potential in the Ovidian texts available to him and he wanted to explore it. An adaptor chooses a source text that offers rich soil in which to cultivate something new or is capable of being turned to new ends. Thus, transformation and development both shape an adapted work. Like the youthful Adonis at the beginning of Shakespeare's narrative, it may either mature (developing its current form) or undergo metamorphosis and become an essentially different work, governed by distinct logic and

cultural factors.¹³ These alternatives remain in indeterminate suspension until we see the trajectory shaped by the adaptor's hand.

2.2 Couplets and Conspiracy

As a genre that examines the rhetorical strategies of seduction or simply titillates through the dilation of the sexual elements in Ovidian narrative, the epyllion is a literary form well suited to explore the means used to reach an end. The sixain Shakespeare employs in *Venus and Adonis* serves an important role in the ways the poem develops meaning. Through reiteration of this stanza and its concluding couplets, Shakespeare invites his audience to evaluate the punctuating moments of commentary against the preceding events. The question that often lurks at moments of chiming prosodic closure—"what (if anything) has been resolved here?"—is indirectly a question about process, since a sense of closure relies on the development of the poem toward that point. When Venus argues that Adonis must breed, for example, her assertive analogies seem absolute and conclusive: "Seeds spring from seeds and beauty breedeth beauty; /

13 Intertextuality, allusion, and formal structures all ensure that even a free adaptation retains bindings to its source text(s). However, I would like to emphasize the importance of every adaptation's *potential* freedom from its sources as well. Endings are as much within the adapter's scope of control as any other aspect of the text, and an unexpected alteration in this place has the potential to shock utterly. Lear's realization that Cordelia is dead is a crowning sorrow to the play's tragic events, but the play's first audiences may have felt an additional, staggering blow of surprise: "In the story as [Shakespeare] found it in every one of his sources, Cordelia's army is victorious, and Lear reascends his throne" (Orgel 1484).

Thou wast begot; to get it is thy duty” (167-68). The finality of these lines belies Venus’s false analogy, that Adonis is bound to reproduce by his mere existence (“Thou wast begot”) and appearance (“beauty breedeth beauty”). A terminal couplet can only contribute to closure if it is effective with respect to the thematic structure that preceded it (Smith 51)—if, to put it another way, the structure ripens toward closure like a mellowing plum, the image Adonis uses to describe maturation.

In *Venus and Adonis*, this “ripening” is conspicuously absent. The poem’s tantalizing extension of Venus’s seduction, parried by Adonis’s resistance, is part of the epyllion’s charm. Many of her speeches are followed by commentary by the poem’s narrative voice, and more often than not, that voice moralizes in sympathy with her views, which are already dominant in the poem by the sheer volume of her speech: seduction is inevitable and Adonis’s good looks cannot but inflame desire. Particularly when the commentary occurs in the final couplet, it mimics Venus’s habit of preventing Adonis from speaking by prescribing a conclusion for the preceding speech or action. The goddess, kissing Adonis with predatory hunger and “vulture thought” (551), for example, exhausts the youth so much that he “no more resisteth” (563), and the narrator’s commentary, ending a stanza, renders this amorous assault as a demonstration of Venus’s virtuosity in wooing: “Affection faints not like a pale-faced coward, / But then woos best when most his choice is froward” (569-70). Poetic structure facilitates Venus’s overbearing speech and contributes to the synthesis of repeated but incomplete resolutions that defer the accomplishment of her desire. Just as Shakespeare’s goddess cannot compel—but does everything she can to finagle compliance from—Adonis, the poem’s discourse reiterates views favorable to her suit, as if repetition itself might effect persuasion, and assertion effect resolution.

Shakespeare positions readers to perceive the tragic hollowness of Adonis being “forced to content” although he will not “obey” (61).

The Golding translation of Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* renders the Latin poem’s brisk dactylic hexameter in rhymed fourteeners couplets that, as John Frederick Nims laments, frequently suffer from “gangling diffusion” (xxiii) and clunking meter (although they are, he concedes, much more readable than the fourteeners of John Studley and Joseph Heywood, both of whom translated works of Seneca in the 1560s [xxv]). Ovid’s poem is divided into books, following epic convention, but the layers of nested narratives otherwise have no formal demarcation, and episodes often cross over the divisions between books (Hopkinson 6). Shakespeare significantly amplifies the scope of the Venus and Adonis story, but gives his poem no points of prosodic grouping to create formal units larger than the stanza. The sixain, which is almost always end-stopped, creates a structural articulation each six lines; marked by the chime of a couplet, each stanza’s conclusion is potentially a moment of pause or incremental completion, a structural choice that reflects Shakespeare’s concern with processes of development in his narrative. This choice is especially significant, as I will show, when the concluding remarks from Venus or the narrator recast Adonis’s resistance into grounds for further and more aggressive pursuit. To unfold an account of tantalizing seduction in sixains is part of a double announcement of authorial control: Shakespeare turns this stanza form to somewhat different ends than his contemporaries do, and, as I noted above, the choice to retell a story from Ovid is an invitation for audiences to witness the poet’s unique virtuosity in the manner of tale-telling.

The majority of Elizabethan poets did not use sixains for erotic verse, although the form itself was extremely common. In *The Reulis and Cautelis to be Observit and Eschewit in Scottis*

Poesie (1584), the eighteen-year-old James VI describes the sixain as “*Commoun verse*,” which could equally signify widespread usage or the form’s ordinary nature (Scott-Baumann 3).

George Puttenham, surveying different types of proportions in “*staffe*” (stanza) in *The Arte of English Poesie* (1589), also notes that the six-line stanza is commonly used and also “pleasant to the ear” (II. 55). He summarizes in a series of diagrams the variety of potential interlocking rhyme schemes for a six-line stanza, remarking that “some be usual, some not usual, and not so sweet one as another,” although he does not specify which is which (II. 72). Its potential associations with erotic subjects are likely tied to shorter lyrics: Elizabeth Scott-Baumann speculates that the sixain entered common usage via mid-sixteenth-century poetic miscellanies (5). The Catholic poet Robert Southwell, Shakespeare’s contemporary, used the form for devotional poetry, but although he associated the sixain with “*materis of loue*,” he might have been thinking of Shakespeare’s *Venus and Adonis* (5). The association between sixains and erotic poetry may reflect the influence of Shakespeare’s poem more than the expectations created by uses of the form as Southwell knew it from other contemporary poetry.

Thomas Lodge’s *Scylla’s Metamorphosis* (1589) is a probable contemporary intertext for Shakespeare’s *Venus and Adonis*. Bate credits Lodge’s poem with giving rise to the epyllion as a new poetic genre (“Sexual Perversity” 80). Lodge uses sixains throughout the volume, and his eroticized tale of Glaucus and Scylla does afford a few stanzas to retell the moment of Venus discovering the tragically dying Adonis.¹⁴ While Lodge’s poem may have played a role in

14 Lodge is among the first to use sixains for erotic poetry, and he does so before Shakespeare, but the diversity of other poetic uses to which Lodge puts the form suggests that he did not have a concerted plan to establish a special connection between the sixain and salacious

suggesting to Shakespeare a choice of form and topic, it is unusual among other Elizabethan poems in sixains, the uses of which were often much more straight-faced than playful. *Venus and Adonis* is one of 209 Elizabethan poems built on sixains and consisting of more than 100 lines, and one of 30 consisting of more than 999 lines (May and Ringler 3: 2150). Of the 30 poems comparable to *Venus and Adonis* in length and prosodic form (i.e., sixains exclusively in pentameter and following the rhyme scheme Shakespeare uses, *ababcc*), topics are more often historical or religious in nature. Poems of the former type include narrative histories of Elizabeth I; Sir John Oldcastle; Piers Gaveston; Richard III; and Humphrey, Duke of Gloucester.¹⁵ Those

Ovidian themes. In the same volume that includes his epyllion, Lodge also uses sixains for “The discontented fatyre” and poems of praise, e.g., “In praife of the Countrey life” (D4v). He groups the poems of praise under the general heading of “Delectable Sonets,” which shows that even that genre label of “sonnet,” which has such a fixed definition to modern audiences, was much more flexible to sixteenth- and seventeenth-century authors (cf. Richard Tottel’s 1557 miscellany *Songes and Sonnettes*, the grouping *Songs and Sonets* in the first print edition of John Donne’s *Poems, by J. D.* [1633], and Andrew Marvell’s *Songs and Sonnets* [1681]).

15 A text’s historical focus does not, of course, preclude eroticism; Michael Drayton’s *Legend of Piers Gaveston* describes a deeply eroticized relationship between Gaveston and the prince who would become Edward II. Entered into the Stationers’ Register in December 1593 and probably composed in the autumn of that year, *Piers Gaveston* postdates Shakespeare’s poem, echoes it in at least one place through a one-stanza summary of Venus’s suit, and perhaps testifies to Drayton’s “susceptibility to poetic fashions” (Hebel, Tillotson, and

of the latter type include religious allegory and vision, translations of apocryphal biblical texts, and laments on penitential themes. Shakespeare, then, chooses to employ a form typically associated with sober subjects, not Ovidian eroticism.

Yet the form is beautifully suited to erotic delay. Reiterated stanza forms lend themselves to narrative with an interest in drawn-out teasing. The identical stanzas create a sense of “deferral through . . . repetition offered by the smaller narrative units of the sixain pattern” (Kuchar 4). Unlike a sonnet or other lyric form with conventional boundaries of scope, this kind of iterative form has no prescribed length; an author’s manipulation of pacing can make the point of resolution seem either surprising or inevitable and the arrival at that point either abrupt or gradual. The adjustments of structure and characterization that mark an adaptation’s originality also establish the conditions for resolution, and in *Venus and Adonis*, Shakespeare amplifies the tragic conclusion of the myth by giving Adonis a desire to wait that the poem brutally denies.

The narrative voice and the goddess both spend a great deal of time dwelling on Adonis’s beauty.¹⁶ His pouting resistance, struggles, and scornful looks are all presented as amplifications of his allure. From the beginning of the poem, when Venus scoops the youth off his horse, his consternation is manifested in physical effects that look *like* symptoms of desire. Tucked under

Newdigate 5: 23). Works such as *Piers Gaveston* and Samuel Daniel’s *Complaint of Rosamond* help to illustrate Shakespeare’s participation in a larger movement in the 1590s toward the use of sixains for erotic poetry.

16 For an analysis of the way the poem’s language is controlled by Venus and represents normative Elizabethan views of language and identity, see Shohet 87-92.

the goddess's arm, Adonis "blushed and pouted in a dull disdain, / With leaden appetite, unapt to toy; / She red and hot as coals of glowing fire, / He red for shame, but frosty in desire" (33-36). His pout, glossed in the stanza's final line as his lack of desire for Venus, still stokes *her* desire: a pout can express either sulkiness or a flirtatious attempt to enhance sexual desirability ("Pout"), and she reacts as if Adonis intends the latter (or, perhaps, the former as thin pretext for the latter). Both goddess and youth are red in the face, and although the passage's contrasts show that opposite affects underlie their blushing, his own complexion belies his frostiness. He is a "tender boy" (32)—a positive description reflecting both his youthfulness and his status as an object of affectionate admiration: the substance of his dispute with Venus is contained within this epithet. As the poem unfolds and Adonis attempts to emphasize his youth to Venus, his desirability almost always eclipses it in her eyes: he is repeatedly provocative to her, whether he will or no.

Curiously, Adonis's own language often appears to carry provocative overtones as well. That it seems unintentionally so suggests the strength of contextual pressure created by Venus's seductive rhetoric and the poem's erotic theme: in this discursive environment, sexual connotations become more conspicuous. Chasing his lustful horse, Adonis cries for the beast to be still: "Stand, I say" (284). The command may illustrate latent wordplay on the sexual sense of "standing" that the youthful, naïve Adonis may not intend ("Stand"). Adonis also affirms that he will not know love "Unless it be a boar, and then I chase it" (410). What he knows of *amorous* love, by contrast, is apparently only through hearsay: "For I have heard it is a life in death, / That laughs and weeps and all but with a breath" (413-14). The paradoxical "life in death" as well as the antithetical behaviors he describes are Petrarchan (perhaps Adonis has been reading Elizabethan sonnets?). Mortimer suspects that the phrase "life in death" is a slip on Adonis's

part for “death in life,” since Adonis is rejecting Venus’s promise of “life in death” through procreation, and concludes that Adonis is “confused by the unsettling advent of adult experience” (89). Considered in this light, Adonis is a hapless adolescent who rejects Venus based on precepts he has only heard and in language with sexual overtones (“death” as orgasm) for which he lacks a personal frame of reference.¹⁷ Adonis concludes his speech by affirming that “where a heart is hard [Venus’s persuasions can] make no batt’ry” (426). Gary Kuchar finds this remark unintentionally emasculating and humorous: “he adds insult to his own injury when he reveals that the only ‘hard’ thing about him is his unbattered heart” (13). The potential for double meaning in Adonis’s language facilitates the epyllion’s eroticism, but also, crucially, it illustrates his naiveté. This youthful quality indirectly validates his assertions of his own immaturity, as I will discuss in the following section.¹⁸

To be helplessly seductive in both appearance and language is a dangerous predicament. Adonis’s neutral comments and physical reactions take on a sexualized quality because we see them through Venus’s powerfully desiring gaze and, additionally, through the interpretations of the narrator, whose view tends to be in sympathy with the goddess’s and who often describes the youth’s neutral and even his resistant actions as alluring. Mortimer reads the narrator as a

17 Adonis’s inexperience may extend to the hunt itself. If we can believe Venus, he has not actually completed a boar hunt: “O, be advised: thou know’st not what it is / With javelin’s point a churlish swine to gore” (615-16). Adonis does not dispute this assertion.

18 Cousins summarizes several of Adonis’s impatient exclamations as proof of his youth: his “terse, sullen anger seems appropriate to his years and his situation,” and he uses “adolescent rhetoric of indignation and impatience” (29).

relatively neutral figure whose tone is difficult to generalize but whose commentary reflects an “eyewitness stance and [employs] frequent recourse to the present tense” (44): the narrator’s moralizing, he argues, is not authoritative (44). I propose instead that we take the narrator’s moralizing as an interpretation offered for consideration, meant to be weighed against the situation it describes. If that interpretation is often in sympathy with Venus, as I will describe, it follows that the narrative will not provide much defense for Adonis’s views.¹⁹ When Venus has the youth pinned in her grasp, she takes his physiological reaction as a greater provocation to desire, as if it were flirtation: “Panting he lies and breatheth in her face; / She feedeth on the steam as on a prey, / And calls it heavenly moisture, air of grace” (62-64). When he struggles, “Pure shame and awed resistance made him fret, / Which bred more beauty in his angry eyes. / Rain added to a river that is rank / Perforce will force it overflow the bank” (69-72). The concluding couplet clinches the point: his anger and his beauty amplify together, and are made of the same substance. This remark is the narrator’s, not Venus’s, but a narrative perspective could

19 Mortimer later veers from a reading of the narrator as merely an eyewitness reporter when he speculates that the narrator engages in “a form of free indirect speech” and “can give voice to Venus’ unspoken thoughts and, for a time, share her ignorance of the future” (104). This argument casts the poem as an echo chamber of the goddess’s consuming desire; the narrator is more or less an extension of Venus’s subjectivity. This interpretation is more closely in line with my suggestion that the narrative commentary often shores up Venus’s viewpoint; however, I take the narrator as a figure in the poem whose voice is distinct from Venus’s, even though it frequently endorses her views (and is therefore capable of a kind of discursive collusion with her against the articulation of contrary sentiments by Adonis).

hardly be more sympathetic to the goddess's attraction or to her view of sexuality as an irresistible natural force.

Other instances of the narrator's sympathy with Venus abound. While reporting the affect underlying the changing color of Adonis's complexion, the narrator emphasizes the goddess's reaction, concluding a stanza with her view: "Still he is sullen, still he lours and frets, / 'Twixt crimson shame and anger ashy-pale. / Being red, she loves him best, and being white, / Her best is bettered with a more delight" (75-78). The transition is seamless between the description of Adonis's consternation and the relation of it in terms of Venus's desire, which is so all-digesting that signs of shame and anger are as good as coquettish blushes for provoking renewed attraction. When Adonis "smiles as in disdain" (241) and shows his dimples, he only inflames Venus's desire further, and the narrator commiserates: "Poor queen of love, in thine own law forlorn, / To love a cheek that smiles at thee in scorn" (258). After the narrative digression describing the courtship between Adonis's lusty horse and the jennet, Venus happily has the opportunity to recommence her interrupted persuasion. The narrator, again in a couplet, moralizes: "For lovers say the heart hath treble wrong / When it is barred the aidance of the tongue" (329-30). Venus being prevented from speaking demonstrates a "treble wrong"; her repeated stifling of Adonis's speech receives no parallel critique.

Most troublingly, the narrator's moralizing suggests a disturbing indifference to consent by implying that Adonis's resistance is a veiled invitation. When Venus holds Adonis by the hand, the gaze between the two is a "war of looks" (355) and the conflict is rendered in beautiful language—his hand is "A lily prisoned in a jail of snow, / Or ivory in an alabaster band" (362-63). The concluding simile, guiding our interpretation of the gaze and touch, suggests that the conflict and constraint are really mutuality: "This beauteous combat, willful and unwilling, /

Showed like two silver doves that sit a-billing” (365-66). If Adonis’s resistance “show[s] like” affection, Venus is justified in her aggression and persistence. Her carnivorous, “feed[ing]” (548) kisses and “hard embracing” (559) are smoothed by the narrator into perfectly justified forwardness. Her affection is uncontrolled and dangerous:

And having felt the sweetness of the spoil,
 With blindfold fury she begins to forage;
 Her face doth reek and smoke, her blood doth boil,
 And careless lust stirs up a desperate courage,
 Planting oblivion, beating reason back,
 Forgetting shame’s pure blush and honor’s wrack. (553-58)

Invalidating Adonis’s objections, the narrator’s commentary suggests that Venus is right to be so savagely importunate:

Things out of hope are compassed oft with vent’ring,
 Chiefly in love, whose leave exceeds commission:
 Affection faints not like a pale-faced coward,
 But then woos best when most his choice is froward.

.....

Foul words and frowns must not repel a lover;
 What though the rose have prickles, yet ‘tis plucked.

Were beauty under twenty locks kept fast,
 Yet love breaks through, and picks them all at last. (567-70, 573-76)

Adonis’s naturalistic precept of waiting for timeliness (“the green [plum] sticks fast, / [And] being early plucked is sour to taste” [527-28]) becomes the narrator’s statement of foregone

conclusion. A rose's defensive prickles are a mere inconvenience, and they will come to naught: "'tis plucked." The rest of the commentary cheers on the goddess's "vent'ring," and, because Venus is the mythological embodiment of love, the axiom that "Affection faints not" amounts to an encouraging apostrophe to the goddess. Although Venus does not ultimately manage to "break through" the resistance embodied in "foul words and frowns," this vision of success is violent (barriers broken) and coercive (locks forced open by artifice).²⁰

Such biased language permeates the poem. When that bias is manifested in the couplets that conclude the sixains, the effect is to invalidate the central reason that Adonis does manage to articulate for his resistance, his unreadiness, by suggesting how natural and proper it would be for him to acquiesce. Adonis's self-consciously resistant immaturity, the most conspicuous difference between Shakespeare's youth and his Ovidian counterpart, shows that the reasons underlying the behavior of the former are central to his character. By making this adjustment, Shakespeare indirectly transforms the scene in Ovid—amorous play and warnings against the dangers of hunting savage beasts—into an environment that quashes Adonis's subjectivity. The adaptation gives Adonis the will to be left to ripen in his own time, then leads him to meet the

20 Even when not wholly partisan (or flattering), the narrator's commentary tends to focus on the love Venus supposedly embodies, not Adonis. As she wanders the woods in panicked search for Adonis's hunting party, the narrator moralizes that Love's "weal and woe are both of them extremes; / Despair and hope makes thee ridiculous: / The one doth flatter thee in thoughts unlikely, / In likely thoughts the other kills thee quickly" (987-90). The variability of her emotion may render her ridiculous, but hers is the only significant subjectivity in the poem.

fate of his Ovidian predecessor, sexually gored by the boar. For Shakespeare's Adonis, this fate is death and a too-hasty consummation, a resolution made more oppressively tragic by the adjustments Shakespeare makes to his lovely youth's sense of self. The alteration therefore invites audiences to consider *why* Adonis resists—why the bone of contention between this Adonis and the goddess is not solely the danger of the boar hunt, but sexual maturity.

2.3 Growing (in)to himself: Adonis's Maturity and Metamorphosis

Metamorphosis is both a crucial motif in Shakespeare's main intertexts as well as a way of understanding *Venus and Adonis* as an adaptation. In narratives of metamorphosis and in an adapted text, figures and forms change, characters transform from one category of creature to another, and the nature of relationships among characters necessarily alters after transformation takes place. With such considerations in mind, it is fitting that Shakespeare gives his Adonis a preoccupation with immaturity, a category of being defined by its movement toward a form it will prospectively achieve (but has not achieved yet: "immaturity" is "becoming-mature"). Shakespeare explores the implications of metamorphosis throughout his epyllion, not just in the final, literal transformation of the dead Adonis into an anemone. The poem's language (turns of phrase, metaphors) repeatedly evoke change, and allusions that engage with other Ovidian narratives of metamorphosis, including Narcissus and Actaeon, clarify that Adonis's reluctance springs from concerns about identity—but concerns distinct from the self-love of Narcissus and the fatal role reversal of hunter-turned-quarry suffered by Actaeon. Critical studies of *Venus and Adonis* have consistently pronounced that Adonis "object[s] to love on principle" (e.g., Bate, *Shakespeare and Ovid* 57), but a more nuanced view is necessary. His response to Venus is not "no," it is "no—for now": his heart "soundly sleeps, while now it sleeps alone" (786), and he

abbreviates his own objections to Venus's argumentation by reaffirming that "the orator [is] too green" (806) to speak authoritatively on desire. His refusal is conditioned by his unfolding state of maturation.

The transformation of Adonis into a flower is anticipated by linguistic and metaphorical transformations earlier in the poem. These instances of figurative metamorphosis reflect the status of the adapted text—its familiar form might change into something new—and begin to suggest Adonis's wariness of being transformed. *Venus and Adonis* is a poem full of oppositions: contrasting behaviors, gender roles, colors, temperatures, textures, and facial expressions. Adonis is introduced in the first stanza with an opposition that contains a nascent transformation: "Hunting he loved, but love he laughed to scorn" (4). The anadiplosis, the repetition of "love," links the contrastive aspects of Adonis's preferences, delight in hunting and derision for amorous love. Yet this opposition is not tidy. Shohet notes the contrast between the straightforward, "unmediated affective response" to hunting and the fact that eros is "the mode *through which* Adonis . . . expresses his response to affective withdrawal" (86). Many critics agree that this line illustrates a rhetorical device, but opinion is divided about which one. Kuchar argues that the line demonstrates a chiasmus that "mirrors the gender reversal of the sexual combatants"; this type of reversal creates a "sense of postponement" (5). Mortimer identifies polyptoton (the repetition of a word in a different form) and paranomasia (punning) (38). These options need not be mutually exclusive; a rhetorical twist or the slippage of one word's sense into another are both to the point. The verbs "loved" and "laughed" describe opposite types of emotional reaction with very similar sounds. The phrase "to laugh to scorn," the expression of Adonis's inclination to ridicule love, may suggest a transformation; it describes a dismissive

attitude manifested in laughter rendering love into an object of scorn (“Laugh,” def. P1.a).²¹ In a text that readers recognize as moving toward metamorphosis, the latent transformation in such a description is significant.

The fate that Shakespeare’s audience expects—the transformation into a flower—is also acknowledged in the imagery describing Adonis in the poem’s opening stanzas. The mingled red and white of his complexion, which figures in the first two stanzas (3; 10) and recurs throughout the poem, anticipates the coloration of the anemone (1168-70), and Venus’s first address to her beloved calls him “The field’s chief flower” (8). The floral metaphors that describe Adonis at the beginning of the epyllion signal to an audience the possibility of change that an adaptation entails. Do these comparisons signal a coming repetition of the metamorphosis that occurs in Ovid’s tale, or will they remain metaphorical? Will the flower supplant Adonis, so to speak, as it does in Ovid’s poem, or will he remain a youth—feminized, certainly, but with purely symbolic roses in his cheeks?

As Venus perceives that her arguments are not making headway with Adonis, she alludes to the myth of Actaeon (another story ending in metamorphosis) through the discursive transformation of metaphor. As an expression of one thing via another, metaphor is an enactment of change that describes the transfer, or bringing-across, of meaning from one object

21 Other idiomatic expressions using “laugh” reflect the transformative quality I am suggesting here. *The Oxford English Dictionary* includes an attestation from *Measure for Measure* to illustrate a person or thing brought into a new state by laughter: “Angels . . . who with our spleenes, Would all themselves laugh mortal” (“Laugh,” def. 5).

to another (as the Latin term for metaphor, *translatio*, suggests) (“Metaphor”).²² While Adonis struggles in her amorous grip, Venus suggests a metaphorical interpretation for their relationship: she is a park, and he is a deer. She clearly intends this metaphor to operate in the service of her persuasive purpose—she describes her body-park in lavish, sexualized detail, inviting him to see it as a pristine landscape since he has been so unmoved by her corporeal charms. Venus figuratively changes her body into a form to which she hopes he will respond more readily. But her reasoning is circular, entrapping: “since I have hemmed thee here / . . . / I’ll be a park, and thou shalt be my deer; / . . . / Then be my deer, since I am such a park” (229-30; 239). The chiasmus illustrates how neatly Venus conflates her claim and conclusion. Adonis is not persuaded (his response is the self-defeatingly beautiful, dimpled smile I noted above). The argument fails because Venus intends to suggest a safe, desirable transformation—she renders her own own formidable body as a safe landscape, and Adonis as a protected pet—but, as Mortimer pithily remarks, “one doubts whether Adonis will be reassured by his transformation from hunter into deer” (73). The suggestion that Adonis might be a deer carries menacing associations of transformation that Venus does not invoke explicitly but which Shakespeare’s audience would have recognized. In Book 3 of the *Metamorphoses*, Ovid relates the story of Cadmus’s nephew, Actaeon, who wanders in the woods after a day of hunting and unsuspectingly comes upon Diana bathing. Vengefully angry that he has seen her (even through an innocent mistake), she flings water drops from her bathing pool and “by and by doth spread /

22 The Greek prefix *meta-* “express[es] notions of sharing, action in common, pursuit, quest, and, above all, change (of place, order, condition, or nature” (“Meta-”). For a discussion of the capacity of metaphor to enact an inward transformation of faith, see Chapter 4.

A payre of lively olde Harts hornes upon his sprinckled head” (III. 229-30).²³ She transforms him limb by limb into a stag, cruelly inviting him to “make [his] vaunt among thy Mates, thou sawste Diana bare. / Tell if thou can” (III. 227-28) as she deprives him of the ability to speak. “[H]e would have cryde Alas” (III. 237), but Actaeon is mute: his formidable hounds circle him and, although he tries to assert his human identity (“I am Actaeon: know your Lorde and Mayster, sirs, I pray” [III. 277]), he can only strain fruitlessly to speak. His hounds fall upon him savagely and tear him apart.

Venus’s metaphor uses “deer” as a vehicle and Adonis as the tenor; she paints a picture of herself as a safe environment in which Adonis could embody that symbolic referent. But Adonis is a hunter who has hounds, and Venus evokes Actaeon’s fate when she concludes her metaphor by what she intends as reassurance: “No dog shall rouse thee, thou a thousand bark” (240). The suggestion of Actaeon’s death works against the pleasant, protected vision Venus describes. Shohet points out that the deer is an “entity inimical and fatal to [Adonis’s] self—in fact, . . . quarry for his proper self” (96). The metaphorical situation causes ontological ambiguity that draws on Actaeon’s tragic inability to assert his human identity. In the *Metamorphoses*, “No part remayned [of Actaeon] (save him minde) of that he earst had beene” (III. 241): that the human mind is the sole exception to the transformation is reaffirmed when Actaeon attempts to call off his dogs, but cannot “utter forth his minde” (III. 278). All that remains of his humanity is rendered helpless. Venus’s metaphor does more than allow Adonis “to be both himself and something else” (Shohet 95); it allows him to embody tenor and vehicle

23 Quotations from the *Metamorphoses* are from the 1567 translation by Arthur Golding available to Shakespeare.

at once, which means he is not fully either one, and Actaeon, in that condition, died violently. The imagined metamorphosis into a deer is therefore threatening on several levels. The transformation into a stag destroyed Actaeon the human (both through bodily transformation and the prevention of the articulation of identity, “I am Actaeon”). Actaeon as a stag was killed by his own hounds, so for Adonis to become a metaphorical deer is not necessarily as pleasant a transformation as Venus means to suggest. If Venus casts Adonis in the role of Actaeon, she may unintentionally cast herself as Diana, who is the cruel agent of the transformation and not a benevolent game warden. In this respect, Shakespeare’s Venus may be unintentionally warning Adonis of the danger she poses to him. Finally, Shakespeare’s engagement with the myth of Actaeon evokes a series of transformations (Adonis into deer, Adonis into Actaeon, Actaeon into stag) which suggest that Adonis, under the influence of metaphor and textual allusion, has no stable identity at all.

While the poem’s engagement with the myth of Actaeon operates indirectly, through allusion, the myth of Narcissus is an explicit intertext.²⁴ As a tale that meditates on “self-knowledge in relation to love” (Cousins 33) and the sexual fates of an alluring youth, the story of Narcissus offers a system of contrasts that clarify how Adonis’s reasons for evading romantic overtures relate to self-development, not self-love. Venus, supposing that Adonis is resisting her because his “own heart to [his] own face [is] affected” (157), warns him that “Narcissus so

24 Various other myths from the *Metamorphoses* inform *Venus and Adonis*. For example, the kiss between Venus and Adonis that blurs the separation between them (“Incorporate they seem, face grows to face” [540]) suggests the merging of Salmacis and Hermaphroditis, and I discuss Venus’s invocation of the story of Pygmalion below.

himself himself forsook, / And died to kiss his shadow in the brook” (161-62). Venus justifies sexuality in terms of procreation; it is the “law of nature” (171), a necessary dimension of maturity. Although her arguments are digressive and occasionally confuse even her, the statements of this “law” are pithy and clear: “Things growing to themselves are growth’s abuse” (166); “Thou was begot; to get it is thy duty” (168); and “By law of nature thou art bound to breed” (171). Narcissus was an ill-fated transgressor of this law; his refusal to express sexual desire toward an external object, Echo, becomes desire turned fatally inward. Venus reasons that a lack of outwardly directed sexuality will destroy the lovely youth before her, as Ovid’s Narcissus had unknowingly anticipated when rejecting Echo: “I first will die ere thou shalt take of me thy pleasure” (III. 487). Both Adonis and Narcissus face the question of whether they will reach maturity. One of the first details offered by Ovid’s narrator about Narcissus is a question posed by his mother to the prophet Tiresias: “whether [the] boy [will] live to a ripe old age.” The cryptic answer is “Yes, if he does not come to know himself” (Cousins 32), a reply closely akin to Adonis’s plea: “Before I know myself, seek not to know me” (525).

Adonis and Narcissus are both immature by early modern legal standards: “The 1563 Statute of Artificers has been widely cited for setting age twenty-four as the threshold of adult manhood . . . by the rationale [that] up until that age a youth lacked the experience and discretion to govern even himself” (Clark 6). Ovid specifies Narcissus’s age and his liminal status: “For when yeares three times five and one he fully lyved had, / . . . he seemde to stande beetweene the state of man and Lad” (III. 437-38). With only “tender spring” (127) upon his lip, Adonis may be even younger—he is certainly nowhere near twenty-four. Venus takes Adonis’s lack of outwardly-directed sexuality as a sign that he is in danger of unproductively narcissistic “growing to [himself]” when he should be breeding. Narcissus is willfully self-focused, as

Coppélia Kahn observes: “since [Narcissus] is already sexually attractive to others, he can define himself as a man if he wishes to. But he would like to remain a boy forever” (31) so he can grow to himself, as Venus accuses Adonis of wishing to do (“Things growing to themselves are growth’s abuse” [166]). Adonis nowhere evinces a wish for his youth to last forever—but he is conscious that he is a youth. While his peach-fuzzed age attracts Venus and is, in her view, an impetus to act immediately (before his bloom fades, to continue the metaphor), Adonis suspects that he is simply unready, and that ignoring this fact will prove harmful: “If springing things be any jot diminished, / They wither in their prime, prove nothing worth” (417-18). (The repetition of “spring”—in “tender spring” as the description of an adolescent beard and “springing thin[g]” as an indirect epithet for Adonis—emphasizes that he is both young and still growing.) The narcissist “does not really have a self” (Kahn 25), but Adonis does not so much lack a self as he has not yet had the chance for a self to develop fully. “Before I know myself,” he protests after citing his “unripe years,” “seek not to know me” (525). Still-developing identity and sexuality are both wrapped up in this kind of “knowing,” and Adonis is determined to guard both.

Venus acknowledges a mature future for Adonis only once, in a reiteration of her argument for procreation: “What is thy body but a swallowing grave, / Seeming to bury that posterity / Which *by the rights of time* thou needs must have[?]” (757-59, emphasis added). Posterity belongs to Adonis’s future, but she understands this fact only as an incentive for him to invest his riches now: “Foul cankering rust the hidden treasure frets, / But gold that’s put to use more gold begets” (767-68). Adonis’s response, which reaffirms his resistance, illustrates a dynamic process at work that is inimical to her desire: “The kiss I gave you is bestowed in vain, / And all in vain you strive against the stream; / For by all this black-faced night, desire’s foul nurse, / Your treatise makes me like you worse and worse” (771-74). “The stream” suggests

temporality as well as inevitability. Because he has been anxious to depart almost since the poem's beginning, "the stream" may suggest the impulse to leave that she has thwarted thus far, the continuity of his attitude, or—most aptly in light of his preoccupation with his immaturity—the flow of time that is beyond both his and her control. Venus may be able to make a summer's day seem short with her kisses (22-24) and while away the night before the hunt with a "tedious" song (841), but abbreviating the time required for the lovely young Adonis to become an adult is beyond her purview.

Adonis's reservations about the danger posed to tender plants, and youths, by too-early plucking are justified. His speech is a "springing thing" (417) that Venus curtails with rhetorically deadly force.²⁵ Adonis does not speak directly until line 185, but his two prior, thwarted attempts to speak illustrate the danger that Venus's forcefulness poses to his nascent articulation. The goddess pushes him to the ground, and the angry youth "gins to chide, but soon she stops his lips, / And kissing speaks, with lustful language broken, / 'If thou wilt chide, thy lips shall never open'" (46-48). The sense of fatal suffocation suggested by having one's lips sealed recurs shortly afterward when Adonis does speak (and does chide): "He saith she is immodest, blames her miss; / What follows more she murders with a kiss" (55-56). It is important to note that these attempts to speak are prevented and cut short, respectively; they are

25 While Ovid's Adonis "says little, and sits patiently" through the tale of Atalanta which Shakespeare omits from his narrative, Shakespeare's youth is both comic and pathetic because he is visible for so much of the poem and yet prevented from speaking. The poem's "silences and hesitations," like the presence of a character onstage who does not speak, are rich with dramatic potential (Burrow 22-23).

articulations that Venus does not allow to become complete expressions of Adonis's attitude. She only wants him to "speak fair words, or else be mute" (208). Venus is the first to compare Adonis to unripe fruit, when she ogles his adolescent facial hair: "The tender spring upon thy tempting lip / Shows thee unripe; yet mayst thou well be tasted" (127-28). Striving to articulate his objection, Adonis may choose his self-description of "green" "unripe[ness]" (806; 524) in an attempt to "speak fair words," following her request and adopting her metaphor. He pleads for her to understand that the time is not right for him to give in to her:

Measure my strangeness with my unripe years;

Before I know myself, seek not to know me;

No fisher but the ungrown fry forbears:

The mellow plum doth fall, the green sticks fast,

Or being early plucked is sour to taste. (524-28)

Adonis suggests that when he is "mellow," acquiescence will come naturally; he "sticks fast" in his resistance because of his youth.

The most significant nuance of Adonis's responses is that he is not rejecting Venus. By emphasizing his unripe state, he establishes conditional acceptance of her advances. But critics of *Venus and Adonis* frequently assert that Adonis is not interested in love at all. Both Bate and Mortimer, for example, claim that Adonis categorically rejects love (*Shakespeare and Ovid* 57; 88), and Maggie Kilgour notes that "Adonis' rather puritanical adherence to chastity" (67) has led critics to interpret the youth as a sterile figure who wholly rejects sexuality (67-72). Cousins finds Adonis's first speech youthfully petulant and argues that he rejects Venus's advances (33). Kuchar also argues that Adonis "remains uninterested" (8) and that he has an "unnatural fear of intimacy" (13). Critics who look for evidence of earnest desire in Adonis tend to emphasize his

will to hunt: Shohet points out that Adonis is fleeing toward the homosocial hunting party as well as away from sporting with Venus (87), and Richard Rambuss likewise argues that Adonis's "singular desire" is the "distinctly male domain" of the hunt (241). Mortimer concedes that "dull disdain" "might appear as merely negative . . . but chastity, no less than desire, can be a passionate commitment" (49). Even these more positive readings of Adonis's motivation deny him mature heterosexuality or sexuality at all.²⁶ "Before I know myself, seek not to know me"—knowing himself implies a stable self, an identity that has reached a final stage of development. Once he does know himself, then "seek[ing] . . . to know [him]" is appropriate. His affirmation that he is immune to her seductions also includes an important qualification: "No, lady, no, my heart longs not to groan, / But soundly sleeps, while now it sleeps alone" (785-86). He is not proposing a lifetime of celibacy; his heart sleeps soundly alone *now*.²⁷ What follows is his

26 Critical precedent for my reading of Adonis's conditional acceptance of Venus is rather slim. Concessions that Adonis does not out-and-out reject Venus usually play comparatively minor roles in the arguments of the scholars who propose them. Rambuss, for example, notes that Adonis's submissive posture "in relation to Venus' advances [means] that he does not reject them" (241). Burrow similarly characterizes Adonis as "not always quite sure he dislikes [Venus]" and points out that Adonis chooses to kiss her after she has fainted (35). When Adonis explains that his "unripe years" are the reason for his reluctance, Burrow says the youth looks "half-bashful, half-won" (35).

27 Adonis's conditional acceptance should be taken as sincere, rather than as a rhetorically graceful tactic for safely rejecting a (large, powerful) goddess. He has no qualms about speaking harshly to her: e.g., "'For shame,' he cries, 'let go, and let me go'" (379); "Nay,

attempt to distinguish love and lust, which he cuts short with an acknowledgment that he is no more ready to theorize about desire than to act on it: “More I could tell, but more I dare not say; / The text is old, the orator too green” (805-06). By giving Adonis a preoccupation with maturity, Shakespeare invites his audience to speculate about and project into the future: what parity and satisfaction might be possible if the youth could mellow into an adult?

When Adonis meets his sexualized end at the tusk of the boar, speculation about “what might be” must change into “what might have been.” The death of the youth, which generally reflects the event as related in Ovid, offers the satisfaction of a fate being fulfilled. In this respect, the epyllion provides a form of closure distinctly suited to an adaptation: readers engage in “retrospective patterning” to make sense of a text holistically after reaching the end (Smith 13). The pleasure in reaching an expected end lies in the balance between fulfilled expectation and innovation in the route that an author charted toward that end: the whole must seem to have justified the patterns perceived in reading, but must not have fulfilled them so schematically as to seem clichéd (14).

Fulfillment of expectation coexists, however, with the permanently deferred fulfillment of desires (Venus’s amorous pursuit and Adonis’s wish to delay) that invites readers to wonder if and how fulfillment will occur: this characteristic suspense lends an essential momentum to the progress of Shakespeare’s narrative. As I will show, the poem’s conclusion meditates on

then . . . you will fall again / Into your idle overhanded theme / . . . / For by this black-faced night, desire’s foul nurse, / Your treatise makes me like you worse and worse” (769-74); “I hate not love, but your device in love / That lends embracements unto every stranger” (789-90).

whether a transformed thing can truly stand in for its original, a question that engages the particularities of plot, the symbolic resources of metamorphosis, and the circumstances of literary adaptation. Ovid's Venus transforms the dead Adonis into a flower by sprinkling nectar on his spilled blood (X. 855). Shakespeare's Venus is busy adumbrating the misfortunes of future love while his body metamorphoses into the anemone by agency unknown. Ovid's Venus creates a flower that mimics Adonis's beauty, fragility, and short life: the flower is a memorial of love and suffering (X. 848-51). Shakespeare's Venus does her best to make the flower take the place of both Adonis and the issue she had hoped for:

She bows her head the new-sprung flower to smell,
Comparing it to her Adonis' breath;
And says within her bosom it shall dwell,
Since he himself is reft from her by death.

She crops the stalk, and in the breach appears
Green-dropping sap, which she compares to tears. (1171-76)

.....

Here was thy father's bed, here in my breast;
Thou art the next of blood, and 'tis thy right.

Lo, in this hollow cradle take thy rest. (1183-85)

Comparison is the only resource available to Venus in an attempt to synthesize fulfillment for her own narrative. The resolution she attempts to create is artificial: the flower is neither Adonis's child nor Adonis. Her inability to hasten Adonis's maturity earlier in the poem parallels her lack of control over the flower's fate: all her attempts to arrange fulfillment formally are futile. The transformation of youth into flower occurs without her influence, and

although she positions the flower on her bosom just as she positioned Adonis, it is no more her child in a “hollow cradle” than her lover in a “bed.” Adonis would not respond to being manipulated into the “lists of love” on Venus’s belly (595), and a cut flower will not “dwell” long, in her breast or elsewhere.

2.4 Genealogies and Adaptation

Adaptation frequently entails the play of reinvention and change. But an adapted work belongs to a genealogy of other texts, and one aspect of the control an adapting author exerts is to what degree he highlights the family resemblances. Shakespeare’s treatment of the myth of Pygmalion in *Venus and Adonis* illustrates how incomplete allusions can liberate an adaptation from its sources. Venus invokes the myth of the sculptor and his statue when she scolds Adonis for being as sexually unresponsive as a stone:

Fie, lifeless picture, cold and senseless stone,

Well-painted idol, image dull and dead,

Statue contenting but the eye alone,

Thing like a man, but of no woman bred!

Thou art no man, though of a man’s complexion,

For men will kiss even by their own direction. (211-16)²⁸

28 Venus’s earlier self-blazon may also be an allusion to the myth of Pygmalion, specifically to the softening of the carved statue into living flesh. Through Orpheus, Ovid describes this moment: “on her brest [Pygmalion] did lay / His hand. The Ivory waxed soft: and putting quight away / All hardnesse, yeilded underneath his fingars, as wee see / A piece of wax

This is the second instance in which Venus raises the question of Adonis's birth; she pleads, "Art thou a woman's son, and canst not feel / What 'tis to love, how want of love tormenteth?" (201-02). Adonis's family history involves a statue in whose fate Venus also intervened, and Shakespeare's Venus attempts to use selective allusion to persuade Adonis to emulation. In Ovid, the statue is the creation of the sculptor Pygmalion, who falls in love with it. Venus gives the statue life and blesses the marriage, and the conclusion of the tale is the birth of a son, Paphus. Because Shakespeare's Venus has been enjoining Adonis to breed, her criticism of Adonis as a lifeless statue is an implicit invitation for him to emulate the precedent that her Ovidian counterpart has set, to come to life and breed. But Venus's allusions are incomplete. The description of Paphus's birth and the announcement that the family is cursed unfold in three abrupt lines: "Of [Paphus] was borne a knyght / Calld Cinyras who (had he had none issue) surely myght / Of all men underneathe the sun beene thought the happyest wyght" (X. 298-300). To have progeny is suddenly a calamity. This is Adonis's family: the narrative of Myrrha's

made soft against the Sunne" (X. 307-10). Shakespeare's Venus tells Adonis: "My smooth moist hand, were it with thy hand felt, / Would in thy palm dissolve, or seem to melt" (143-44). The melting heat of the sun and the heat Venus perceives from Adonis's hand are the causes of "melting": Shakespeare's youth is construed again as an involuntary seducer and the warmth of his hand, a neutral sign at best, a gesture of flirtation. He is once more an irresistible force of sexuality, completely in spite of himself. In a discussion of Milton's depiction of Adam seizing Eve's hand in book 4 of *Paradise Lost*, Stephen Dobranski also notes that this passage of *Venus and Adonis* may allude to the tale of Pygmalion, although Milton, unlike Shakespeare, "correct[s] the latent idolatry of Ovid's story" (279).

incest and transformation into a tree follows, and then the birth of Adonis, “That wretched imp whom wickedly his graundfather begate” (X. 521). So when Venus scolds, “Art thou a woman’s son, and canst not feel / What ‘tis to love, how want of love tormenteth?” (201-02), the answer is both yes and no. Adonis’s great-great grandmother (or great grandmother) was an ivory statue and, if we apply the criteria for being “of woman born” offered by the witches to Macbeth (IV.i.102), Adonis may not even be that, since the incestuous Myrrha had been transformed into a tree before she gave birth to him.

Adonis descends from a cursed family line, and Shakespeare partially frees him from it. The poem includes no mention of Adonis as an “imp” or of his relationship with Venus fulfilling a curse that is part of a larger drama of vengeance. The myth of Venus and Adonis in the *Metamorphoses* begins with this damning pressure of precedent: “in the end Dame Venus fell in love with him: wherby / He did revenge the outrage of his mothers villanye” (X. 527-28). Shakespeare’s Venus seems not to acknowledge this part of the story; Shakespeare’s audience must. But to recognize the omissions is also to recognize the authorial control that invites a different process of reading and interpretation based on the new disposition of materials. Adonis’s fate is tragedy on an individual level in Shakespeare’s poem, not the consummation of a generation-spanning curse. Shakespeare cannot *wholly* free Adonis from his family (and literary) history, just as no adaptation functions wholly independently from its intertexts. To loosen those bindings, however, is within the adaptor’s scope of control. The alteration of source material works doubly as an expression of authorial agency and a comment on the nature of adapted texts: to read an adaptation is to witness a transformation.

Venus and Adonis represent conflicting pressures that act on an author who undertakes adaptation. Adonis’s resistance, expressed so insistently in the protestations of his own

immaturity, speaks to the limitations imposed by factors not exclusively within the author's control. Venus, aggressively advocating for reproduction—and thus intervening in Adonis's plans to let his heart “soundly slee[p], while now it sleeps alone”—represents the drive to transform and renew source material, to engender a new creation from the forms that already exist.

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3. OPEN/ENDED: THE LYRIC SATIRE OF JOSEPH HALL

“I never loved those salamanders that are never well but when they are in the fire of contention. . . . I have ever found that to strive with my superior is furious; with my equal, doubtful; with my inferior, sordid and base; with any, full of unquietness” (Joseph Hall, *Meditations and Vowes* [1605] 452).

Who can behold their Manners, and not clowd-
Like upon them lighten? If nature could
Not make a verse; Anger; or laughter would.

(Ben Jonson, “An Epistle to a Friend, to perswade him to the Warres” 60-62)

Francis Meres, prudently attempting to avoid involvement in the poetic squabbles of the 1590s, wrote diplomatically in *Palladis Tamia* (1598) that poets’ differences of opinion served their audiences well:

As that ship is endaungered, where all leane to one side, but is in safetie, one leaning one way, and another another way: so the diffension of Poets among themfelues, doth make them, that they leffe infect their readers. And for this purpose our Satyrifts, *Hall, the Author of Pigmaliions Image, and certaine Satyres* [John Marston], [William] Rankins, and such others, are very profitable. (Nn6v)

During the final decade of Elizabeth’s reign, plenty of writers were willing to steady Meres’s imagined ship with their dissents on political, religious, and artistic subjects. The Martin Marprelate and Harvey-Nashe pamphlet wars had seethed through the 1580s and 1590s, and many authors adopted satire as their preferred method to attack both opposing viewpoints and the people who held them. Joseph Hall, an accomplished rhetorician and recent graduate of Emmanuel College, Cambridge, waded into the contentious waters of poetic controversy with six books of satires, the *Virgidemiae* (1598 and 1599), and claimed audaciously—if not entirely accurately—to be the first English satirist (I. Prol. 1-4). Primarily adopting the Juvenalian model of aggressive and allusive satire, Hall writes topical satires that attempt to create a decisive sense

of closure. He tends to make a curt point with cultural immediacy about his subjects: the cost of paper has spiked, for example, because of the volume of bad poetry being written (II.i.9-12), and profit-mongering lawyers are degrading justice (II.iii.7-34). He aims each satire's darts at his chosen subject and moves on. But an offended audience may not be so willing to let go of a topic or the satirist who raised it, and Hall's self-conscious meditations on the targets of anger and satiric laughter reflect the struggles of a young poet trying to reconcile his nascent aesthetic with the sometimes hostile responses of his audience. The *Virgidemiae* demonstrate Hall's evolving, sometimes contradictory, attempts to win sympathy from readers and to disregard those whose reactions were critical.

The reception of Hall's work, which was spirited and full of imitation as well as criticism, illustrates how the inflammatory quality of satirical art is often in the eye of the beholder. In the dedication to *Volpone* (1607), Ben Jonson defended himself against critics disposed to read biographical allusion into his dramatic characters, much in the same way that the readers of verse satire did. Jonson insists that a defensive reader can take even something "innocently writ" and make it "obnoxious by construction" by hunting actively for insulting allusions (4). Such a reader interposes himself into the satiric text, construing ("construct[ing]") something that may not have been there at all. The response of a reader angered by satirical writing might well be a dual composition, a hostile "construction" of the text and a biting satire of his own. As I discussed in the previous chapter, the composition of responsive texts was common in the early modern period, and skilled appropriation of preexisting material was central to poetic discipline; satirical responses to satirical works are part of a culture of imitative artistic creation that spanned many forms, including sermons, translations, and answer poems. While the tendency to invite response is not unique to satire, then, the coyness of a veiled Juvenalian

attack meant that the exact nature of the attack might be interpreted far more variously than the satirist intended, as in the case of the satires that ramified from Hall's *Virgidemiae*, as I will discuss below. Answer poems (such as Raleigh's "The Nymph's Reply to the Shepherd" and Donne's "The Bait," inspired by Marlowe's "The Passionate Shepherd to his Love") respond to lyric structure and convention. A satiric response may similarly engage with a predecessor's form and genre, but, borne of hard feelings as well as poetic inspiration, it also embodies the answering author's harsh "construction" of both the original text and its author (just as John Marston did, grumbling in the preface to *The Scourge of Villainie* that he "dared defend [his] plainnes gainst the veriuyce [verjuice, sour] face, of the crabbed'st Satyryst that euer stuttered" [101], who was, of course, Hall). The individual satirist may close off his topic, but no satire—toothless or fanged—can prevent another satirist from taking up a retaliatory pen that not only draws from, but indignantly reconstructs, the source of his creativity.²⁹

Satire requires the assertion of an authoritative persona—a figure justified to assess wrongs and wield the symbolic scourge that punishes them. Hall's construction of his own authority in the satires relies strongly on an ideal of authorial and textual decorum. In other words, his aesthetic depends on a fit likeness between himself as an author and the work he writes: he is a just judge whose works justly condemn wrongs, and, as I will show, his satires often measure wrongdoing against an ideal, even an inaccessible Golden Age one: the offensiveness of wrongs is expressed as a failure of decorum, a failure to match up. But the young Hall chose a form that presents terrible problems for a poet who values authorial decorum:

29 A similar pattern is true of parody, which remakes its predecessors even as it imitates them, but parody may or may not share the bite of satire.

to address scurrilous topics, even with the intent of chastisement, the satirist must conjure up vices and corruption. Hall occasionally professes that he and his “rag’d,” “roug[h]” satires are not alike (“His Defiance to Enuie,” ll. 75-76), and the critical goals of satire require that he attempt to stand apart from his “rough” subjects. In contrast, most of his attacks also reflect a conviction that people and their deeds are alike; in the case of obscene poetry, he condemns the likeness between a lewd person, his lewd poetry, *and* the lewdness that such work might provoke in others (I.ix.21-24). Unlike contemporaries like John Marston and Thomas Nashe, Hall avoids truly vicious attacks, and he rarely dwells on squalor or vulgarity.³⁰ He strives throughout his

30 See, for example, the ugly but not repulsive pseudo-Petrarchan blazon of an Italian sonnet mistress (VI.i.281-304) and Hall’s criticism of derivative “high *Heroick* rimes”—the unskillful poet “Compileth worme eate stories of olde times: / . . . / Then striues he to bumbast his feeble lines / With farre-fetcht phraise” (I.iv.5, 6, 9-10). Marston did not hesitate to accuse Hall of scavenging for old topics in just that way, and used far nastier imagery:

What Academick starued Satyrist
 Would gnaw rez’d [reasty, rancid] Bacon, or with inke black fist
 would [sic] tosse each much-heap for some outcast scraps
 Of half-dung bones to stop his iawning chaps?
 Or with a hungry half pin’d iaw
 Would once a thrice-turn’d bone-pick’d subject gnaw,
 When swarmes of Mountebancks, & Bandeti
 Damned Briareans, sincks of villanie,
 Factors for lewdness, brokers for the deuill,

satires to maintain his position as a moral poet whose work reflects that quality, which drives him to write with an occasionally squeamish propriety. Hesitant to delineate the objects of his attack with truly appalling imagery or rabid rhetoric, Hall sets his targets apart from himself by conjuring up the censuring laughter of a hypothetical audience that is sympathetic to his views. Laughter marks the difference between “you” and “I,” or “us” and “them,” an oppositional perspective necessary to satire. Like the scourging rods after which Hall named the *Virgidemiae*, laughter is a disciplinary tool employed through rhetoric in order to define what the satirist considers unacceptable—an opinion he wants his audience to share.³¹

Attempting to craft a type of satire that could sustain his ideals of authorial and textual decorum, Hall invokes laughter to mark off the ideas and people he attacks and to solicit a supportive response from his readers. As I will show, this strategy is most clearly perceptible in the first three books of satires, published together first in 1598, which Hall called “toothless.”

Infect our soules with all polluting euill. (*The Scourge of Villainie* III.111-20)

Hall’s lines are not especially urbane, but they acquire something of that hue next to Marston’s.

31 Laughter in literature simulates a system of social relations, a “dialectic of exclusion and inclusion” that “creates or affirms a community or solidarity of laughers joined in the shared awareness of being different from, or superior to, the targets of its derision; and at the same time it excludes its victims from this shared sense of identity” (Pfister vii). In the Renaissance and afterward, laughter enabled satirists to expose “vice-ridden individuals to public ridicule and ritual humiliation. Public scorn is the key to satire’s corrective function” (Goulbourne 143).

The second set of three books, which Hall labeled his “biting” satires, were published a year later, after Hall had encountered uncongenial and, as he saw them, ungrateful reactions.³² In these books, defensive and displeased with the (at least partially) hostile response that his satiric debut had evoked, Hall reserves scornful laughter for himself alone, and he meditates on the potential for restrained silence to close off an ever-escalating rhetorical duel between a satirist and his outspoken, responsive targets. Finally, I will address John Milton’s resurrection of Hall’s satires during the Smectymnuan pamphlet controversy in the 1640s, some forty years after the poems’ composition. Using elements of the satires as ammunition for his attacks on Hall, Milton perhaps unintentionally revisits and echoes his opponent’s youthful explorations of laughter, righteous anger, and the integrity of poetic identity.

3.1 “Peeuish syllable[s]”: Hall and His Critics

The *Virgidemiae* represent the first concerted effort to adapt classical satire to the intensely self-conscious literary scene of the late sixteenth century. Hall pursued print publication for his poetic debut—a bid for a wider scope of audience than the coteries of the universities and the Inns of Court—and in the poem “His Defiance to Enuie,” which prefaces the *Virgidemiae*, he deliberately refused to “personate” himself in a pastoral guise after the fashion of Spenser (103). Hall preferred the persona of the plain-spoken and authoritative satirist in a

32 “A Post-script to the Reader,” appended to the “biting” satires, includes an aggrieved discussion of how Hall “so warily . . . [has] indeauoured” to protect the identities even of the genuinely “guiltie” people he has satirized, and yet his audience “complaine[s]” of the exposure (98).

decade of poetry deeply invested in the artifices of Petrarchism, pastoral, and prosodic experimentation. In some measure, Hall set the stage for the witty satires of Donne (whose satires were composed although not published in the 1590s), and Jonson (who joined the quarrel of verse satirists touched off by the *Virgidei* and included his satirical epigrams in his authoritative folio of works in 1616).³³ Jonson's commitment to systematic laureate integrity was more strenuous than Hall's, but Hall still deserves credit for striving, like Jonson, to create a voice that combined the authority of classical precedent, the immediacy of topical critique, and the influence of just assessment.³⁴ I make no claim for Hall as an unacknowledged prosodic

33 Jonson took very seriously the assertion of morality in his *Epigrams*, which were written around the same time that Hall was composing his satires. The first three poems, "To the Reader," "To my Booke," and "To my Booke-seller," acknowledge that the generic associations of the label *Epigrams* will lead readers to expect poems that are "bold, licentious, full of gall; / Wormewood, and sulphure, sharpe, and tooth'd withall" ("To my Booke" 3-4). While such bitter satires arbitrarily "hurle inke, and wit, / As mad-men stones" and hope to "catch the worlds loose laughter, or vaine gaze," Jonson suggests that he will not "depar[t] with his owne honesty / For vulgar praise" (5-6, 12, 13-14). This "programmatic opening sequence" of poems announces a novel combination of classical form (derived from Martial's epigrams) and the "ethical terms of the poet's judgment" (derived from Horace's *Satires* and *Epistles*) (Moul 75).

34 Arnold Davenport offers a brief sketch of the satirical writing that coincided with Hall's venturing into the form. He credits Thomas Lodge as having "made some effort" to develop satirical verse in English with *A Fig for Momus* (1595) (xxv). Lodge's text consists of a

genius, but his attempt to develop an authorial voice justified in terms of decorum, as I describe above, is a significant venture that reflects an effort to unite the heft of classical satiric lineage with the ability to speak authoritatively to his contemporaries—a rhetorical posture that has more in common with the laureate self-fashioning of canonically central figures like Spenser and Jonson than with the truculent bombast of Marston’s satires or the intimate wit of Donne’s coterie poetry. In this respect, Hall’s uncertain versifying has obscured from critical view his attempt to create a persona that some of his more skillful contemporaries managed more artfully.³⁵ As I will discuss below, some evocative similarities emerge between Hall’s ideals for authorial selfhood and those of John Milton—a proposition that would, perhaps, appall both of them.

handful of satirical verses interspersed with an assortment of pastoral dialogues, commendatory poems, literary epistles, and silly odes (e.g., “In praise of his Miftris dogge” [H4r]). The variety of this single-author miscellany does not convey the sense that Lodge wished to shape an authoritative literary persona, just a persona involved in the literary trends of the moment. Richard McCabe remarks devastatingly that Lodge’s satire “made no impression upon his contemporaries” (32).

35 Hall does not help his own case when he writes sarcastically about how he might earn “a Poets name” by laboring in “dullard” anguish and then delighting over “one peeuish syllable” granted by “the backward Muses” (VI.i.186, 189, 191, 190). He intends to depict slavish and incompetent poetic work, but a reader unsympathetic to Hall’s own peevisish syllables might find the portrait apropos.

Neither Hall nor his satires are well known in the twenty-first-century literary canon. The obscurity of his references and his occasionally awkward poetry have relegated the *Virgideum* to a marginal position. In addition, his long career in the church—as a bishop and author of devotional works, sermons, and apologiae for episcopacy—has tended to eclipse his satirical juvenilia. His three centuries (sets of 100) of *Meditations and Vowes* (1606) were very popular in their own time and “served as devout conduct books” that accommodated the concerns of readers from varied social and doctrinal backgrounds (Narveson 149-50). Ronald Corthell suggests that these and Hall’s other meditative writings are his “chief legacy to English literature” (“Joseph Hall” 180), and Corthell’s entry for Hall in the *Dictionary of Literary Biography* falls in the volume devoted to *British Prose Writers of the Early Seventeenth Century*. Hall himself attempted to leave his poetry behind him as he gained recognition as a preacher and domestic chaplain in the court of Prince Henry, the eldest son of James I (Davenport xx). He composed metrical versions of the first ten psalms around 1607 (at age 33) and reiterated in a prefatory letter the conventional dismissal of poetry as a toy of youth, excepting only that its capacity to revive the spirit deserved respect: “Indeede, my Poetrie was long sithence out of date, & yielded hir place to grauer studies: but whose vaine would it not reuiue to looke into these heauenly songs?” (“To My Loving and Learned Cosen” 127).³⁶ Through his own influence and

36 In the 1620s, Hall’s fame as an author came primarily from his Anglican apologetics. His religious views (as well as his connection with Emmanuel College, a center of Puritanism in Cambridge) led Archbishop Laud repeatedly to summon Hall to the royal court to account for his “Puritan tendencies” (Davenport xxiii). Hall’s advocacy of moderation in the controversial writings of the 1620s made him enemies in more than one camp: “he was

the tastes of readers in his lifetime and afterward, Hall's religious prose has proven the most enduring of his work.

To the degree that the *Virgidemiae* have been visible in literary criticism, they have most often been the stuff of footnotes to John Milton's polemical writings. In the 1640s, more than 40 years after the composition of the satires, Milton dredged up the *Virgidemiae* as part of a blistering attack on Hall, who had contributed to the Smectymnuan pamphlet controversy and thereby placed not only his defenses of episcopal church government but his entire identity and life's work in Milton's line of fire. Critics have generally agreed that Hall is memorable chiefly as the target of the more canonically central Milton.³⁷ Davenport, sketching Hall's biography in

frequently accused of Romanism by the Puritans and of Puritanism by the Laudians”
(Corthell, “Joseph Hall” 183).

37 For a view of Hall's importance vis-a-vis Milton, see Corthell, “Joseph Hall” 184. Arguing in a similar vein, Audrey Chew, considering Hall's prose works, also suggests that Hall is primarily interesting as a predecessor to others: Hall is a seventeenth-century Neo-Stoic who is valuable because “he points in the direction of eighteenth-century Neo-Stoicism” (1130). Even when Hall is not discussed in conjunction with Milton, critics often present Hall as second fiddle to a more canonical figure. For example, Dustin Griffin, writing in 1994, lamented that both Hall and Marston are “still too little discussed today,” but conceded that Donne's satires outstrip theirs (11). Hall's burlesque travel narrative, *Mundus Alter et Idem*, has also tended to attract interest primarily vis-a-vis other works, either as a precursor to Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* or a successor to More's *Utopia*. See, e.g., Adolfo Di Luca, “Inventio and Fabula in More, Hall and Swift,” *Per una definizione dell'utopia: Metodologie*

his heroically exhaustive edition of Hall's poetry, echoes this view: "Milton's use of *Virgidemiae* as a weapon in his controversy with Hall in 1642 brings it momentarily into literary history, but it seems to have been pretty well forgotten until Pope read and admired the satires" (xxvii). Even twentieth-century critics whose analyses focus on Hall have not hesitated to compare him unfavorably with more recognizable and accomplished authors. Corthell argues that Hall "displays none of the psychological kinkiness of Marston or moral depth of Donne" ("Joseph Hall and Seventeenth-Century Literature" 254). James Sutherland finds Hall's verse smoother than Donne's and better, if only just, than Marston's: in Book IV of the "biting" satires, Hall "manages to write almost as badly as Marston; but it must have been uphill work, for Hall was obviously a sensible person with a prejudice in favour of being understood, and before long he lapses into the intelligible" (32-33). The densest cluster of modern criticism focused on the *Virgidemiae* occurred in the 1970s and 1980s, and scholarship on Hall's satires during that period and through the turn of the century has tended to be courteous in defending Hall's "remarkable" books of satires (although Hall "is no longer considered terribly significant") (Manzo 53). In the twenty-first century, critics have more frequently found interest in Hall's other non-religious works—*Mundus Alter et Idem* (1605) and *Characters of Vertues and Vices* (1608), a book of Theophrastan character sketches—as well as in the sermons and devotional

e discipline a confronto, ed. Nadia Minerva (Ravenna: Longo, 1992), 81-88; and Robert Appelbaum, "Utopia and Utopianism," *The Oxford Handbook of English Prose 1500-1640*, ed. Andrew Hadfield (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2013), 253-67.

works that constituted Hall's contribution to the doctrinal controversies of the early and mid-seventeenth century.³⁸

Notwithstanding the skepticism about the *Virgidemiae*'s artistic merits, Hall's contemporaries received the satires with great interest, a measure of significance that should not disappear beneath the formidable and sometimes amusing censures of Milton and more recent readers. In addition to acknowledging Hall's contribution in steadying the wallowing ship of dissenting poets, Meres considered Hall among the "chiefe" English satirists (Oo4v). The *Virgidemiae* provoked an immediate response from Marston in the form of satires that strongly imitated and responded explicitly to Hall's work. Hall, who was "not above participating in student quarrels" (Gill 411), replied in turn by pasting an insulting epigram about Marston into all the Cambridge copies of Marston's satires, labeling him a "mad dogge" and "a mankinde Asse" ("An Epigram on John Marston," *Poems*, l. 2). Hall's direct engagement in the conflict apparently ended there; he may not have had the ability to insert his epigram into the copies of Marston's poems printed outside Cambridge, or he may have reflected that a favorable reception of his literally intrusive poetic attack depended on the esteem he held in the university

38 See, e.g., Csaba Maczelka, "Joseph Hall's *Mundus Alter et Idem* and Cross-Dressing in Early Modern England," *Gender Studies* 11.1 (2012): 69-84; Geoffrey Dodds, "Joseph Hall, Thomas Fuller, and the Erasmian Via Media in Early Stuart England," *Erasmus and the Renaissance Republic of Letters*, ed. Stephen Ryle and Lisa Jardine (Turnhout, Belg.: Brepols, 2014), 399-423; and Jan Frans van Dijkhuizen, "Love Tricks and Flea-Bittings: Meditation, Imagination and the Passion of Christ in Joseph Hall and Richard Crashaw," *Meditation—Refashioning the Self* (Leiden, Netherlands: Brill, 2011), 209-32.

community, a positive bias he would be unwise to expect elsewhere. While Hall chose to hold his peace, the duel proliferated into a melee that involved further scurrilous abuse from Marston (including the epithet “stinking Scauenger” [*The Scourge of Villainie* X.36]) and additional satires written by Edward Guilpin, John Weever, Jonson, Nicholas Breton, and at least one anonymous author (Davenport xxxiii-iv). Yet some contemporaries also chimed in with positive responses. In *Affaniae* [1601], a collection of Latin epigrams, Charles Fitzgeoffrey praised Hall’s just inheritance of the rods of Nemesis and the scourge of Spenser’s Talus (D7v); and, even a decade after the publication of the *Virgidemiae*, John Davies of Hereford was moved to compose a complimentary epigram that described how Hall had made vices “grone betweene [his] Satyres Fangs” (qtd. in Cathcart 244). For Hall and Marston’s contemporary audiences, at least, the *Virgidemiae* “carried the day by [their] popularity,” a point confirmed by Marston himself, who conceded snidely in *The Scourge of Villainie* that the “Mad world” was pleased with the work of “this juggler” (qtd. in Stein 273).

The readiness with which the satires responding to Hall proliferated testifies to the capacity of the form to branch easily from one topic to another, or from insult into potentially subversive critique of politically sensitive issues. In the final years of Elizabeth’s reign, the uncertainty of important questions—succession, church doctrine, and ceremony—and the controversial bickering that “occasionally slipped over into serious libel” meant that satires that began on relatively innocuous topics were still regarded as dangerous (Davenport xxvi). The erotic and satiric works of Nashe, Marston, and a number of other authors were called in by the Bishop’s Ban of 1599 and burned (xxvi). This ban, from which Hall’s satires narrowly escaped (they were also recalled, but reprieved), “brought an abrupt end to a vigorous, late-Elizabethan outpouring of verse satire” (McRae 1). Still, the ban may not have been strictly enforced, or

enforced for very long: Hall's first three books, the "toothless" satires, were reprinted in 1602, and satirical verses in the form of brief lyrics and epigrams were still current in the literary culture of the first decades of the seventeenth century.

3.2 Satire: Closure, Provocation, and Performance

Satire tends to resist closure. As Griffin notes, "it is concerned rather to inquire, explore, or unsettle than to declare, sum up, or conclude" (95). Satirical endings are often "obtrusively open, not because the end of one story is always the beginning of another, or because literary constructions are subject to deconstructing or unraveling, but because the form and purpose of satire seem to resist conclusiveness" (96). I suggest that satire resists closure primarily for three reasons. The first two are formal: first, there is a great deal of flexibility in individual satires' length and prosodic structures. Most Renaissance satirists, including Hall, employed heroic couplets. While the frequently end-stopped rhythm can increase the sense of closure at a given point (Griffin 113), couplets also allow any number of verse units to be strung together, as with the sixains in *Venus and Adonis* that I discussed in the preceding chapter.³⁹ Hall's satires vary in

39 No poetic form can effect closure for every reader. Commentators on Renaissance satire have ascribed a startling degree of power to the heroic couplet itself, however. K. W. Grandsen suggests that this otherwise prosodically unadventurous form became the dominant meter for satire in the seventeenth century because it could serve as "an instrument for witty antithesis" (26): it gestures toward "Augustan wit and poise" (an idealizing claim at best), or a "synthesis of Horatian poise and Juvenalian aggression" (26). Similarly, Griffin proposes a link between the heroic couplet and satiric purpose, which he argues are both

length from twelve lines (I.v.) to 305 lines (VI.i.). Because of this flexibility, a reader of satire will not be primed to expect a turn at any particular point (as opposed to the reader of a sonnet, for example), although he might expect a stinging conclusion if the satirist's work has adopted an epigrammatic or acerbic style in the vein of Martial or Juvenal. The second aspect of satirical form that resists closure is that it tends to be non-narrative, so its endings are more or less arbitrary and its conclusiveness provisional. The Dutch philologist Daniel Heinsius, a pupil of Joseph Scaliger, defined this quality of satire in his commentary on Horace in 1612: "Satire is a kind of poetry, without a series of action, invented for the purging of our minds; in which human vices, ignorances and errors . . . are severely reprehended . . . partly . . . in a facetious and civil way of jesting, by which either hatred or laughter or indignation was moved" (qtd. in Salmon 74). Satire, according to Heinsius, has no plot; in this regard, it shares with lyric the challenges of shaping resolution through other means.

The third reason that satire resists closure is also adumbrated in Heinsius's definition. The satirist may attempt to articulate a definitive condemnation of vice, but the sense of

a mix of witty closure and forward movement. End-stopped couplets permit the satirist to write with what used to be called *point* (which Johnson defines as "the sting of an epigram; a sentence terminated with remarkable turn of words or thought") . . . So too satire as a form builds to *moments* of narrative, moral, or rhetorical closure. But the moments pass and turn out to be pauses. (113-14)

Nevertheless, the heroic couplet can be more protean than these readings suggest. Its subject is not limited to the urbane or the aggressive, and its effectiveness depends on the prosodist's skill and purposes.

fulfillment toward which satire aims is a reader's viscerally-felt emotion: the resolution of a satire lies in its audience, not its formal structure. Satire is a provocative form that elicits responses borne of shame or outrage, as the quarrel between Hall and Marston demonstrates. Of course, readers react to literary forms of all kinds, not just satire: Renaissance audiences were certainly gratified by sonnets, titillated by epyllia, and moved by elegies and devotional verses; authors were moved to respond in kind to these and other poetic genres, as well as prose forms such as sermons and polemical pamphlets. But satire is an inflammatory form that rouses readers to respond from a posture of anger, whereas many other responsive and adaptive early modern genres do not. Elizabethan authors who theorized satire often reiterated the notion that satire's fulfillment lay in emotional reaction. Philip Sidney described the genial moral effect of satiric mockery in his *Apology for Poetry*: satire is the form that "sportingly never leaveth until he make a man laugh at folly, and at length ashamed to laugh at himself" (97). Amusement gives way to shame, according to Sidney. In *The Arte of English Poesie*, George Puttenham claimed that satire was invented by the Greeks as a type of "poe[m] reprehensiue," an invective intended for "correction of [the citizens'] faults" in the absence of "sermons or preachings" (I. 24). Puttenham also employs the common Renaissance etymology of satire that associates it with satyrs, the gods who were supposedly the originators of "those verses of rebuke" and who were necessary as performative stand-ins to deliver rebukes so that "their bitternesse should breede none ill will, either to the Poets, or to the recitours" (I. 24).⁴⁰ The audience of satire,

40 This etymology is false, but it was "popular in the Renaissance, when it was used to justify the rude, spirited, and defamatory character of satire" (Knight 19). First compiled by Diomedes, the possible sources for "satire" included *satyroi* (satyrs), *lanx satura* (a full dish

Puttenham suggests, will naturally be provoked to anger—the reproof will be embittering, and the delivery, as he explains it, is not literary but dramatic (and thus godlike figures were needed to present the message and to lend it gravity, lest an irate audience turn against the vulnerable human satirist).

As Puttenham’s account of dramatic satirical recitation suggests, Renaissance authors’ preference for associating satire with satyrs reflects an understanding of satire as a rhetorical performance. Like such a performance, satire was shaped by some of the same considerations of audience reaction and the skill or authority of delivery. The Roman satirists Lucian and Juvenal were both “rhetorical performers,” and a “declamatory element” was essential to satire of the 1590s (Griffin 77). Rhetorical training was a standard part of the late sixteenth-century curriculum; Hall’s education was steeped in it, and he evidently excelled. While at Cambridge, he participated regularly in public disputations and was elected in two consecutive years to the University Lectureship in Rhetoric, “in which he was markedly successful” (Davenport xvi-xvii). The *Virgidemiae* reflect the sensitivity to readers’ responses that Hall’s rhetorical training and engagement in disputation exercises would have cultivated. Attentive to the need to establish an ethical and artistic voice, Hall worked concertedly to establish firm boundaries between his satirical persona and the objects of the scornful laughter he not only urges but scripts for his audience.

of assorted fruit), *farci-men* (sausage or stuffing), and *lex per saturam* (an omnibus law) (16).

Charles Knight explores the background and application of each of these possibilities (16-27).

3.3 Decorum and the Prescription of Laughter in the *Virgidemiae*

Throughout the *Virgidemiae*, Hall emphasizes the likeness between people and their actions or creations. He highlights the positive instances of this especially in places where he represents his own identity and objectives as a satirist, and does not hesitate to use negative instances of such decorum, especially among contemporary poets and actors, as ammunition for his attacks. In both classical and Elizabethan satires, the satirist's self-representation often entails a pose of straightforwardness in both identity and style; the satirist is a plain-spoken man whose verses tell things like they are. Hall's particular quirk is to dwell on this likeness so persistently through both the self-praise and self-deprecation he employs when he acknowledges that other, more prestigious literary forms are open to him as a young poet making his debut. Hall describes his satires as "but packe-staffe plaine uttring what thing they ment" (III. Prol. 4), and he claims that he is guided by embodied Truth in an age when pens are "hyred Parsite[s] / [That] . . . claw [scratch helpfully] the back of him that beastly liues, / And pranck base men in proud Superlatives" (I. Prol. 5-12). This pose is as artificial as any poetic self-representation, but it points up the severity of the social ills to which Hall wants to draw attention. As Alvin Kernan puts it, "Things are so bad, vice so arrant, the world so overwhelmingly wicked that even a plain man . . . who prefers to live in peace is forced to attack the vice of mankind" (19). Hall's modesty topoi reflect decorum as well: in "His Defiance to Enuie," he claims that his muse has "in carelesse wilfull rage" cast aside the bays and that "she sets them at worse than nought" (32, 35). Loftier forms such as chivalric romance might inspire Envy to attack her, but in truth she is safe: "But now such lowly *Satyres* here I sing, / Not worth our *Muse*, not worth their enuying" (65-66). Hall claims a moral high ground even as his poetry follows a course analogous to the types he condemns. "But now [ye *Muses*] . . . your sacred hests / Profaned are by each

presuming tongue” [109-10]), so Hall vows that he will eschew the pastoral ennobled by Spenser and spend his poetry on the unpleasant world that inspired it: “neuer field nor groue shall here my song. / Onely these refuse [spare] rimes I here mispend, / To chide the world, that did my thoughts offend” (111-13). Just as hack poets misuse the “sacred hests” of the muses, Hall will mispend his verses on an offensive world. It may be a fool’s enterprise to be a satirist, but Hall claims preeminence for himself and his work: “I First aduventure, with fool-hardie might / To tread the steps of perilous despight: / I first aduventure: follow me who list, / And be the second English Satyrist” (I. Prol. 1-4).⁴¹

Hall also depicts the world and its artists in degenerate harmony with one another. These days, he claims, the muses are whores, and they beget “such Litturs of new Poetry” with the aid of “rablements of rimsters new” (I.ii.28, 32). The poets themselves are also bastards, descended “From common Trulls, and loathsome Brothelry” (I.ii.37-38). Artistic success comes from giving degraded audience exactly the kind of sensationalism it desires. Hall describes with skepticism the grandiose theatricality with which a tragedian can earn applause (I.iii.24-40). The masses also love a vulgar poet reciting vulgar poetry; possibly thinking of Nashe, Hall grumbles

41 Hall’s claim is true in that he is the first to attempt a sustained appropriation of classical satire (drawing on the work of Horace, Persius, and Juvenal) for pointed attack in English (McCabe 31). Yet the title of “first” English satirist is not unlike Milton’s claim in *Paradise Lost* to undertake “things unattempted yet in prose or rhyme” (I. 16), an assertion of originality made in full knowledge of those who have trod similar ground before. Hall refers to English predecessors whose works had satirical overtones, including Chaucer and Skelton (IV.v.115-16 and VI.i.76, respectively).

that “*Cupid* hath crowned a new *Laureate*” who “Rymed in rules of Stewish ribaldry, / . . . / Whiles th’itching vulgar tickled with the song, / Hanged on their vnreadie [slovenly] Poets tongue” (I.ix.2, 9-12). This leads not only to a likeness between the author and his work, but an active, influential kind of decorum that shapes the attitudes of readers into accord with the degraded author and his text. A lecherous poet who writes lecherous poetry might incite similar action in his readers: “What if some *Shordich* furie should incite / Some lust-stung letcher, must he needs indite / The beastly rites of hyred Venerie, / The whole worlds vniuersall baud to bee?” (I.ix.21-24). Hall curses the too-patient muses who allow such villainy: the poet who offers mimetic, represented beastliness to his audience is actually engendering more of the same vice. Yet this is a slippery slope for a satirist, and Hall might well be hoisting himself by his own petard when he offers “dispight” to the muses for offenses that include “let[ting] your floore with horned Satyres hoofe / Be dinted and defiled euery morne” (I.ix.18-19). Likewise, Hall does not hesitate to denounce as social climbers the young men whose professional ambitions reflected the career path he himself was already following. The figure he denounces, the upstart son of a landowner, Lolio, is not exactly Hall’s self-portrait—the young man seeks legal training “To make amendes for his meane parentage” and goes about “ruffling as he can, / . . . currant each-where for a Gentleman” (IV.ii.56-58), and he becomes an even more abusive landlord than his father (IV.ii.122-32). But in this portrait of an unscrupulously ambitious youth, Hall also includes details that strike closer to home. He envisions the toadying that does not even serve the sycophant’s advancement very well: the youth might “plod [seven years] at a Patrons tayle, / To get a gelded Chappels cheaper sale [a benefice in which the patron, not the pastor, would receive a significant portion of the revenues]” (IV.ii.105-06), and that youth might “Sit seauen yeaes pining in an Anchores cheyre, / To win some patched shreds of *Miniuere*” (IV.ii.104-05).

Hall concludes derisively: “Fooles, they may feed with words & liue by ayre, / That climbe to honour by the Pulpits stayre” (IV.ii.101-02). A year away from being ordained and evidently confident in his own integrity when he composed these lines, Hall perhaps did not consider that, viewed critically, his own ambitions might not appear very different from those of the noxious young man in the satire.

Hall often describes the failures of bad artists in terms of indecorous mixture or mismatch. The use of “profane” verse forms for holy subjects, for instance, creates a travesty: “Now good Saint *Peter* weeps pure *Helicon*, / And both the *Maries* make a Musick mone” (I.viii.5-6). Hall sarcastically anticipates the potentially ridiculous outcome of such flexibility in the muses: “Ye *Sion* Muses shall by my deare will, / For this your zeale, and far-admired skill, / Be straight transported from *Ierusalem*, / Vnto the holy house of *Betleem*” (I.viii.13-16). (Hall puns on the name of the Bedlam Hospital, already famous as a lunatic asylum by his lifetime [Davenport 171].) If the holy-turned-profane muses can transform Solomon into a “Sonetist,” they might as well be conscripted to sing for lunatics. Hall also contrasts contemporary fashion with the clothing that belonged to the Golden Age, which he distinguishes by its simplicity and domestic origins: “ruder hide, / Or home-spun *Russet*, voyd of forraine pride” (III.i.62-63). The fallen alternative in the contemporary world is an incoherent disaster for style and national identity: “a fooles far-fetched liuery” has “A *French* head ioyned to necke *Italian*: / Thy thighs from *Germanie*, and brest fro *Spaine*: / An *Englishman* in none, a foole in all, / Many in one, and one in seuerall” (III.i.65-69). The problem has gone beyond vanity: misguided, magpie-like judgment undermines the signification of “Englishman.” Hall’s treatment of these ills suggests his anxiety that failures of decorum might precipitate some more serious, anarchic disconnection between expressive forms and content. Hall resolves to make satire’s mission the restoration of

order: “Rather had I albee in careless rymes, / Check the mis-ordered world, and lawlesse times” (I.i.23-24).⁴² Emphasizing the social, performative aspect of satire, Hall attempts to fulfill his plan to “check” objectionable attitudes and actions by invoking scornful laughter.

Kernan suggests that satire, like drama, originates from ritualistic behavior: “formulaic curses and the magical blasting of personal and tribal enemies” (7). Although satire need not have such superstitious origins, it *is* a fundamentally social genre that springs from the dramatization of behaviors and opinions in conflict—it is one ground on which differing values can contend. But as Kernan rightly notes, satire is more than a savage attack given aesthetic expression (since we can find attacks in literature that would probably not be regarded as satires, such as Ahab’s descriptions of Moby Dick) (7). Laughter—sometimes mirthless—sounds within satire: before a satirist can critique the faults of his society and his contemporaries, he must mark off those objects as distinct, and laughter, even simulated in written form, is essential to establishing such a separation. Henri Bergson, theorizing humor, sheds valuable light on the importance of laughter in satire: “Laughter is, above all, a corrective. Being intended to humiliate, it must make a painful impression on the person against whom it is directed. By laughter, society avenges itself for the liberties taken with it” (197). Heinsius’s definition of satire, as I discussed above, lists the intended reactions of the satirist’s audience as a cluster of responses (“hatred or laughter or indignation”) that arise together, if Bergson’s formulation is

42 “Careless” here seems to mean “uncared-for” rather than “negligent,” since Hall is describing his censure of a world that will not welcome his judgment, and negligent rhymes would make poor tools for creating order in a mis-ordered world. However, both senses of the word were current when Hall was writing (“Careless”).

accurate. While the “laughter of comedy” is sympathetic and sociable, a laughing-with, satirical laughter laughs *at*, and reflects the separation between the person or group laughing and the object of derision (Jemielity 16). Hall’s denunciation of the overacting tragedian includes the appreciative laughter of the vulgar crowd: “A goodly grace to sober *Tragike Muse*, / When each base clown, his clumbsie fist doth bruise, / And show his teeth in double rotten-row, / For laughter at his selfe-resembled show” (I.iii.41-44). Such approving laughter only shows that the “base clown” is pandering; Hall wants his readers to see the scene from the hostile perspective he gives. Reflecting on Hall’s depiction of audience laughter in this satire, Matthew Steggle remarks,

Hall is fascinated by the auditory texture introduced by laughter: the contrast between the silent audience and the “frightfull” scenes, and the sheer din of an audience laughing and applauding. . . . Hall gives us a warrant to read audible laughter in the comic scenes in Elizabethan tragedy. Hall later imagines the writers sitting watching audience reaction through these scenes, revising the script for future performances accordingly[,] . . . show[ing] the reciprocal, mutually constitutive relationship between audience reaction and playtext. (70-71)

As Steggle points out, authors and performers are willing to adjust their art to please their audiences. But while Steggle highlights the interest of dynamic composition—texts are adjusted to please audiences, and, presumably, to draw more revenue for the theater—Hall’s point in the four lines I have quoted is to show the mercenary attitude underlying such adjustments. By including a simulated drama in his satire, complete with performance and evaluation, Hall depicts audience reaction as a subject for satirical consideration in its own right. Hall, too, wants to shape a mutuality with his readers, and attempts to create it by showing the contemptibility of

an artist who will cater to a crass audience's whims. Hall positions his audience to judge, alongside him, the faults of the vulgar crowd, and to share his disdain for them.

As with the passage mocking the overacting tragedian, Hall's other references to laughter in the first three books of satires give cues to his readers about where to direct their contemptuous laughter so that their views will align with his.⁴³ In his critique of contemporary poets, Hall considers the damaging influence of the archetypical bad poet, Labeo, and the poetic community he partly represents. Hall begs Labeo to write "little," "better," "cleanly," or, preferably, "write none" (II.i.26, 54, 64). A representative of qualities Hall finds objectionable in current poetry, Labeo is a singular figure, but the satire still dwells primarily on the damage done by the bad habits of *many* poets. The trouble is caused by scope: "now men wager who shall blot the most, / And each man writes: *There's so much labour lost*" (II.i.19-20). The alternatives Hall presents to this wasteful commentary on wastefulness are instances of works that are literally smaller and more ingeniously condensed, not superior in quality. These include the work of a poet called Strabo, who "Contriu'd all *Troy* [i.e., the *Iliad*] within one Walnut shell" (II.i.38), and a "subtile *Stithy-man*" who forged "an Iron-chariot so light, / The coach-horse was a Flea in trappings dight" (II.i.44, 47-48). And even these contrivances are worth

43 Hall did not abandon this strategy of prescribing laughter when he completed his satires, although he did not necessarily learn to employ it to more nuanced effect. "[A]s if he feared we might take too much amusement from his satirical presentations [in the second book of *Characters of Vertues and Vices*]," Harold Knutson remarks, "he sternly warns against any frivolous reading of his text: 'I abhor to make sport with wickedness, and forbid any laughter here but of disdain'" (56).

mockery, since the contrivers solve problems of scope only with the clever literalism of small size. Hall scripts his audience's reaction to the individuals who, each creating mediocre novelties, together contribute to an aesthetically contemptible atmosphere: "Strive they, laugh we" (II.i.51). These feats of *multum in parvo* are better than the voluminous slew of contemporary writing that Hall critiques, but still far from a creative ideal.

In perhaps the only genuinely funny satire in the six books, Hall's speaker describes walking down a London street and happening upon an extravagantly dressed "lustie Courtier" with curled auburn hair (III.v.7). When the courtier doffs his hat to return the speaker's "lavish" salute (III.v.9), an errant wind sweeps the splendid wig off his head and sends it tumbling down the street; the courtier hastens furiously "To ouertake his ouerrunning hed," which blows into a ditch (III.v.14). The speaker describes his own mirth, and indirectly invites a similar reaction for his audience to this comical punishment of pomposity:

I lookt, and laught, whiles in his raging minde,

He curst all courtesie, and vnruilie winde.

I lookt, and laught, and much I maruailed,

To see so large a *Caus-way* in his head.

.....

Is't not sweete pride, when men their crownes must shade

With that which ierks the hams of euery iade [horsehair]

Or floor-strowd locks from of the Barbers sheares?

But waxen crowns well gree with borrowed haire. (III.v.19-22, 25-28)

This laughter takes vengeance on pretense, since the extravagant salute as well as the wig conspire to humiliate the courtier. The wig is twice referred to as though it were the courtier's

head (III.v. 14, 18), and the courtier himself is “a *Headlesse* man” without it (III.v.15). The critique is simplistic but amusing; the preening courtier has a mere simulacrum of a head, and his baldness, an additional sign of the emptiness of his head, has at least been outfitted suitably, since all the contents of his head must be borrowed. The rhetorical question that leads up to the satire’s conclusion, “Is’t not sweet pride . . . ?,” coaxes agreement with the reasonable logic of the final line. This satire genuinely is “toothless.” Its only explicit criticism is a glancing reference to the current “fickle age” (III.v.3), a lenience that McCabe suggests is the key to its effectiveness: “The anecdote is ridiculous, and the speaker, like Horace, so genial that the reader has little choice but to support his conclusion that ‘waxen crowns well gree with borowed haire’” (43). The satire’s real attacks—on ostentation and pride—are expressed not through vituperation but through the sources of (mocking) laughter: the extravagant salute, the runaway piece of the courtier’s “fayre disguisement” blown into a ditch (III.v.2), and the furiously thwarted pride of exposed pretense. The speaker does not stand wholly apart from the pretense—he performed the same showy gesture of greeting that the courtier did. He is insulated from a parallel humiliation by his own hair, which stays put even if he offers a showy salute. As a symbolic figure for sincerity and integrity, this image is charmingly pedestrian; the satiric persona invites readers’ goodwill by admitting that he might deserve some mocking laughter, but the thoroughgoing faker deserves the most thoroughgoing censure.

The second half of Hall’s satires are bookended with self-conscious meditations on the unfriendly reactions that the toothless satires had elicited: a prefatory poem in sixains, “The Authors charge to his *Satyres*,” and a prose post-script, which I will address at the end of this section. The opening poem begins with a defensive, wounded note: “Ye luck-lesse Rymes, whom not vnkindly spight / Begot long since of Trueth and Holy Rage, / Lye heere in wombe of

Silence and still Night / Vntill the broyles of next vnquiet age” (1-4). They are reasonable—they belong to an “vnquiet age”—for the same reason that they have met with a hostile reaction; their very aptness makes them provocative. Surprisingly, he concludes his prefatory verses not with redoubled intent to expose the vices of the age for what they are, but moderate request for a kind reaction: “What euer eye shalt finde this hatefull scrole / After the date of my deare *Exequies*, / Ah pittie thou my playning Orphanes dole” (25-27). The verses live on, suffering, after the satirist himself has died. This unlikely request for pity follows quickly after an acknowledgment that the preceding satires had not met with good fortune. But there is a bolder edge to Hall’s engagement with an unfriendly audience in the imperative, not plaintive, “pittie thou.” Although no poet’s language can muster genuine performativity—words that, in J. L. Austin’s famous phrase, do things—the audacity of such a command is a powerful rhetorical appeal to his readers to revise their reactions to the satirical verses.

In the biting satires, the character of laughter changes. Registering the real censures of unsympathetic readers, the laughter in these books is less socially ingratiating to a potentially like-minded audience. The only solidarity the satirist requires, these books suggest, is with his own mocking verses. The densest series of references to laughter in the *Virgidemiae* occurs in the first satire of Book IV: four instances in fewer than sixty lines. Acknowledging the harsh response to his first volume of satires, Hall brings back the figure of Labeo to illustrate the churlishness of his critics—wrongdoers whose identities Hall has tactfully concealed:

Should I endure these curses and despight

While no mans eare should glow at what I write?

Labeo is whip’t, and laughs mee in the face:

Why? for I smite and hide the galled place.

.....

Who list complaine of wronged faith or fame

When hee may shift it to anothers name? (IV.i.35-39, 43-44)

Labeo's aggressive laughter sounds alongside "curses and despight," and his reactions are all unjust because Hall's satires have preserved his anonymity. Only a truly knowing reader will recognize the offender(s) beneath the pseudonyms. Indeed, Hall emphasizes his own restraint in choice of subject—the vices and not the identities of the figures he satirizes. Like cuttlefish defensively emitting a "black Cloude of . . . thicke vomiture" (IV.i.42), Hall's victims produce repellent distraction in the form of their misdeeds, and Hall has had enough to do, he suggests, with addressing that cloud, let alone revealing the identities of the creatures who emit it.

Distinguishing different provocations of laughter, Hall insists on a contrast between the pandering of a performer and the scourger's delight in the outrage he has provoked. For the satirist who has moved on to serious, biting satires, laughter is the sign of a satirist's avowed confidence in the justice and effectiveness of his critiques. No longer soliciting approval, he is content to laugh contemptuously alone. With relish, Hall describes the impotent rage of one of his targets: angrily sparking eyes, cheeks puffed like a toad stung by a poisonous spider, and mouth pursed tightly in scorn (IV.i.66-70). Hall's mockery has made his target so angry that he unwillingly furnishes splendid entertainment:

Now laugh I loud, and breake my spleene to see

This pleasing pastime of my poesie,

Much better than a Paris-garden Beare,

Or *Mimoës* whistling to his tabouret

Selling a laughter for a cold meales meate.

Go to then ye my sacred *Sermones*,
 And please me more, the more ye do displease;
 Care we for all those bugs of ydle feare? (IV.i.74-82)

Like the overdramatic actor earning applause in the first book of satires, a clownish performer (“Mimo”) might slavishly earn laughter from his audience by pandering—but this meed is nothing in comparison with the fine amusement afforded by a wrongdoer baited into fury. The victim becomes an entertainer for the satirist, and the justly critical satires, here elevated to “sacred *Sermones*,” serve primarily to please their creator. The solidarity with an external audience that Hall invoked in the toothless satires is replaced by a reinforcement of the ideal of decorum, author and work standing together in their likeness, sufficient unto themselves to be creator and audience. When Hall asks, “Care *we* for all those bugs of ydle feare?” (emphasis added), the *we* includes only “my sacred *Sermones*” and the “me” pleased by their incendiary effect.

Resolved to continue his scourging, the satirist offers one more instance of hypothetical laughter: another person’s laughter forestalled by the satires. A would-be critic will not have the opportunity to indulge in mockery of others when the satirist exposes him: “Those toothlesse Toyes [i.e., the first three books of satires] that dropt out by mis-hap, / Bee but as lightning to the thunder-clap: / Shall then that foule infamous Cyneds [an adulterer’s] hide / Laugh at the purple wales [weals, stripes from lashing] of others side?” (IV.i.90-93). The gentler satires were a mere prelude, Hall promises, and Cynedo the adulterer will have no chance to direct his laughter at anyone else. To make good his threat, Hall devotes the subsequent seventeen lines to denouncing the scope of Cynedo’s lewdness, which encompasses “all, saue tooth-lesse age or infancie” (IV.i.108).

The final book of satires grimly returns to the idea of decorum. Here, Hall claims to have been mistaken all along: he, the satirist, is out of step; the age he has been attacking is, in fact, just and righteous. “[R]ecanting” (VI.i.17) his critical view, the satirist expresses regret for his supposed error in decorum:

Then let me now repent mee of my rage,
 For writing *Satyres* in so righteous age:
 Whereas I should haue strok’d her towardly head,
 And cry’d *Euæe* in my *Satyres* stead,
 Sith now not one of thousand does amisse,
 Was neuer age I weene so pure as this. (VI.i.21-26)⁴⁴

He glances at the possibility of decorum through a truce in which the satirist and the world come to peace with one another through mutually observed silence. Although introduced with a tone of sarcastic pseudo-regret (the satirist asks himself, “Then why did I a righteous age that wrong [of criticizing vices that are no longer practiced?] [VI.i.120]), Hall offers at least the *gesture* of ceased hostilities: if he could only return to his “former innocence, / I would at last repent me of my rage: / Now; beare my wrong, I thine, O righteous age” (VI.i.126-28). Not only innocence is required to effect such a truce, however: both the world and the satirist must learn the virtue of

44 Davenport’s edition follows the corrected 1599 printing of Hall’s text in reproducing “*Euæe*” and does not list any textual variants from other sources. The word appears to be a printer’s error for “euge,” a Latin borrowing from Greek that means “well done” (“Euge”). *The Oxford English Dictionary* does not include an attestation of this term from Hall’s lifetime—the earliest is from 1658—but the sense logically fits the line.

silence that stands opposed to ever-escalating misdeeds countered by ever-escalating denunciations. “Doe thou disdain, O ouer-learned age,” Hall wonders, “The tongue-ty’de silence of that *Samian* sage [Pythagoras][?]” (VI.i.149-50). If eager writers with “fine wits” (VI.i.160) could only have restrained themselves, Hall muses, “so I had silent beene, / And not thus rak’t vp quiet crimes vnseene. / Silence is safe, when saying stirreth sore / And makes the stirred puddle stinke the more” (VI.i.171-74).⁴⁵ This epigrammatic and unusually effective couplet lends a note of sincerity to the proposition that a little restraint from everyone—satirists and their targets included—would do the world good. The rhetorical violence of Elizabethan polemical debate and the hostile responses that Hall witnessed to his own work might well have moved him to suggest in earnest that the world would be better off if there were no need for satirists—if provocation and response might both rest in silence. But this is not to be: Labeo returns immediately following the couplet enjoining silence, and Hall ventriloquizes Labeo’s contemptuous attitude toward the satirist:

Shall the controller of proud *Nemesis*
 In lawlesse rage vpbraide ech others vice,
 While no man seeketh to reflect the wrong
 And curb the raunge of his mis-ruly tongue?

.....

45 Although Hall’s classically-inflected satires rarely allude to scriptural intertexts, this evocative image recalls the message as well as the idea of “stirring” in Proverbs 15:1: “A soft answer putteth away wrath: but grievous words stir up anger” (Geneva Bible). The King James Bible’s rendering of this verse also uses the word “stir.”

As I true Poet am, I here auow

.....

If that bold *Satyre* vnreuedged be

For this so saucy and foule iniurie. (VI.i.175-84)

Labeo will not be silent. The vengeful response that Hall contrives for him is diametrically opposed to the prospect of restraint proposed earlier. Regardless of whether Hall's proposal of silence is sincere, the simulated reply from Labeo implies that retribution is the most likely response from Hall's audience, not forbearance.

“A Post-script to the Reader,” the prose apologia that follows the final satire (the counterpart to the self-defense in the volume's opening poem, “His Defiance to Enuie”), echoes many of the sentiments expressed in the final satire, including the notion of restrained silence. In this defense, which excuses the faults of his style (“English is not altogether so naturall to a Satyre as the Latin” [98]) and reaffirms how discreet he has labored to be in hiding the identities of his targets, Hall shows why restrained silence and the Golden Age ideals from which the world has departed (III.i.) are equally impossible. Satires will naturally offend many, Hall admits, but for an audience to take offense from baseless or misunderstood causes is intolerable: “notwithstanding if the fault-finding with the vices of the time may honestly accord with the good will of the parties, I had as leaue ease my selfe with a slender Apologie, as wilfully beare the brunt of causelesse anger in my silence” (97). To turn the other cheek to his displeased audience may have been possible, but unjustified anger is a provocation Hall cannot resist—the fault the satirist contends with is not simply the anger of men whose “falts loath nothing more than the light” (98), but men who perversely fail to read with understanding and “choose carelesly to lease the sweete of the kernell, [rather] than to vrge their teeth with breaking of the

shell wherein it is wrapped” (99). Hall’s silence is not silence. He would just as well defend himself against ignorance as suppress his response; he claims to have “taken my solemne Farewell of [poetry], and shaked handes with all her retinue” (98), but such a claim is no more binding than any other statement of career ambition (and, in fact, Hall composed metrical translations of some of the psalms in 1607 and various other occasional verses in the following years). A refusal to respond does stanch the flow of controversial writing. Such closure is dependent not only on writers holding their peace for a month or a year, but genuinely abandoning the impulse, as Jonson put it, to re-“construct” and reply to the offending work. As I will show in the following section, even the closure created by forty years of silence can be undone. A touch of misunderstanding or misdeed, real or perceived, ruptures the closure created by restraint.

Hall’s postscript is a parting shot—a way to get in the last word for himself, if not to end the poetic conflicts that his satires set off.⁴⁶ As he watched Marston and the other satirists carry on their scourging, he may have reflected that a quarrel in satire was not the ongoing fight he wanted for himself, and active responses and counter-responses evidently led to neither

46 Although *Characters of Vertues and Vices* and *Mundus Alter et Idem* both have satirical elements, Hall gave up on English verse satire. He was pleased with his own efforts in translating psalms, but either Hall or his friends eventually concluded that he was not quite the next Philip Sidney: “it is clear that [Hall] thought of translating all the *Psalms*. Possibly Hugh Cholmley and Samuel Burton, whose criticism he solicited, did not feel able to encourage him to continue with the work, or perhaps the removal from Hawstead to Waltham turned his interest elsewhere” (Davenport xx-xxi).

reconciliation nor the improvement of the various foibles and vices that the satirists critiqued. When Milton resurrected Hall's satires, Hall did not engage with Milton's carping attacks: formulating a defense would make Hall accountable for a poetic persona he had shaped decades earlier. Having argued repeatedly in the intervening years for moderation and conciliatory attitudes from the controversialists who were debating English church government, Hall chose to let go of the work that instantiated that youthful, divisive persona. For his own part, if not Milton's or his other readers', Hall asserted closure through silence.⁴⁷

3.4 Echoes of "grim laughter": Milton and Hall

Milton, with the intent to attack if not to satirize Hall, reopened Hall's satires half a lifetime after their composition. The two men became embroiled during the Smectymnuan controversy that extended from 1640 through the spring of 1642. The pamphlet war began with Hall's defense of episcopacy (in *Episcopacie by Divine Right* [1640]), but ramified into many other topics and a great deal of *ad hominem* attack. Mingling his criticism of Hall's arguments with savage, "personal animus" (Smith 160) in *Animadversions* (July 1641) and *An Apology*

47 Hall's silence was prudent, since Milton may not have been the only one ready to drag Hall's juvenilia back into the arena of literary combat. As Taylor Corse points out, *Mundus Alter et Idem*, like *Virgidemiae*, was "popular enough for Milton to refer disparagingly to it and its author" (183). Milton would probably have seized on almost anything—any juvenile work, any breach of good character, any real or imagined intellectual inconsistency—but his choice of targets does reflect an expectation that his audience would be familiar with the works of Hall's that he attacked.

(April 1642), Milton drew on a handful of cherry-picked excerpts from the *Virgide miae* and *Mundus Alter et Idem* in order to discredit his opponent. The incredible hostility of Milton's attacks has been amply noted.⁴⁸ What has not been fully appreciated, however, is the degree to which Milton reconsiders some of the questions that preoccupied the youthful Hall: the rhetorical and pedagogical uses of laughter, the role of righteous outrage in an author's self-representation, and, most significantly, the value of asserting the likeness between one's works and oneself.

Milton's reflections on satiric laughter, like Hall's, register the potency of scorn in marking the seriousness of an opponent's error. Derisive language singles out the object of mockery:

And although in the serious uncasing of a grand imposture, (for to deal plainly with you, readers, prelaty is no better,) there be mixed here and there *such a grim laughter*, as may appear at the same time in an austere visage, it cannot be taxed of levity or insolence: for even in this vein of laughing (as I could produce out of grave authors) hath oftentimes a strong and sinewy force in teaching and confuting, nor can there be a more proper object of indignation and scorn together; than a false prophet taken in the greatest, dearest, and most dangerous cheat, the cheat of

48 Nigel Smith, for example, contrasts "Milton's vituperation" and "the meekness of the ministers who penned the Smectymnuus tracts, or the calm but firm reasoning of his first opponent Bishop Joseph Hall's *Humble Remonstrance*" (160). Stephen Dobranski also remarks that Milton's attacks "can seem relentless and petty," and even "unnecessarily mean-spirited" (99, 100). Corthell excuses neither Milton nor Hall: "Milton's pamphlets may be vituperative and obscure, but Hall's are boring" ("Joseph Hall" 184-85).

souls: in the disclosing whereof, if it be harmful to be angry, and withal to cast a lowering smile, when the properest object calls for both, it will be long enough ere any be able to say why *those two most rational faculties of human intellect, anger and laughter*, were first seated in the breast of man. (*Animadversions* 663-64, emphasis added)

Laughter and a “lowering smile” together signal that “grand imposture” has been identified and exposed for public condemnation. Justified with such a grand scope of moral gravity, Milton’s grim laughter also marks Hall’s juvenile writing and, as Milton depicts it, Hall’s shaky grasp of the types of classical satire (Calhoun 200-01). “You love toothlesse Satyrs,” Milton jeers: “let me informe you, a toothlesse Satyr is as improper as a toothed sleekstone, and as bullish,” by which he means “ridiculous, like a papal bull,” or perhaps “just as worth ignoring as a papal bull” (*Animadversions* 670). Milton’s cavil becomes a way of invalidating Hall’s judgment wholly. Though carping, it gives Milton a point of comparison by which he can insist on a stark contrast between himself and his opponent—and in *An Apology* he demonstrates the depth of his knowledge of the “grave authors” of classical satire, providing examples from Horace and referring to further support from Cicero and Seneca to teach his adversary “the bounds, and objects of laughter and vehement reproofe, as he hath knowne hitherto how to deserve them both” (904).

Hall’s satires offered Milton an opportunity to take up a topic in which he already had a strong personal investment—the capacity of satire to sustain a lofty style and to effect grand reformation through its didactic power (Morkan 494). They also supplied Milton with material he could use to discredit Hall in the same way that Hall critiqued writers of lewd verse: the satires were misinformed, misguided, artistically and intellectually faulty—and so, Milton

suggested, was their author.⁴⁹ Milton shares with his opponent a conviction in the value of decorum, and he did not hesitate to use that conviction to structure his insults. He labels *Mundus Alter et Idem* “universall foolery” and “the idlest and paltriest Mime that ever mounted upon banke” (*An Apology* 880). According to Milton, no sober man could “devise laws for drunkards to carouse by,” as Hall does in *Mundus* (881), and Hall, of course, is the perpetrator of the qualities he attacks: “Let him go now and brand another man injuriously with the name of *Mime*, being himselfe the loosest and most extravagant *Mime*, that hath been heard of” (881). Hall is perfectly decorous—he and his work are alike; both are clownish and derivative.

The young Hall strove to establish a satirical voice authoritative enough to support his criticism of Elizabethan culture and art; Milton in the antiprelatical tracts, especially *An Apology*, strove to craft an autobiographical portrait that would testify to the seriousness of his studies and his fitness to undertake monumental work. Each summons laughable oppositional figures to delineate his own authority. Milton and the other Smectymnuan authors “tried to discredit [Hall] by drawing attention to his salad days in Cambridge” (Corthell, “Joseph Hall and Seventeenth-Century Literature” 251). Milton singled out a passage from the *Virgidemiae* that mingles the images on the signs of Cambridge inns with the zodiac. Hall ruined an opportunity

49 Thomas Kranidas takes a slightly different view of Milton’s attack on the oxymoron

“toothless satires,” but his argument coincides with my suggestion that Milton employed the satires as a stand-in for Hall and a supposed blueprint of Hall’s intellectual failings: “*In context*, the critique of toothlesse satyrs demonstrates [what Milton wants to represent as] Hall’s fear of the abrasiveness of truth—even his satires are toothless—and that fear of Truth is behind his much reiterated fear and contempt for the multitude of libels” (255).

to write something lofty, Milton argues; Hall began well with “th’heauens vniuersall Alphabet” (II.vii.1) but descended into poetically awkward descriptions of Bridge Street. The satires reflect Hall’s juvenile inability: his satires do no better than “whip the signe posts of *Cambridge* Alehouses, the ordinary subject of freshmens tales, and in a straine as pitifull” (*An Apology* 915). Milton “goes to considerable lengths to contrast his own serious university career with what he characterizes as Hall’s antic one” (Corthell, “Joseph Hall and Seventeenth-Century Literature” 251). The portrait of a puerile, incompetent Hall helps Milton to insist on the sharpness of the contrast with his own diligent studies and promising future.

Not necessarily inspired by Hall, but following a remarkably similar train of thought, one of Milton’s most resonant declarations of poetic ambition affirms an ideal decorum between the character of authors and the grandness of their works. Milton describes the disquieting effect of discovering faulty character in authors he admired, and he resolves symbolically to become a righteous work himself:

[I]f I found those authors any where speaking unworthy things of themselves, or unchaste of those names which before they had extolled; this effect it wrought with me, from that time forward their art I still applauded, but the men I deplored; . . . And long it was not after, when I was confirm’d in this opinion, that he who would not be frustrate of his hope to write well hereafter in laudable things, ought himself to be a true Poem, that is, a composition, and patterne of the best and honourablest things; not presuming to sing high praises of heroick men, or famous Cities, unlesse he have in himselfe the experience and the practice of all that which is praise-worthy. (*An Apology* 890)

The controversies of prelacy laid aside, Milton might well have nodded in agreement with the translator of psalms who wrote that a religious poet must be a grave and reverent person to compose fitly: “This worke is holy and strict, & abides not anie youthful or heathenish libertie; but requires hands free from profanenesse, loosenesse, affectation” (“To My Loving and Learned Cosen” 127). If the author and his work truly are alike, the vitriol Milton expends on Hall is understandable: Milton wanted to paint his adversary as a controversialist who was not just writing but *being* something perverse. Milton understood his written works as creative matrices in their own right, reflecting their creator’s identity but also able to serve as a “patterne,” an exemplar that could influence his culture and the English literary tradition. Not so unlike Hall in this respect, Milton worked to assert an authoritative self, his identity and actions together serving as “the practice of all that which is praise-worthy.” As I will explore in the following chapter, George Herbert also considers the value of habitual actions, but for the devotional poet, the repetitions of ceremonial behavior mimic the “patterne” of the divine.

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4. DEVOTION IN THE PRESENT PROGRESSIVE: CLOTHING AND LYRIC

RENEWAL IN *THE TEMPLE*

Lord, mend or rather make us: one creation
 Will not suffice our turn:
 Except thou make us dayly, we shall spurn
 Our own salvation.
 “Giddinesse” (25-28)

“[T]hough our outward man perish, yet the inward *man* is renewed day by day”
 2 Cor. 4:16

George Herbert’s *The Temple* is about the ongoing practice of faith: the collection’s lyrics illuminate a spectrum of religious experiences and attitudes, each poem exploring the emotional and devotional contours of a moment in that process. Herbert’s collection includes recurring metaphors to describe the experiences of the faithful, most conspicuously the architectural conceit that gives Herbert’s volume its name. Yet the comparison between devotion and the physical spaces in and near which devotional activity takes place describes not stasis but dynamic process. Herbert’s structural metaphors point not only to *a* building (the sections of a church or its environs) but the act of building itself, the ongoing process of spiritual edification documented by his individual metaphors as well as the incremental, varied meditations in the lyrics throughout the volume. The completed structures—an altar built from broken pieces of heart (“The Altar”); the allegorical stones of virtue cemented by love and charity in “The Church-floore”—belie the ongoing kinetics of creation that inform Herbert’s poetry. The edification of spirit is never complete, as so many of Herbert’s metaphors of brokenness suggest, but finds its conclusiveness through analogy with what Herbert sees as the ongoing nature of creation itself. If the processes of faith—prayer, repentance, devotion, self-

reflection—are impossible to complete, they nevertheless reach closure through their kinship with the continual remaking of God’s original creation.

Herbert’s collection is deeply analogic: the poet rifles through stores of metaphors from masonry to agriculture to astronomy in order to represent the facets of Christian life. Rather than shift attention away from the doctrinal sensitivities of recent criticism, this chapter aims to restore a proportional sensitivity to the particularity of Herbert’s choices in image and structure, specifically in the recurring metaphor of clothing in *The Temple*. Herbert’s repeated references to dress, both sacred and secular, testify to the flexibility of this vehicle. Clothing is among the richest and yet most accessible of images in *The Temple*, a metaphorical vehicle that lends itself both to doctrinal critique (in “The British Church,” for example, the Catholic church is overdressed, and the church of Geneva naked) as well as earnest self-examination (for example, priestly identity and vestments fuse together in “The Priesthood” and “Aaron”). Earthly, material comparisons like clothing render the experiences of faith that Herbert describes more accessible and thus potentially more moving. Yet analyses even of Herbert’s most (literally) concrete metaphors have attempted to construe his use of architecture as purely symbolic (Dyck 237). My aim here is to retain a focus on the literal. As commentators have long observed, the variety of earthly, occasionally mundane, comparisons, testifies to Herbert’s belief that even a homely metaphorical vehicle can possess spiritual force. Sometimes a superfluity to be cast off, sometimes a sign of human participation in the Incarnation, clothing in *The Temple* demonstrates Herbert’s vested interest in the spiritual implications, and poetic resources, of dress. Herbert’s collection develops an aesthetic in which repetitive actions related to both ceremonial and everyday dress become a source of completion.

The associations of clothing in *The Temple* are complex and sometimes contradictory. As an aesthetic expression with a bearing on spiritual state for laymen as well as for the clergy, choices about dress often figure in Herbert's meditations on the uses of poetry in devotion. Adornments of language through prosody and of the body through costume can be either sources of meditative focus or distracting vanity. The capacity of both clothing and verse to aid in spiritual edification, however, is one of the most important arguments of *The Temple*. In the following chapter, I will show how the legacy of the Elizabethan vestiarian controversy informs Herbert's use of clothing metaphors. As theologians and laymen debated the implications of church ceremony, including the conventions of priestly dress, the processes of dressing (or, in some cases, the refusal to dress) in a particular type of garment became actions charged with symbolic power. I will then explore how *The Temple*'s opening section, "The Church-porch," engages with clothing among other secular concerns in order to cajole readers toward a habit of self-scrutiny: Herbert encourages his readers to look in the mirror as a step toward teaching them to regard their spiritual state with the same careful attention. "The Church-porch" ultimately enjoins readers, "Quit thy state" (407) as part of the necessary preparations for piety, a dictum that anticipates the aesthetic of dissolution that Herbert develops throughout the volume's subsequent section, *The Church*. I will accordingly then turn to "Mans medley" and "Mortification," the two poems that most fully develop this aesthetic through the metaphor of clothing. Poems that reflect on the shedding of garments—or on the garments themselves falling apart—express Herbert's understanding of process in devotion: to take off or disassemble is almost always a salutary action, an act of undoing creation that makes possible a stronger and more beautiful re-creation.

I will conclude by examining lyrics that encourage the opposite process, the assuming of “state,” and concentrate on the pair of poems that most explicitly refer to priestly clothing, “The Priesthood” and “Aaron.” Of all the poems in *The Church*, the metaphor of dress is particularly central to the theme of the latter; “Aaron” demonstrates most fully the links between ritualistic repetition, dress, and spiritual edification. In each of these poems, habit offers a valuable route to emotional and spiritual closure. Repetitive elements in both dressing and versifying mark accomplished action and signify strengthened faith. During the decade before Herbert’s birth, the term “habit” began to refer to the frequently repeated practices that constitute character even as it retained its more longstanding sense of “attire” (*OED* “habit” 9a).⁵⁰ Herbert’s lyrics make the renewal of habit, both attire and action, a means to gain access to the divine.

4.1 The Vestiarian Controversy: Dressing the Inward Man

Attacked by some reformers as a sign of vanity, clerical clothing served as a focus of debates over the spiritual valence of ecclesiastical ceremony from the mid-sixteenth century through the civil wars. Vestments became a medium through which broader concerns of reformed theology could be explored. The polemic that developed around ecclesiastical dress, the vestiarian controversy, occurred within the larger Reformation debates over which elements of ceremony and church decoration were *adiaphora* (“things indifferent”). Vestments were already an “urgent” focus for doctrinal dispute in England in 1550, when John Hooper, a Zwinglian reformer, was consecrated as bishop in spite of his resistance to wearing traditional

50 For the sake of clarity, when I use the term “habit” below, I refer to repetitive behavior unless

I explicitly call attention to a passage where Herbert exploits this word’s punning potential.

vestments (Anderson 79). Reformers sought to establish which elements of clerical clothing were “popish,” and whether such vestments qualified as *adiaphora* and might be worn “lawfully and with a safe conscience,” as the nonconformist Laurence Humphrey wrote in 1563, thinking of “that round cap and popish surplice” (Phillips 366). The significance of vestments extended beyond serving as an example of a thing possibly indifferent to include a symbolic power. Humphrey’s remarks testify to the capacity of vestments to stand in for spiritual state: he wrote to the Swiss theologian Heinrich Bullinger in 1566 to determine “whether the habit is to be worn, rather than the office deserted” (Phillips 366), a question both philosophical (in principle, could one retain the office of priest and wear the prescribed vestments “with a safe conscience”?) and deeply personal in its theology (would wearing the habit entail shirking a spiritual responsibility?). Judith Anderson notes that the symbolic nature of ecclesiastical clothing had been part of the Roman church’s rites before the Reformation; in the Roman tradition, “the significance of vestments had become fixed, recognizable, even separable from the wearer—metonymic. The vestments were instinct with a dignity of their own” (79-80). Elizabethan reformers such as Hooper undertook their critique of the Roman church in part by attacking the metonym, “reclathing” it, as Anderson remarks, “in copious, abusive metaphor of their own making” (80).

Yet because the symbolic value even of a single ecclesiastical garment could be adapted to a variety of purposes as a part of ritual, not just in critique of it, the significance of both vestments themselves and the rituals connected with them remained loci of contestable and

alterable meaning.⁵¹ From late antiquity to the thirteenth century, the alb, a white garment worn as part of ordination rites, was “variously interpreted on the basis of its whiteness, material, style, length, and closeness to the body as a layer of clothing” (Anderson 83). Any of these qualities alone is dense with potential meaning and susceptible to interpretation guided by precedent and, both during and after Elizabeth’s reign, legal requirement. The 1560s saw at least two attempts to abolish or to simplify radically the required ceremonial clothing for priests (Phillips 366). In this context, both “elaborations of significance of the vestments” and the need for legislation to control the proliferation of meaning developed together (Anderson 84). Indeed, vestments offered such a useful and longstanding discursive focus for disputation because of their inherent metaphorical flexibility.

Because “No single statute, canon, or article contained or professed to contain more than a fraction of ecclesiastical law” (Usher 191), even explicit legal prescriptions about vestments formed part of the controversy’s substance. A 1605 tract addressed to bishops—including, most notably, Richard Bancroft, Bishop of London—argued that even parts of the existing body of

51 Anderson argues that the metonymic significance of vestments existed at the expense of their metaphoric power; her larger discussion distinguishes metonymy and metaphor in early modern discourse, and she usefully notes the conservatizing tendency of metonymy, which is “coded and fixed, more referential than imaginative” (80), whereas metaphor, *translatio*, is capable of modification and transformation (9). As I will argue below, Herbert preserves the metaphorical quality of clothing in *The Temple*, although the lyrics’ transformations tend to operate privately and inwardly, rather than on the level of cultural discourse that Anderson describes.

church law were “voyd” because their prescriptions “litle or nothing respect[ed] any orders and Ceremonies of our Church” (Usher 195; *Certaine demandes* 49). The tract’s Puritan authors objected to demands for conformity to laws whose authority was contested: “The Lawes and orders of the Church remayne very vncerteyne, fo . . . it is not certeyne, to which lawes and orders establihed the minifters should conforme them felves . . .” (49). The writers of *Certaine demandes* articulate the concern that ceremonial vestments are apt to lead people to believe that spiritual efficacy comes from the clothes, not the priest. The authors thus point out that Christ

did not intitute any proper minifteriall garmentes, for the Apoftles, Evangeliftes, Prophetes, Doers of Myracles, or Teachers, to exercife anie their minifteriall function in, leaft the people *putting an opinion of holynes in their garmentes*, might thinke the doing of myracles, preaching the worde, prophecying, or miniftering the sacramentes, to be sanctified by their garmentes. (11, emphasis added)

Appealing to biblical rather than legal precedent, the authors warned against the *inappropriate* ascription of symbolic meaning to garments. Just because the ancient prophets’ hair shirts visually distinguished them from the crowd, it should not follow that the clergy preaching in contemporary English churches should have to “put vpon that their ordinary and vsuall garment, some other garment . . . without which necessary and propheticall garment, it was not lawfull for them to prophesie” (6). As M. M. Knappen notes, the reformer Hooper’s mid-sixteenth century “protest against the traditional garb was . . . more than a mere quibble about a piece of cloth. It involved the speeding up of the reformation process, a sharper break with the Roman churches, and an outward recognition of the priesthood of all believers” (84). The controversy, then, manifested a struggle to control symbolic meaning, a struggle to establish what relationship an

outward form should bear to such intangible aspects of faith as the efficacy of preaching and the sources of priestly authority.

Issues with serious doctrinal significance, including the concrete conventions of dress and behavior that constituted proper priestly decorum, were often broached in the language of aesthetics. Frances Baldwin's study of sumptuary legislation describes several cases of sanctions on ecclesiastics whose dress was "unbefitting," a term that indicates both a breach of decorum and an aesthetic failure.⁵² "Unbefitting" seems to have signified poor tailoring as well as undue showiness in the 1631 case of a minister whose rhetoric and dress were both so apparently excessive that the Bishop of London reproved him with equal severity for the twin offenses of inducing a parishioner to suicide through his preaching and wearing a band "curiously sett and too bigg" (260-61). Religious dress offered an accessible subject through which such larger issues of dissenting theology could be explored, including the relationships "between inner states and outer expression, . . . [the] distinctions between priest and bishop, between clergy and lay, [and] between sacred and secular occasions" (Richardson 15-16). Like Humphrey, some clergy refused elements of clerical costume such as the surplice, the white linen garment worn over a gown, denouncing ceremonial garments as "popish rags" and "Aaronic habits" (Mayo 68-69).⁵³

52 "To befit" signifies "to show moral fitness" as early as 1605 ("befit"). The earliest sartorial sense of "to fit," describing the correct shaping of a garment to its wearer—an aesthetic matter—occurs ca. 1616, although the *The Oxford English Dictionary* includes an attestation from 1581 describing "a saddle to fit anie Horse" ("Fit").

53 In a sermon delivered during Lent in 1550, Hooper conceded with dubious tact that "vestments required in the ordinal were 'tolerable things' and 'to be borne with for the

The surplice, Anderson remarks, was the garment “alone retained for Communion in the Prayer Book of 1552, [and] became the cause célèbre of the purifying Reformers in Elizabethan England,” although she notes that it “could be considered doctrinally neutral in the eyes of the episcopacy” (83, 85). Ecclesiastical clothing, then, served as shared discursive ground that retained the literal and aesthetic elements of the subject matter while supporting serious doctrinal disputation that reached far beyond a “quibble about a piece of cloth.”

Vestments, among other *adiaphora*, retained a significant role in discussions of worship during Herbert’s lifetime (Stewart 28). Herbert’s life and work engaged with this controversy in several points, in general defending the value of church externals such as vestments and church decoration. Around 1622, Herbert composed *Musae Responsoriae*, Latin epigrams that replied to the Puritan Andrew Melville’s verse attack on all rites that lacked explicit scriptural authorization, *Anti-Tami-Cami-Categoria*. Melville’s polemic was composed in 1604, but its print publication in 1620 seems likely to have occasioned Herbert’s response, which characterizes the abandonment of ceremonial clothing as a spiritual vulnerability. The Puritans, according to Herbert,

weak’s sake awhile” (Knappen 84). His early example of dissent on matters of ceremonial clothing was imitated, with significant consequences, by others. In 1565, Archbishop Parker deprived the nonconformist Thomas Sampson, Dean of Christ Church, Oxford, from his position because of a refusal to wear the surplice (Phillips 365), although Elizabeth allowed Sampson’s friend Humphrey to retain his position as President and Professor of Divinity at Magdalen College, Oxford in spite of a similar refusal (367).

are covetous of a
 Lord's bride bare of sacred rites,
 And while they wish
 All things regressed
 To their fathers' barbaric state,
 Lay her [Britain], entirely
 Ignorant of clothing, bare to conquest
 By Satan and her enemies. (37-44)

The time elapsed between the composition of Melville's and Herbert's texts suggests the continued relevance of the vestment controversy; even eighteen years after Melville argued against ceremonies as "offenses" to worship (Stewart 29), Herbert saw the matter of the dispute as in need of response. Herbert's own ordination also marks a necessary engagement with the implications of church vestments. Although the exact date of his ordination is unknown, it preceded his institution to the canonry and prebend of Leighton in July 1626 (Summers 34). Herbert's religious duties also entailed the renovation and redecoration of three churches (Dyck 225), projects that addressed some of the same issues of reform and dress.⁵⁴ Finally, although

54 The note of "The Printers to the Reader," appended to *The Temple* (1633), describes how God "ordained [Herbert] his instrument for reedifying of the Church belonging [to Leighton], that had layen ruined almost twenty years" (Wilcox, *English* 43). See Dyck for a discussion of Herbert's dedication to doctrinal and literal re-form in the church: Dyck argues that Herbert's renovations would have been "frowned upon by radicals" because they did not raze a supposedly idolatrous medieval legacy; rather, Herbert believed that the arrangement

the dates of composition for most of the poems in *The Temple* are unsure, Stanley Stewart estimates that 1627 until Herbert's death in March 1633 is the densest period of composition and revision (3). Vestimentary metaphor plays a role in 26 of the 161 lyrics in *The Church* as well as figuring significantly in "The Church-porch," suggesting Herbert's enduring interest in marshaling the substance of the vestimentary controversy for his lyrics' exploration of devotion. Herbert's verse shows that dress—literal, metaphorical, priestly, secular—offers a system of associations that are essential to understanding *The Temple*'s cultivation of attentiveness to spiritual state.

4.2 The Aftermath of the Religious Wars

Recent Herbert criticism has not been especially preoccupied with matters of form. Stanley Fish's *Self-Consuming Artifacts* (1972) is an important and lastingly influential example of the tendency to treat the poetic form as disposable or of secondary importance. Fish argues that texts are not verbal objects but catalytic tools, the means of altering a reader's perception (13). In the case of *The Temple*, the poems "become true (accurate) hieroglyphs only when their pretensions are exposed" (168)—and the satisfaction of a poem's deliberate form is part of the sense of control that Fish believes should be subverted (208). Recent critical work shows the continuing influence of the notion of poems as self-consuming. Helen Wilcox, for example, emphasizes potential doctrinal maneuvering over imagery as she assesses the community-making function of Herbert's volume for its early readers; she speculates that Nicholas Ferrar named *The*

of objects and type of decorations in a church "could spell out the interiorization reformed theology required" (237-38).

Temple as such “to appeal to the ceremonialists” since the title did not appear in manuscript or the earliest references to Herbert’s work (“In the *Temple*” 270).

Some recent studies nevertheless demonstrate a sensitivity to, if not an emphasis on, form: *George Herbert’s Travels* (2011) devotes a cluster of three chapters to “Herbert in Form and Embodiment,” and Greg Miller’s *George Herbert’s “Holy Patterns”*: *Reforming Individuals in Community* (2007), an attentively historicized examination of Herbert’s theology enacted in his poetry, includes a chapter on “The Poetics of Unending Conversion” (137-64). Yet Fish’s influence remains strong even in readings of *The Temple* that respond critically to his views on form. Dyck, for example, notes that both Fish and Richard Strier “have worked to separate Herbert’s architectural poems from their literal referents” (237), and that this interpretive model ignores how the material temple and the piety of the worshiper exist in a dialectical relationship, mutually consecrating one another (239). In an attempt to redress this tendency, Dyck observes that in the inscription of scripture on church walls, a feature of some of the churches that Herbert helped to renovate, “the church attracts attention not as a terminus but as a sign, pointing beyond its physical presence to a metaphysical and subsuming reality” (229). In this reading, the form of the church, characterized by the holy texts that contribute aesthetically to its function in worship, is still primarily a means to an end—if it is not “self-consuming,” in Fish’s terms, it continues to operate in the way that Fish argues self-consuming artifacts do; its primary job is to incite a reaction.

Rather than focus on form, recent critics have tended to analyze elements of Herbert’s life, pastoral labors, and theology—especially the developing theology of the Stuart Church of England—as a means to understand Herbert’s work. Within the last decade, Ronald W. Cooley has proclaimed an end to the “religious wars in George Herbert criticism” (6), a term coined by

Gene Veith, Jr., in 1988. At issue in these wars, which began in the earliest responses to *The Temple* (Wilcox, “In the *Temple*” 260-64) and have continued into modern criticism, is the matter of which doctrinal influences most significantly affected Herbert’s work and thought. Early modern as well as modern readers of Herbert have disputed whether Herbert’s poetic and devotional labors more significantly reflect medieval Catholic or Calvinistic influences. In the mid-twentieth century, Louis Martz established important debts owed by poets such as Donne and Herbert to late medieval influences, in particular the structures of Ignatian meditation (25-32). Martz argued that the methods of distinctively Catholic spirituality were “embedded in English life and literature of the seventeenth century” (9). In response to this emphasis and in part with an eye to addressing the contemporary practices of faith that were shaping the “developing indigenous Protestant tradition” (Lewalski 147), several studies from the 1970s and 1980s sought to discern not only the departures of English religious writing from Catholic traditions but to demonstrate the priority of these departures. Barbara Lewalski argued that even for poets whose works were informed by Catholic devotional manuals, Protestant devotion—biblically-focused and insistent on “application to the self” (148)—is the most important doctrinal current shaping the contours of the poetry (147-49).

Owing in part to the attention that New Historicism has afforded to Herbert’s theological milieu, current criticism generally accepts that Herbert’s mindset and poetics are essentially Protestant. Amanda Taylor notes the Protestant emphasis on works (poetry and visible effort) in Herbert’s poems (79), and Graham likewise finds in *The Temple* a “characteristically Protestant balancing act” in which faith has priority, but “the will to join in the practice of Christian life fostered by grace” must be encouraged (82). Graham uses “Discipline,” among other poems, to illustrate that Herbert’s Protestantism is not strikingly radical, but rather in line with Herbert’s

contemporaries in its suggestion that, “while justification is a work of faith alone, the process of sanctification is cooperative and repetitive, fusing grace and effort over time” (85-86). Not only does Graham’s analysis contribute to the current understanding of Herbert’s theology, it suggests the importance of both repetition and poetic creation in faith as well as poetry, as I will discuss below. Critics’ acceptance of Herbert’s Protestantism has inspired, on the one hand, a great deal of critical effort to discern the nuances of his idiosyncratic doctrinal quirks (Wilcox, “Hallow’d” 92, 100), and, on the other, the establishment of elements of Herbert’s views as a representative norm for Stuart theology (Dyck 226; Graham 82; Doerksen 201)—and, in Cooley’s 2004 study of *The Country Parson*, an effort to claim both: Herbert’s “comments on ecclesiastical matters” are neither purely personal nor representative of “the settled policies of the church” (26). The interest in Herbert’s theology rather than his versifying is especially perceptible in the work of Daniel Doerksen, whose 2011 book, *Picturing Religious Experience: George Herbert, Calvin, and the Scriptures*, explores the influences of Calvinistic thought on Herbert. Poetics is of significantly less concern to Doerksen’s study than allusion (to Calvin’s *Institutes* or biblical passages that Calvin addresses).

Such prominent attention to doctrinal nuance in recent Herbert criticism demonstrates a taste for a blended, literary-historical approach to Herbert’s writings. This approach has flourished in part because of an increased interest in nuanced historicism, but also because the influential formalist studies of the mid-twentieth century offered a kind of comprehensivity that may have discouraged further focus on prosody. Thorough, formally attentive studies such as Summers’s *George Herbert: His Religion and Art* (1954) offered both persuasive close reading and an equally persuasive pragmatism: generalizations about poetic form in *The Temple* are difficult to make, as Summers observed: “The only justifiable generalization is that every poem

required a new beginning, a new form, a new rhythm” (149). In the case of poems like “The Flower,” the complex stanza form of which has inspired a great deal of comment, one might well feel that the skilled readings of critics like Coburn Freer (218-20) and Fish (*Self-Consuming* 158-59) have already squeezed the interpretive essence from Herbert’s versification, and that, because “Generalizations crumble before the practice of a particularist like Herbert” (Summers 149), critical labor might be better served in seeking out elements of Herbert’s theology or biography that could offer an encompassing interpretive framework for *The Temple*, rather than piece-by-piece analysis of each lyric’s brilliant idiosyncrasies. Perhaps in light of this arrangement of critical priorities, analyses of *The Temple* from the past ten years often include context from Herbert’s prose, details of his labors as a preacher and renovator of churches, and discussion of the development of Protestant theology in England.⁵⁵ These studies are enlightening and offer valuable perspective on the circumstances that inform Herbert’s devotional and poetic labors. However, the merits of his prosody have almost uniformly come to play a minor role in recent scholarship. The allusions and echoes in his poetry represent the critic’s primary concern, and poetic structure, if addressed at all, is a point of casual interest (e.g.,

55 See, for example, Cooley’s intriguing analysis of Herbert as a sensitive negotiator of doctrinal nuance, through prescriptions for church decoration that make some “concession[s] to Laudian ceremonialism” but stipulate grave solemnity (26). Cooley’s study is one of two recent monographs focused on Herbert’s clerical manual *The Country Parson*; see also Wohlberg. For recent analyses of Herbert’s engagement with contemporary theological issues, see Wilcox, “In the *Temple*” 257, 262-64; Schoenfeldt 78-79; Netzley 17; and Richey, “Property” 287-88.

a symmetrical rhyme pattern or the accretion of similar endings in several stanzas). Herbert the poet can get lost in such interpretations, eclipsed by Herbert the theologian or Herbert the aristocrat-turned-parson-to-the-simple-folk-of-Bemerton. Addressing the doctrinal contours of *The Temple*'s lyrics without treating them as lyrics diminishes an essential aspect of Herbert's choice of communicative medium, and sometimes ignores it in favor of the attempt to take Herbert's doctrinal pulse.⁵⁶ While recent scholarship has worked productively to locate Herbert in the flow of religious history, it is necessary to restore sensitivity to his lyric craft as the critical conversation continues in the aftermath of the "religious wars."

4.3 "Dresse and undresse thy soul": Readerly Vanity in "The Church-porch"

Just as the rituals of dress precede an ecclesiastical figure's performance of his public duty, the reader of *The Temple* must pass through the long introductory poem "The Church-porch" as preparation to enter *The Church*. Herbert, as both clergyman and poet, is attentive to the capacity of aesthetic concerns to help prepare for a spiritual exercise. Although not directly involved in the polemic surrounding the matter of clerical dress, he was necessarily involved in

56 If the lyrics of *The Temple* do not offer a definitive statement of Herbert's doctrinal allegiance, they can tell us something about his ideals for, if not the actual state of, the Stuart church. See especially Wilcox's discussion of the devotional rather than literary uses that seventeenth-century readers made of *The Temple* ("In the *Temple*" 257)—although she notes that Herbert's collection was "the first book of what we would term 'English literature' to be recommended for use in schools—in 1660—as an instance of 'Lyrick' as well as a repository of catechistical piety" (258).

the substance of the debate: a clergyman cannot opt out of the matter of dress, but must make choices that reflect his negotiation of the competing impulses of modesty, decorum, and spiritual productivity. “The Church-porch” cultivates a similar consciousness in its reader: the aesthetics and process involved in dress, and the self-scrutiny inherent in attention to fashion, contribute to Herbert’s strategy to prepare his readers for the challenges of spiritual self-scrutiny. Culminating with the injunction to evaluate spiritual state by “Dress[ing] and undress[ing]” the soul (453), “The Church-porch” develops a series of metaphors for the examination of the soul in terms of clothing—what to wear, how to wear it, and how to judge it.

Lyric form is inseparable from Herbert’s project to hone spiritual awareness: a poem must have a form, and Herbert’s choice to use sixains for “The Church-porch” situates it within a late sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century trend of adapting this structure, often used not only for secular but amorous verse, to sacred purposes. The common label for the sixain, the “*Venus and Adonis* stanza,” ascribes the form’s prestige to Shakespeare, as Elizabeth Scott-Baumann has recently argued (3), but the popularity of Shakespeare’s epyllion and a broader association in the Renaissance between the sixain stanza and erotic narrative (Guernsey 23-24), as well the stanza’s use in complaint and elegy, ground the form in thoroughly secular traditions.⁵⁷ The Jesuit poet Robert Southwell also used this stanza, however, and in spite of its associations with “materis of loue,” he employed it in devotional poetry to demonstrate “how well ‘Verse and Vertue suite

57 The label “*Venus and Adonis* stanza” is nineteenth century in origin (Scott-Baumann 1), although the editors of the Norton Shakespeare suggest, perhaps not without bias, that this label is the current default, rather than “sixain” or “sesta rima” (Greenblatt et al. 629).

together” (Scott-Baumann 5).⁵⁸ So, too, with Herbert: he is not marshaling the sixain in an unprecedented way, but his choice of it subtly signals the transformative purpose of “The Church-porch,” and in theme as well as form the poem makes admonitions about secular concerns (including social niceties and financial habits) the basis for teaching attentiveness to spiritual state.

The suggestion of formal conversion is evident in the first stanza of “The Church-porch,” which introduces the Horatian precept that aesthetic pleasure can open the way to instruction. The speaker of this poem, the self-named “Verser,” announces that, true to the etymology of his epithet, his purpose is to *turn* the attention of the “sweet youth” (1) in a spiritually productive direction: “Hearken unto a Verser, who may chance / Ryme thee to good, and make a bait of pleasure. / A verse may finde him, who a sermon flies, / And turn delight into a sacrifice” (3-6).⁵⁹

58 As Scott-Baumann is careful to note, Southwell’s use of the sixain for religious verse was not culturally marginal; his poems went through fifteen editions between 1595 and 1636 (5). Her larger point is that Shakespeare’s fame has contributed to the continuing association of sixain stanzas with erotic narrative *and* with an author-centric understanding of verse forms.

59 “Verse,” meaning a line of poetry, owes its sense of turning not only to the Latin verb *vertēre*, to turn, but to the noun *versus*, used because of the turn to begin a new line (“verse”). This sense of *re*-turn is especially significant because it reminds us that poetic structure itself can be conceived of as a series of deliberately modulated beginnings—or, viewed another way, measured and controlled endings. Miller, considering “the *versus*, or winding of poetry over the line” in a slightly different light, argues that Herbert’s poems “associate such winding with the motions of the self in time” (138).

The attraction of the “bait of pleasure” opposes the imagined flight from dull sermonizing, but aims toward the same end, the willing “sacrifice” of superficial and potentially sinful delights in the name of earnest faith. The concept of delight turned into sacrifice describes a transformation of agency: the benevolent pounce of the verse finding and catching the person who fled from the sermon is also the prospective, willing sacrifice of the young man whose attitude has been reformed. The stanza’s concluding couplet has the sixain’s characteristic epigrammatic finality, and it suggests not that a spiritual overhaul can occur in an instant, reforming the epicurean tastes of the “sweet youth” into asceticism (1), but rather that there is a possibility of a suddenly striking new perception. Robert B. Hinman, suggesting that the reader needs to be tricked more than reasoned into piety, argues that “The Church-porch” owes its strategy to the spirit of the cony-catching pamphlets: the “bait of pleasure” is a benevolent ruse meant to draw in “the sermon-fleeing prey” and “betray the auditor or reader into the joy the preacher already knows” (56-58). The metaphors of clothing and fashion throughout the poem—the poem contains 12 explicit instances, and at least three potentially punning others—operate in just this way. The Verser’s objective is not to quash the pleasures offered by beautiful poetry and appearances, but to lead his reader to extend the uses of that sensitized perception to spiritual matters.⁶⁰

60 In this respect, my argument opposes some recent discussions of the poem, which take the central purpose of “The Church-porch” to be an “insist[ence] on renunciation and regulation,” a state that renders pleasure suspect (Netzley 46), or to fret that “visual beauty might be especially distracting to the aesthetically sensitive” (Doerksen 59). My claim falls more closely in line with Harold Toliver’s suggestion that the poem’s focus is “The need to

Moralizing on the insincerity of those who dress extravagantly to make their fortunes—a misdeed of social self-representation—the Verser uses clothing to show how scrutiny from an external perspective can produce not just vanity but a more honest self-evaluation. To complete the admonition, “By no means runne in debt” (175), the Verser offers an example of both an aesthetic and a social mis-fitting: “The curious unthrift makes his cloth too wide, / And spares himself, but would his taylor chide” (179-80). The showy spendthrift is unwilling to acknowledge his own involvement in ruining his look with superfluous cloth. The garment that fits poorly is not only an aesthetic failure, but allows for the displacement of responsibility onto others. Rather than moralize directly against these shortcomings or the pride underlying them, the Verser pragmatically notes their inadequacy to the youth’s social aims by pointing out the unreliability of “pleading clothes” (181), which are the outward, charismatic signs that the unwise youth might use to ingratiate himself “when worth and service fail” (182). Skillful coordination of a different sort is the solution: “In clothes, cheap handsomenesse doth bear the bell. / Wisedome’s a trimmer thing, then shop e’re gave. / Say not then, This with that lace will do well; / But, This with my discretion will be brave” (187-90). The Verser invites the young man to apply his good taste to figurative, inward clothing, the garments of wisdom and discretion. By imitating the language of the tailor, the Verser asks his audience to coordinate the garments and evaluate the impression that they will give together. The Verser avoids critiquing the youth’s motives—in this section of “The Church-porch,” the social goals described are wholly secular—but the habit he advises is the poem’s central principle. The Verser incites

discipline desire” (212), although I argue that Herbert’s Verser is working not to straiten desire so much as to redirect it.

productive agency by arguing that the pride that leads to chiding others for one's own faults can also attune one's attention inward toward what will "do well" for him. The youth, he argues, is capable of coordinating in not only fashionable garb, but also wisdom and discretion. The act of considering abstract behaviors together both validates individual judgment and forces an evaluation of the relationships between competing principles and values; it invites a weighing of the comparative worth of, for instance, a fine lace and wisdom. We need not eschew the beautiful as long as it sets off earnest character: "stuff thy minde with solid braverie; / Then march on gallant: get substantiall worth. / Boldnesse guilds finely, and will set it forth" (208-10).

Egotism and clothing go together so well that the Verser makes even the daunting prospect of honest self-scrutiny palatable: "By all means use sometimes to be alone. / Salute thy self: see what thy soul doth wear. / Dare to look in thy chest; for 'tis thine own: / And tumble up and down what thou find'st there" (145-48). The passage does not make clear whether the garments of the soul and the contents of the chest are the same matter, but both are deeply personal elements of the self, described as physically close (the soul "wears" those qualities) and private ("thine own"): for Herbert, emotional response is central to the constitution of the soul.⁶¹ The precept of this passage is sober: self-scrutiny will require "dar[ing]," and "what thy soul

61 "Chest" meaning "container" appears in "Mortification," "Confession," and "Praise (III)." In the last of these, the chest is God's, ready to receive the speaker's praise. Herbert's use of "chest" in this poem is significant because he much more often uses the word "breast" in relation to human (and sometimes divine) emotion and spirit: see, for example, "Aaron," "The H. Communion," "The Temper (I)," "The H. Scriptures (I)," "Even-song," and "Trinitie Sunday," among many others.

doth wear” may not please, if the gaze considering it is truly objective. As a reflection of the classical dictum to “know thyself,” the essentially egocentric advice in this stanza describes an important step preparatory to understanding one’s relationship with God. Self-evaluation must progress beyond admiration (of beautiful inward “bravery” or “boldnesse”) to a thorough going-over.⁶²

Paradoxically, however, a little genteel vanity can go a long way toward fostering a reverential attitude. Richard Strier, reading “The Church-porch” as a work steeped in “civil conversation,” argues that it demonstrates an “exclusive concern for the gentry rather than for either ‘simple parishioners’ or universalized catechumens” (97). He concludes that the poem’s “ideal is Aristotelian rather than Pauline, proper pride rather than humility” (96). Strier’s argument is borne out persuasively by the poem’s sustained, Baconian attention to the cultivation of inward virtues that also help one appear advantageously in company (e.g., at the gambling table [192-204], the dinner table [132], and the negotiating table [121-22]). The function of “The Church-porch,” then, is not to chasten and limit attention devoted to the self—in spite of the poem’s ongoing stream of didacticism—but rather to foster it. The young man’s awareness of place within a social hierarchy needs refinement, not removal:

62 The cultivation of self-awareness is a habit that Herbert encourages in *The Country Parson* as well as in his verse. Stanley Fish points out that, for Herbert, one of the most important goals in catechetical instruction is the catechumen’s understanding of himself in unscripted terms; the ideal question will point him to “discover what he is,” Herbert argues (in chapters 21 and 22), and Fish elaborates: “this is not a question for which there is a rote or set answer, but one whose purpose it is to set the listener’s mind to working” (*Living* 21).

When once thy foot enters the church, be bare.

God is more there, then thou: for thou art there

Onely by his permission. Then beware,

And make thy self all reverence and fear.

Kneeling ne're spoil'd silk stocking: quit thy state.

All equall are within the churches gate. (403-08)

The image of bareness that accompanies entrance to a holy place evokes Moses's approach to the burning bush and God's command that he remove his shoes in acknowledgment that he stood on holy ground (Exod. 3:5). The imagined act of kneeling may carry overtones of "proto-Laudian" allegiance, as Esther Gilman Richey suggests (*Politics* 118), but this couplet does not emphasize the act of kneeling or a form of worship so much as it prescribes an attitude of self-awareness. The Verser redirects this fastidious concern for spoiled stockings, so potentially trifling, into a sensitivity to reverence. The directive, "quit thy state," uses the physical action of taking off a piece of clothing to describe the modification of a frame of mind. Ritual need not be scripted and prescriptive only, but is within an individual's control to interpret; ritual is susceptible to individual piety as well as being capable of shaping or imposing on it. In this respect, Herbert's verse contributes significantly to the ongoing disputations over the role of vestments in private devotion: he shows the varied metaphorical potential of clothing, and the capacity of vestimentary metaphor to adorn the contours of many devotional activities, not simply to bind individual piety in a metonymic straitjacket. The Verser's advice, "quit thy state," implies a great deal of faith in individual agency. The person entering the church is capable of the necessary transformation, to "make [him] self" appropriately reverent, "bare" of finery and pretension.

The Verser's commands to "be bare" and "quit thy state" have their counterpart in the following stanza: "O be drest" (410). The state of one's dress is the approachable, earthly vehicle for the argument that the evaluation of one's spiritual priorities must accord with a different standard:

Resort to sermons, but to prayers most:

Praying's the end of preaching. O be drest;

Stay not for th' other pin: why thou has lost

A joy for it worth worlds. Thus hell doth jest

Away thy blessings, and extreably flout thee,

Thy clothes being fast, but thy soul loose about thee.

In time of service seal up both thine eies,

And send them to thine heart; . . .

.....

Who marks in church-time others symmetrie,

Makes all their beautie his deformitie. (409-20)

As critics have long noted, to be "drest" means to be spiritually prepared for devotion in the church—curiously, the same state described in the preceding stanza as being "bare." This stanza is rife with puns on terms for the accessories that shape and secure one's dress: "stay[s]" and "pin[s]" are the hardware essential for an aesthetic objective, but here the Verser contrasts the security of the literal garments with the insecurity of being overly concerned with them when the mind should turn inward in prayer. The tidiest outfit can belie the most vulnerable soul, and the consequences are likewise described in aesthetic terms: the "loose soul" becomes "deform[ed]"

by “mark[ing] others symmetric”—the distraction ruins her own look. By preserving the vehicle of judgmental people-watching in his moralizing, the Verser keeps the “bait” appealing: he cajoles his reader into mindfulness by way of devaluing the vanities of literal dress.

Critical judgment of dress is the concluding note of advice of “The Church-porch,” and it is a repeated activity in which aesthetic and earthly pleasures are not evils finally to be rejected, but elements in a person’s spiritual constitution which need and deserve an artistically sensitive eye:

Summe up at night, what thou has done by day;

And in the morning, what thou hast to do.

Dresse and undresse thy soul: mark the decay

And growth of it: if with thy watch, that too

Be down, then winde up both; since we shall be

Most surely judg’d, make thy accounts agree. (451-56)

The Verser enjoins his reader to monitor the soul in motion, to examine its routines, to observe its wear and tear—and to work actively to maintain its beauty and regulated function. Exacting attention in this regard combines the awareness of a third party’s evaluation—of the human scrutiny described throughout “The Church-porch” and the divine judgment anticipated in this passage—with a reminder to continue that judgment oneself. “In brief, acquit thee bravely; play the man. / Look not on pleasures as they come, but go” (457-58): the Verser’s closing advice does not forbid the young man to dwell on passing delights—to dwell, that is, on the delights themselves—but enjoins him to mark the processes of contraction and growth, the repeated behaviors of action and reflection involved in dressing and undressing one’s soul. Herbert shows that the habit of self-regard they entail teaches us to observe ourselves closely. “The Church-

porch” mimics the activity of a dressing room, the consideration and trying-out of the pleasures that all monitory literature must contend with. Such comparative activity blends judgments of taste and moral state: to regard one’s soul should employ the same kind of judgment with which one regards the cohesiveness of a suit of clothes. Alongside metaphors whose vehicles entail relatively clear distinctions of changed states (decay, growth), function and malfunction (a watch in need of winding), and correctly and incorrectly tallied finances (accounts that must agree), this image of the soul’s clothing adds a necessarily more subjective, aesthetic dimension: the young man must learn to judge and behave rightly, and also to discern. The reader of “The Church-porch,” preparing to enter *The Church*, learns the habit of self-regard through the presentation of virtuous and becoming behavior as well-coordinated garments. If the look appeals to him, he can choose to assume those garments together.

4.4 Coarse Stuff: Shedding Vanity in *The Temple*

As we have seen, “The Church-porch” prescribes a spiritually healthy vanity, a pleasure in regarding how one’s soul is dressed. Herbert develops this clothing leitmotif adumbrated in “The Church-porch” in the lyrics of *The Church*. Alongside the architectural metaphors that describe productive spiritual processes through the breaking-down or collapse of physical structures, Herbert’s lyrics develop a parallel argument through metaphors of shedding clothes. In *The Temple*, to disassemble is almost always a beneficial activity: spiritual edification must sometimes proceed first through tearing-down, and likewise, to put on the proper spiritual

habit(s) can require undressing. Herbert thus uses clothing in analogies for decay or mortality.⁶³ Acts of dressing and undressing can help us understand our own composition, set up in opposition to God's creative agency, and in this way, metaphors of clothing operate in concert with those of architectural and biological vulnerability to transform the pride encouraged by "The Church-porch" into humility. Crucially, undressing in *The Temple* is not simply about shedding superficialities in order to reveal or liberate something more essential, whether Christian soul or poetic spirit.⁶⁴ Rather, for Herbert, undressing establishes relationships. Just as

63 Herbert sometimes employs literal clothing as a way of describing a quality of fallen humanity. In "Providence," for example, clothing sets humanity apart from the ways nature is in harmony with itself: "Nothing wears clothes, but Man; nothing doth need / But he to wear them" (109-10). The odd but exalted model of integration and purpose in this poem is the coconut, which "Is clothing, meat and trencher, drink and kan, / Boat, cable, sail and needle, all in one" (127-28).

64 A comparatively stark duality between superficial embodiment and a deep, essential nature is perceptible in many other Renaissance authors' clothing metaphors. In the Garden of Adonis in *The Faerie Queene*, for example, infant spirits waiting to go into the world require "fleshly weedes" from Genius, and Spenser is particular that "The[ir] substance is not chaunged, nor altered, / But th'only forme and outward fashion" (III.vi.32, 38). Ben Jonson, in "To the Memory of my Beloved, the Author, Mr. William Shakespeare," describes verse as a beautifying garment for Nature, which is grateful to wear Shakespeare's creation: she "joyed to wear the dressing of his lines" (48). In John Donne's Holy Sonnet 11 ("Spit in my face yee Jews"), clothing is not glorious but rather the debased aspect of the incarnation; Donne

the Verser enjoins his reader to “Dresse and undresse thy soul,” a composite action that describes both construction and disintegration, the varied voices of *The Temple* evoke creation and collapse together, the spiritual productivity of clothes removed or in ruin. Of the poems that employ clothing metaphors, “Mans Medley” and “Mortification” most conspicuously emphasize the paradoxical constructiveness of the removal of clothing. These poems show that the motions of disintegration or doffing can simultaneously enact spiritual edification.

“Mans medley” describes the human state, straddling earthly experiences both good and bad and the hopes and fears projected into the future, at death and beyond. Amid dominantly seasonal metaphors—e.g., humankind’s ability to double both its joys and trouble, to “ha[ve] two winters” by “fear[ing] two deaths” (27, 30), unlike any other creature—Herbert describes the soul and body united as if in a garment:

In soul he [man] mounts and flies,

In flesh he dies.

He wears a stuffe whose thread is course and round,

But trimm’d with curious lace,

describes Christ assuming humanity as if it were shabby clothes (“God cloth’d himself in vile mans flesh” [13]), a conception of composite divine and human nature that curiously reverses Herbert’s description in “The Bag,” in which Christ instead doffs divinity first, descending from heaven and “undressing all the way” (12). In the generation after Herbert, Andrew Marvell’s “The Garden” imagines the soul freeing itself: “Here at the fountain’s sliding foot, / Or at some fruit-tree’s mossy root, / Casting the body’s vest aside, / My soul into the boughs doth glide” (49-52).

And should take place [i.e., assume its proper station]

After the trimming, not the stuffe and ground. (13-18)

The stanza describes finery, but unlike the textile beauty suggested in “The Church-porch,” the homiletic point leads off this stanza, preventing any undue admiration of the human “garment.” The preemptive reminder of mortality, “In flesh he dies,” creates the possibility of unraveling or decay in the coarse mortal “stuffe” as well as drawing a clear separation between the unembellished “ground,” a plain fabric used as the base for embroidery (“Ground”), and the fine soul-lace that decorates it. The poem links the mortal flesh and coarse fabric and opposes them to the “mount[ing] and fl[ying]” soul that flutters aloft like an elaborate lace border affixed to its mortal garment but, if we follow the suggestion of a soul mounting heavenward away from the body, perhaps already half-detached.⁶⁵ The unusual stanza form of “Mans medley” evokes this act of coming apart at the seams: a three-line metrical pattern consisting of a trimeter line, a dimeter line, and a pentameter line repeats twice in each stanza. The three-line grouping forms a seam in each stanza, and the trimeter and dimeter lines together form an unraveled pentameter line.⁶⁶ The verse, in short, lies somewhat unraveled on the page; even the term “trimming” may

65 Julia Carolyn Guernsey draws attention to the stanza quoted above as evidence for the ability of the soul to rise “to the exclusion of the body,” and points out several other instances of poems in *The Temple* that use images of the soul’s disembodied flight toward God (29).

66 Herbert employs a similar strategy in “Church-monuments,” etching a crack down the center of each stanza through a repeating but non-interlocking rhyme scheme *abcabc*. In this poem, too, the crack is significant to Herbert’s point about the shared dusty substance of humans

glance at the process of undoing through its self-contradictory senses of both adding and removing a decorative edge.

This metaphor for the human state, plain mortal cloth with soul-trimming, offers a resource that the poem's naturalistic and seasonal metaphors do not. The latter offer only oppositions: present and future, human and angel, mundane discomfort and the dread of "two deaths" to come. The poem's title also evokes musical art, which may suggest that the human "thread" acts like a taut string on a musical instrument, strung between "things of sense" (7) in mortal life and heaven: "Man ties them both alone, / And makes them one" (10-11). In both the textile and musical metaphorical schemes, the earthly "thread" of human life is tied to the celestial; the musical overtones suggest that this mingled divine and earthly nature renders humankind an instrument on which God can play.⁶⁷ The garment metaphor offers an important supplementary insight: to meditate on one's own mingled nature—a process of active engagement that the metaphor of man-as-taut-musical-string does not necessarily imply—helps direct one's attention toward the divine element, "th' . . . hand touching heav'n" (12) and the soul that "mounts and flies." Even as we imagine the garment of humanity fully assembled, we see the separation of rising soul and sinking flesh through the image of half-detachment, trimming affixed to its "stufte and ground" but fluttering loose. The soul "should take place" after this lace trimming which is ultimately, we find, the essential rather than the superfluous

and their stone memorials. Herbert uses the same rhyming pattern, although with different meter, in "Mortification."

⁶⁷ For an analysis of Herbert as a creative collaborator with God, see Oakes 133-34.

element. The image clarifies the part that we should emulate through rising aspiration and the part we should cast off as the textile and earthly “ground” it is.

The precept of quitting one’s state finds particularly solemn manifestation in “Mortification,” in which Herbert strengthens the commonplace association between the bed and the grave through the additional analogy of clothing. Herbert’s point is to show that the motions of our acts of creation are also equally preparations for dissolution. The lyric opens with the act of dressing an infant doubling as the dressing of the corpse it will prospectively become:

How soon doth man decay!

When clothes are taken from a chest of sweets

To swaddle infants, whose young breath

Scarce knows the way;

Those clouts are little winding sheets,

Which do consign and send them unto death. (1-6)

A protective swaddling-cloth does not actually swaddle an infant here: the garment is taken from its chest with the evident intention to wrap around the baby, but transforms mid-stanza into a winding-sheet that becomes a veritable agent of mortality itself, “consign[ing]” and “sending . . . unto death.” Mortality hijacks the act of putting on a garment, contracting the span of an entire human life into the space of a stanza and converting the fabric intended to protect a vulnerable infant into the winding-sheet for a corpse. Crucially, the image collapses early infancy and death into one composite mortal state, a foreshortening of perspective that encloses the step-by-step procession of the poem’s remaining stanzas, each of which imagines the advancing stages of life that the first stanza has already rendered foregone. Each stanza also ends with the word “death,”

and its corresponding rhyme is always “breath”: the repetition of the very emblem of life never escapes this mortal pairing.⁶⁸ No human act can avoid this continually reiterated decay.

The motion to dress the infant remains thwarted until the final stanza, when the only thing dressed is the structure supporting the corpse: “Man, ere he is aware, / Hath put together a solemnitie, / And drest his herse” (31-33). The correspondence of actions, not just the *meditatio mortis*, makes the process of life, “while [man] has breath / As yet to spare” (33-34), a preparation for the ceremonies of death. These preparations are continual (man, going about the business of daily life, has been all the while preparing for his own burial ceremony “ere he is aware”) and, Herbert concludes, life is in fact an ongoing lesson about death. As in “Church-monuments,” the natural fact of mortality is a pedagogical opportunity. The poem ends with a prayer, “Yet Lord; instruct us so to die, / That all these dyings may be life in death” (35-36). Our “dyings” (this curiously un-idiomatic word suggests action more than the noun “deaths” would) are a kind of habit built into existence, actions repeatedly undertaken rather than states achieved. This brief moral at the poem’s conclusion, the perspectival volta that works to turn awareness of mortality toward a spiritually productive end, demands an appreciation of the composite quality of human action. Dying—understood as an unfolding, reiterated, and, if it can be pluralized, an oddly repeatable action—is, in fact, the definition of life, and we only need realize it. The

68 Summers notes that the rhymed sounds at parallel points in each stanza “accentuat[e] the repetitive aspect of each age” of life that the poem describes (153). Guernsey, also attentive to the poem’s form, argues that the poem’s prosody stands in for the human body; she calls attention to a number of rhythmic features and rhyme structures that develop the poem’s chastening theme (35-37).

poem's conclusion suggests that Herbert is sensitive to the fact that such a recurrence or "habit" can be both an almost involuntary repetition of actions or customary action purposefully undertaken ("Habit" 9a; 9b). The latter sense of the word "habit" is more recent—*The Oxford English Dictionary* includes only one attestation for this sense from Herbert's lifetime—but the concluding couplet of "Mortification" suggests that even an involuntary repetition, the "dyings" intrinsic to life, can become the object of active meditation, a way that God can "instruct us so to die." Restful "Successive nights, like rolling waves, / Convey [youths] quickly, who are bound for death" (11-12), and the joyful "mirth and breath / In companie" is "musick [that] summons to the knell" (15-17). Understood as "dyings," these acts can become the matter of divine instruction.⁶⁹ To see the shroud and swaddling-cloth layered together simultaneously, as if in a textile palimpsest, is to be at once chastened and granted hope that the way we undertake our habits of dying can point us finally to "life in death."

4.5 Habitually Clothed in Christ: Repetition and Spiritual Growth

Although the prospect of perceiving ongoing death in every feature of mundane existence is sobering, and contributes to the humility essential for *The Temple's* meditative function, Herbert's collection overall presents a remarkably positive view of repetition. Through "habit," both dress and customary action, Herbert shows that repetition does not ultimately signify

69 For an alternative reading of "Mortification," which finds this *memento mori* "chilling and sobering, not triumphant or engaging," see Gottlieb 58-59. Sidney Gottlieb also remarks upon the suddenness of the volta at the poem's conclusion, noting that this personal turn is characteristic of Herbert (59).

hopelessness, but rather renewal. In this respect, the creature imitates the creator, who repeatedly re-creates the world: “ev’ry day a new Creatour art” (“The Temper [II]” 8). Habit aligns not only human devotion, but all human activity, with the divine.

The stakes for such an alignment are high: meditating on taking the office of priest, Herbert faces the anxiety that the seriousness of the profession is dangerously incompatible with his human frailty. Addressing the “Blest Order” (1) in “The Priesthood,” Herbert worries:

But thou art fire, sacred and hallow’d fire;
 And I but earth and clay: should I presume
 To wear thy habit, the severe attire
 My slender compositions might consume.
 I am both foul and brittle, much unfit

To deal in holy Writ. (7-12)

In this passage, “habit” refers to the literal priestly vestments. The costume and dealing in holy writ together expose the priest to the splendid dangers of “sacred and hallow’d fire.” The presumption he fears to demonstrate has a startlingly physical dimension: the literal vestments, “severe attire,” are not only “instinct with a dignity of their own,” as Anderson suggests (80), but they smolder with dangerous, holy fire sustained by the duties of the priest, who must “deal in holy writ” again and again as an individual Christian and as a preacher. The vestments themselves almost seem to threaten to transform the minister into a burnt sacrifice. But the resolution to this vocational dilemma (and threat of immolation) comes through a careful collapsing of distinction between the “foul and brittle” man and the imposing priestly attire. Observing that “by cunning hand / And force of fire, . . . curious things are made / Of wretched earth” (13-15), Herbert reconceives of the priest as an earthen vessel, “lowly matter for high uses

meet” (35). This vessel shares with all humanity a common origin, substance, and destination. All people come from the earth, just like their food and their dishes: “at once both feeder, dish and meat / Have one beginning and one finall summe” (21-22). What we are and what nourishes us—both physically and spiritually—are the same. This view not only justifies the ambition to a priestly vocation, it shows humanity and the rest of the world as both God’s creation and the product of God’s artistic craft, all lowly material, yet “mean stuff whereon to show his skill” (38). The offices of a priest do not demonstrate an impetuous wish to play with fire, then, but rather to merge into a divine timelessness, so that in giving communion, “Their hands conuey him, who conveys their hands” (28). The priest as a vessel stands apart from the rest of humankind through this apparently circular reciprocity with the divine.

Herbert elsewhere uses clothing to mark a status achieved or a divine gift granted, and in many of these cases the metaphor establishes a parallel between Christ and humankind. The coincidence of this parallel with metaphors of clothing shows that through the medium of lyric, not just polemical epigram, Herbert argues for the value of vestments as both transformative and sanctifying. Responding to the anxieties that priestly clothes themselves might falsely seem to have an intrinsic sanctity—a concern central to the vestiarian controversy and, as we have seen, still a subject of debate at the beginning of the seventeenth century—Herbert uses clothing to engage with broader discourses about church externals and the “externals” of prosody: outward forms offer an interface with the divine, not a distraction from it. The lyric in *The Temple* that is most arguably centered on the inward implications of outward vestments is “Aaron.” Here, vestments are aids to piety because the garments and the ritual of dressing evoke the embodiment of both the eponymous Old Testament priest and Christ “liv[ing] in me” (24). The priest described in the poem undergoes inward transformation through the process of dressing. As

Anderson notes, “Aaron” “is at once an idealized, symbolic expression and an obliquely political one. . . . Herbert is not rejecting meanings . . . he is seizing such meanings and *translating them* radically inward” (110). Ritualistic preparatory dressing of the priest accompanies the cultivation of reverential feelings, both together constituting the status of being “clothed in Christ” (Veith, *Reformation* 80): to dress is literally to transform oneself, not just to assume an outward form that recalls typological priesthood, but to resurrect, to become. As Guernsey notes (37), such a “change of wardrobe” into the body of Christ is a renewal of both the priest himself and his “well drest” verses (15). This metaphorical structure illustrates Herbert’s position on the value of the vestiary symbol, but even more significantly, it demonstrates the importance Herbert places on the garments and repetitive action together constituting the activity of faith. Herbert shows that the value of ritual arises from both thing and action, both the aesthetic, symbolic value of garments and the repetitive ceremonial rituals that entail becoming “clothed in Christ” again and again.

“Aaron” embraces formal repetition (an act of dressing that a priest would undertake many times over; the patterning of ideas in parallel lines of each stanza), and reiterated action transforms the priest. The manifold repetitions enact the dual senses of “habit.” Five rhyme words recur in each stanza, the lines of each stanza expand and contract in the same metrical quantities, and terms that echo each other in sense fall at corresponding points in each stanza. For example, the central line of each stanza describes outwardly audible as well as inward music: “Harmonious bells” on the hem of the robe produce “A noise of passions ringing me for dead” (3, 8); “Another musick,” signifying Christ (13), soothes the priest who then apostrophizes his savior as “My onely musick,” and concludes that “My doctrine [is] tun’d by Christ” (18, 23). The conclusion, the completed act of dress, describes harmonious merging not just of the priest

and his ceremonial vestments, but of the priest and “Christ, (who is not dead, / But lives in me while I do rest)” (23-24): thus Christ’s body, as Guernsey puts it, “clothes or encloses the speaker’s body” (69-70). The completion of this act of dressing entails a genuine attunement with Christ, “My onely musick” (18), and the act of assuming garments involves not just ritual but efficacious transformation of an individual into the typological priest. Anderson contends that Herbert’s “recovery of Aaron . . . is also a narrowing and personalizing of the power of the vestimentary symbol” (110); she rightly observes that Herbert’s engagement with the controversy emphasizes the significance of the vestment metaphor on a personal rather than cultural scale. Yet the conceptual force of Herbert’s metaphor is just as transformative on an intimate, individual level, and it need not necessarily entail the loss of typological significance that Anderson suggests. “Aaron” brilliantly illustrates such modification in an individual taking place. The identical stanza structure, like the clay described in “The Priesthood,” “retains its outward form, but inwardly all is changed in the divine consumption of the self” (Summers 137-38). The poem does retreat somewhat from the materiality of vestimentary metaphor, but the conspicuously crafted prosodic structure suggests language in an artfully dressed, patterned form, which is perhaps as material as language can be.

The links between humankind and Christ, as well as the concreteness of patterned, hieroglyphic poetry, show a glorification of embodiment in Herbert’s theology.⁷⁰ The visceral

70 Herbert also merges the soteriological and sartorial in “The Dawning,” although with a possible lapse in decorum. Herbert enjoins the “sad heart” (9) to arise and rejoice in Christ’s resurrection for a peculiar reason: “Arise, arise; / And wish his buriall-linen drie thine eyes: / Christ left his grave-clothes, that we might, when grief / Draws tears, or bloud, not want an

physicality of the imagery in all of the poems that I have discussed in this chapter indicates that earthly forms—whether Christ’s humanity, the world we perceive through the senses, or the works of human hands—are neither chaff to be discarded in favor of their ineffable spiritual counterparts nor worldly superficialities in need of clearing away before a deeper truth can become visible. *The Temple* is throughout a testament to the value Herbert places on formal structures per se: lyric itself is not a vain prosodist’s bauble, but a way of shaping reflections and meditations aesthetically in order to communicate spiritual value more effectively.

I have emphasized throughout this chapter the value Herbert places on such external forms in the practice of devotion mediated through verse. *The Temple* does include a significant number of poems that offer a contrasting view of ornamentation, both physical and poetic, and advance an aesthetic of plainness.⁷¹ “The Flower,” for example, affirms that “We say amiss /

handkerchief” (14-16). Although Summers establishes the associations of Christ’s shroud with genuinely comforted faith, remarking that this image would not have been as silly or unsettling to an early modern audience (114), the salvific burial-cloth-turned-handkerchief expresses eternally renewed consolation with somewhat less solemnity than the “garments bloudie” (10) in “The Agonie,” reddened with ichor as if with Eucharistic wine (18).

71 Mark Taylor summarizes how the Jordan poems have contributed to Herbert’s reputation as “anti-metaphysical” and a “devotee of Puritan plainness” (15). In the mid-twentieth century, Taylor suggests, the work of Summers and Rosemond Tuve helped to counteract the view of Herbert as “comparatively child-like and unlettered” next to Donne or Milton (18). In support of this view of a Herbert who is artistically refined even in his simplicity, Stein has explored in detail the sophistication of Herbert’s “rhetoric of sincerity” (160).

This or that is: / Thy word is all, if we could spell” (19-21), which suggests the communicative inadequacy of praise, while “A True Hymne” describes a heart that “runneth mutt’ring up and down / With onely this, *My joy, my life, my crown*” (4-5) and hopes for the sufficiency of this simple sincerity: “The finenesse which a hymne or psalme affords, / Is, when the soul unto the lines accords” (9-10). Arnold Stein points out that the stanza following these lines parodies the faults of excessively ambitious versification:

He who craves all the minde,
 And all the soul, and strength, and time,
 If the words onely ryme,
 Justly complains, that somewhat is behinde
 To make his verse, or write a hymne in kinde. (11-15).

The poet in this case “finds himself hung up, forcing rhyme, splicing syntax, and barely staggering through” (Stein 161). “A True Hymne” concludes with the quiet simplicity of God’s sufficiency even when artistic expression fails: “th’ heart sayes (sighing to be approved) / *O, could I love!* and stops: God writeth, *Loved*” (19-20). This kind of plain conclusiveness introduced by an external voice is common in *The Temple*; “The Collar” and “Jordan (II),” for instance, both end with the quiet reassurance of a “friend” who calms the poet’s distress. Although “Nothing could seem too rich to clothe the sunne” (“Jordan [II]” 11), poetic craft attempting to achieve such a goal can become “all this long pretence” (16). In this clothing metaphor, “Jordan (II)” reflects the complex, potentially contradictory value of beautiful externals, whether poetic or bodily: mere vanity or desire to show honor might equally motivate one to put on “rich” ornamentation. “Jordan (I)” also broaches the troublingly overdetermined

forms of Petrarchan and pastoral love poems, concluding with a wish that the poet not be “punish[ed] . . . with losse of ryme, / Who plainly say, *My God, My King*” (14-15).

Yet “Jordan (I)” offers a valuable insight about the competing values of plainness and ornamentation in Herbert’s poetry. The poem poses a series of rhetorical questions about over-complicated verse, most of which seem to anticipate an answer of “surely not”: “Is all good structure in a winding stair?” (3); “Must all be vail’d, while he that reades, divines, / Catching the sense at two removes?” (9-10). Crucially, these questions do not reject the “winding stair” of an intricate rhyme scheme (not least because the poem’s interlocking rhymes might well be such a stair). Here, Herbert objects primarily to the idea that intricacy is the sole trademark of skillful verse, whether secular or religious. Not “fictions *onely* and false hair / Become a verse” (emphasis added). The poet’s hesitation over the arcane conventions of Petrarchan poetry has more to do with these forms’ “usurpation of the whole field and very title of poetry” (Tuve 187) than with any intrinsic fault in stylized poetry per se. The problem articulated in “Jordan (I)” shows the significant link between Herbert’s meditations on poetic craft and the substance of the vestiarian controversy. At issue is the misapprehension of outward forms and the danger of considering them ends in themselves, sanctified in themselves, sufficient in themselves. Herbert’s plainness is still a tool of his art. Artfulness may take an unadorned as well as an adorned shape, as we can see in the variety of lyrics in *The Temple*. We need not consider the poems that enact or praise plainness in opposition with those that manifest his technical virtuosity. Indeed, we need not even address these traits as mutually exclusive aspects of Herbert’s art. The stark beauty of “Me thoughts I heard one calling, *Childe*: / And I reply’d, *My Lord*” (“The Collar” 35-36) represents hard-won spiritual insight no less effectively than the formal intricacy of the poem’s preceding complaint.

Artful language and artful clothes are both subject to the scrutiny given to all potentially distracting iconographic forms. But Herbert repeatedly affirms the value of clothing holy thoughts in beautiful language. Even in the acutest anxiety about the limitations of “Louely enchanting language, sugar-cane, / Hony of roses” (“The Forerunners” 19-20), tied through convention to the designs of “fond lover[s]” (21), Herbert demonstrates confidence that, although “True beautie dwells on high,” artistic creation is “a flame / But borrow’d thence to light us thither” (29-30)—a difference of degree but not of kind. Such a view of shaped language is bracing. Like prayer and devotion, Herbert’s verse is the product of earnest exertion, and has been “Brought . . . to Church well drest and clad: / My God must have my best, ev’n all I had” (17-18). The aesthetic principle described in “The Forerunners,” “Beautie and beauteous words should go together” (30), suggests that Herbert views lyric as a tailored, finely embellished form of language. Understood in this light, lyric is language in its Sunday best, given a “broider’d coat” (23) to set off its devotional potential and to honor its subjects. If it falls short in expressing sublimity, Herbert locates the fault in the wit of the poet, not language: “Who cannot dresse it [English] well, want wit, not words” (“The Sonne” 4). The prismatic variety of lyric forms in *The Temple*, balanced with the collection’s characteristic repetition of prosodic structures within poems, constitutes a brilliant defense of poetic language, even if the speaker sometimes rejects it as mere gilding. A rich surface—a complex stanza form, dense polysemy, a shaped poetic hieroglyph—can sharpen rather than distract from the experience of devotion.

More important than human creation, however, is the devotion inherent in repetition, the mimetic activity that aligns human labor with God’s ongoing, renewing acts of creation. A habit itself is a form of devotion: “The Sundaies of mans life, / Thredded together on times string, / Make bracelets to adorn the wife / Of the eternall glorious King” (“Sunday” 29-32). Like the

repeated narrative of discovery in each of Herbert's lyrics, the habitual actions of weekly churchgoing create this accumulating "string" of Sundays: they become tangible and, moreover, a form of art offered to adorn the church. So too with the continual recreation of the world. If "Preservation is a Creation," as Herbert writes in *The Country Parson* (249; ch. 34), the world is a testament to God's continual presence: "The grosser world stands to thy word and art; / But thy diviner world of grace / Thou suddenly dost raise and race, / And ev'ry day a new Creatour art" ("The Temper [II]" 5-8). Herbert's rime riche unifies "art" as both noun and verb, his own work and his creator's, the activity of creation and its results, "to be" conjugated into a physical manifestation of being. God's continual "rais[ing] and rac[ing]" is the perpetual oscillation of destruction and re-forming, a renewal that human habit can mimic and thereby participate in the divine—a fruition as complete as any act of devotion could hope to achieve.

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5. POETRY TO LEAVE BEHIND: MILTON'S PASTORAL ELEGIES

“Being man He felt the pull of death, and being God He must have wondered more than we do what it would be like. He is known to have walked upon water, but He was not born to drown. And when He did die it was sad—such a young man, so full of promise, and His mother wept and His friends could not believe the loss, and the story spread everywhere and the mourning would not be comforted, until He was so sharply lacked and so powerfully remembered that his friends felt Him beside them as they walked along the road, and saw someone cooking fish on the shore and knew it to be Him, and sat down to supper with Him, all wounded as He was” (Robinson 194).

“Reformation—whether of poetry or of religion—is an ongoing, repeated process in history, a series of new beginnings” (Quint 214).

Memory brings the deceased back to life. Elegiac discourse and the processes of mourning that it describes simultaneously lament loss while invoking the presence of the dead. Such an invocation is part of the closure that elegiac consolation attempts to create. To be able to speak once more to the dead, however, entails a confrontation with various impossibilities: the bereaved cannot rewrite the circumstances of death, converse with the dead, or effect consolation purely by assertion (whether through theology or an elegantly crafted elegiac form). Elegy itself is therefore aspirational, a genre most significantly shaped by process and struggle rather than the consolatory ends toward which it aims.

By drawing the dead into the present and exploring the facets of the grieving process, elegy often focuses on the subjectivity of the mourner as much (or more than) the deceased. The centrality of the mourner—and whether that centrality is appropriate—has been a significant question in the critical history of Milton’s two pastoral elegies, *Lycidas* and *Epitaphium Damonis*, as scholars have looked for evidence of the sincerity of Milton’s grief for, respectively, Edward King and Charles Diodati. In the wake of Samuel Johnson’s famous complaint about the artificiality of pastoral mourning in *Lycidas* (“where there is leisure for fiction there is little grief” [Evans 40]), even twenty-first-century criticism of these pastoral elegies continues to

weigh poetic accomplishment—Milton’s adaptation of pastoral conventions and the skill of his prosody—against the authenticity of his grief. Analyses often turn to the self-concern present in both poems, particularly the anticipation of epic labor, which reinforces the notion that the most important subject of the elegies is Milton himself, whether his fictions or his grief.⁷² Rather than demonstrating egotism or crass appropriation of death as a chance for self-promotion, Milton’s poems confront the fact that elegy is a poetic manifestation of one mind invoking and sustaining the dead. The intense focus on the subjectivity of the mourner in Milton’s elegies can accommodate authentic grief, intellectual reflections on loss, and the concerns of a poet looking into his own future; these categories need not mutually exclude one another. To work toward consolation, Milton constructs not just the eternal, celestial fulfillment for Lycidas and Damon in their respective heavens, but a projection of his own as-yet-unfulfilled human labors. Milton’s pastoral elegies grapple with unfulfilled and unfulfillable action—the life and labors of the dead

72 In the early twentieth century, for instance, John Crowe Ransom found no deep feeling, self-focused or otherwise, in *Lycidas*. Echoing Johnson’s sentiments, Ransom describes the poem as an exercise in “technical piety” (67) that occasionally falters into self-expression. Barbara Lewalski finds *Lycidas* intensely emotional, but concludes that it is not authentically sad (“Poetic tradition” 88). Instead, she attributes the poem’s “passionate emotion” to Milton’s discomfort with the similarities between Edward King and himself; the dead friend is an “alter ego,” another young man “just beginning a career as a poet, scholar, and cleric” (86). In complete contrast, Balachandra Rajan has argued that *Lycidas* demonstrates “total authenticity” by “the complete integration of experience, structure, and language,” a thoroughgoing coherence of “large strategy and . . . minor manoeuvres of style” (63).

person, or the interactions two friends cannot share again—and transfer these unfulfillable acts into the mourner’s own labor, an unshaped, open potentiality that can be brought to fruition on earth.

The significant labor toward which Milton’s elegiac personae look is primarily the creation of epic. Both pastoral elegies demonstrate Milton’s engagement with the Virgilian *rota*, the arc of poetic career that entails a youthful poet’s dalliance with pastoral and progression through georgic toward epic poetry. Just as elegy strives to work through grief and achieve consolation, pastoral is an expendable mode in the Virgilian career path; it is a form to be mastered and then discarded for other, loftier ones. We would expect Milton, as an admirer of Virgil, to have attempted the pastoral mode early in his career and also to have envisioned the grander works that might follow.⁷³ But Milton, composing his elegies in the late 1630s, was not miraculously prescient, and both *Lycidas* and *Epitaphium Damonis* reflect more uncertainty than is often recognized about the place of the pastoral role within his larger career. That both poems meditate on his ambition is certain, and the criticism of these poems has thoroughly explored the ways Milton mingles the conventions of classical pastoral with Christian, naturalistic, and epic

73 Maggie Kilgour observes that “the young Milton burst on the scene in 1645 with a volume that seems carefully crafted to present himself as a Virgilian poet,” and she notes that a number of influential studies of Milton have stressed the Virgilian elements of his works. She suggests that these studies sometimes miss or exclude the influence of Ovid on Milton (*Metamorphosis* 20).

overtones in order to suggest his ability to transcend or reinvent the form.⁷⁴ A teleological view of his career, however, renders these experiments too much like elaborate hurdles that the rising

74 Criticism of *Lycidas* in particular has often cast the poem as triumphal: Milton masters pastoral convention, the Christian apotheosis of Lycidas conquers pagan naturalism, and the mingled combination of Christian and classical motifs transcend the consolatory potential of both. Even critics who advance opposing interpretations of the last of these features find *Lycidas* an intellectual victory. For example, G. W. Pigman contends that *Lycidas* ends with “vigor and confidence”; after having used the poem to “questio[n] the efficacy of pastoral, its assumptions and values,” Pigman writes, “Milton transcends it” (124). Thomas Hubbard, too, argues for the poem’s successful hybridity: “It was Milton’s achievement [in *Lycidas*] to combine the developed pastoral tradition of clerical satire with a more complete Christian *kerygma* [preaching] of prophetic revelation” (319). Clay Daniel, in contrast, argues that the poem sets Christianity and classicism in opposition to one another, and works toward a triumphant rejection of paganism in favor of Christianity (110, 120); he claims that the poem “inexorably builds to a Christian response” to the problem of coping with a learned, good man’s death (135). More recently, a handful of critics have worked to complicate the idea that Christianity in the poem ultimately trumps classicism. Colin Burrow argues that both *Lycidas* and *Epitaphium Damonis* “are oppressed with the burden of having an unknown future, and with the contingencies and frailties which circumscribe a poet’s growth. They are not simply triumphal” (57). Bruce Boehrer has likewise acknowledged the temptation to read *Lycidas* as a rejection of classicism, “an opportunity for the Christian muse to have the last word in a song of classical [*sic*] derivation,” but he suggests that it is “more helpful” to

poet clears with a flourish as he demonstrates his fitness to sing on epic themes.⁷⁵ Although Milton was indeed sensitive to fashioning his work within an arc of development that engages with Virgil's progression, I will argue that, in the late 1630s, Milton envisioned progression of genres as accumulative instead of serial. To work toward epic accomplishment, that is, need not entail the abandonment of the pastoral persona or the memorialized dead. Both *Lycidas* and

interpret the relationship between the classical and the Christian in typological terms.

Nevertheless, Boehrer concludes that Christianity offers a fulfillment that classicism lacks: the "pagan amatory aspirations" of *Lycidas* cannot be fulfilled, he argues, but Christian redemption "offers . . . satisfactory fulfillment" of those desires (226-27).

75 In his recent exploration of experimental form in *Lycidas*, James Rutherford finds the English elegy significant because it anticipates "Milton's mature thoughts about human and divine creativity, and of the nature and human consequences of his much-discussed metaphysical monism" as these are expressed in later works (*The Reason of Church Government, Areopagitica*, and *Paradise Lost*) (18-19). Rutherford argues that Milton's creative technique, "inaugurate[d] in *Lycidas*," alters a classical understanding of artistic process, which separates the artist's fore-conceit from the creative act, by combining the two; Milton "breaks down the barrier between planning his poem and building it" (33). Although I am attempting in this chapter to discourage a view of Milton's development that makes early works important because of the way they prefigure later works, Rutherford's discussion offers a valuable view of the ways prosody reflects Milton's interest in developmental processes.

Damon persist in earthly as well as celestial forms, and Milton's forward-looking ambition has a retrospective dimension that has never been fully appreciated.

5.1 Constructing a Future Legacy: *Epitaphium Damonis*

Epitaphium Damonis includes a survey of the British epic over which Milton was brooding, and the poem uses dactylic hexameters (elegiac couplets), the meter of classical epic: it is reasonable in many ways to interpret the farewell to Diodati as a leavetaking gesture to pastoral as well.⁷⁶ The Latin elegy is the final lyric in the *Sylvarum liber* and of the 1645 *Poems*,

76 Elegiac couplets were employed in classical and seventeenth-century poetry for a variety of subjects, although the epic connotations of the form were widely acknowledged and thus it was considered “appropriate for serious topics and ‘passionate meditations’ (on both love and on death)” (Brady 11). The effect of the metrical bounce of alternating hexameters and pentameters is difficult to generalize, however, and Milton himself describes the effect of elegiac meter in surprisingly different ways. In Elegy 6, Milton echoes Ovid (in *Tristia* 3.1.11-12) in calling elegiac verse “limping feet” (8) (Brady 12), and here concurs with Puttenham, who calls the meter “pitious”: “a limping *Pentameter*, after a lusty *Exameter* . . . made [elegiacs] go dolourously more than any other meeter” (I. 24) and with Thomas Nashe, who critiqued the suitability of hexameters to English more colorfully:

The Hexamiter verſe I graunt to be a Gentleman of an auncient houſe (fo is many an englilh begger) yet this Clyme of ours hee cannot thriue in; . . . hee goes twitching and hopping in our language like a man running vpon quagmires . . . Master [Richard] *Stannyhurſt* (though otherwiſe learned) trod a foule lumbring

and in this culminating position critics have seen Milton's anticipation of a higher poetic calling—the pastoral may be impressive, but it is only a prelude.⁷⁷ In addition, the view of pastoral as a starting point for a young poet on his way to accomplishing greater feats was

boystrous wallowing meafure, in his tranflation of *Virgil*. He had neuer been praifd
by *Gabriel* [Harvey] for his labour, if therein hee had not bin so famoufly absurd
(G3r).

Yet in *Apology Against a Pamphlet*, Milton expresses misgivings about the allure of “smooth elegiac poets, whereof the schools are not scarce” (850): meter and licentious subject matter are conflated through their attractiveness, and both, perhaps, are suspect because of their seductive quality. As Nicholas McDowell remarks, “smoothness is not usually a virtue in the Miltonic register” (“Dante” 249).

77 For readings of pastoral primarily as a preparatory genre, see, e.g., Hubbard 317 and Marcus 214. Estelle Haan offers a more integrated view of how the pastoral elegies work as part of the 1645 volume's twinning of English and Latin verse to reflect not tension between the languages but a productive mingling (as reflected also in the mingling of pagan pastoral with the Christian apotheoses of both *Lycidas* and *Damon*). Milton's volume, Haan argues, constitutes his identity as a laureate, national poet who must write in the vernacular, but who develops an idiosyncratic and distinctly Latinate English (63). Analyzing the volume from a New Historicist vantage point, Burrow echoes the interpretation of the 1645 *Poems* as a collection that “trumpet[s] the plans of a rising poet for a British epic . . . but one can also see it as a volume which testifies to the growing difficulty of uniting the nation around a single British theme” in the disunified political atmosphere of the 1630s and 1640s (67-68).

common for early modern theorists and has persisted to some degree among contemporary scholars.⁷⁸ The Renaissance rhetorician Julius Caesar Scaliger articulates in *Poetices libri septem* the Renaissance understanding of pastoral as a low genre: “antiquissimum idem, et

78 Pastoral is still considered a juvenile form by many critics, and the language of abandonment colors discussions of pastoral within Milton’s career. Richard Helgerson in his influential study of laureateship remarks that *Lycidas* and *Epitaphium Damonis* were part of Milton’s laureate self-fashioning because pastoral was “the genre . . . that could be left behind” (269). McDowell likewise notes that the progression from lyric forms to epic is a sign that the poet “has left behind childish things” (“*Lycidas*” 114) and that *Damon* and *Elegy 6* both display “mastery and then renunciation of a neo-Latin lyric genre” (135). Noam Reisner argues that the mastery of pastoral in *Epitaphium Damonis* constitutes Milton’s “negative statement about the extremely limited solemn range of such a voice” (166). Leah Marcus, analyzing the frontispiece illustration of the 1645 *Poems*, argues that “the central figure . . . [the portrait of Milton] seems to gesture toward the distant shepherds as toward an earlier, and now superseded, version of himself He claims a higher art than the pastoral,” and, Marcus concludes, the frontispiece as a whole is a “visualization of the familiar Virgilian *rota*” that signals Milton’s intention to transcend pastoral (218). Stephen Dobranski, emphasizing the collaborative nature of Milton’s volume, offers an alternative view of the frontispiece’s representation of pastoral: the shepherds visible through the window and the four muses that occupy the border of the frontispiece “illustrate the author’s position within a larger group: the muses suggest Milton’s sense of dependence, and the genre of pastoral deals in particular with community and fellowship” (*Authorship* 97).

mollissimum, et simplicissimum, et ineptissimum [‘not only the most ancient, but the mildest, simplest, and most inept’]” (Gutzwiller 185). In the first book of *The Arte of English Poesie*, George Puttenham also criticizes pastoral’s “base and humble stile” of speech, articulated by “the meanest sort of men, as shepherds, heywards and such like” (I. 20; Condee 589). Sir Philip Sidney, charging gallantly to the rescue of the form, reminds the readers of his *Apology for Poetry* that “sometimes, under the pretty tales of wolves and sheep, [pastoral] can include the whole considerations of wrong-doing and patience” (97). But a view of Milton as a laureate poet has more or less persisted, and according to this scheme, Milton “accepted the Renaissance commonplace that pastoral is the lowest of the genres and therefore the appropriate starting point for a young poet” (Lewalski, “Poetic tradition” 79)—and a starting point is meant to be left behind.⁷⁹ Yet if we consider pastoral as the first step on a progression that aims toward something more grand, it only becomes an “immature” form in retrospective relation to epic. Charles Martindale wisely reminds us that epic only becomes an inevitable part of a coherent career path after the fact (442-43), and Kilgour has persuasively discussed the ways in which the Virgilian *rota* is not as neatly linear and progressive as critics have often assumed. She shows how Milton and other Renaissance authors drew on Ovid as well as Virgil for career models that return to their troubled origins rather than launching teleologically toward epic fulfillment and closure (“New spins” 179-82).⁸⁰ For Milton, composing his elegy for Charles Diodati after

79 This view has been rearticulated by Lewalski (“Poetic tradition” 88), Stella Revard (229), and Daniel (151).

80 Kilgour, for example, highlights the troubling elements of the conclusion of the *Aeneid* to illustrate how both Aeneas and Virgil’s careers resist closure (“New spins” 179). She then

returning from his Italian journey, pastoral is a form that offers a range of communicative resources and an opportunity to engage intertextually with predecessors both classical and early modern (including Virgil, Theocritus, Moschus, and Spenser)—pastoral is not a juvenile exercise. As I will discuss below, we can see in *Lycidas* and *Epitaphium Damonis* Milton's developing intention intimately to explore the pastoral mode—the mode of preparation—rather than to abandon it.

The ways Milton dramatizes grief and engages with a range of classical intertexts in *Epitaphium Damonis* suggest that he was meditating on the persistence of pastoral rather than constructing a final farewell to the form. For example, Milton adapts the final line of Virgil's

surveys the broad sweep of Milton's career to suggest that Milton may have been consciously imitating both Virgilian and Ovidian models of development. From one perspective, Milton seems to announce a Virgilian career path with the pastoralism of the *Nativity Ode* at the beginning of the 1645 *Poems* (and with the pastoral elegies that end each section). He then revises his epic into the twelve-book structure of the *Aeneid*, and, at the end of his career, he illustrates with *Paradise Regained* a transcendence of the Virgilian progression toward epic as the culminating genre. From another perspective, though, Milton also follows Ovid's circular model and returns at the end of his life to "his first source of poetry, the elegy," with earlier motifs of sexual desire metamorphosed into an exile's longing for home ("New spins" 182). In the early, "exilic" *Elegy 1*, Milton engages with the Ovidian model of an exiled, "derailed" poet (184), and in the "generically shady" *Paradise Regained* and *Samson Agonistes*, he represents concerns about the protagonists' and his own "messy and open ending[s], full of questions about the past, and the future" (185, 186).

final eclogue (“Go home, well-fed; Hesperus comes, go, my goats” [10.77]) for his elegy, but he transforms Virgil’s conclusive description of fulfilled pastoral labor into his recurring refrain, “Go home unfed, lambs; your master has no time for you now.”⁸¹ The refrain that Milton gives to his pastoral double, Thyrsis, articulates deep grief by denying conclusiveness: the repetition reinforces the incompleteness of the action, a duty of caretaking repeatedly rejected in favor of mourning. Thyrsis cannot care for the sheep at *this* moment, as he is preoccupied by grief (“your master has no time for you *now*”).

Of course, the repeated refusal to attend to the lambs could, on the contrary, sound emphatically final, and critics have traditionally interpreted the refrain as either a sign that Thyrsis/Milton is permanently bidding farewell to pastoral by dismissing the sheep (e.g., Hubbard 337), or a simple rejection of pastoral in the face of devastating personal grief (e.g., Condee 588; Revard 2). In essence, according to these critics, the refrain signals rejection or failure of pastoral because of the poem’s elegaic purpose, and the two are hopelessly at odds. But Milton frames the beginning of Thyrsis’s lament with a reminder that a “mind . . . filled to satisfaction, and anxiety for his abandoned flock” (215) drew Thyrsis home from Italy—both the intellectual preparation and the desire to work are apparently in place. Thyrsis, as Clay Daniel observes, “has traveled to make himself a fit shepherd, that is, to acquire what is necessary to

81 This and all subsequent prose translations of Milton’s Latin, unless otherwise indicated, are drawn from the Oxford edition of Milton’s shorter poems, ed. Lewalski and Haan (trans. Haan); I cite the page numbers of the English translations and line numbers of the Latin verse in this edition. I have also consulted for the sake of comparison the additional translations listed in the Appendix.

feed—teach, guide, inspire—the sheep properly” (139). Duty to the flock is preempted by duty to Damon, who, like Lycidas, needs a memorial poem (he must “not crumble away in a tomb unlamented” [215]).⁸² Rather than rejecting pastoral, the refrain’s repeated shooing-away of the sheep explores a problem of competing priorities. If the process of mourning precludes pastoral duty, and diligent pastoral work would preclude proper mourning (as the refrain suggests, a grieving shepherd has no time to care for the sheep), then both courses of action entail a dereliction of duty, a voluntary choice either not to feed the vulnerable flock or not to honor the deserving friend. Milton’s solution to this time-management dilemma, I suggest, is to enfold personal grief into the poetic labor that shapes his own *rota*. Although Thyrsis repeatedly asserts that he now must grieve rather than serve his flock, the poem itself reflects Milton’s choice to express grief while writing in the pastoral mode, which invites readers to interpret even the articulation of grief as a contribution to the career path of a great poet.⁸³ Following Virgil, Milton incorporates pastoral elegy into the epic poet’s career trajectory. The intellectual preparation to serve the flock, which reflects Milton’s civic and poetic ambitions, can also enrich

82 Pigman argues that “Thyrsis has no qualms about presenting himself as the bad shepherd” (108) like the ones denounced by St. Peter in *Lycidas*. Elizabeth Sauer also finds an echo of *Lycidas* in the refrain’s rejection of the sheep and the image of sheep turning their faces expectantly toward the shepherd; the flocks of both poems are rendered vulnerable by shepherds’ neglect (205).

83 Virgil also composed a pastoral centered on “mourning for a poet-friend,” the lament for Daphnis in Eclogue 5 (Revard 276), and he established a precedent that pastoral elegy could share the gravity, if not the scope, of epic themes (Hanford 419).

the sophisticated intertextuality of Damon's epitaph, the literary act of mourning.⁸⁴ Likewise, the difficulty of working toward consolation becomes a resource—a persistence of a pastoral poetic subjectivity in the face of doubt about an epic that may or may not come to be.

The context Milton establishes for Thyrsis's brief sketch of the planned British epic reveals some telling doubts about the epic that the shepherd will write "if life remains for me" (225). Thyrsis begins with a quasi-Virgilian tag that announces a transition from pastoral to epic, "give way, you woods" (225).⁸⁵ Although apparently looking forward, these remarks and the brief narrative of Britain's Trojan founders are conditioned by two significant elements: the first is Thyrsis's wistful recollection that he had wanted to share his epic plans with Damon, which lends both sadness and doubt to the outlined epic as Thyrsis articulates it within an elegy instead of to a living interlocutor; and the second is the descriptions of doubly failed pastoral pipes, broken and abandoned.

Thyrsis mournfully recounts snatches of conversation that he imagined he would have with Damon before he knew that "the black ash possessed" his friend (223): "these hopes for the future which at that time I readily preserved in my mind I, fickle in my desire, seized upon and

84 The elegy for Diodati reflects Milton's substantial engagement with Virgilian, Ovidian, and other sources. For example, Douglas Bush finds in *Epitaphium Damonis* 70 allusions to the *Eclogues*, 35 allusions to the *Georgics*, and 40 allusions to the *Aeneid* (285).

85 As commentators have long noted, by way of comparison, Gallus in Eclogue 10 turns from pastoral song to epic by saying, "concedite silvae" (l. 63), "farewell" or "give place, forests." In Milton's poem, Thyrsis commands, "vos cedite silvae" (l. 160). For discussion of this allusion, see, e.g., Condee 579 and Revard 229.

imagined as in the present” (223). The phrase “*praesentia finxi*” (l. 146), the hopes that Thyrsis *feigned* were present, introduces the imagined conversation that immediately follows (“Hey, good fellow, what are you up to?” [223]), which includes an exchange of the expertise each has gathered. Thyrsis apostrophizes his friend: “You can run through for me your healing potions, your herbs . . . and all your medical skills” (224-25). A lament on the uselessness of this knowledge—it did not save Damon’s life—precedes the summary of the British epic, the work that would make use of the diligent study that Thyrsis has undertaken and which might elicit the same doubt that he articulates about Damon’s medical skill: what if all the careful work “avail[s] its] master nothing” (225)? Once Thyrsis concludes the outline of the epic and his resolve to be satisfied with fame on exclusively British shores, he speaks to his absent friend once more: “These things I was keeping for you beneath tough laurel-bark; these things and more as well” (227). “*Haec tibi servabam*” (l. 180), the things Thyrsis was saving for a future conversation with Damon that is now permanently forestalled, include the imagined pleasantries, the epic plans, *and* the poet’s self-conscious reflections on the fame that an epic might earn. The introduction to the sketched epic is in the future tense, but its language of intention, “still I shall render the song” (225) (“*tamen et referam*” [l. 160]), is framed as an action that cannot unfold the way Thyrsis envisioned. Damon’s death has prevented not only the recitation but the following intellectual interplay that might have then influenced the nascent epic.⁸⁶ Like the cups

86 The content of what Thyrsis will proclaim is the summary of Britain’s founding, which occurs in the following verse paragraph. Braden’s translation of this phrase, “but still I will recite” (239), helpfully reminds readers of the performative, dramatic aspect of some pastoral verse. In both classical and Renaissance pastoral, a shepherd sometimes recites or performs a

of Manso, the conversation and the epic plans are preserved in the bark of a laurel—the tree suggestive of poetry—as artifacts Thyrsis meant to share with Damon. Even the outline of the epic that Thyrsis boldly offers in spite of loss is thus tinged with sadness, a point perhaps reinforced by the fact that the “graves . . . sonos” (l. 159) that break the pastoral pipes—usually taken to refer to the serious sounds of epic song, as I will discuss below—might also be the somber or heavy sounds of the mournful elegy.⁸⁷ Deprived of Damon as audience and conversational companion, Thyrsis preserves in the verse of his elegy the hypothetical remnants of future plans and Italian remembrances that he intended to present first to his friend. Although

song composed by another figure. In Giovanni Pontano’s *Acon* (1505), for example, a young shepherd sings a song written by his absent mentor Meliseus; Meliseus composed the song as a lament for his own absence in the voice of his wife (Hubbard 249-50). Thyrsis’s announcement that he will recite the beginning of the British epic indicates forward-looking resolve and, with the Virgilian echo that immediately follows (“vos cedite silvae” [l. 160]), Milton reminds his readers that the voice of Thyrsis is also the voice of poetic precedent and the voice of the English poet turning tradition to new purposes.

87 In addition to suggesting the seriousness of epic, the Latin adjective “grave,” applied to sound, can also signify “heavy,” “dolorous,” or “ominous,” as in Ovid’s *Ibis*, in which the birth of the invective’s subject is heralded by an owl hooting gloomily: “an owl’s / mournful hoot greeted his first moments / with terrible portent [‘Sedit in adverso nocturnus culmine bubo, / Funeroque graves edidit ore sonos’]” (225-27, emphasis added). We can assume that Milton was familiar with this sense; he alludes to *Ibis* in his epitaph *On the Death of the Bishop of Ely* (l. 18).

the elegy often includes apostrophe to Damon, the readers of the elegy are not the audience with whom Thyrsis originally hoped to share his poetic ambitions.

The second, and most significant, way in which Milton expresses misgiving about his epic intentions is in the curiously unexplained double failure of the pastoral pipes—a breaking and then a contemplated abandonment. The prelude to Thyrsis’s epic summary recounts that “my pipe was sounding some lofty tune”—this passage is typically taken as a reference to the attempt to begin an epic—and “that I had applied my lips to new pipes, but they burst asunder, their fastenings broken, and were unable to bear the deep tones any longer” (225).⁸⁸ The pipes, linked so closely to pastoral, have broken under the strain of “graves . . . sonos” (l. 159), yet

88 Milton uses two words to refer to the pastoral instrument, *fistula* (pipe) and *cicuta* (reed). In *Epitaphium Damonis*, the former is used twice and is singular in both cases (ll. 156; 169); the latter is used twice, once in singular (l. 135) and once in plural (l. 157). Translators almost always render both words as “pipe” or “pipes,” and do not consistently reproduce the singular/plural of the Latin word in the English translation. Consequently, the potential distinctions Milton draws by using two different Latin words (the whole instrument and constituent parts? different instruments?) disappear in most English translations of the elegy. Only Braden’s translation of *cicuta* in l. 135 offers an English word that expresses the instrument’s construction: several pipes are bound together into one instrument, the “panpipe” (238). I do not mean to suggest that the other translators are careless in their rendering of the Latin; the word “pipes,” like “scissors” and “pants,” refers to a singular yet plural thing. For a comparison of translations of Milton’s uses of *fistula* and *cicuta*, see the Appendix.

Thyrsis plunges ahead: “still I shall render the song” of the British epic (225).⁸⁹ Thyrsis has either repaired his pipes (the “fastenings” that joined the instrument together had burst [225], which could suggest that the instrument was not entirely ruined, just broken apart), or pastoral pipes are fungible and he has acquired a replacement, or perhaps he is now singing *a capella*, skillfully persisting in pastoral style even without the aid of the mode’s representative instrument. This curious detail—broken pipes do not signify the absolute end of pastoral song—seems to present pastoral as a proving ground for epic that allows for trial and error—and, crucially, broken pipes are not necessarily a sign that the poetic mode they symbolize is no longer useful. The summary of epic and the rest of the elegy unfold afterward, still couched in the pastoral mode.

89 Reisner notes that the motif of broken pipes symbolizes the “breaking of poetic inspiration” for Spenser’s Colin Clout in the January eclogue of the *Shepherd’s Calendar* and *Faerie Queene* 6.10.18 (166). Other critics have offered readings of the broken/abandoned pipes as signifying forward-looking plans rather than pastoral failure: Haan argues that the breaking of the pipes only apparently signals the abandonment of Latin in favor of English verse, but in fact sets the stage for the unique “experimental vernacular” of Milton’s epic (64). Thomas Hubbard, noting the ambiguity of the paired possibilities of the pipes being either hung up *or* transformed, contrasts Milton’s image with the more decisive abandonments of “Nemesianus’ Pan, Sannazaro’s Sincero, and Spenser’s Colin,” for whom this gesture is an “invitation to successor poets to try their skills.” Hubbard suggests that hanging up the pipes signifies Milton’s intention to explore new poetic ground in the future, not to resign pastoral labor (338).

Even more curious is the hypothetical abandonment of the pipes. After Thyrsis describes the planned account of Arthur's conception, he imagines hanging up the pipes "far away upon an age-old pine tree, very much forgotten by me, or else transformed by native muses . . . [to] rasp out a British theme" (225). This equivocation—will the pipes be left behind or metamorphosed into an epic instrument and taken up again?—expresses on a minute scale the sweeping question of poetic career and whether one genre can be adapted into another or whether genres must be taken up and put down sequentially, like so many orchestral instruments managed by one ambitious musician. Milton's use of the two different Latin words for the pipe reveals a distinction that may suggest that he saw epic potential latent within pastoral: the pipe (*fistula*) Thyrsis played did "soun[d] some lofty tune" (225), however briefly. But when he placed his lips to the new reeds (*cicutis*) of that pipe, the structure that held together the pieces of the instrument broke ("Et tum forte novis admôram labra cicutis, / Dissiluere tamen rupta compage" [ll. 157-58]). The reeds—the structural elements of the instrument or the poetic mode—might have failed, but the whole instrument itself was capable of something grand before that failure and might in time play another lofty tune. If a replaced or reconstructed *fistula* can sing the epic notes so serious that they may have broken the instrument in the first place—and perhaps also sound the theme of not-yet-readiness that resonates in so many of Milton's works—it certainly participates in the dramatized self-consciousness of laureate poetic identity that characterizes Milton's epic as well as lyric voices.

The pipes—broken, repaired or replaced, possibly to be abandoned in a hypothetical future, possibly capable of transformation—are an essential part of Milton's meditation on the close interconnection of pastoral and anticipated epic. If pastoral is a preparatory genre, it is also an enabling one; pastoral elegy makes it possible for Thyrsis/Milton to mourn what did not

happen, the would-be conversations with Damon/Diodati, but also rhetorically to generate the occasion to stage that conversation anyway. The sketch of the British epic, then, is a synthesized recollection that mingles the content of an imaginary conversation with the content of an epic plan that the poet might yet be able to realize. It looks forward and backward, collapsing time in a fashion not unlike that of the *Nativity Ode* that opens the 1645 and 1673 *Poems*.⁹⁰

90 “On the Morning of Christ’s Nativity” focuses on the specific moment named in the title, but, as Dobranski points out, the poem collapses significant past, present, and future events with the morning of the Nativity. These events include creation, the “age of gold” (l. 135), the Crucifixion, the apocalypse, Moses’s receiving of the Ten Commandments, and the poem’s year of composition (which locates the ode within Milton’s career and “underscores the author’s precocity”) (*Introduction* 143). David Quint describes the importance of temporality in the *Nativity Ode* vis-a-vis Milton’s own hopes and fears: the youthful poet “expects from the newborn Christ a reign of truth that will replace and banish earlier pagan error once and for all” (195). The poet’s wish that his own “Heav’nly Muse” might hurry ahead of or displace the Magi (“O run, prevent them with thy humble ode” [15; 24]) reflects a “desire to be exempted from history—and hence from death” (Quint 210). This ambitious prospect, a poetic escape from mortality and history that is structured around the power of the Christ child retroactively to purify and redeem history, may have resonated again for Milton as he grieved for a lost friendship and attempted to retrieve elements of it through his elegy. The *Nativity Ode* reflects on Christ’s simultaneous historicity (Christ is still a child lying in a manger) and timelessness (he is the agent of universal salvific power that spans all of history), but Thyrsis is a figure fixed firmly within a moment in time, looking backward at

The retrospective aspect of Milton's elegy is significant not just to his recollections of Damon/Diodati, but also to the persistent place of pastoral in the career of a poet who intends to take up graver forms. The *consolatio* of the elegy envisions the persistence of Damon in many places; the character inhabits the celestial realm where the eternally resurrected phoenix and neo-Platonic Love dwell (227), participates in the frenzy of the Christian bacchanalian (229), dwells familiarly as "our Damon" in the literary woods of pastoral and as Diodati, "God-given," in heaven (229), and is also invoked by Thyrsis to remain tenderly present on earth: "be propitious and at my side" (229). Translations of this last line sometimes miss an important echo: Thyrsis invites Damon to remain at his *right* side ("Dexter ades" [l. 208]), a sign of proximity and intimacy that also fulfills the wish for companionship at the moment of Damon's death that Thyrsis articulated earlier in the poem: "Ah, . . . if I could have been permitted to touch your right hand for the last time ["Ah certe extremum licuisset tangere dextram" (l. 121)] and gently close your eyes as you peacefully died, and could have said 'farewell: remember me as you journey to the stars'" (221). Thyrsis wishes himself back to Damon's side at the time of death, and part of the fulfillment he imagines at the elegy's conclusion is that Damon can now come to him to restore that proximity. Damon persists—and at the end of the elegy, Thyrsis too, in small measure, inhabits multiple literary realms. The Bacchic orgy is held under the "thyrsus of Zion" (229); the ceremonial staff evokes the name of the character Thyrsis, and Thyrsis's name is the first word of the argument and the last word of the elegy (Hubbard 340). The elegiac speaker

imaginary conversations missed and, tentatively, forward to new beginnings. To begin yet once more is, "Like the birth of Christ, . . . a pledge of greater things to come: a poetic career" (Quint 216).

inhabits both frame and narrative; he imagines consolatory reunion with Diodati and, through the echo of the name *Thyrsis*, obliquely joins the celestial revels. The elegy ends with a measure of comfort through these shadowy restorations of proximity, although the labor of grief is still surely unfinished and further authorial labors, in polemical prose and laureate verse, remain for Milton to do after he doffs the guise of Thyrsis. The elegiac pastoral mantle remains in the Miltonic wardrobe, so to speak, not left behind with the sheep on a hill. As I will discuss below with respect to *Lycidas*, the mantle blue is still on the swain even as he departs for pastures new.

Persistence—of life, memory, fame, and poetic genre—is thematically central to *Epitaphium Damonis* and a significant preoccupation of Milton’s self-conscious career-fashioning. In *The Reason of Church Government* (1642), Milton meditates not only on what he still feels is his youthful unreadiness for epic composition but also on the temporally curious and deeply important motive for artistic creation: a future legacy. He expresses the desire to “leave something so written to aftertimes, as they should not willingly let it die” (840). The persistence of his own monumental work lies in the discernment of future generations of readers, who, like the mournful elegist, will be able to sustain the traces of an extinguished mortal life. Those traces encompass the whole sweep of poetic (and prose, and political) accomplishment. Milton’s concern with pastoral is not whether he should leave it behind him, but holistically, *inclusively*, what he will leave to persist in “aftertimes.” If the poet does his job well, the ongoing judgment of generations will continue to renew the worthy works left behind.

5.2 Enabling Earthly Labor in *Lycidas*

Like *Epitaphium Damonis*, *Lycidas* has inspired a great deal of commentary on the ways it looks beyond its own generic horizons by mingling literary traditions and alluding to the

reception of epic labors to come. The poem's denunciation of reprobate pastors encourages readers to see the work's significance not in what it is but what it looked toward: a just future reckoning of the actions of pastors and poets that the poem's re-publication in 1645 and 1673 with the headnote confidently confirms.⁹¹ The ecclesiastical ills described in the poem were answered on earth (Bishops were superseded by Presbyters), vindicating the poet-prophet and implying that the more distant, eternal comeuppance suggested by "that two-handed engine at the door" (l. 130) will also come to pass. Remarking on the indignation of the phrase "nothing said" (129)—St. Peter's expression of outrage that clerical offenses are allowed to continue—Ellen Lambert observes that *Lycidas* points to the eschatological promise that, ultimately, "it shall be answered" (170). Milton crafts his poem and headnote to participate prophetically in such anticipated justice, and his conviction in it is a potent force for enabling work in the present (the composition of the poem). Likewise, an affirmation of emotional consolation can motivate the continued labor that will work toward that goal. On the level of individual mourning, the hope for a distant but promised moment of resolution offers a kind of prevenient closure, a provisional assurance of fruition that enables the continuation of earthly poetic labor.⁹²

91 The headnote, which appears in the 1645 and 1673 *Poems*, also occurs in the Trinity MS, although it was added there after the poem's composition and it does not mention the corrupted clergy. The headnote's presence in the Trinity MS suggests that its inclusion was requested by Milton himself, not the printer or the bookseller (Dobranski, *Authorship* 212).

92 The enabling power of anticipation I describe here is analogous to the theological concept of prevenient grace, which describes divine grace that precedes and facilitates human action. In his commentary on John 16:21, John Calvin describes present, earthly happiness as a "taste"

In *Lycidas*, Milton expresses confidence in both divine judgment (“that two-handed engine at the door, / Stands ready to smite once, and smite no more” [130-31]) and in his own poetic potential: the ottava rima that retroactively creates a “closing frame” (Revard 276) for the poem, for example, is suggestive of labor beyond pastoral and employs the stanza used for Italian epic romances.⁹³ A teleological view of Milton’s career, however, obscures the insecurity

(*gustus*) of God’s goodness,” which offers “a participation in the blessed life to come, and thus we experience the first fruits, ‘a few drops,’ of that eternal gladness which is laid up for us in Heaven. This foretaste should both satisfy us and at the same time lead us to aspire after the real fullness of such experience” (Wallace 317). Those “few drops” enable earthly piety. For Milton, as a poet and a man in mourning, the future can productively shape the present through such a “foretaste.” The belief that he *will* be consoled (although he may not be so in the present) and that he *will* compose the estimable works he wishes to compose (although he does not know exactly what those “pastures new” [193] will look like) position him to continue moving toward those objectives.

93 Lambert describes the coda as a formal signal of decisive consolation that resolves the poem’s preceding incertitude. The poem holds in reserve “those assurances of order traditionally conferred by the frame: the poise, the detachment, the knowledge that our sorrows have a place in nature’s world of death and regeneration,” and with the coda, Lambert argues, the poem achieves such detached confidence (156). Rutherford likewise contrasts the “initial [metrical] chaos of *Lycidas*’s opening, and the security of iambic pentameter and ottava rima at its close” (23). As I have suggested, critics may have overestimated the degree of confidence implied in *Lycidas*.

in *Lycidas*. Although *Lycidas*, like *Epitaphium Damonis*, intimates a great future work, a pastoral poem that engages with the Virgilian *rota* is not necessarily self-assured: *Lycidas* articulates a hope, not a guarantee.⁹⁴ With the addition of the headnote in 1645, past prescience becomes an argument and evidence rolled into one that Milton anticipated the abuses of self-serving Anglican clergymen and their fate. The headnote's language emphasizes the foresight of the poem that "foretells the ruin of our corrupted clergy, then in their height": the term "ruin" communicates at once the destructive influence exerted by the corrupt bishops when they were "then in their height" (in the distant past) *and* their subsequent downfall and ruined state (in the more recent past) ("Ruin"). This perspective has the assurance of backward-looking confirmation: the headnote shows a poet pointing to a poem he composed years before but which is significant specifically because of its prophetic accuracy. But this is a retrospective construction of authority. In the poem's unfolding drama of grief, speculation rather than

94 Milton's announcement of large-scale arcs for his compositions was not limited to the works that fit the Virgilian *rota*. Dobranski notes: "In *Defensio Secunda* [1654], Milton [retrospectively] suggests that he planned his achievements: he explains that he wanted to write about the three types of liberty—ecclesiastical, civil, and domestic—and he neatly divides this last category into marriage, education, and freedom of expression, claiming that he intended to address each one" (*Authorship* 7). Thus, Milton adumbrates great accomplishments in early works such as the pastoral elegies, and he also retrospectively proclaims that his oeuvre reflects a purposeful plan: the *affirmation* of deliberateness, regardless of the actual circumstances of composition, is essential to Milton's self-presentation.

certainty is the dominant mood: the speaker faces the possibilities of action (“the fair guerdon . . . we hope to find” [73] as reward for diligent, self-denying labor), worries about the fruitlessness of action (“Alas! What boots it with uncessant care / To tend the homely slighted shepherd’s trade, / And strictly meditate the thankless muse?” [64-66]), and reflects on the consequences of bad actions (the poem’s most famous crux, “that two-handed engine at the door, / [That] Stands ready to smite once, and smite no more” [130-31], looms as the punishment for the self-serving “Blind mouths” [119] of depraved clergymen). The reassurances for Lycidas, exalted “In the blest kingdoms meek of joy and love” (177) and transformed into the “genius of the shore” (183) leave open the question of what parallel reassurance might be possible for the swain.⁹⁵

The poem’s generic status is ambiguous as well. In the added headnote, Milton labels *Lycidas* a monody, an ode for one voice. Yet the poem’s concluding coda introduces a narrative voice that is distinct from the swain’s, and the unfolding poem includes speeches from Phoebus and St. Peter: the poem certainly has more than one voice. Both Scaliger and Puttenham also define a monody as a funeral song (Revard 165), a composition that is tied to the specificity of a

95 If we take the poem’s speaker as a figure whose professions of grief are sincere, the parallels between Lycidas (as an exalted, beneficent version of his earthly self) and the swain become primarily an exploration of consolation and self-conscious questioning. A more skeptical view of the swain—he is a crafted persona, as all pastoral “shepherds” are, and the anxieties about untimely poetic composition are merely modesty *topoi* meant to contrast the elegy’s skillful, allusive, learned accomplishment—would mean that the expressions of grief are more calculated, but perhaps no less sincere as a vehicle for Milton to articulate poetic self-concern.

ritualized social event (a funeral). Yet Milton meditates on the futility of a funeral song that lacks a physical focus (a body and a “laureate hearse” [151] to deck with flowers) even as the poem itself conjures up images of Lycidas’s body “float[ing] upon his wat’ry bier” (12) to invoke the body’s presence within the poem. Instead of a funeral, the poem’s social occasion(s) are the publication in *Justa Edouardo King naufrago* (1638) and then again in the 1645 and 1673 *Poems*; these contexts make the death of Edward King a public subject (Kay 225) and position the pastoral elegy as a form that can articulate in tandem private self-reflection and grief, a consideration of national politics, and polemical critique.⁹⁶ The label “monody” is not so much a

96 In the early seventeenth century, poets began to use the discourse of private grief in undertaking broader social or religious critique; from 1613 onward, Dennis Kay argues, the elegy was “a canonically laureate form” (203) and therefore at least potentially a tool of nationalist political critique and moralizing. Andrea Brady concurs: “The view represented by Isaiah 57:1 that ‘mercifull men are taken away, and no man understandeth that the righteous is taken away from the evil to come’ often provokes sermonists and elegists to use the occasion of a death to condemn the degeneracy of the age” (13). Milton himself may have participated in the use of elegy for veiled critique: some aspects of *Lycidas* seem to respond to the repressive violence undertaken against three Puritan pamphleteers, who were publicly tortured and then exiled in 1637, when Milton was composing his elegy. “[A]bhorred shears” and “trembling ears” may refer to the Puritans’ mutilation (their right ears were cut off) (Sauer 203), and the vision of fearsome oceans in *Lycidas* may evoke their exile to “remote islands reached by dangerous sea voyages” (Hubbard 317). Elegy could also serve the less grand purposes of personal insult: Brady offers the example of an “anticipatory

misnomer as it is an invitation to acknowledge the plural voices and plural purposes that a single literary form can express.

Many critics have sought the key to *Lycidas*'s complex form and multiple contexts by exploring the elegy's relationship to Milton's other works, especially *Paradise Lost*. Unfortunately, such readings may unintentionally devalue *Lycidas* and the pastoral mode by using either Milton's epic or epic conventions generally as a frame of reference. Addressing the passage of *Lycidas* that worries about the amorous "tangles of Neaera's hair" (69) distracting from poetic labor, for example, John Kevin Newman speculates that the "Miltonic reluctance to abandon the pastoral mode" arose because pastoral poetic labor stood favorably in opposition to idle, erotic dalliance (384).⁹⁷ Newman's observation is conditioned by a backward-looking perspective of *Lycidas* that uses *Paradise Lost* as the primary point of comparison. Lawrence Lipking treats *Lycidas* as a proto-epic in its own right, describing the poem's greatness through its likeness to epic; he interprets *Lycidas* as a figure of powerful imperialistic convictions and argues that the elegy is an expression of commitment to "the call of leadership and faith": "King's mission to convert the Irish must enlist fresh recruits. Milton both justifies God's ways

elegy" attributed to Nicholas Oldisworth, which "advises Ben Jonson to hurry up and 'Die Johnson: crosse not our Religion so, / As to bee thought immortall. Lett us know / Thou art a Man'" (131).

97 Newman notes more positively that "The pastoral eventually inspires much of the imagery associated with Milton's Eve" (393), although this remark locates true accomplishment within epic: pastoral comes to fruition because it furnishes an effective mode of description for Eve.

to men and steps out of innocence into a world that waits to be conquered, with the help of his genius” (212). The looming presence of Milton’s epic, and Milton’s ego, is clear in these readings of *Lycidas*.

Yet *Lycidas* is significantly informed by earthly concerns and fears of inadequacy. Death disrupts the present moment and in consequence the planned future for both men. In the poem’s opening apostrophe, the swain takes stock of the pressing certainty of death and what the future might not hold after the tragedy. Futures that are no longer possible haunt the poem’s opening sentences:

Yet once more, O ye laurels, and once more
 Ye myrtles brown, with ivy never sere,
 I come to pluck your berries harsh and crude,
 And with forced fingers rude,
 Shatter your leaves before the mellowing year.
 Bitter constraint, and sad occasion dear,
 Compels me to disturb your season due:
 For Lycidas is dead, dead ere his prime . . . (1-8)

The “mellowing year” has not yet ripened the berries, and after the intrusion of the “forced fingers,” of course, no ripening is possible. Like Shakespeare’s *Adonis*, the poetic plants are plucked for use before they mature—and readers are left to wonder but never to know what the fully “mellowed” form might have been. “Shattered” leaves, whether scattered or shattered as if made brittle with ice (both senses were available to Milton [“Shatter”]), are starkly opposed to leaves allowed to flourish on their branches. The elegiac speaker is also claiming to act out of his own “season due”: the adjective “forced” suggests that the action is conditioned by the duress

of the present's "Bitter constraint, and sad occasion dear."⁹⁸ The previous poetic experimentations implied by the current poem's status (as activity undertaken "Yet once more . . . and once more") were too early, as is the present elegy. The damage caused to the berries and leaves reflects concerns about the repetition of over-hasty poetic labor: the speaker has come to try his skill "yet once more," but will this be the last iteration, if premature attempts ruin the laurel, myrtle, and ivy, three plants that clearly symbolize poetic accomplishment? Finally, Lycidas himself has died "ere his prime," a pronouncement that could mean that Lycidas drowned before he could accomplish the fullest flowering of his pastoral career, but could also mean that he died before the springtime of his life ("Prime")—before he had even properly begun his career at all. Critics have observed the meaningful parallels of prospective vocation between Milton and King, and so the suggestion of Lycidas's future cut short may reflect

98 Lauren Shohet argues that the "forced fingers," like the muses, are simultaneously agents of creation and instrumental mechanisms controlled by the poet's subjectivity; "here, poetry is produced by the hybrid entity 'berry-plucking-fingers'" (104). The "sad occasion dear" that constrains the poem could have brought to Milton's mind various significant deaths that occurred between 1637 and 1639, as John Rumrich points out. These deaths included Milton's mother, Ben Jonson, the Dowager-Countess of Darby (who had been a patron of Milton; she was the stepmother of John Egerton, the Earl of Bridgewater, for whom Milton composed *A Mask*), Joseph Mead (one of the most influential tutors at Milton's college), and Milton's nephew, the eldest son of his brother Christopher. In addition to these, Milton faced the deaths of the two men for whom he composed his pastoral elegies, Edward King and Charles Diodati (128).

Milton's anxieties for his own aspirations.⁹⁹ Even as his choice to compose a pastoral elegy for King situates the work within the context of a Virgilian career, the poem's opening motifs of untimeliness and precluded maturity attest to deep misgiving. If pastoral is the mode on which a young poet should begin to try his skill, it is telling that *Lycidas* opens with such anxiety: the poet fears he is not even ready for the first stage of the *rota*, and the act of beginning the poem is pervaded by instances of development that are cut abruptly short.

Most obviously, the speaker has difficulty getting his elegy started. He disturbs the poetic plants in the first verse paragraph, but must still invoke the muses twice more, echoing laments by Virgil and Theocritus: "Begin then, sisters of the sacred well, / . . . / Begin" (15-17). The repeated false starts invite readers to consider what circumstances finally allow the speaker to begin to elegize Lycidas. Only the urgency of the occasion moves the speaker. Lycidas is drowned, and "He must not float upon his wat'ry bier / Unwept, and welter to the parching wind, / Without the meed of some melodious tear" (12-14). These enabling circumstances are also tied to the poet's ambition: the disposition of a future poet, "some gentle muse" (19), toward the speaker after he is dead, and the poem's first explicitly pastoral vision, the memory of the speaker and Lycidas as young companion shepherds. Struggling to find a way to memorialize his

99 See, e.g., Tillyard 60; Evans 41; and Lewalski, "Poetic tradition" 86. In *The Reason of Church Government*, Milton discusses his erstwhile intention to join the church—the career path that Edward King had also planned to take—but which Milton voluntarily cut short: "I thought it better to prefer a blameless silence before the sacred office of speaking bought and begun with servitude and forswearing" (844).

friend, the speaker uses a vision of his own distant legacy to motivate his artistic creation in the present:

Hence with denial vain, and coy excuse;
 So may some gentle muse
 With lucky words favor my destined urn,
 And as he passes turn,
 And bid fair peace be to my sable shroud. (18-22)

The speaker envisions his own reputation persisting in a future moment, meritorious enough to cause a fellow artist to pause while he is going elsewhere (he turns as he passes) and to wish that the speaker's spirit be at peace. The swain's command to himself, "Hence with denial vain, and coy excuse," is not sufficient motivation. Only with the additional, modest incentive of earning the good will of a future generation can he act. The swain's motivation might spring from the prospect of causing the gentle muse's admiration (hence with coy excuse *so that* the gentle muse will look back favorably) or, more tentatively, the hope that good opinion will follow once the swain finally composes the elegy (hence with coy excuse—and, with the elegy thus composed, a future audience can read it and esteem its author). The speaker looks into the future and imagines a fellow artist looking back into the past: the present elegy—and what it can say about the speaker's worthiness to future generations—becomes the focal point of these temporally opposed viewpoints.

This motivation is self-focused, but the pastoral mode introduces a more companionable, social motivation as well. The couplet that bridges the meta-commentary on beginning an elegy and the elegy proper emphasizes pastoral mutuality: "For we were nursed upon the self-same hill, / Fed the same flock, by fountain, shade, and rill" (23-25). This idyllic vision, allusive of

the Cambridge college attended by Milton and King, describes perfectly balanced pastoral labor—and perhaps an idealized education—through the paired receiving and giving of nourishment, the two shepherds being nursed and then in turn feeding the flock themselves.¹⁰⁰ The meditation on the poet’s future reputation, the echoes of pastoral laments, the vision of youthful activity, the performance of pastoral music (“Meanwhile the rural ditties were not mute” [32])—together, all of these details evoke the ambition of a poet who is aware of the Virgilian career and the place his elegy might occupy in that scheme. *Lycidas* opens as an attempt to do honor to its subject *in the pastoral mode*—and prospectively to use that mode to demonstrate poetic credentials as well, to show what pastoral is capable of in this poet-mourner’s hands. Particularly in light of the imagined respect given by the future “gentle muse,” there is no reason to suspect that Milton meant to denigrate pastoral. The esteem of the future audience is clearly related to the pastoral elegy—the chiasmic opening of the poem is deeply moving, but entails only the slightest glance at epic, if it is a glance at all, in its praise of Lycidas as an accomplished writer of “lofty” verse: “For Lycidas is dead, dead ere his prime, / Young Lycidas, and hath not left his peer: / Who would not sing for Lycidas? He knew / Himself to sing, and

100 Brady notes the elegy’s pervasive maternal imagery, including Cambridge as alma mater and the pastoral landscape that “nursed” both the speaker and Lycidas, as well as the relevance of the death of Milton’s own mother in April of 1637. This reading reflects the temptation to see Milton’s elegy as looking beyond pastoral toward epic: the maternal imagery may underscore the poet’s youth and grief and, Brady suggests, contribute to Milton’s self-definition as “a liminal writer, emerging from infancy to the maturity of his epic ambitions” (21).

build the lofty rhyme” (8-11). The respect of future generations does not require a composition of epic scope and subject: that esteem rests on a worthy pastoral elegy for a worthy man, and the tribute paid is not universal acclaim but a token of evidently sincere good will, the wish of “fair peace” (22) for the author’s spirit.

Facing arbitrary fate, his own mortality, and the uncertainty of works he might not be able to write, Milton’s speaker laments his lack of control in an adapted sonnet, one of the most controlled verse forms in the English poetic tradition, and, like pastoral, also a potentially “low” form (a prosodic plaything, not the vehicle of serious literary purpose).¹⁰¹ The elegist has reservations about whether writing pastoral is worthwhile, but again, his focus is not about the putatively humble status of the genre, but instead whether misfortune will cut his life short before he has a chance to turn his poetic abilities to account. Milton’s speaker worries about the time he has already spent and the whims of the “blind Fury with th’ abhorred shears” (75) who might prevent more mature labors, pastoral or otherwise:

101 Some critics have suggested that elements of the sonnet form are present in various passages of *Lycidas*: Keith Rinehart and Louis Martz call the first fourteen lines of the poem a “broken sonnet” and an “eroded sonnet,” respectively (103; 64). Raymond MacKenzie finds some features of the sonnet present in the fourteen lines that begin, “Where were ye nymphs . . . [?]” (l. 50) (540), a passage that Rutherford identifies as a more perfected version of the opening lines’ brokenness (26-27). No critic has yet addressed the sonnet-like features of the fourteen-line passage I discuss below; Rutherford attributes a different pattern to these lines (he groups them into a 21-line paragraph that corresponds with another 21-line paragraph at the end of the poem, immediately preceding the coda) (24).

Alas! What boots it with uncessant care d
 To tend the homely slighted shepherd's trade, e
 And strictly meditate the thankless muse? f
 Were it not better done as other use, f
 To sport with Amaryllis in the shade, e
 Or with the tangles of Neaera's hair? d
 Fame is the spur that the clear spirit doth raise a
 (That last infirmity of noble mind) b
 To scorn delights, and live laborious days; a
 But the fair guerdon when we hope to find, b
 And think to burst out into sudden blaze, a
 Comes the blind Fury with th' abhorred shears, c
 And slits the thin-spun life. "But not the praise," a
 Phoebus replied, and touched my trembling ears. c (64-77)

The opposed poetic duties and alluring snares of hair are described in a sestet that refuses to tangle its three mirrored rhymes (*deffed*), an instance of formal control even if it can only articulate the problem of priorities that the pastoral poet faces. The reversal of the passage's sestet preceding its octave (*abab acac*) also registers the pressure to engage innovatively with a prior tradition, whether classical or vernacular, and suggests Milton's awareness of the varied routes a poet might take in pursuit of fame.¹⁰² Both Michael Drayton and "our sage and serious

102 The upside-down "sonnet" here begins a verse paragraph and coheres on metrical grounds (the lines all employ iambic pentameter) and on the rhyming pattern described

poet Spenser” (*Areopagitica* 939) announced epic ambitions and enfolded sonnets into their respective corpora of laureate works. Milton demonstrates elsewhere (e.g., in the caudate sonnet “On the New Forcers of Conscience”) his desire to incorporate his experimentation with the sonnet form into his work as a mature poet engaged with national politics.¹⁰³ The quasi-sonnet in *Lycidas*, with its meditation on the uncertain outcomes even of diligent, “laborious days,” is answered once again by what I described above as prevenient closure—an assertion of the just judgment of an audience who sees the work’s place within a larger framework, the “perfect witness of all-judging Jove” (82). Jove is the definitive audience, according to Phoebus, and the rhyme of “Jove,” deferred nearly 100 lines, links the pagan god with the Christian God who

above. The remaining seven lines of the verse paragraph, ll. 78-84, are mostly iambic pentameter (with the exception of one trimeter line, “Nor in the glistering foil” [79]), but also seem to cohere: three couplets complete the verse paragraph and end Phoebus’s speech (*aa bb x cc*), and the one apparently unrhymed line (“And perfect witness of all-judging Jove” [82]), as I note below, has a significant although much-delayed rhyme.

103 Dobranski identifies another significant allusion to sonnet form in a sestet (*cde cde*) embedded within Milton’s descriptions of Adam and Eve’s hair (*Paradise Lost* 4.306-11). By employing only the second half of the sonnet form, Dobranski argues, the poet shows that he “has no need for the sonnet’s octave, which typically poses a problem, or for the *volta*, which signifies a sudden change in tone or thought” (“Clustering” 346). The untangled rhymes of an isolated sestet suggest resolution without a preceding problem, a pure and unfallen “origin of all future lovers and all future love poetry” (346).

oversees the “blest kingdoms meek of joy and love” (177). The prospect of heavenly fame further develops the poem’s weighing of doubt with action-enabling faith in future fruition.

Both Phoebus’s response to the anxious poet (“That strain . . . of a higher mood” [87]) and the following “dread voice” (132) of St. Peter disrupt the modest pastoral register—indeed, they chase it off like the sheep shooed away in the refrain of *Epitaphium Damonis*. The poet resumes his song after both instances: “But now my oat proceeds” (88); “Return Alpheus, the dread voice is past / That shrunk thy streams; return Sicilian muse . . .” (132-33). The literary and polemical discourses opened up by the speeches of Phoebus and St. Peter—prophecy, Christian eschatology, topical ecclesiastical critique—do not lastingly overshadow the poem’s pastoral mode. These higher and more apocalyptic moods do not accomplish the same ends as pastoral, however more lofty or theologically urgent they may be. The catalogue of flowers that follows in the wake of St. Peter’s dire speech, ornamented with variety in colorful imagery and prosody (including a stanza of rhyme royal, ll. 132-38), “interpose[s] a little ease” (152) that the stridency of St. Peter’s denunciation makes necessary. In this way, *Lycidas* dramatizes the rise into a register far more glorious than simple pastoral and then, significantly, the relief of a retreat from it. Milton calls attention to the development of the elegy as it glides through different moods and modes, loses track of Lycidas and finds him again specifically by the re-invocation of pastoral through the flower catalogue, which draws on the conventional motif of nature mourning for the dead.¹⁰⁴ Milton stages within the elegy a process of generic development that

104 Milton attributes sympathy to some of the catalogued flowers (e.g., “cowslips wan that hang the pensive head” [147]; “every flower that sad embroidery wears” [148]). The mourning of nature for the dead is a convention that Milton could have drawn from a number

is not linear but wave-like, swelling into grander modes and then ebbing again into pastoral. *Lycidas* is no linear charge toward epic; it rides a variable tide between loftier and humbler modes, Christian and classical, without casting any aside.

Lycidas's remains literally do not remain, but the pastoral elegy conjures them up to synthesize part of the process of mourning (ceremonial reverence offered to the body), to make the body present poetically, and to keep it present long enough to help the speaker find a way forward. The conclusion of the catalogue articulates the tragic fact that the floral consolation is "false surmise" (153) because "thee the shores, and sounding seas / Wash far away" (154-55). The elegiac speaker willfully dwells on the consolatory power of the poetic catalogue: "For so to interpose a little ease, / Let our frail thoughts dally with false surmise" (152-53), even though the flowers cannot "strew the laureate hearse where Lycid lies" (151) because no such physical focus for mourning is available. "Hearse" only signifies the carriage used to transport a coffin after 1650 ("Hearse"). When Milton envisioned a "laureate hearse," he would have drawn on the early seventeenth-century understanding of the hearse as a framework constructed over the coffin; this structure was often ornamented with lighted tapers, banners and other heraldic decorations, and poems or epitaphs written by friends of the deceased. The hearse is not the bearer of the body, but of the beautiful trappings of mourning: *Lycidas*'s "laureate hearse" may be a "false surmise" because it is not a physical structure. But *Lycidas* is a consummately ornate poetic structure that demonstrates Milton's own skill in "build[ing] the lofty rhyme" in memory of his "learned friend" (11; headnote). The elegy *is* a podium for ecclesiastical critique, and it *is*

of sources, including Virgil, Moschus, and Theocritus. For an analysis of Milton's use of the pathetic fallacy in this passage, see Pigman 112-13.

a venue for Milton to demonstrate his engagement with fellow mourners and other writers of pastoral. But it is also a form that mimics and honors earthly mourning activity and points to the need for “ease,” not just piety, for grief to develop toward consolation. Viewed as an endpoint of mourning, consolation is not a product of ease or misery or any other single facet of grief, but the result of the composite process.

This is also the view of pastoral within the Virgilian career that Milton is exploring through his elegies. All the forms that the prospective epic poet takes up contribute to his development, and the struggle of that development is in itself valuable. *Lycidas* ends with a glorification not of celestial rest but earthly labor still to do. Lycidas is consoled in heaven by the song of “all the saints above” (178), and he finds fulfillment and consolation there—the heavenly multitudes “wipe the tears for ever from his eyes” (181). His exaltation, however, does not mean that there is not still work for him to do on earth, where he is a benefactor, the “genius of the shore” who “shal[l] be good / To all that wander in that perilous flood” (183-84). Spiritually nourished in heaven and protecting others on earth, Lycidas fulfills in exalted terms the vision of his youthful, modest, pastoral life with the poem’s speaker, “nursed upon the self-same hill” (22) and feeding their flocks. Phoebus’s earlier assertion of exclusively heavenly “meed” for pastoral work falls away at the poem’s conclusion; labor that produces a visible earthly result is the reward proposed for Lycidas. At the start of the penultimate verse paragraph, the swain enjoins an end to mourning: “Weep no more, woeful shepherds, weep no more” (165). Now, closer to the end of the poem, this command appears again, transformed into a declarative statement that consolation has been achieved, suggestive of the efficacy of the swain’s elegizing efforts: “Now, Lycidas, the shepherds weep no more; / Henceforth thou art the genius of the shore, / In thy large recompense” (182-84). Like the retrospection of the added headnote, this

assertion invites readers to see that the poem looks beyond its specific occasion: it shows a glimpse of present poetic accomplishment and Lycidas's future. Apparently, ongoing labor is essential to the apotheosis of Lycidas, who will do good on earth "henceforth," and for the swain too, perhaps, a poetic vocation pursued faithfully and "with uncessant care" (64) is sufficient reward, whether the fruit of those labors is elegiac or epic. The transformation of the poem's opening repetition, "yet once more," into the shepherds' concluded mourning, "weep no more," marks an accomplishment for the swain's grief and his poetic skill, but it does show that questions remain about what will unfold afterward. With mourning concluded, the poetic occasion for pastoral elegy has also ended. While Lycidas's mission may be the eternal guardianship of souls on earth, the work that remains for the swain is more indeterminate.

The ottava rima coda that ends the poem adds yet another voice to this polyvocalic monody, the dirge for one voice that in fact contains many. The coda brings the preceding modulations between the voices into unity again, gathering them all together as elements in the song of the "uncouth swain" (186). Pastoral is not dismissed here; it binds the elegy together. The retrospective frame locates the swain in a pastoral landscape similar to the one where he and Lycidas had shared their youth together: the two shepherds tended their flocks "by fountain, shade, and rill" (24) and "Thus sang the uncouth swain to th' oaks and rills" (186). As Lycidas's continuing earthly work is part of his apotheosis, so the swain's poetic labors are likewise exalted—the present elegy and the work that he can still undertake while life remains to him. The swain arises at the poem's end and prepares to depart toward another pastoral landscape (not a city, not a battlefield): "Tomorrow to fresh woods, and pastures new" (193). This concluding line may even offer a witty glance at the convention of pastoral *otium*, leisure and inaction, as the final phrase lacks a verb: it expresses direction and intention, but no motion toward epic—yet.

Lycidas is not a farewell to pastoral. If anything, it seems to anticipate further pastoral or bucolic poetry, although it does so in a conventionally epic stanza, and Milton did, in fact, write further pastoral: he composed *Epitaphium Damonis* after *Lycidas*. To look toward pastures new need not require the abandonment of a given mode of expression and need not entail forgetfulness of the people and circumstances that occasioned its use. Consolation, Milton's elegies suggest, arises in the accumulative process of experience.¹⁰⁵ For a poet contemplating what he still has left to do and what he will leave behind, the thought that he might not have to abandon one aspect of his poetic identity in order to develop others would have been consoling indeed.

5.3 Pastoral Persistence

In the months leading up to the publication of the 1645 *Poems*, Milton may well have reflected on the continuing place of pastoral within his career, even as he explored new territory. The ecstatic vision of the celestial marriage feast at the conclusion of *Epitaphium Damonis* has sometimes been taken as Milton's decisive turn away from pastoral (Lewalski, "Poetic tradition" 88), and the fact that the Latin elegy is the last poem of the volume could support such an

105 The patterning that Rutherford identifies in *Lycidas*, irregular metrical and verse paragraph forms followed by more perfected iterations of the same structures, reflects Milton's interest and even proud satisfaction in making visible the "slow process of composition characterized by frequent deletion, revision, and reordering of material" (32). Even if one disagrees with the divisions that Rutherford proposes, *Lycidas* is a poem so highly patterned and with so many reiterated elements that his observation is still valid.

interpretation. This view depicts Milton using pastoral to create a moment of discontinuity in his career: the last poem is also Milton's last word on the form. As I will show, however, Milton continued to engage with the pastoral throughout his career, and the placement of a poem in a conclusive position in the 1645 collection might signify a variety of poetic purposes. In addition to the possibility that Damon's epitaph signifies Milton's intention to give up writing pastoral, the poem's placement might also signify Milton's sense of the poem's superiority, the importance he or the bookseller Humphrey Moseley attached to its genre, or the emotional gravity that its subject conveys—and these options need not be mutually exclusive.

It is difficult, then, to use the 1645 volume as proof of Milton's alleged turn away from pastoral or any other lyric form. Moreover, the arrangement of the volume was not solely in Milton's hands. Dobranski has shown that the 1645 *Poems* conjures up a singular, controlling authorial presence that belies the collaborative and contingent aspects of the publication process (*Authorship* 101). As he observes, "The poet John Milton emerges in 1645 as an individual according to the original meaning of the word: . . . a person in explicit relation to a larger group" (101). The community of composers, printers, and booksellers within which Milton worked to publish his poems influenced the design of the volume: the publisher Moseley as well as Milton may have been responsible for the placement and layout of texts. Pastoral elements occur in significant locations throughout the volume, including the rustic scene on the frontispiece, the *Nativity Ode* that opens the vernacular half of the volume, the centrally-placed *Mask*, and, of course, in the elegy for Diodati that concludes the collection.¹⁰⁶ Regardless of whether Milton

106 This is far from a comprehensive list of pastoral works in the 1645 *Poems*; others include *Arcades*, *L'Allegro*, and *Il Penseroso*.

oversaw the volume's organization, the prominence of pastoral works would have been obvious to an audience steeped in the classical tradition and familiar with contemporary continental works. If we grant that the presence of *Lycidas* and *Epitaphium Damonis* in both the 1645 and 1673 *Poems* entailed, at the very least, Milton's consent to their inclusion in both volumes, then we can tentatively infer that they had a lastingly meaningful role to play in his authorial self-presentation.¹⁰⁷ In these volumes, Milton's elegiac subjects and the pastoral elegy as a genre are invoked within a fresh set of social, political, and poetic circumstances—Milton brought his subjects back into life, if not back to life.

Contrary to the expectations shaped by the Virgilian career model, pastoral persists in Milton's later works. The "pastures new" toward which the swain looks at the end of *Lycidas* lie—at least in part—within the precincts of epic. The compendiousness of *Paradise Lost* enfolds into epic many elements from other genres (including romance and lyric) and modes (including heroic, pastoral, georgic, and tragic) (Lewalski, *Paradise Lost* 19-21). Within this assortment of literary forms we can see that Milton did not in fact leave pastoral, or many other literary kinds, behind him as he undertook his epic labor.¹⁰⁸ Milton gives descriptions of Eden a

107 Although the *Nativity Ode*'s first print publication was in 1645, both *Lycidas* and *Epitaphium Damonis* had been published separately prior to appearing in that volume (in *Justa Edouardo King naufrago* and in an anonymous private publication in 1640, respectively). The pastoral elegies are therefore re-published in 1645 as well as 1673.

108 *Paradise Lost* is generically encyclopedic in part because, as Lewalski explains, the Renaissance definition of epic was itself contested (*Paradise Lost* 12); she notes that Renaissance poets and theorists defined a wide range of works as epic, including romantic

distinctly pastoral inflection: the garden is “A happy rural seat of various view” (4.247) where open fields support “flocks / Grazing the tender herb” (4.252-53) and, as Satan slips into Eden to work mischief, he is compared to “a prowling wolf” who watches shepherds pen up their flocks and then “Leaps o’er the fence with ease into the fold” (5.183, 187). Likewise, as Lewalski remarks, the epic voice “heralds the Fall sequence” with an announcement that the idyllic pastoral will be disrupted: “I now must change / These notes to tragic” (9.5-6; *Paradise Lost* 19).

That a generically inclusive epic such as *Paradise Lost* should employ elements of pastoral is not necessarily surprising, although this aspect of epic stands in tension with the supposed tidiness of the Virgilian progression of genres. More surprising is Milton’s choice in *Paradise Regained* to cast all of *Paradise Lost* retrospectively as a pastoral. The opening lines of the later poem announce a turn away from the epic’s narrative of “the happy garden” in order to “sing / Recovered Paradise” and “deeds / Above heroic” (1.1, 2-3, 14-15). Composing *Paradise Regained* roughly 30 years after *Lycidas*, Milton does finally articulate a resolution to cast pastoral aside, but he does so in a poem that once again does not clearly abandon the form—indeed, a poem for which critics have yet to devise a single satisfactory genre label. Walter MacKellar finds *Paradise Regained* utterly different from the other biblical poems of the

epics (Ariosto’s *Orlando Furioso*), philosophical poems (Lucretius’s *De Rerum Natura*), allegorical dream-visions (Dante’s *Divina Commedia*), and poems on topics from both the Old and New Testaments of the Bible (Vida’s *Christiad*). Milton’s epic also employs narrative elements that were common in Renaissance pastoral but not exclusive to it, including several types of dialogue that draw on philosophical, pedagogical, and biblical models (16).

sixteenth and seventeenth centuries (10). Anthony Low surveys the variety of formal models that critics have suggested for the poem, which include “brief epic (Lewalski), debate, Socratic dialogue ([Elaine B.] Safer), and even pastoral ([Stewart] Baker)—while Northrop Frye calls the poem an ‘experiment . . . practically *sui generis*’” (152). Baker’s reading of *Paradise Regained* as a pastoral (despite the opening lines’ apparent renunciation) points to the influence of Sannazaro, who “establish[ed] the pastoral landscape as the symbolic setting for meditation upon the typological figures and events of Christian history” (117). By turning away from “the happy garden” of Eden, Baker argues, Milton crafts an “inverted pastoral of ‘the waste Wilderness,’ the emblem of man’s fallen state” (123). That such a wealth of generic influences are perceptible, and that “even pastoral” is among them, suggests that at the end of his career, Milton was still exploring how to refine and redefine the possibilities of multiple literary forms. Whether such experimentation follows or defies a given career model, it shows how deeply he was invested in engaging with patterns of development—including prosodic experimentation, the psychological process of grieving, and the crafting of poetic career. In his later works, Milton radically gathers together pastoral and a wealth of other literary forms in order to compose poetry that is formally inclusive yet which still engages with systems of generic hierarchy to address questions of development, timeliness, and the comparative importance of subjects and literary traditions.

Even after composing *Paradise Lost*, Milton continued to reflect on the importance of pastoral as a category of writing. Classical and Renaissance traditions made pastoral a venue for preparatory work, yet Milton seems to have been unwilling to leave it behind even as he kept bidding it farewell. In *Paradise Regained*, Milton relates through Jesus’s speech a telescopic vision of humble pastoral origin and holy destiny by alluding to David as “the shepherd lad, / Whose offspring on the throne of Judah sat / So many ages, and shall yet regain / That seat, and

reign in Israel without end” (2.439-42). Transcendent genres—Christian epic and the accounts of heroism in *Paradise Regained* and *Samson Agonistes*—entail a prescription for abandonment: having attained these forms, a poet should supposedly have no more need for the forms that led to them. But emotional consolation cannot be dictated by ritual or doctrine, and likewise, the composition of works that celebrate Christian history did not erase the satisfactions Milton took from the non-Christian literary tradition or aspects of his own past that were sweet to recall even in grief, just as the swain remembers his youth and the festivities he shared with Lycidas. Recollection of the companionable, “glad sound” of “our song” has a place in the elegy as well as the need to cope with “the heavy change” of Lycidas’s death (l. 35, 36, 37). The past is always to some degree present in Milton’s mind, so that even as he prepared to sing the Son’s “deeds / Above heroic” in *Paradise Regained* and apparently dismissed the value of his prior achievements, he looked over them again by conjuring up “the happy garden.” Milton continued to mull over the significance of preparation (by redefining even his grand epic as a preliminary work) and the development of his poetic and intellectual achievements into more refined forms. The repeated glances back at pastoral show Milton’s unwillingness to estrange himself from aspects of his literary and intellectual past that had helped to determine the course he took. A consideration of poetic career keeps our view trained on endpoints—the climaxes or anti-climaxes of Milton’s late works. But Milton again and again said goodbye to pastoral in part to keep yesterday’s pastures always in sight.

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6. CONCLUSION

The burden of conclusion, especially in a study of closure, is formidable. As John Donne well understood, the success of a whole composition can rely on the effect created by an ending. In a 1623 sermon on the penitential psalms, Donne observes that David defers thanks to God until the end of all the psalms in order to give thanksgiving “the best impression in the memory” (Aaa6r). Donne speaks of that impression quite literally: “And therefore it is easie to observe, that in all Metricall compositions . . . the force of the whole piece, is for the most part left to the shutting up; the whole frame of the Poem is a beating out of a piece of gold, but the last clause is as the impression of the stamp, and that is it that makes it currant” (Aaa6r). However valuable the constituent materials may be, they need such a stamp of finality to become recognizable and coherent—to make them ready to circulate in the world.

In this study I have examined the final strikes that poets give to their works as well as the entire minting process, as it were. The question of whether individual poems reach a sense of conclusiveness is ultimately less significant than an understanding of the poets’ envisioned goals and the poetic structures that give expressive shape to those aspirations. My analysis has thus focused on how poets (writing *in propria persona* or through fictionalized speakers) work toward closure and often meditate self-consciously about the trouble they have on the journey. The value of such a focus is not in the enumeration of each poet’s successes and failures in creating resolution—which would not be an especially compelling goal for literary criticism—but rather in concerted attention to the forms of language that bear the traces of poets working out points of difficulty. Such attention clarifies the pressures to which each poet responds. In this respect, I benefit from the leveling effect of New Historicist criticism, which does not demand that a work demonstrate consummate literary achievement to be a useful subject for

study: even Hall's occasionally inept versifying offers a useful window into how he wanted to portray his own poetic abilities to his readers. In *An Apology*, Milton sneered at the internal rhyme of Hall's pastoral vision in "His Defiance to Enuie" to "Teach each hollow grove, and shrubby hill, / . . . / To sound our love . . . / Wearying echo with one changeless word" (81-84). But even Milton's poetic skill was open to reproach. More than thirty years later, the author of the pamphlet *The Transproser Rehears'd* (1673) took Milton to task over the expression "eternal coeternal" from Book 3 of *Paradise Lost*: "[T]hat jingling in the middle of his Verse, is more notoriously ridiculous, because the *blind Bard* . . . studiously declin'd Rhyme as a *jingling sound of like endings*" (qtd. in Shawcross 77).

That responses proliferate is not the key point: in a study of lyric generally, not just of satire, it is more valuable to focus on authors' selectivity in engaging with their predecessors. Hall wanted to show off knowledge of pastoral tradition, particularly the recent and redoubtable work of Spenser, and also to turn away from pastoral as the framework for his youthful poetic debut. Milton cherry-picked a handful of Hall's juvenile verses to impugn Hall's authority as a reformer. The author of *The Transproser Rehears'd* painted a portrait of Milton as a mean-spirited hypocrite who faulted Hall for a poetic quirk that he himself displayed; Milton's attacker discredited Milton in much the same way that Milton discredited Hall. This colorful array of motives illustrates authors positioning themselves relative to existing literary practices, to other authors (sometimes favorably, as successors to lofty traditions, or in self-aggrandizing contrast with debased others), and to the expressive challenges unique to their topics—to attack, as with Hall with his satires; to tease, as with Shakespeare's epyllion; to meditate, as in Herbert's lyrics; and to mourn and move on, as in Milton's pastoral elegies.

The diversity of the texts I have addressed here shows how the meaning of resolution is intimately tied to the ways a poet approaches situations and problems through verse. Shakespeare, taking up the epyllion—which moves forward primarily by dilating moments of denied fulfillment—makes the attractiveness and dangers of fulfillment his primary subject. Hall, styling himself the first English satirist, claimed authority that manifested itself as more or less a target he had painted on his own chest, and the satires register his discomfort with the vulnerability elicited by hostile responses to his supposedly preeminent poetry. Herbert, mindful of the capacity of poetry to instruct his readers in patterns of thought, crafted lyrics that explore the variety of paths that meditation might take and also give glances at moments of fulfillment. And Milton, acutely aware of the variety of literary and religious precedents available to him, labored to locate his work intelligibly within traditions while still attempting to control the story of himself that unfolded across his career. Each of these poets has a different framework for thinking about closure and different motives to reflect on achievement; the essence of their works is not in the particular form of resolution they envision, but the various ways they formulate their problems to themselves and their readers.

All of the poets I consider here demonstrate a careful self-awareness about the poetic structures they use to articulate their subjects. In my introduction, I suggested that the preoccupation with intricate verse forms that each of them is aware of—and uses to greater or lesser extent—is a legacy of the Elizabethan enthusiasm for sonnets. Further development of this project should engage more explicitly with sonnet form. Just as Hall found value in claiming to be the first *English* satirist—there was an ample tradition of satirical sketches and brief epigrams in Latin—the Tudor poets who adapted the Italian sonnet to English found value in testing out the expressive limits of an existing form in a new language. The adaptations and

translations undertaken by Thomas Wyatt and Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey, spawned a wealth of creative experimentation by their successors. Like a tomato cage, the limitations of a strict verse form (with its attendant Petrarchan conventions and motifs) offered English lyricists the framework within which they could plant their ideas, so to speak, and watch how they grew. Through the permutations of rhyme scheme and meter developed by Sidney, Spenser, Shakespeare, and others, ambitious poets used the restriction of the form to explore how unfolding process and the assertion of a conclusion could interrelate—to make a conclusion emphatic or undercut, cynical or hopeful. The rigorous requirements of a sonnet were viewed not as confinement but as a productive support for creative expression: as a genre devoted to exploring how turns of perspective affect a reader's sense of a conclusion, sonnets crystallize this project's central concepts.

I have discussed important representatives of four major Renaissance literary genres. But the questions I broach about how authors use formal structure to explore their ideas are much more widely applicable: as I showed in Chapter 2, adaptation theory attunes our attention to the expectations and preexisting structures that authors employ to show their audiences the delights of both familiarity and novelty. Adaptation theory has focused most emphatically on film, but this critical approach has the potential to draw together existing source studies and scholarship on allusion in Renaissance literature—in prose and drama as well as poetry—and to illuminate the productive restraint of works created vis-a-vis literary precursors and their authors. Because expectation conditions interpretation regardless of genre, the precedents I explore here—classical and contemporary intertexts, religious controversy and doctrine, patterns of career development—might shed light on the mechanisms of process and closure beyond lyric. The future development of this project would profit from an approach conditioned by the

considerations of adaptation: authors work with a varied array of features in their intertexts, and the exploration I have undertaken here would be enriched by further attention to these dependencies as vital points of reference for authors and their audiences. Mindful of the ways Renaissance authors constructed closure, we might reconsider some of our own conclusions about their works.

Even in his sermons, Donne meditated on the effect of closure in poetry, as I showed above. He and other early seventeenth-century poets also frequently broached the topic in their valedictory poems: a lyric about saying goodbye poses questions about what might be gone for good, what remains, and what might return.¹⁰⁹ Reminders of closure beyond one's control are sobering: the speaker of "Song" ("Sweetest love, I do not goe") laments, "O how feeble is mans power, / That if good fortune fall, / Cannot adde another houre, / Nor a lost houre recall!" (17-20). He bids his beloved to moderate her anticipatory fears of his death; if she imagines a dreadful ending for him, then

Destiny may take thy part,
And may thy feares fulfill;
But thinke that wee

109 Although Donne's valedictory lyrics (e.g., "A valediction forbidding mourning," "A Valediction of weeping" and "A Valediction of my name, in the window") are perhaps the most famous of the kind among early seventeenth-century poets, valediction was a common trope: Aemelia Lanyer's "To Cookham" opens with a farewell to the locale, and Song 4 of Lady Mary Wroth's *Pamphilia to Amphilanthus* includes Pamphilia's plea that her departing beloved take her heart with him, since "As good there, as heere to burne" (24).

Are but turn'd aside to sleepe;
 They who one another keepe

Alive, ne'er parted bee. (35-40)

Donne's speaker re-imagines the stillness of death as the calm of lovers "turn'd aside to sleep," and transforms even the pose of mortality into a reassuring image of lasting peace. Even the prospect of a fearful closure that lies beyond his control has a use for the lyricist who turns verses and transforms perspectives. "Ne'er parted": a mournful ending has become eternal fulfillment.

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APPENDIX: COMPARISON OF TRANSLATIONS OF *FISTULA* AND *CICUTA*

In addition to Estelle Haan’s translations in the Oxford edition of Milton’s poems, I have consulted the following editions for the English translations of *Epitaphium Damonis* that appear below: Gordon Braden (*The Complete Poetry and Selected Prose of John Milton*, ed. Kerrigan, Rumrich, and Fallon [New York: Modern Library, 2007]); Lawrence Revard (*John Milton: The Complete Shorter Poems*, ed. Stella Revard [Malden: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009]); William Shullenberger (*Milton’s Selected Poetry and Prose*, ed. Jason Rosenblatt [New York: Norton, 2011]); and David R. Slavitt (*Milton’s Latin Poems* [Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 2011]).

“. . . nam sunt et apud me munera vestra / Fiscellae, calathique et cerea vincla cicutae” (ll. 134-35).

Braden: “for your gifts are still with me: baskets of twigs and baskets of wicker and the wax fastenings of a <u>panpipe</u> ” (238).
Revard: “I have about me / their gifts—baskets and bowls and <u>pipes</u> with wax joints” (ll. 135-36).
Shullenberger: “for your gifts are with me, / Baskets, and wicker bowls, and <u>pipes</u> with waxen seals” (ll. 134-35).
Slavitt: “for I still have with me those gifts / with which you presented me—reed baskets, earthenware bowls, / and <u>shepherds’ pipes</u> ” (ll. 146-48).
Haan: “for I still have in my possession your gifts: baskets, bowls and <u>pipes</u> with waxen fastenings” (223).

“Ipse etiam, nam nescio quid mihi grande sonabat / **Fistula**, ab undecima jam lux est altera nocte, / Et tum forte novis admôram cicutis, / Dissiluere tamen rupta compage” (ll. 155-58).

Braden: “And myself—for my **pipe** played something grand, I know not what, it is now the next day after the eleventh night, and then by chance I had placed my lips on new reeds, but they fell apart” (239).

Revard: “And I— / for my **pipe** played some great song or other / (it is now one day past the eleventh night since!)— / I happened to set my lips to new pipes. But they / broke at their joints” (ll. 155-59).

Shullenberger: “For me, I know not what grand theme my **pipes** / Sounded, eleven nights since, and now another day; / I chanced to press my lips to my fresh pipes, / They shattered, bindings snapped” (ll. 155-58).

Slavitt: [omits “Ipse etiam . . . / Fistula”] “It is now eleven nights and a day, and I put my lips / to the pipes but they broke apart” (ll. 168-69).

Haan: “And I myself—for my **pipe** was sounding some lofty tune—eleven nights and a further day have now gone by since then—and at that time it happened that I had applied my lips to new pipes, but they burst asunder” (225).

“O mihi tum si vita supersit, / **Tu** procul annosa pendebis **fistula** pinu / Multum oblita mihi” (ll. 168-70).

Braden: “O, if life then is left to me, you, pipe , will hang far off on an aged pine tree, all forgotten by me. . .” (240).
Revard: “O, if I have life left over then, / my pipe, you will hang forgotten on an old pine far off” (ll. 169-70).
Shullenberger: “O then if any life remain to me, / You pipes will on an aging pine be hung far off, / Forgot by me” (ll. 168-70).
Slavitt: “Then, if life remains, I shall hang my pipe on a pine / far away and forgotten” (ll. 179-80).
Haan: “Oh then if life remains for me, you my pipe , will hang far away upon an age-old pine tree, very much forgotten by me” (225).