About the cover:

Ireland’s Burren is a striking ecological area. Found on the West Coast of Ireland down from Galway Bay, the Burren consists of limestone mountains and hills that have cracked and weathered away over millennia, allowing plant life to flourish throughout the year. Furthermore, the ice age glaciers left hundreds of plant species behind, hosting a rare combination of Arctic, Alpine, and Mediterranean species. The plant life in the Burren is so prolific, it makes up around 70% of Ireland’s total plant life.

My time abroad was spent deeply embedded in the Burren environment, exploring the area as much as I could. I wandered widely, often crossing fields to find my own path, and this image was captured along the Doolin cliffs during such a walk. The uneven and broken ground can make for a fairly dangerous journey if one doesn’t watch their footing. I forged my own path along the cliffs in Doolin, to find the best photos and collect my own memories. The limestone ground, unsteady and cracked, constantly shifts as you walk, making every path a new adventure. In the Burren, every day was a new adventure for me, captured with the help of my camera. – Elizabeth Day
The Expositor showcases the exceptional work done by Trinity students under the guidance of our faculty across the humanistic disciplines, broadly defined.

This journal is seeking submissions for future volumes.

Any faculty member may submit humanities work by students in their classes or by research fellows under their supervision. Please inform your students when you submit their work. Selections are made in the Fall.

Send your submissions to expositor@trinity.edu.

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Editor’s Preface

The Expositor was first published in 1989 by Trinity’s Department of English at the initiative of Professor Peter Balbert, and, through 2015, it provided a venue for the best academic writing produced at the university. Beginning with the 2016 volume, the members of the English Department responsible for the journal, in consultation with the director of the Mellon Initiative for Undergraduate Research in the Humanities, made the decision to change the journal’s scope to focus exclusively on humanities disciplines. The journal is now published annually as a collaboration of the Mellon Initiative and English Department, and its editorial board is made up of faculty from across our humanities programs.

The decision to focus the disciplinary approaches represented in The Expositor was made for a number of reasons. While Trinity students in the natural and social sciences are certainly participating in exciting and innovative research, those disciplines also allow more easily for students to appear as co-authors of essays written in conjunction with faculty. (And our faculty in the sciences have been very good at creating opportunities for this kind of student involvement in research and publication.) Humanities research is different: professors in the humanities do not have labs to which our students can contribute, and the specialist skills required for our work make it extremely difficult for undergraduates to collaborate with and contribute to the writing of our publications. At the same time, thanks to programs like the Mellon Initiative and now the Humanities Collective, humanities departments at Trinity are creating opportunities for student research that are almost unprecedented at undergraduate institutions across the country. We have an exceptionally talented body of students, and they are undertaking research of an unusually high quality, offering new and theoretically sophisticated interpretations of cultural artifacts and presenting archival research and discussions of previously unnoted material. (Not incidentally, several of the essays published in the most recent volumes of The Expositor have been used as writing samples to win their authors places in top graduate programs in the United States and abroad.) Though these students are less likely to write collaborative pieces with faculty members, their work is original, thoughtful, provocative, and rigorous—it has real potential to contribute to ongoing scholarly conversations on a variety of topics, and it therefore merits publication. The Expositor promotes that work within, and beyond, the Trinity community.

Finally, it should be noted that The Expositor is endeavoring to draw attention to the range of forms taken by humanistic research. While the argument-driven essay is (for good reason) the most common, original research in the humanities can also yield scholarly descriptions, editions and translations of texts, and other less familiar kinds of writing. By soliciting and publishing works in all of these forms, The Expositor aims to reveal the rich variety of work done in our disciplines.

Andrew Kraebel
Department of English
A Twelfth-Century Service for Enclosing an Anchorite or Anchoress: Introduction, Latin Text, and Translation

Luke Ayers and Victoria Bahr

Perhaps one of the most distinctive religious practices of the Middle Ages was the life pursued by anchorites and anchoresses, holy men and women living enclosed in small cells attached to the outside of church buildings. These reclusees had considerable spiritual authority in their communities, and many of the most noteworthy medieval figures partook in this unique form of cloistered life. Anchoritism appears to have been an especially important (and perhaps empowering) mode of religious expression for women: the first book written by a woman in English was by an anchoress, Julian of Norwich, while Goscelin of St. Bertin’s Liber Confortatorius (Book of Consolation and Comfort) was written to guide another anchoress, Eve, in her new profession. Once they were enclosed, anchorites and anchoresses never left their cells, and the ritual surrounding their enclosure therefore took on considerable religious significance: it served, in many ways, as their funeral. Various forms of the rite of enclosure survive from late medieval England, the earliest being preserved in a twelfth-century pontifical (or book of bishop’s services) that is now London, British Library MS Vespasian D. xv, fols. 61r–65r. After a brief historical and linguistic introduction, the Latin text of that service, as well as some shorter related texts, are translated here in English for the first time.
ANCHORITES, ANCHORESSES, AND RITES OF ENCLOSURE

Though it could certainly never be described as popular or commonplace, anchoritism gained increasing prominence as a mode of vowed religious life in the European Middle Ages. Beginning with the religious reforms of the late eleventh century, anchorites and anchoresses came to be seen as practitioners of the most elite form of medieval monastic living. In their cells, under the care of the local bishop, the anchorite devoted themselves to prayer and meditation. They were provided with an allowance of food and clothing, both rather plain, and though they had left the outer world behind, they were not entirely without human contact. From a window in their cell, the anchorite could see into the adjoining church and take communion, and through another window they could speak to visitors and make confession. Such contact was greatly restricted, however—the anchorite was discouraged from speaking to others through the church window, and the visitor’s window was covered by a curtain. In general, anchorites spent their entire lives praying and meditating in near isolation, except for instances of religious (and institutionally-sanctioned) communication.

The specific dimensions and locations of an anchorhold differ from church to church. One set of regulations says that a cell should measure twelve feet by twelve feet and be made of stone, while another text describes a wooden loft, and an anchorhold attached to Chichester Cathedral in southeastern England measures nearly seven hundred square feet. The cell’s placement was likewise not standardized. It could be built on any side of the church, though there is some evidence of a preference for building against the north wall. Regardless, it was generally agreed that these cells should be sparse and small, consisting of no more than a few rooms.

Since they were his spiritual responsibility, it fell to the bishop to install new anchorites and anchoresses in their cells, and the earliest services for their enclosure are therefore, like the consecration of a church or the ordination of priests, preserved in pontificals, books used by bishops in the liturgy. By definition, pontificals were not widespread, since bishops were a limited class of priests, preserved in pontificals, books used by bishops in the liturgy. The earliest surviving Servicium Recludendi, or service for enclosure, appears in one of these books, apparently made to be used somewhere in the vicinity of Exeter, England. As noted by its editor, H. A. Wilson, this form of the Servicium was likely to have been used more broadly in the south of England, since its manuscript, Vespasian B. xv, shares other texts (though not this one) with another pontifical, Oxford, Magdalen College MS 226, which is associated with Hereford and Canterbury. Wilson suggests that Vespasian was likely entrusted to an assistant bishop, but it could also have been used by the bishop himself traveling throughout his diocese.

The enclosure service was made to be incorporated into the celebration of the mass. Given the geographical placement of Vespasian, this is likely to have been a mass according to the particular local ordering called the Use of Sarum, or at the very least something quite similar to it. A typical Sarum Use mass would have been structured as follows:

1. The choir sings the Introit.
2. While the celebrant, a priest or bishop, is vesting, Veni Creator Spiritus is sung.
3. The Kyrie eleison is sung.
4. The Gloria in excelsis is sung.
5. The Collect (prayer for the day) is read.
6. The Epistle is read by the subdeacon.
7. The Gradual is sung.
8. The Alleluia is sung.
9. The Gospel is read by the deacon.
10. The celebrant may give a sermon and offer prayers relevant to the readings or circumstance.
11. The Nicene Creed is said.
12. Bread and wine are brought to the altar.
13. The eucharist is celebrated.
14. The people are dismissed.

The Servicium Recludendi would have prompted some changes to both the beginning and end of this structure. It seems that the Veni is moved from the beginning of the mass to a point after the reading of the Gospel. Additionally, the Kyrie would likely have been replaced with the Litany of the Saints, which begins and ends with the Kyrie text. The Gloria would have been omitted, as it was not included in masses for the dead, which the Servicium mirrors (more on this below), and the Alleluia would likely be absent for the same reasons. The Epistle was replaced by an Old Testament reading. The Servicium is unclear on the treatment of the Gradual. The liturgy also mandates that the priest give a sermon and offer corporate prayer for the recluse, before which the recluse genuflects at the altar and places candles on it. The portion of the Servicium beginning with the phrase “Qua finita” (“When this is finished”) takes place after the eucharist and completes the liturgy. In addition to specifying the readings and describing various ritual actions, most of the service consists of psalms and antiphons (sung at the beginning and end of psalms, and supporting a specific interpretation of them), which are referenced in the text by their opening phrases only. Presumably whoever used the pontifical would only need these brief prompts to know the text specified thereby.
Goscelin of St. Bertin, already mentioned, though anchorites were often seen as deeply pious figures, even as living saints, having left the world behind, they still had to take considerable care not to fall prey to the sins of the body or mind. Anchorites would therefore devote themselves to prayer, employing fasting or self-flagellation to quell gluttony, sloth, and other sinful urges of the body. The anchoritic life was far from effortless, and though entering an anchorhold may bring one closer than most to Paradise, it was, apparently, no guarantee of entry into heaven. Dead to the world, the anchorite still had to work to secure a place in heaven.

**The Language and Style of Servicium Recludendi**

In its choice of words and phrasing, the Vespasian Servicium casts light on its author’s views of the life of anchorites and anchoresses. The Servicium refers to the anchorhold on five different occasions, using four different terms. The first, reclusorium, most literally means “the place for the recluse,” but is translated below as “anchorhold.” The use of the -arium ending conveys that the anchorhold is clearly designated for the purpose of housing an anchorite. The second, habitaculum, literally means “little dwelling place,” with the diminutive -culum making clear that the dwelling ought to be small. The term is thus both descriptive and prescriptive. The third, domus, is repeated (as domus) at the end of the text, and it simply means “home.” The repeated use of this word conveys that the anchorhold is meant to be the true home of the recluse, the place where they carry out every activity. Finally, the fourth term is sepulchrum, “tomb.” The use of these distinct words serves to convey, very succinctly and clearly, how the anchorhold is to be viewed: as both the anchorite’s home and grave.

The grammar of the Servicium is fairly straightforward, often repeating verbs that could otherwise have been omitted, such as the repetition of iaceat (“let him/her lie”) in the first few lines, or the inclusion of various forms of esse throughout the text. This unnecessarily repetitive style makes the text easier to comprehend, reflecting its instructional and practical nature: this text was meant to be used in the course of a service in the church. Similarly, the use of the present active participle without a finite verb reflects the same stylistic priorities: this is used throughout the Servicium and is sometimes difficult to translate into English. This use of participles, paired with a liberal application of the ablative absolute, emphasizes the simultaneity of events. The priest, for instance, begins an antiphon at the same time as he sprinkles dust over the anchorite and at the same time as the chorus is singing. Such a construction could obscure the precise order of actions, but it could be that the order was known to the Servicium’s reader (or, perhaps better, user), or perhaps what action happened mattered more than when it happened.

**A Note on the Text and Translation**

In adapting the text from H. A. Wilson’s Henry Bradshaw Society edition of 1910, several editorial decisions were made that are worth noting. Wilson italicizes the instructional or directional portions of the text (those that describe actions to be done), while parts to be spoken were in plain type, but for ease of
lectionem legentem:
et proximi. Quos singulis manibus tenendo, sollicite audiat subdiaconum hanc
rit, dantes ei in manibus duos cereos ardentes, ut fervens sit in dilectione Dei
dem faciat.
eum ter in circuitu, et postea incenset similiter. Quod si episcopus defuerit,
cruce ante illum posita et cum aqua benedicta et thuribilo, et prius aspergat
loci, nominent eum ter inclinatis capitibus.
spondente et dicente semper: “Ora pro illo.” Cum autem venerint ad sanctum
stantes ante gradus decantent totam letaniam alta voce, choro per singula re
prostratus in medio choro nudis pedibus in oratione iaceat. Tunc duo clerici
habitare. Si masculus et laicus, ad ostium chori iaceat. Si clericus vel sacerdos,
Si est femina, primum iaceat in occidentali parte ecclesiae ubi mos est feminis
habitat. Si masculus et laicus, ad ostium chori iaceat. Si clericus vel sacerdos,
prostratus in medio choro nudis pedibus in oratione iaceat. Tunc duo clerici
stantes ante gradus decantent totam leteriam alta voce, choro per singula re
pondeente et dicente semper: “Ora pro illo.” Cum autem venerint ad sanctum
loci, nominent eum ter inclinatis capitis.
Finita vero leteria, veniat episcopus si affuerit indutus sacerdotalibus vesti-
mensis praeter casulam cum diacono et subdiacono ad praestram illum, cum
crece ante illum posita et cum aqua benedicta et thuribilo, et prius aspergat
eum ter in circuitu, et postea incenset similiter. Quod si episcopus defuerit,
sacerdos idem faciat.
Tunc subievent eum duo seniores, sacerdos videlicet et quem ipse adhibue
inhabitare. Si masculus et laicus, ad ostium chori iaceat. Si clericus vel sacerdos,
prostratus in medio choro nudis pedibus in oratione iaceat. Tunc duo clerici
stantes ante gradus decantent totam leteriam alta voce, choro per singula re
pondeente et dicente semper: “Ora pro illo.” Cum autem venerint ad sanctum
loci, nominent eum ter inclinatis capitis.

**SERVICIUM RECLUDENDI**

Si est femina, primum iacet in occidentali parte ecclesiae ubi mos est feminis
habitat. Si masculus et laicus, ad ostium chori iacet. Si clericus vel sacerdos,
prostratus in medio choro nudis pedibus in oratione iacet. Tunc duo clerici
stantes ante gradus decantent totam leteriam alta voce, choro per singula re
pondeente et dicente semper: “Ora pro illo.” Cum autem venerint ad sanctum
loci, nominent eum ter inclinatis capitis.

Finita vero leteria, veniat episcopus si affuerit indutus sacerdotalibus vesti-
mensis praeter casulam cum diacono et subdiacono ad praestram illum, cum
crece ante illum posita et cum aqua benedicta et thuribilo, et prius aspergat
eum ter in circuitu, et postea incenset similiter. Quod si episcopus defuerit,
sacerdos idem faciat.
Tunc subievent eum duo seniores, sacerdos videlicet et quem ipse adhibue-
rit, dantes ei in manibus duos cereos ardentes, ut fervens sit in dilectione Dei
et proximi. Quos singulis manibus tenendo, sollicite audiat subdiaconum hanc
lectionem legentem:

Vade, populus meus, intra in cubicula tua. Claude ostia tua super te, ab-
scondere modicum ad momentum, donec prætranseat indignatio. Ecce
enim Dominus egrediatur de loco suo, ut visitter iniquitatem habitatoris
terrae contra eum, et revelabü terra sanguinem suum et non operiet ultra
interfectos suos. In die illa visitabit Dominus in gladio suo, duro et grandi
et forte, super Leviathan serpemntem vectem, et super Leviathan serpemntem
tortuosum, et occidet caetum qui in mari est. In die illa vinea meri cantabit
ei. Ego Deus qui servo eam, repente propinabo e o. Ne forte visitetur con-
ta eam, nocte et die servabo eam. Indignatio non est mihi, dicit Dominus
omnipotens.

Post haec legatur evangelium secundum Lucam: “Intravit Iesus in quoddam
castellum.” Quo finito incipiat cantor alta voce: “Veni creator spiritus,” quod
quid decantet omnis chorus.

Tunc supradicti seniores accipientes recludendum ex utraque parte deduc-
tant ad altare choro festivae annuam concinente. Quo finito, flectat recludendus
ter genua sua dicenter hunc versum: “Suscipe me Domine secundum eloquium
tuum et vivam, et non confundas me ab expectatione mea.” Quo ter dicto of-
erat super candelabra cereos suos et iterum cum silentio sedeat vel iacet pro-
tratus. Sacerdos vero vel alia persona exponat populo lectionem et evangelium,
et commendet populo recludendum, ut orent pro illo. Deinde dictam missam de
sancto Spiritu sacerdos vel recludendus si fuerit sacerdos.

Qua finita, supradicti seniores accipientes recludendum ex utraque parte ete
quaerant eum in reclusorium suum, incipientes hanc antiphonam: “In par-
adisuum ducant te angeli,” choro cantante psalmum: “Confitemini Domi-
no,” cum eadem antiphona. Cum autem pervenerint ad ostium, incipiat ipse
recludens antiphonam: “Ingressus Raphael archangelus.” Et ita sacerdos incipiat omnes antiphonas, choro de foris psal-
mos cum eisdem antiphonis decantante. Similiter et commendationem animae
faciat, usque ad impositionem defuncti super feretrum, ne forte praeventus
morte careat hoc sancto servici. Quibus magna veneratione peractis, aperi-
tur sepulchrum, quod ingrediens ipse recludendus incipiat antiphonam: “Haec
requies mea,” choro de foris cantante psalmum, “Memento Domine David,”
cum eadem antiphona. Tunc aspergente sacerdote parum pulveris super eum,
incipiat antiphonam: “De terra plasmasti me,” choro cantante psalmum: “Do-
mine probasti me,” et repetente antiphonam. Post haec exeat omnes, sacer-
dote parum remanente et praecipente recluso ut per obedientiam surgat et in
obedientia reliquum vitae finiat. Et sic obstruatur ostium domus eius, finitoque
psalmo cum antiphona et orationibus, scilicet “Temeritatis quidem” et “Deus
vitae dator,” omnes in pace discedant.

**THE SERVICE OF A RECLUSE**

If it is a woman, first let her lie in the west part of the church where the women
customarily dwell. If it is a man and not ordained, let him lie in the choir29 to-
wards the door. If he is a cleric or a priest, let him lie prostrate in the middle of
the choir, with bare feet, in prayer. Then let two clergymen, standing before the
steps, chant the entire litany in a loud voice while the chorus responding...
after each petition and always saying: “Pray for him.” When they reach the sanctuary, with their heads bowed, let them name him three times.

When the litany is finished, let the bishop, if he is present, having put on all his priestly vestments but his chasuble, come with the deacon and subdeacon towards the prostrated person, with a cross placed before him and holy water and a Thurible, and let him first sprinkle him, circling him three times, and then let him cense him in the same way. But if the bishop is absent, let a priest perform this action.

Then let two elders, that is the priest and someone he has appointed, raise him up, giving him two burning waxen candles in his hands, that he may be burning with love of God and neighbor. When he is holding them, one in each hand, let him eagerly hear the subdeacon reading this lesson:

Go, my people, enter into your bedrooms. Close your door over you, hide for a short while, until the indignation might pass away. For, behold, the Lord will come out from his place, in order to visit the iniquity of the inhabitant of the earth against him, and the earth will reveal its blood and will no more cover the slain. On that day, with his sword, hard and great and strong, the Lord will visit Leviathan the bar serpent, and Leviathan the twisting serpent, and will kill the assembly which is in the sea. On that day there will be singing in the vineyard of true wine. I am the God who protects it; suddenly I will give it drink. So that violence does not visit it, I will protect it by night and by day. There is no indignation in me, says the Lord almighty.

After this, let the Gospel according to Luke be read: “Jesus entered into a certain village.” When this is finished, let the singer begin in a loud voice: “Come creator spirit,” which the whole choir should sing piously.

Then let the aforementioned elders take the recluse from each side and lead him to the altar as the choir festively chants a hymn. When this is finished, let the reclus彭 genuflect three times, saying this verse: “Receive me, Lord, according to your word and I will live, and let me not be ashamed by my hope.” When this has been said three times, let him place his waxen candles upon the candelabra, and let him again sit in silence or lie prostrate. Let the priest or another person expound the lesson and Gospel to the people, enjoining them to pray for the recluse. Then let the priest, or the recluse if he is a priest, say a prayer for the recluse. Then let the aforementioned elders take the recluse from each side and lead him into his anchorhold, with them beginning this antiphon: “I will go in,” and thus let them enter the dwelling with the cross and the Thurible and the water blessed by the bishop. Then let the priest sprinkle and cense the whole house, and then let him complete the whole office of anointing, beginning the antiphon: “The Archangel Raphael entered.” And in the same manner let the priest begin all the antiphons, with the choir chanting the psalms with the same antiphons from outside the anchorhold. Likewise, let him perform the commendation of the soul, up until the imposition of the dead person on the bier, so that he does not lack this holy service when he is overtaken by death. When all of this has been done with great generation, let the tomb be opened and let the reclus彭 enter it and begin the antiphon: “This my rest,” with the chorus outside chanting the psalm, “O Lord, remember David,” with the same antiphon. Then, as the priest sprinkles a little dust over him, let him begin the antiphon: “From the earth you formed me,” with the chorus singing the psalm: “Lord, you have tried me.”

When this has been said, let the priest begin all the antiphons, with the choir chanting the psalms with the same antiphons from outside the anchorhold. Likewise, let him perform the commendation of the soul, up until the imposition of the dead person on the bier, so that he does not lack this holy service when he is overtaken by death. When all of this has been done with great generation, let the tomb be opened and let the reclus彭 enter it and begin the antiphon: “This my rest,” with the chorus outside chanting the psalm, “O Lord, remember David,” with the same antiphon. Then, as the priest sprinkles a little dust over him, let him begin the antiphon: “From the earth you formed me,” with the chorus singing the psalm: “Lord, you have tried me.”

The following material was edited by Wilson from Magdalen College MS 226, the pontifical that, as noted above, appears to be related to Vespasian. All of these texts are referenced at some point in the *Servicio Recludendi*, but they appear in Magdalen as part of different services. The first two are prayers from the burial rite, *De sepultura mortui*, mentioned at the very end of the Vespasian enclosure service.

Temeritatis quidem est, Domine, ut homo hominem, mortalis mortuum, cinis cinerem tibi Domino Deo nostro audeat commendare. Sed quia terra suscipit terram et pulsus convertitur in pulverem, donec omnis caro in suam redigatur originem, inde tuam Deus piisime lacrimabiliter quaesit, et quia illi sunt Domine dignae commendationes, ut huius famuli tui animam quam de huius mundi voragine caenulenta ducis ad patriam, Abrahae amici tui sinu recipias, et refrige rii rore perfundas. Sit ab aestuantis Gehennae truci incendio segregatus, sed quia illi sunt Domine dignae cruciatus pulpe, tu eas gratia mitissimae leniatis indulge, nec peccati recipiat vicem, sed indulgentiae tuae piam sentiat bonitatem, cumque finiti mundi termino supernum cunctis illuxerit regnum omnium sanctorum.

It is temerity indeed, O God, that a person would dare to commend a person, a mortal commend the dead, ashes commend ashes to you, Lord God, but since earth receives earth, and dust is converted into dust, while all seeds are returned to their origin, we therefore with weeping ask your pity, most holy God, that you lead the soul of this your servant from the filthy chasm of this world to his homeland, that you receive him in the bosom of your friend Abraham, and that you bathe him with the soft waters of rest. Let him be kept away from the fierce fires of seething Gehenna and be joined by your gift to blessed rest. And those things which, Lord, have merited his torture, forgive them by the grace of your most gentle mildness, and do not let him receive the vice of his sin, but let him feel the pious goodness of your pardon, and when at the end of the world he will light up the heavens, joined to the vast hosts of all your saints, let him arise again crowned with the elect at your right hand. Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Next, a much shorter prayer cited immediately after the last in the Servicium, also from the Magdalen text of De sepultura.

Deus vitae dator et humanorum corporum reparator, qui te a peccatoribus exorasti: exaudi preces quas speciali devotione pro anima famuli tui N. tibi humiliter fundimus, ut liberare eam ab inferorum cruciatibus et collocare inter agmina sanctorum tuorum digneris, veste quoque caelesti et stola immortalitis indui, et paradisi amoenitate confoveri iubeas. Per [Dominum nostrum Iesum Christum. Amen.]

God, giver of life and renewer of human bodies, you who wanted sinners to entreat you: hear the prayers which, with particular devotion, we humbly pour out to you on behalf of your servant N., that you would deign to free his soul from the sufferings of hell and place him among the flocks of your saints, and clothe him, too, with heavenly vesture and the stole of immortality, and command him to be cared for by the loveliness of paradise. Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Finally, the commendation of the soul, excerpted from the rite for the visitation of the sick (Ad visitandum infernum) in Magdalen. This prayer is referenced in the Servicium before the priest is to sprinkle dirt on the enclosed.

Tibi Domine, commendamus animam famuli tui N., ut defunctus saeculo, tibit vivat: et quae per fragilitatem mundanae conversationis peccata ad misit, tu venia misericordissimae pietatis absterge. Per [Dominum nostrum Iesum Christum. Amen.]

To you, Lord, we commend the soul of your servant N., that dying to this age, he might live to you. Whatever sins he committed through the frailty of worldliness, wash away with the grace of your most merciful holiness. Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Luke Ayers is a senior majoring in Economics. Victoria Bahr is a senior majoring in English and Ancient Mediterranean Studies. They prepared this work as part of Professor Andrew Kraebel’s seminar on Medieval Latin Literature (MDRS 3401) in Spring 2017.

NOTES
4. Ibid., 79.
5. Ibid., 83.
7. Ibid., vii.
8. Ibid., xxviii.
13. Pontifical of Magdalen, ed. Wilson, 42.
15. Ibid., 69-72.
19. See ibid., Hermits and Anchorities, 114.
20. See Licence, Hermits and Recluses, 120 and 124.
Throughout her literary career, Jane Austen regularly made use of architectural settings to embody crucial issues in her novels. Such settings in Austen’s work often function firmly within the popular attitudes of her age, serving as symbolic representations of status for her characters and operating on the associations coded by a society characterized by class tensions. For example, from her first published novel to her last, Austen makes use of the dichotomy between grand English country houses of the landed gentry and the pastoral cottages of peasants. In Sense and Sensibility, the Dashwood family’s harsh relocation from the family estate to “cottage” life unambiguously represents a class demotion central to the novel’s plot. In Persuasion, the Elliots face a similar fate, though in a more nuanced manner, when members of the working class move into Sir Walter’s Kellynch Hall estate and Anne meanwhile encounters pastoral peasant locales on her journeys to Winthrop and Lyme, signifying a blurring of boundaries between two worlds defined by their physical spaces.

In contrast, Austen’s approach to architecture, which employed contemporary intellectual and aesthetic ideas to relate more specifically to character, provides what is perhaps a more complex and fruitful way to understand the author’s general storytelling formula. In many cases, her architectural settings serve as the site of and stimulus for a pivotal shift in the heroine’s develop-
mental arc. This is clear in the two Austen novels named for the story’s most important settings: Northanger Abbey and Mansfield Park. In both cases, though these works were written at opposite ends of Austen’s career, the main character’s interaction with and reflection on the titular architectural setting comes to catalyze and represent a shift in her thinking. Not incidentally, these novels named for their settings are also those most clearly defined as Bildungsroman within Austen’s œuvre.

While there appears to be a correlation between works focusing on buildings and the emphasis of the Bildungsroman, these elements are present in all of Austen’s work. For example, though Pride and Prejudice is perhaps most famous for its iconic relationship between Elizabeth Bennet and Mr. Darcy, what makes this central plot focus so compelling is that it facilitates the heroine’s reevaluation of herself (reading Darcy’s letter forced her realize that she hadn’t “known her own mind”). At its core, Pride and Prejudice adheres to the focus on the main character’s development as a model for learning how to navigate the social world in the Age of Sensibility. A point of interest for the purposes of this paper, then, is the use of architectural setting, particularly that of Pemberley, as a key element in Elizabeth’s development.

Comparing and contrasting the cases of Northanger Abbey, Pemberley, and Mansfield Park as sites of their respective main character’s self-reflection and growth show that Austen’s interest in architecture reflects her own explorative journey. In each case, the heroine gains knowledge of both herself and the larger society through instructive interaction with these locations at the nexus of the manmade and the natural, and by analyzing her treatment of these subjects in each novel, we can also see how Austen either rejects or advocates for a Romantic worldview. While much scholarship surrounding Austen’s work acknowledges the prominent role of architecture as reflective of the novelist’s awareness of such major aesthetic themes, and others discuss the heroine’s socialization using aesthetic forms as tools in the female Bildungsroman, earlier critics do not tend to view the two as related concepts. In contrast, I argue that Austen uses built sites as devices pivotal to her heroines’ ultimate character development, effectively making such treatments into embodiments of each character’s specific coming-of-age journey, but also into a map of Austen’s development of such ideas within her narrative formula.

As her first novel, completed in 1803, it was in Northanger Abbey that Austen began to establish a pattern of using external setting as integral to a character’s interiority. Though the writing and characterization of the satirical novel are often criticized as heavy-handed, such a less-nuanced handling can be useful in understanding Austen’s development as an author. Her crafting of thematic emphasis using setting is especially evident in Northanger Abbey’s treatment of the Gothic, as the heroine’s preoccupation with romance novels is central to an obvious burlesque of the genre. In fact, here she sets a precedent for later works, with Catherine Morland’s confrontation with Northanger Abbey on her travels forcing her to confront her own assumptions and attitudes regarding society, as will be the case for Elizabeth Bennet encountering Pemberley and Fanny Price complicating and facilitating her homecoming.

As Avrom Fleishman argues, Northanger Abbey is at its heart “the story of a young lady’s development,” one that is firmly in the realm of the Bildungsroman in its “systematic exploration of the variety of forms which culture provides to constitute the individual mind—a culture including not only literature and moral dicta but esthetic norms, historiography, language, and several kinds of rhetoric.” In this context, Catherine Morland’s development centers on “making her mind up” with the “abstractions, symbols, and patterns of understanding ... in the process of cultural formation.” Catherine herself acknowledges her starting point with the statement, “And as to most matters, to say the truth, there are not many that I know my own mind about.”

To support his point, Fleishman cites the scene in which Catherine learns about the picturesque, an example demonstrating the role of architectural theory as a model of social learning. On their walk with Catherine, the Tilney’s were viewing the country with the eyes of persons accustomed to drawing, and decided on its capability of being formed into pictures, with all the eagerness of real taste. Here Catherine was quite lost. ... The little which she could understand however appeared to contradict the very few notions she had entertained on the matter before. It seemed as if a good view were no longer to be taken from the top of an high hill, and that a clear blue sky was no longer a proof of a fine day. (1015).

Fleishman uses this passage to demonstrate the idea that cultural symbols shape people’s expectations for the world: Catherine’s favoring of fair weather and a clear view are confirmation of “a lack of a terminology by which to see the countryside around her” rather than support for a basic intuition that justifies her preferences. In this situation, though, Catherine is a quick learner: “A lecture on the picturesque immediately followed,” and Catherine is easily led by Henry Tilney to accepting the picturesque as the correct mode and adapting it into her own view (1016).

While Fleishman’s focus on the picturesque as representative of learned cultural symbols (comprising “real taste”) is useful, this emphasis also allows for the demonstration of Catherine’s seemingly girlish inclinations and impressionableness. The quickness with which Catherine’s change of perspective occurs frames her as a ridiculous figure, a characterization Austen cultivates throughout the novel. Here she is easily led by an eagerness to follow the example of her new friends, driven by emotions and admiration for her
love-interest rather than by a critical assessment of the merits of the picturesque perspective. In this case, then, even though Catherine is rewarded for her quick acceptance of contemporary cultural learning, both through Henry’s admiration and by adhering to the reader’s culturally-learned acceptance of such learning as “correct,” she is still the subject of satire rather than a heroine we are encouraged to fully embrace. This suggests an ironic view of cultured society in line with the tone of the overall burlesquing, playfully critical novel. Even when women accept the systems of thought embraced and encouraged by erudite males (and reap praise from this choice), they are still subject to an underlying judgement assuming female vacuity and a lack of agency.

Nevertheless, this instance is a step forward for Catherine in the reader’s eyes, and it might be seen as a preface to Catherine’s most important learning experience, which centers on her adjusted view of reality following her interaction with Gothic architecture. As Fleishman notes, the one obvious exception to Catherine’s “unmade mind” is her enthusiasm for the Gothic. It is her reading “which gives her a set of terms by which to order—erroneously, as it happens—some of her perceptions” through which she can understand herself and the world around her, though in her “rudimentary” way.4

Catherine’s understanding of the world through the lens of the Gothic most clearly shapes her expectations and process of dealing with the space of her greatest learning, the abbey itself. In her first approach to the abbey, we can see that Catherine’s expectations are clearly governed by a taste for Romantic notions of mystery and excitement. Almost immediately, though, reality challenges her assumptions. Catherine approaches the abbey expecting

with solemn awe to afford a glimpse of its massy walls of grey stone ... with the last beams of sun playing in beautiful splendor on its high Gothic windows. But so low did the building stand, that she found herself passing through the great gates of the lodge into the very grounds of Northanger, without having discerned even a single antique chimney. (1041).

Such an opinion-changing entrance to an estate is reminiscent of the introduction to Pemberley in Pride and Prejudice, showing that the conventions Austen established in her early work should be viewed as devices that she continued to refine rather than as failed, heavy-handed experiments.

While exploration of the Gothic aesthetic is most obvious in the heroine’s preoccupation with romance novels, which is central to Austen’s burlesquing tone, rather than as a representative of a serious intellectual, aesthetic position. The reader is told in a short, declarative statement introducing the renovated section of the abbey that “All that was venerable ceased here,” suggesting a sweeping, harsh judgement by Catherine (1054). Likewise, the claim that “The new building was not only new, but declared itself to be so” suggests an indignation towards a perceived double offense, furthering an exaggeration of an unforgetting attitude and judgement (1054). This passage also introduces a moralistic approach to appraising the surroundings and all that it represents, as the word “venerable” connotes something worthy of respect. Therefore, the following account of what is decidedly not venerable becomes a reflection of Catherine’s morals and character in opposition to the tastes of her counterpart, General Tilney.

The opposition here between the tastes of General Tilney and Catherine clearly corresponds to the era’s theoretical dichotomy between the aesthetics of Neoclassicism and Gothic Revivalism, a debate with which Austen’s audience would have been familiar, suggesting that Austen is consciously using these opposing tendencies regarding architecture and design as markers of larger opposing worldviews. The renovations of General Tilney embody a Neoclassicism representing contemporary modernity, particularly in its repeatedly mentioned features that “declared” its element of distinct “newness,” showing the importance of ostentatious display in the General’s motives (1054). In addition, the General’s renovations are defined by an overarching practicality; the renovated building was “intended only for offices,” suggesting a plan of ordered designation of rooms for a single purpose (1054). The office space, intended as a male domain where business ventures are carried out, embodies the Neoclassical movement’s primary proponents—the more established, powerful elite already at the top of the social hierarchy.

In light of this characterization, Catherine’s sympathy for Gothic tendencies comes to denote a distinctly female viewpoint here, making her a rep-
representative of a socially subordinate and less respected group within her late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century society. The appreciation of the Gothic is expressed as central to Catherine’s character throughout the novel, and it is a continuation of proclivities readers have already seen in her keen interest in reading popular literature such as The Mysteries of Udolpho. Austen acknowledges the opinion of many of her contemporaries who discredited such romantic novels by making Catherine a caricature of the “feeble” female mind. In an earlier chapter, Austen says that Catherine’s “passion for ancient edifices was next in degree to her passion for Henry Tilney,” effectively equating her admiration of Gothic architecture with a frivolous, youthful infatuation (1030). The General also expresses an appraisal of Catherine tied to her gender by assuming that she must be pleased by the “accommodations and comforts, by which the labours of her inferiors were softened,” which projects a compassion for others and self-sacrificing politeness associated with women onto her character (1054).

On the other hand, the excessive emotionality associated with the Gothic should not be solely considered a trapping of Catherine’s identity as a stereotypical frivolous young woman. The educated reader of the time may have just as easily regarded Catherine’s extreme reaction to the renovations as aligned with the views of Gothic-leaning architectural theorists in the larger cultural context, since enthusiasm for the romanticized Gothic as an escape from the world had by then become an acceptable preference of the gentry. The passage further complicates simple, conventional judgement of these characters based on their genders with the emphasis on the “vanity” of the General based in the “arrangement of his offices” (1054). The idea of vanity suggests a moral fault in this elite group, a fault just as characterized by separating one’s mental world from one’s surroundings as are the inattentive fantasies of the Gothic. Furthermore, the language of economy in this passage brings to mind the recurring issue in Austen’s novels of a harsh economy of courtship and social prejudices dependent on wealth that dictates a woman’s station in life. The mention of “domestic economy,” “labour,” and the “value” of the Gothic all suggest different modes of assigning worth and in turn raises the idea of equally valid worldviews and value systems in a world that unfairly favors one over the other, rather than a simple assertion that the Neoclassical male view is inherently superior to a female Gothic one. Austen seems to acknowledge that the former view is not more correct but simply more powerful, a reality that leads one to read her work as simple satire aligned with this system in the first place. These issues set the story up for a more complicated reading of Catherine’s impending recognition of her own views, a realization which leads to greater self-awareness.

Austen’s evocation of the Gothic and Neoclassic tastes is thus not simply meant to provide laughable characterizations of a mistaken (Gothic-loving) versus the correct (anti-Gothic) worldview, but it rather serves to acknowledge the realities of the society in which this tendency exists. And her message is not so juvenile as the still-developing writing style may suggest. In fact, the issues raised here show that Austen engages with highly relevant, defining concepts of the nineteenth century while furthering her own highly attentive social commentary in Northanger Abbey, just as in her more widely-respected works.

In Austen’s later novels, the heroines are more formed in their opinions from the start, requiring a subtler sort of Bildungsroman. If Catherine Morland needed to make up her mind, then Elizabeth Bennet needed to learn not to make her mind up so quickly. Fleishman notes that Catherine “finds that she has made her mind up not, like Elizabeth Bennet, on the basis of insufficient evidence, but on the wrong kind of evidence altogether.”% Elizabeth, usually accepted as the Austen character most deserving of the title of a proper heroine, begins the novel characterized by a cleverness and quickness. This is what makes her appealing in many ways (and it is where she differs from Catherine), but it is also something that she must overcome in order to fully develop her abilities of fair and careful judgment. The change in her thinking is most clear in her opinion of Darcy, a shift in which the architectural setting plays an important role.

The picturesque is invoked early in the novel, with Elizabeth’s direct reference to the “charmingly group’d” image of the “picturesque” while on a walk, offering support for Austen’s—and Elizabeth’s—knowledge of this elite landscape tradition (239). Here it demonstrates Elizabeth’s proclivities towards cleverness and judgement. Her laughter while saying this lends her a somewhat ridiculing tone regarding the party led by Darcy, suggesting that she does not actually take to heart the picturesque ideals of moderated evaluation and an open appreciation of beauty. Elizabeth’s visit to and appraisal of the Pemberley estate in Chapter 1 of Volume 3 represents a key turning point in a development of her judgement, allowing Austen to cleverly utilize a setting embodying the sensibilities of her society in order to ultimately question them. Through Elizabeth’s experience of Pemberley, Austen presents the aesthetic concept of the picturesque as a model for the proper judgement of character according to moral atmosphere of the Age of Sensibility.

Though Elizabeth’s favorable impression upon her tour of Pemberley may appear to support a straightforward acceptance of social values in which the landed gentry reigns supreme and others should aspire to such material wealth and social standing, it is in fact part of a larger argument for the complication of such norms. At first blush, the description of the “large, well-proportioned,”
“handsomely fitted up” dining-parlor and the other rooms’ “furniture suitable to the fortune of their proprietor” seems to drive Elizabeth’s favorable opinion through an admiration of material wealth (342). However, putting this scene into the larger context of the story suggests that such a viewing is oversimplified. When considering that this interior description serves as a synecdoche for the estate of Pemberley as a whole, and ultimately for Mr. Darcy himself—in fact, the description of the “large, well-proportioned room, handsomely fitted” corresponds to the house as a “large, handsome stone building” and Austen’s embodied description of Darcy—we see that this positive impression is in marked contrast to Elizabeth’s previous prejudice against Darcy’s character.

Furthermore, the description of his home’s interior as having “less of splendor, and more real elegance, than the furniture of Rosings,” situates Mr. Darcy in an implicit comparison to Catherine de Bourgh (342). In typical Austenian fashion, the placement of different characters in opposition as unexpected foils illuminates a new conception of each of them: in the face of the blantly caricatured Lady, the idea of Darcy as a stereotypically proud, rich gentleman loses its potency, and he begins to seem like more of a complete and multi-dimensional human worthy of Elizabeth’s regard. At the same time, Austen suggests through free indirect discourse that Darcy possesses an interior mind that contrasts with surface appearances, stating that “Elizabeth saw, with admiration of his taste, that it was neither gaudy nor uselessly fine” (342)—his taste, here, seems to signify an authentic intellect (a classic “real elegance”) rather than adherence to superficial fashion.

This focus on an aesthetic of authenticity is in line with the idea of the picturesque landscape, also represented quite directly in the description of Pemberley’s grounds. For example, Elizabeth’s earlier admiration of the landscape—“where natural beauty had been so little counteracted by an awkward taste”—reflects the landscape sensibility of the English garden, which placed value on the accentuation of a given locale rather than an imposition of order (342). At the heart of the picturesque is the concept of mental presence in the temporal and spatial moment, based on the intellectual rationality of Enlightenment and a Romantic attention to emotional sensation created by one’s physical surroundings. Therefore, the picturesque process of seeing acts as a useful metaphor for the type of careful, unbiased, and multi-level judgement of character (a mode perhaps best summarized as “sensible”) that Austen advocates for with Elizabeth’s reassessment here.

While the tour scene takes place indoors, much of it is devoted to a virtual experience of the entire landscape, not only through the use of synecdoche, but also through the emphasis on the act of seeing. As Elizabeth looks out the window at the landscape, Austen emphasizes the idea of a whole only completely seen through multiple viewpoints. For example, “the hill from which they had descended” took on a new meaning as “a beautiful object” rather than a space through the experience of distance (342). The description of “these objects ... taking different position ... from every window” as Elizabeth passed through each room is highly reminiscent of the picturesque ideal’s emphasis on changing vistas as comprising a complete temporal–spatial experience, while the earlier mention of her mind “too full for conversation” suggests that a fully meditative observational experience can counter her characteristic inclination towards quickness (342). More significant, though, is the idea that Elizabeth is now seeing beyond her immediate surroundings through this experience, enjoying a full “prospect” that connotes imagined possibilities. In this way, we see that Elizabeth is learning to view things outside of her own subjective prejudices and to imagine others’ perspectives. For example, she later “fixed [Darcy’s] eyes upon herself” when contemplating his painted portrait, effectively seeing things through his eyes (345).

With the language and imagery used to describe Elizabeth’s experience of viewing and interpreting Pemberley, Austen sets up her reassessment of Mr. Darcy and, by extension, her assessment of herself as firmly within the picturesque mode. With the invocation of the picturesque mode, the use of architectural setting effectively suggests the art of drawing, with its emphasis on careful looking and framing. This is especially fitting, since Elizabeth’s lack of drawing experience is mentioned throughout the novel. Her experience with Pemberley represents, then, a new skill that allows her to correctly navigate the social world as a proper young woman. Just as Elizabeth learns the importance of meditation on the judgement of others as a means of personal and interpersonal growth and practices the art of seeing beyond caricature through careful observation, it seems that Austen’s reader is presented with this message through a parallel lesson through an exercise in close reading, perhaps an element in our own readerly Bildungsroman. The novel can thus be seen as serving as a tool for understanding oneself and others in a manner in line with the Age of Sensibility, balanced somewhere between the strict rationale of the Enlightenment and the sublime emotionality of Romanticism. In this way, Austen offers an alternative to the improper overly–Romantic Gothic literature satirized in Northanger Abbey.

While Northanger Abbey and Pride and Prejudice both explore the developmental aspects of characters by teaching a skill of perception that changes the heroine’s mind, Mansfield Park is clearest in its emphasis on a distinctly female Bildungsroman journey. While Catherine makes up her mind and Elizabeth changes hers, Austen follows the story of Fanny Price as she grows into herself. The setting of Mansfield Park, though not as fully described or even addressed as Austen’s other famous estates, still plays an important role. While one might expect travel to be the catalyst for growing into oneself, as is the case of Cath-
erie and Elizabeth’s visits to the homes of their romantic interests, the architectural setting in Fanny’s story facilitates a mental homecoming more than a physical one. As Nikolaus Pevsner notes, Portsmouth is the subject of little description in terms of architecture or landscape, a reticence which may be due to Austen’s considerable familiarity with this area compared to her more thoroughly described imagined landscapes.\(^9\) Instead, it is revealed that her true home is Mansfield Park, the stage for the story that plays out.

This is the approach to the novel taken by Matthew Taylor, who, by utilizing a framework from Shakespeare criticism, asserts that the outdoor landscapes in *Mansfield Park* serve as stages where romantic rivalries take place.\(^9\) Though Taylor focuses on renovations to outdoor landscapes as modes of social competition and argues that “outdoorsmanship in Mansfield Park always boils down to self-exhibition and competition,” the idea of the physical setting as a stage can also be extended to fit into Austen’s pattern of invoking different artforms through architecture.\(^10\) We can extend the stage metaphor to the entirety of Mansfield Park itself, with its implications of growth inherent in its name giving a hint at Austen’s intent to frame the estate as a place of growth. In this novel, the theatricality and social artifice of characters such as the Crawfords serve as a foil to the moralism of Fanny. For example, she is the only one hesitant to participate in the play: “she could not endure the idea of it” (519). The idea of endurance in the face of such artifice is important, since this action facilitates Fanny’s growth. Rather than changing herself by utilizing the tools of the gentry’s many artifices, she instead uses theatre as a tool to define herself against others through her refusal to participate.

This instance of Fanny’s moral position showing through is representative of her overall character development. Fanny remains a relatively passive actor in her own story, and her growth is characterized by a process of enduring spectatorship. In this way, Fanny represents a distinctly feminine heroine in an alternative to the traditional action-focused male *Bildungsroman*. In accordance with this approach, Austen presents Fanny as an exemplar of a distinctly feminine morality among the larger theater of a problematic and patriarchal society. In fact, this novel stands out in Austen’s body of work as perhaps the most ineluctable in her overall character development. Fanny remains a relatively passive actor in her own story, and her growth is characterized by a process of enduring spectatorship. In this way, Fanny represents a distinctly feminine heroine in an alternative to the traditional action-focused male *Bildungsroman*. In accordance with this approach, Austen presents Fanny as an exemplar of a distinctly feminine morality among the larger theater of a problematic and patriarchal society. In fact, this novel stands out in Austen’s body of work as perhaps the most ineluctable in her overall character development.

\(5\) See, for example, Catherine’s discussions with Mr. Thorpe and Henry Tilney regarding her

narrative. Rather than adapting to the world by learning new methods of artistic judgement, Fanny realizes her development by growing into herself with relatively little external imposition as she observes the story surrounding her. In this way, Austen inverts conventions to create a distinctly female *Bildungsroman*, working within but also subverting the norms of Romanticism, with an argument for the merits of subjective and personal judgement of the scenes playing out rather than adopting a codified approach of aesthetic criticism.

Overall, by considering these three works and Austen’s engagement with both architecture and literature, visual arts (through the drawing-focused pictures), and theater, we might identify this preoccupation with artforms as an integral part of Austen’s characteristic formula. Rather than separate elements, these ideas and artforms are intertwined, showing that Austen engaged in a thorough and holistic consideration and criticism of the cultural and social trends of her time. Tracing the development of Austen’s work throughout her career, it may seem as though she moves from a Neoclassical/Enlightenment worldview to one embracing Romanticism, reaching an aesthetic of Sensibility as these crossed in *Pride and Prejudice*. However, careful attention to her treatment of architecture, which simultaneously embraces and criticizes these opposing worldviews by observing a dichotomy between them, reveals that Austen’s own journey regarding the *Bildungsroman* was more complex. This process plays out in her use of architectural spaces that are at once domestic and worldly, often reflecting the complexities of each main character’s growth. Though her work may have become subtler across her career, Austen remained an intentional and observant critic of society, acknowledging the complicated role of gender and cultural norms in shaping one’s story of personal growth.

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NOTES

4. Ibid., 650.
5. See, for example, Catherine’s discussions with Mr. Thorpe and Henry Tilney regarding her
On January 6, 1941, a mere eleven months before the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor dragged the United States into war, President Franklin Delano Roosevelt gave his eighth State of the Union address. In this speech, Roosevelt articulated the Four Freedoms that constituted his vision for a peaceful, democratic world order: freedom of speech, freedom of religion, freedom from want, and freedom from fear. These freedoms were an essential component of FDR’s proclamation that “Freedom means the supremacy of human rights everywhere.” While this idea became important to the rhetoric of the Allies during World War II, it revealed an unsettling split in American policy abroad and the domestic treatment of African Americans and other minorities.

Indeed, while FDR promoted his four freedoms abroad, these freedoms were not fully enjoyed by all men and women in America. Specifically, African Americans did not enjoy many of FDR’s espoused freedoms, with their treatment in the South being especially heinous. By championing these values, Roosevelt opened up America to charges of hypocrisy from African American intellectuals, the African American press, and foreign powers. These criticisms formed the basis upon which African American intellectuals and black presses, during and after World War II, advocated for civil liberties and civil rights. By seizing upon FDR’s four freedoms, African American intellectuals and presses advocated for the dismantling of Jim Crow, comparing the Jim Crow South to Nazi Germany, and they seized upon differences between America’s stated...
ideals and its imperfect reality to support the emergence of a fairer, more democratic system built upon the supremacy of human rights.

These hypocrisies, inherent in America’s positioning of itself as a human rights champion, allowed African American thinkers, influenced by government indifference to Ethiopia’s plight during its war with Italy, to sympathize with and defend Japan’s ascendance as a triumph of colored races over western colonizers. For example, W.E.B. DuBois, when asked to support the idea that American foreign policy in Asia was “evolutionary and pacific” while “Japanese policy [was] militaristic and aggressive,” responded that Americans regarded the Japanese as “lesser breeds” and that America wanted Japan to be its industrial and commercial backyard. Furthermore, DuBois, remarking that he did not remember “Mr. Stimson’s protest on Ethiopia,” revealed that the lack of an Ethiopian intervention had created bitterness and anger among African American elites. This bitterness towards American inaction in Ethiopia made it easier for African Americans to find common cause with Japan, which had upended western dominance in the Asian Pacific. Yet Japan was an inaccurate analogue for the Jim Crow South, which left Germany, the other main member of the Axis, to be the chosen analogue for the racial hierarchy of the American South in the African American press.

Germany, likely noticing the ambivalent attitudes towards Japan in the African American press, treated African American soldiers and African soldiers mildly in the hopes of dividing America’s home-front. Indeed, Germany even made use of “Negro Spies,” an idea which, in light of their racial ideologies, gave the impression that they were trying to gain sympathy from the American black populace. However, as Larry Greene remarks, Germany, with its virulently racist ideology, made a better mirror for criticizing the prejudicial Jim Crow system than Japan did. As such, Germany’s efforts came to nothing. Indeed, some of the earliest criticisms of German fascism noted that laws imposed upon Jews in Germany bore remarkable similarities to Jim Crow. These similarities rendered Germany’s attempts to court favorable opinions among African Americans ineffective. Indeed, for African American presses Germany became a go-to comparison used to criticize Jim Crow.

Over the course of the war, the black press conflated the battle against Nazism with the battle against Jim Crow, giving birth to the Double V Campaign, which advocated for victory both abroad and at home. This campaign’s name originated in a letter by the African American soldier, James G. Thompson, who wrote that:

The V for Victory Campaign sign which was being displayed prominently throughout the Allied Countries should be adopted by African Americans as a “Double VV” with the first V for victory over our enemies from within, the second V for Victory over our enemies from within. For surely those who perpetrate these ugly prejudices here are seeking to destroy our democratic form of government just as surely as the axis forces. By equating the the Axis Powers with segregation, this letter pointed out that both European fascism and southern fascism posed a clear and present danger to democratic institutions. As such, the Double V Campaign cloaked itself in the soaring morality espoused by FDR, who articulated a worldview contrary to Nazism and its principles. Specifically, African Americans embraced the idea that “Freedom means the Supremacy of Human Rights Everywhere.” Further, while they embraced FDR’s four freedoms, they added a fifth, the right to be free from segregation. By adding this freedom, African Americans modified and readapted the four freedoms to advance both a domestic human rights struggle and an international one, and they asserted that America’s self-proclaimed mantle as a human rights defender required fighting domestic human rights violations.

The Double V campaign reoriented the four freedoms to meld together two enemies of African Americans: the crushing oppression of Jim Crow and Hitler’s Aryan supremacist, genocidal, German regime. In his poem, “Beaumont to Detroit: 1943,” for example, Langston Hughes wondered, “how long I got to fight / BOTH HITLER AND JIM CROW.” Commenting that “You tell me that hitler / Is a mighty bad man. / I guess he took lessons / From the ku klux klan,” Hughes painted American white supremacy as an antecedent for Hitler’s doctrine of Aryan superiority. Moreover, Hughes’s typographic rendering of both the “ku klux klan” and “hitler” indicates that both groups shared the hue of white supremacy, and that both were unworthy of capitalization in a world where Roosevelt’s stated ideals should reign. Ultimately, using the rhetoric that arose from both Roosevelt’s criticism of Nazi Germany and his stated ideological positions, African American leaders lambasted southern politicians and institutions and pushed for desegregation of national industries.

This campaign revealed that by fighting oppression abroad, while maintaining domestic systems of oppression, America opened itself to caustic criticisms from the contemporary black presses and leaders. These leaders, while recognizing Germany was the greater current threat, hesitatingly compared the conditions of the Jim Crow South to Nazi Germany. Indeed, writers such as Hughes stated that “segregation, [and] separate blood banks” were “so closely related to Hitlerism practice” that “if we [marched] into Berlin playing DIXIE in our hearts, instead of THE STAR SPANGLED BANNER, as far as colored people [were] concerned” it would be the same as if Hitler stayed in power. Here Hughes implies that there was no difference between the leadership of Hitler and leadership of the Jim Crow South. According to this portrayal, the
South and Hitler’s Nazi Germany were cut from the same (white) cloth. In the eyes of many African Americans, Dixie and Nazi Germany were indistinguishable. This painted racism as a global problem that, in the spirit of the Double V Campaign, needed to be defeated at home and abroad.

The notion that American racism was similar to the Nazis’ racial beliefs was expounded in the *Kansas City Plaindealer*, which stated that “Hitler ... Rankin, Bilbo et al.” should be put in blackface so that they can “experience the indignities which are the daily lot of the American Negro.” This statement showed that these African Americans felt that if white people, including Hitler, dealt with the conditions black people faced they would gain a greater measure of humanity. The crux of this argument was that once white supremacists suffered the indignities of oppressed populations, they might be able to realize the follies of their racism. Essentially, this rhetoric built up the idea that African Americans had to undergo conditions that most white Americans would balk at. Two years earlier, the same newspaper advanced a similar argument in response to another editorial:

> [Americans] would have to work where they were told to work ... children would be taught what Hitler wanted them taught ... [Americans] would be arrested by any official flunkie, with or without reason .... Our officials killed or jailed ... [Americans] would lose every vestige of humanity relegated to a place of inferiority. These images (paraphrasing the other editorial) convey what white Americans believed would happen to them if Germany conquered the United States. Responding to these fears, the *Kansas City Plaindealer* cuttifyingly remarked that this “picturesque description reflects in some respects the condition of the American Negro under the present setup of discrimination, segregation, disenfranchisement, lynching, [and] injustice.” This specific reaction showed that African American writers did not viscerally fear the consequences of losing to a white supremacist nation. They already lived in one. This African American editorialist accordingly had little sympathy for white Americans who feared losing to Nazi Germany. This characterization of the Jim Crow South revealed that, in sum, African Americans viewed discrimination against Jews in Europe as similar to the persecution undergone by African Americans during Jim Crow. These comparisons between the South and Nazi Germany extended, even more cuttingly, into the realm of the personal and structural. Personal comparisons between Southern politicians and German officials revealed that African American presses and intellectuals viewed the actions of southern governors (and Jim Crow’s existence) as analogous to Hitler’s Germany. Accordingly, these comparisons were quite caustic. For example, the *New York Amsterdam News* put out an article called “Talmadge Copies Hitler,” comparing the incumbent executive governor of Georgia, Eugene Talmadge, to the German dictator. Further, the *New York Amsterdam News* noted that Hitler “burned books and purged all people who believed in the equality of man,” while Talmadge also “burned books and purged more than 1,000 teachers.” “Hitler stated that Negroes are born half ape,” while Talmadge “stated that negroes are inferior.” In essence, the *New York Amsterdam News* systematically built up a case showing that Talmadge and Hitler were two sides of a single coin forged in the fires of racial hatred. The newspaper implied that, in the eyes of African American journalists, the southern viewpoints did not differ noticeably from Nazi viewpoints. Thus, the black press argued that defeating Nazi ideology would require fighting its cousin, southern white supremacy, at home. In this analogy, Eugene Talmadge became an American Hitler.

Accordingly, when Talmadge lost reelection, the *Chicago Defender* hailed the defeat of this “Fascist Governor,” who created a “poll tax dictatorship,” as “the progress of Democracy.” This display towards Talmadge, especially the characterization of his “poll tax dictatorship,” revealed that the African American press, or at least the *Chicago Defender*, was unafraid to paint Talmadge’s Georgia as a parallel Third Reich. The *Chicago Defender* rhetorically transformed Talmadge’s Georgia into Germany and specifically showed that Nazi authoritarianism already existed in the United States. The *Chicago Defender* thus illuminated the jarring dichotomy of a country that claimed to fight dictators abroad while enabling dictators at home.

This inconsistency was brought to sharp relief by the poll tax, which the *Chicago Defender* called the “main instrument by which reactionary congressmen maintain their power.” The poll tax was a discriminatory measure that required payment in order for someone to vote, predominantly hurting poorer southerners and meant to prevent African Americans from voting. Indeed, during World War II, more people voted for two congressmen from Rhode Island than voted for the 32 combined representatives from Mississippi, Alabama, Georgia, and South Carolina. In such an environment, black presses fearlessly criticized southern leaders of states that maintained poll taxes, calling the Governor of Alabama, Frank Dixon, for example, the “Alabama Hitler” because of his support for poll taxes. This derogatory nickname revealed that African American intellectuals and leaders viewed the poll tax as a tool of tyranny.

In a similar vein, when an anti-poll tax bill failed, the *Chicago Defender* asserted that its defeat was a victory for fascism. Poll taxes, due to their regressive nature and ability to restrict voting rights, were used widely by southern leaders to maintain southern white supremacy. This created another avenue in which the Jim Crow South mirrored Nazi Germany. In essence, poll taxes deprived minority populations of power and allowed the majority to trample civil liberties, which created a kind of dictatorship of the majority easily com-
pared with Nazi Germany’s, which oppressed the Jews and other minorities. The South’s mechanisms of repression shared, in the eyes of the African American press, many similarities with the race laws of the German Reich, which had in fact borrowed elements of its race laws from America.

Further, while Talmadge and Dixon met with harsh criticisms for their states’ similarities with Nazi Germany, they were merely two among the many southern politicians who faced intense criticism throughout the war, e.g., Theodore Bilbo, a Mississippi Senator, and John Rankin, a congressman known to be a “Negrophobe,” were frequently lambasted by the African American press. The always-cutting Langston Hughes remarked that these two “talk just like Hitler about Negroes and Jews, [while] other senators remain silent.”26 This criticism implied that people like Hitler, Rankin and Bilbo flourished while others remained quiet, also indicting the so-called moderates who tolerated Rankin and Bilbo.

Criticisms of these moderates and the white supremacists they empowered often took on religious undertones. For example, Earl Conrad, a writer for the Chicago Defender, described Bilbo and similar southern congressmen as “Christless spiritless Hollow Infidels … who have sought to restore sectionalism and White supremacy to the mainstream of American Life.”27 Conrad shamed senators who, while claiming moderation, refused to condemn the racism and extremism of their southern colleagues, effectively condoning the actions of these “Infidels.” The acerbic language in this column used religious imagery to portray segregation as heretical and its proponents as false prophets set against a righteous natural order and attempting to instill their views across the South. Conrad also called these figures “Neo-confederates” who possess more “hatred, bigotry and danger … than Hitler,” and he thus invoked America’s discriminatory history and a “special style American fascism” that predated Hitler. Conrad called on this tradition to insinuate that while Germany had been defeated only two months earlier, America was still fighting the war against fascism, specifically the oppression of African Americans that predated World War II.

By calling for a unified war against fascism both at home and abroad, African American leaders and newspapers, as Thomas Sugrue notes, saw their mission as a crusade which united black people against the evils of Jim Crow, fascism, and segregation.28 However, while African Americans fought against fascism abroad, Jim Crow was a more durable figure, one that took more time to overcome. Activists accordingly focused on segregation. In 1940, for example, A. Phillip Randolph, who led the brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, began calling for a march on Washington.29 During a speech he made stumping for this march, Randolph advocated “the integration of Negroes in the Armed forces” and “for the abolition of Jim Crowism in all government departments and defense employment.” This clarion call urged African Americans to advocate for full inclusion in fields critical to national defense before and after the war. While the march was going to occur before the United States entered World War II, America was already acting as an “arsenal of democracy,” providing war materials to Great Britain in its fight against the Nazis.29 A united front to support Great Britain, whose navy Roosevelt considered important to America’s national defense, was essential. This gave African American civil rights activists unique leverage to advocate for desegregation in the defense industry.

Understanding that African Americans had this unique leverage to press for desegregation in the defense industry, Randolph stated:

If American democracy will not defend its defenders; if American democracy will not protect its protectors; if American democracy will not give jobs to its toilers because of race or color; if American democracy will not insure equality of opportunity, freedom and justice to its citizens, black and white, it is a hollow mockery and belies the principles for which it is supposed to stand.30

Randolph cut to the core of America’s hypocrisy in claiming to fight for freedom when it did not fully support equal opportunities for all Americans. By pointedly remarking that America should be helping everyone, regardless of race, Randolph implied that this duty was not being met. Randolph suggested that American democracy itself was not worth defending until African Americans “secured equal participation in [the] national defense,” that is, until segregation was ended, and he thus tied the struggle for desegregation to the institution of democracy itself.

By connecting the struggle against segregation to democratic institutions, Randolph challenged FDR, “a great humanitarian and Idealist,” to live up to his soaring rhetoric. Specifically, he seems to have in mind FDR’s idealistic claims that “freedom means the supremacy of Human Rights everywhere,” that democracy was “the most humane … [form] of human society,” and that, as such, America’s democratic nature allowed all people to find “a life new in Freedom” within its borders.31 In essence, FDR suggested that America’s democratic freedoms should be enjoyed by all. Randolph, by remarking that segregation and Jim Crow had transformed American democracy into “a hollow mockery” of itself, challenged FDR to ensure that his statements were more than just rhetoric.32 Randolph thus showed that, by fighting the Nazis in the name of protecting democracy, Roosevelt left himself vulnerable to attacks from marginalized communities demanding equal participation in American life.

Further, grounding his argument in a uniquely African American patriotism, Randolph rooted his call in the actions of “Denmark Vessey, Gabriel Prosser, Harriet Tubman, and Frederick Douglass.” By evoking historic civil
rights activists, Randolph centered his call for desegregation within a long civil rights tradition that united African Americans. In doing so, he transformed his call for a march on Washington into a movement that continued the work of previous activists. When combined with his appeals to Roosevelt’s idealism, this speech cloaked activism against segregation in a patriotism that was rooted in both the past struggles against slavery and the continuing struggle for civil rights and liberties.

Regardless of its possible final outcome, Roosevelt’s administration was nervous about the prospects of Randolph’s march going forward and the dangers it presented. Specifically, they were afraid the march would lead to violence. The Roosevelt administration met with Randolph to prevent the march from occurring. Following this meeting, President Roosevelt issued Executive Order 8802, establishing that there should be full participation in the national defense program by all citizens of the United States regardless of race, creed, color, or national origin, in the firm belief that the democratic way of life within the Nation can be defended successfully only with the help and support of all groups within its border. Whether due to pragmatism or idealism, Roosevelt conceded to some of Randolph’s demands. Further, by using language that emphasized American unity, Roosevelt cultivated an inclusive sense of national unity that starkly contrasted with the exclusive national identity promoted in Nazi Germany. In effect, this projected an image of an ideal America, where all Americans were included and needed to promote the common good, in stark contrast to Nazi Germany’s persecution of Jews and other minorities. The executive order was not only a concession to civil rights activists but a rebuke to Nazi ideologies. Of course, this executive order would have been meaningless without a way to enforce it. The order accordingly established “a committee on Fair Employment” practices, which “would enforce Executive Order 8802’s provisions.” This committee received and investigated “complaints of discrimination” that violated “the provisions of [the order],” and it could “take appropriate steps to redress” grievances. This committee represented a victory for Randolph.

By establishing this commission, and giving it the power to resolve conflicts, Roosevelt showed that the African American community successfully could pressure him to put his rhetoric about the supremacy of human rights into practice domestically for all Americans. This illustrated that America’s pragmatic needs in the war gave civil rights activists a powerful bargaining position, based on the recognition that a strong national defense needed what the Chicago Defender called “a free, happy, and united people.” By withholding unity until FDR rectified discrimination in the defense industry, civil rights activists forced concessions from his administration. These concessions provided African Americans with measurable victories against what was portrayed, at least by the comparisons made of the Jim Crow South, as a domestic Reich.

World War II invigorated the civil rights movement. By giving African Americans and white Americans a common enemy, it provided African Americans a proxy for the Jim Crow South—Nazism—that white Americans opposed. When discussing the evils of Jim Crow, African American leaders and presses quickly drew comparisons between southern white supremacy and Jim Crow. These caustic, acerbic attacks on the southern institution of Jim Crow, which compared it to Nazi Germany, unified into a campaign against fascism both at home and abroad and allowed African American leaders to hold Roosevelt to his assertions that America was a champion of “human rights everywhere.” African Americans thus secured victories like the desegregation of the national defense industry, which would eventually be followed by the military’s desegregation. Ultimately, World War II strengthened the civil rights movement by giving civil rights activists and white Americans a common enemy, which increased white sympathy, at least in some corners, with the African American cause. World War II was thus a watershed moment that, by creating this universal enemy, gave birth to a stronger civil rights movement, which could secure immediate victories and which continued to advocate for domestic civil rights long after World War II ended.

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NOTES
5 Plummer, Rising Wind, 77.
On June 15, 1574, in Greenwich, Queen Elizabeth I delivered an address enforcing statutes of apparel, lamenting that “the excess of apparel and the superfluity of unnecessary foreign wares thereto belonging now of late years is grown by sufferance to such an extremity that the manifest decay of the whole realm generally is likely to follow.” In response to such apparent decay, Elizabeth’s sumptuary laws tailored clothing to meet rigid restrictions within her court. These laws thus created a visual rhetoric in which embellishments functioned as the materialization of both a spoken limitation on class-related self-presentation and an unspoken lexicon of ambitious hierarchical extravagance. As Elizabeth meticulously named within each and every statute the pedigree of those who would qualify for exceptions to the rules of specific dress-codes, the purpose of her sumptuary laws became clear: to define a social hierarchy in order to maintain control. Elizabeth’s obvious goals were to assert her power as a feminine, authoritarian monarch and to exercise control of her subjects. As she grappled with the anxieties of emergent modernity and the controversy of being a female monarch, Elizabeth’s reign focused primarily on maintaining appearance—a means of governance ruled by an obsession with self-display—to enforce political stability.

On the surface, the sumptuary statutes attempted to restrict expenditure on foreign fashions and extravagance out of fear of the rhetorical power ornamentation carried—a language of sartorial economics that should only be spoken and understood by those who need to look the part. The confusion of

Slutty Embellishments:
Elizabethan Fashion and Projections of Decadence in Marlowe’s Hero and Leander

Brian Holmes
stations implied in the possibility of a commoner indulging in the fashion of an Elizabethan courtier requires someone to tell people what to wear: superficial differentiation is required for maintaining a social hierarchy. Ann Rosalind Jones and Peter Stallybrass point to Phillip Stubbes’s Anatomy of Abuses (1583) as bridging the idea of clothing as superficial indulgence and the depth of hegemonic disruption that such superficiality produces. Stubbes agrees with Elizabeth that the act of overindulging is a base sin of sumptuousness and an unaffordable strain on economy, but he considers the very non-necessity of clothing more dangerous because clothing prints its meaning onto a wearer. That is, clothes “transnature” their wearer: they “give a nature to what previously had [none], [turning] the virtuous into the vicious, the strong into the weak, the male into the female, the godly into the satanic,” and the nun into the whore. They create a depth that exceeds a personalized gown fitting: clothes become a second skin, which molds itself to a skull, warranting Stubbes’s reservations of “sumptuous dress as the proper dignity of high office.”

Clothing must be considered as an investiture, livery that provides the literal form a person was allotted—their “shape, a social function, a ‘depth’.”

Although livery is not an obvious concern of Christopher Marlowe’s Hero and Leander, the Elizabethan poem’s refusal to adhere to sumptuary law exposes anxieties about the relation between dress and social identity. I wish to trace the connections between clothing and ideas about social control that the poem explores: to navigate the dialogic threads that initiate a kind of proto-modernism in the poem, like Hero dressing in whorish purple when she should not. In the midst of the vestarian crisis over clerical dress, Hero’s fashion pairs her with the likes of Archbishop Parker, whose desire for the clergy’s dressing in vestments and square caps was “attacked [by anti-vesterians] as the materialization of the Whore of Babylon.” This quality of clothing should only be expected from a royal sponsor, which implicates Hero in her obstinacy toward subscribing to the apparel statutes of Elizabeth’s England. If clothes both name and carry socio-economic value, then Hero’s garments properly fashioned her into a “Venus nunne.” That is, her clothing in the poem exposes a tension between conformity and its subversion. The economic currency of Hero’s clothing is weightier than her morality, directly correlating with the ultimately failed attempt to falsely accessorize her as a lady of the court: the lavish attire does not cover the “sinner” that wears them.

In response to such impositions, it seems that Hero assumes a satiric role in Marlowe’s poem, wearing the kind of over-embellished costumes that Elizabeth was known for in her later years, and thus representing a facet of cultural decadence—a dramatized decline of order. This assumption of cultural decadence seems to be the very point on which Marlowe’s Hero and Leander pivots, deriving its beginning tension from Hero’s sumptuous attire and ending in her deadly nudity. Reading the poem from this perspective, I argue, the estranged pastoral description of Hero’s garments sets up the decadent complexities that subsequently unfold: Hero’s already sumptuous clothing is shed from her virgin body in tandem with her increasing lust as Leander attempts to expose her to carnal knowledge. The progression of her promiscuity terminates with a failed aubade that implies, instead of an expected regeneration, her moral degeneration: the eternal damnation of losing the will to live. Rather than attempting to categorize Marlowe as a modernist, then, I am examining the concept of embellishment in Hero and Leander—both literally on Hero’s clothing and descriptively through Marlowe’s writing—as a symptom of breaking from the tradition of categorization altogether, to refuse to limit the potential of a text as a living, breathing document.

A postmodern historicism unsews the early modern period from the conceptual renaissance of antiquity and rehangs it with what David Lee Miller describes as the “agonized emergence of intertwining social, political, economic, and cultural forms of European modernity.” A similar historicism would uproot scholarly appropriation of literary periodic terms, which go through their own historicization, developing specific systems of analysis through their respective, distinctive features, resulting in authors’ styles becoming projected structures outside of historical, linear time and offering a potential understanding of these resonances. What should be made, then, of unidentified resonances in the past that scholars note in recent literary history? I would argue for a reverse renaissance that celebrates and mourns the pre-existing modernities of supposed contemporaneity: to locate trends of more recent aesthetics that were previously uncharted in the past and reconsider the multiple lenses through which literature demands to be seen.

No literature, regardless of time or place, can avoid the wave of modernity, the assumption of the superiority of the present as a step in a mutating series of superior “presents.” In Five Faces of Modernity, Matei Calinescu considers modernity, due to its universal implication, as a critical abstraction of literatures across the globe. He defines this abstraction through the comparison of the contradictory French and Hispanic tendencies in fin de siècle Europe. The combatting aesthetics within the contemporary French literary “schools” of the Parnassians, decadents, and symbolists demonstrate the French failure to acknowledge their own similarities and converge into a singular school of modernity, the equivalent Hispanic modernismo as the “complete and utter end of all schools.” In his discussion of the various modernisms, Calinescu comments on this interest of modernity, “which is certainly changing—to the point that change constitutes its essence.” The attitude toward history and modernity—anti-traditionalism—is the very manifestation of the modern: an “urge for change.” Calinescu makes the case that a false conception of modernism
Relies solely on history rather than aesthetics and their history. A truer understanding of modernity as a linear trajectory requires a convergence of history and aesthetics, a necessity to realize that our present Anglophone modernity starts with the end of the Elizabethan age and ends with the discontinuity of the twentieth century’s conceptualized “modern”; again, modernity always implies a tradition of anti-traditionalism.

Modernity must thus be understood by the beginning and end of a moment, a destiny to die. In what Calinescu considers a poetic manifesto, “The Future of Poetry,” the modernist poet and critic John Crowe Ransom recognizes modernism’s possession of two principles: 1) “to disembarrass poetry of its terrible incubus of piety,” and 2) that poetry contains freer verse where “meter is more elastic to accommodate novelties.” Although Marlowe does not fully comport to the latter definition of free verse, he does invent his own style, transfiguring preceding verse forms and modes. Marlowe’s mock blazon of Hero, for example, turns the metaphysically embodied attributes of courtly love into mere embellishments of their original intentions, rejecting Petrarchan love poetry and sonnet tradition altogether. He furthers this mode of anti-traditionalism in Ransom’s primary sense of modernism by subverting piety. Rather than a unary, Christian God, a selection from the Greek pantheon—Aphrodite, Cupid, and Poseidon—governs the narrative of Hero and Leander. Marlowe’s avoidance and rejection of Judeo-Christianity culminates with Hero’s denied prayer, albeit pagan, criticizing the performance of praying and its inherent, earthly failures. Ransom’s conception of modernism further highlights the impatience and-destructiveness of aspiring modern, examining poetic predecessors with a magnifying critical lens, which, for Calinescu, results in a fatal aesthetic paralysis.

In Hero’s case, conflating holy terms like “chastity, blessing, and prayer” with Greek gods in a Christian world is “bound to lead to a situation of crisis.” For Hero, this conflation manifests itself through the “resentment” of giving herself over to desire and the ultimate decay of her beauty. Thus, the social decay Elizabeth fears, anticipated in her statutes, is the very result of this willed urge for change that characterizes modernity, which Friedrich Nietzsche points to as not merely a literary movement but rather a global phenomenon. From this point of view, modernity and decadence are redundant. The “new” becomes the symptom of decay. This conflation requires the recognition of decadence as “a phenomenon of the order of the will” that can be at once negative, the acknowledgement of an ontological decline in order, and psychically positive, a manifestation of the desire for progress.

With the reality of Elizabeth’s sumptuary statues as its cultural backdrop, Marlowe’s Hero and Leander operates like a decadent text through its depiction of Hero’s cultural degradation. But before going further into the implications of sumptuary clothing in the poem, I should first construct the imaginary that is Hero’s dress as it is described early in the poem. The pastoral enargia of her ensemble in the following excerpt seems to assemble the necessary elements of her decadent destiny. In accordance with the fashion of the times, Marlowe associates Hero’s body with “modernizing” social change. With Elizabeth’s sumptuary statues already imposed, Hero knowingly wears unsuitable clothing that is reserved for the royalty of the Tudor court, rejecting institutionalized hegemony. Yet, the idea of a false blazon, with Marlowe’s diction, deceptively dresses Hero’s transgressive body with embellished language, painted in the frame of a pastoral, idealized beauty:

The outside of her garments were of lawne, the lining, purple silke, with guilt starres drawne, her wide sleeves Greene, and bordered with a grove, Where Venus in her naked glory strove.

Aside from the more obvious textile definition, “lawne” can be interpreted to mean “an open space between woods; a glade.” This pun imagines Hero’s body as a landscape under “guilt stars ... bordered with a grove,” where Venus is free to frolic in her glorious nudity. In the context of Tudor fashion, Hero’s sleeves are notably “wide,” correlating to Eleri Lynn’s description of the “Spanish sleeves, which were wide decorative outer sleeves”—an example of the “unnecessary foreign wares” Elizabeth forbade from lowly subjects. Describing this piece of Hero’s costume as “green” demonstrates both the rich color of Hero’s body as pasture and her clothing as an accessory of a stylish, wanton wardrobe. Moreover, the “purple silke” with “guilt starres drawne” are a readily discernible fabric and design reserved for someone of a higher class, as Elizabeth I decreed: “No persons under the degrees above specified”—the lowliest of whom were knight’s wives—“shall wear any guard or welt of silk upon any petticoat, cloak, or safeguard.” The extravagance of her dress overtly exceeds even the smallest amount of silk reserved for the lowliest ranks, signifying the over-idealization of Hero’s imagined beauty.

Yet, Marlowe’s language, interrupting himself, prevents a reader from following the blazon without returning to the beginning. Miller rightfully critiques the narrative for recycling language, which forces a rereading of the first few lines as the text begins with a circular prophecy of the ending:

On Hellespont, guiltie of true love’s blood, In view and opposit two citties stood, Seaborderers, disjoin’d by Neptun’s might: The one Abydos, the other Sestos hight. (1-5)
“Hellespont” implies a forgone conclusion, a scene determined by the narrator’s disclosure of details. Marlowe’s destruction of the suspense that accompanies linearity suggests the narrator’s potential lack of reliability, which holds true with the later upending of the expected conclusion. The narrator’s slippery tongue is evident in (as Miller observes) the “seaborders,” which form the borders of Hero’s sleeves, and Judith Haber notes that the narrativized “guilt of the Hellespont becomes the aesthetized ... artificial stars of Hero’s garment.”

Hero’s clothing blends with the rhetoric that describes her environment, framing her body as a pastoral landscape. For Haber, Marlowe’s language causes these stops and turns that form the “Spectacular” in the poem, namely, the possibility of viewing the “naked truth,” which is constantly denied as Hero redresses herself or lets the text veil her nudity, as when the narrator says, “eie those parts, which no eie should behold.” Although the text explicitly taunts the reader with seeing what cannot be seen, the obvious place from which to watch is Leander’s gaze, his urgency in viewing an erotic spectacle, doomed in her purple silk parade.

Upon describing the exterior of Hero’s gown, the speaker exemplifies a key interruption of the pastoral moment in his account of her “kirtle.” The metaphor situates itself daringly close to Hero’s body, a licentious battle “of wretched louers slaine” leaving bloody stains all over her petticoat (16). Although not using the metonymical term “petticoat” as a means of attributing a sense of womanish features to the clothing, the kirtle nonetheless carries with it a sense of female agency that elicits Hero’s guilt in the spilled blood. As Jones and Stallybrass note, in Genesis 37:34, Joseph “is stripped of his clothes, and both times his clothes will tell stories that are false. The first time his bloody coat of many colors proclaims that he is dead. The second time ... it is [his] own garment that testifies against him.” Of course, blood is a sign of something gone awry, and, like Joseph, Hero’s dress testifies against her. Both wearing the garment that testifies against him.”

The “sweet smell” that “her breath foorth cast” incited the praise of many with what almost sounds like magic—a spell of seduction “cast.” The many praises redress herself or lets the text veil her nudity, as when the narrator says, “eie those parts, which no eie should behold.” Although the text explicitly taunts the reader with seeing what cannot be seen, the obvious place from which to watch is Leander’s gaze, his urgency in viewing an erotic spectacle, doomed in her purple silk parade.

In attempting to refocus the treatment of Hero in true pastoral fashion, the speaker drips her body with organic diction of “flowers and leaves” that cascade down “to the ground beneath.” Still, the deviation from pastoral continues:

Upon her head she ware a myrtle wreath,
From whence her vaile reacht to the ground beneath.
Her vaile was artificiall flowers and leaves,
Whose workmanship both man and beast deceaves. (17-20)
attraction toward rebellion for both the rebel and those around her. Leander defends this idea with his desire to have sex with Hero, creating the metaphor of Hero’s beauty through the speaker’s description of Elizabeth’s pearls, wrapped “about [Hero]’s necke ... chains of peblestone” (25). They are not the genuine gem, though they “like Diamonds shone,” but pearls were nevertheless an embellishment reserved for the pious and pure, a luxury of the court (26). Like a Petrarchan lover, Leander uses this falsehood as a means to an end in his garrulous argument in favor of Hero’s indulgence in desire. He claims a “diamond set in lead his worth retaines,” meaning these stones, although not outwardly at the same standard of beauty as the diamonds, should be considered the same if not better because they will last longer (215). As an allegory of their own situation, beauty is not lost due to its association with something considered beneath them—that is, having sex with Leander would not tarnish Hero’s value. It could only improve her beauty as it is enjoyed.

With an odorous honey tongue and deceitful pearls, the artificial construction of Hero’s beauty undertakes anti-traditional subversion to reject the expected simplicities of conventional pastoral form. All of the embellishments are falsely “greene,” and Hero’s body becomes the decaying landscape of progress.30 In the context of Hero and Leander, Hero’s pastoral-like body is understood at the crudest level by Leander as progress—the ideal—and by Hero as decadent modernity—the real—but the reader is bombarded with the full complexity of the descriptions. We receive the divine praise of Hero’s magnificence through the speaker’s energia and Leander’s infatuation with her, while simultaneously viewing glimpses of a decadent transformation in her body: from the natural to its true artificiality. Therefore, the pastoral moment cannot be entirely written off as merely an idealized landscape; rather, it is also the realization and destruction of it. This conflation assumes these two modes of pastoral as mutually inclusive: the ideal is a distortion of the real as a result of the internal conflict between instinctive tendencies and societal norms. In other words, Hero represents a prototype of human desire that enrolls the self in the role of artifice, insofar as our own social fabrications produce psychological distortions as a response to primal instincts.31 This schema of contradiction is evident in the ebb and flow of Leander’s argumentation in tandem with Hero’s internal anxiety and external presumptuousness. If her clothing marked her body to associate with a particular institution, the very fact that her clothes do not align her religiously or socially strains against Philip Stubbes’s reservation of “sumptuous dress as the proper dignity of high office” to form an identity “for onlooker and wearer alike.”32 The materials on her body reject her social identity, being the base self-destruction of othering oneself, and later culminating in her death—the chronic symptom of opposing a modernity whose aesthetic was not ready to die.

In imagining her own aesthetic, Hero’s appearance from the onset of the poem in opposition to Elizabeth’s sumptuary statutes forcibly creates an unconscious contradiction of pursuing her own decadent style while prescribing herself to expectation. Calinescu observes that “a style of decadence is simply a style favorable to the unrestricted manifestation of aesthetic individualism,“ and there is no greater freedom of will than a “Venus nunne” tramping around in queenly clothing.33 Thus, decadence and modernity coincide in Hero’s rejection of traditional expression, a physical signal that fuels Leander’s harassment targeting her unnecessary virginity: “For thou in vowing chastity has sworne / To rob her name and honour” (304–305). Leander argues that as the priestess nun of Venus, Hero should lose her virginity to him:

This idol which you terme Virginitie,
Is neither essence suject to the eie
Nor is’t of earth or mold celestiall,
Or capable of any forme at all. (269–274)

Hero is but a lowly virgin priestess of Venus—the irony of being a virgin and priestess to the goddess of sex, Venus, is the basis of Leander’s sophisticated argument encouraging Hero’s acquisition of carnal knowledge. Leander’s speech is copious and exudes a feverish urgency; understandably so, since “the consciousness of decadence brings about restlessness.”34 Leander’s perspective of the ideal in progress forces him into this mindset of impending change and, therefore, since time is fleeting, the desire to alter Hero in the immediate moment. The material memory of her clothing serves as a signifier, and a “Venus nunne” tramping around in queenly clothing.

This idol which you terme
Virginitie,
Is neither essence suject to the eie
Nor is’t of earth or mold celestiall,
Or capable of any forme at all. (269–274)
This off-kilter pastoral experiences an unprecedented transformation that resists expectation, where shepherds no longer ask and “eie those parts, which no eie should behold,” where the seductive becomes the brutish, and where the day sinks menacingly into the night (408).

And when the day sinks, Hero very nearly slides into bed with Leander. In one of Leander’s nearly successful sexual endeavors with Hero, Marlowe presents the moment as an aubade. Yet the term cannot be quite right, since Hero refuses carnal knowledge and remains a virgin—she is not a lover leaving at dawn. The motif of the sun perseveres through the decaying of Hero’s morality, as the “sunne through th’orizon peepes” (583). The syntax characterizes the sun’s curiosity, “peep[ing]” over the horizon to see if Hero actually went through with losing her virginity. Since she did not follow through, Hero is neither equated with the rising sun nor compared to the organic features of the world. Nature itself continues unaffected.

Although the assumption of the aubade is that the night will conceal all wrongdoings and the sun will represent the beginning of a renewed present, Hero has implied the impossibility of this outcome. She struggles to decide which she would rather have: a sinful night that can never be forgiven by any form of light or continuing as the virgin priestess of a sexual goddess wearing clothes that would doom her regardless. Her unsatisfied desire is the very tension that the narrative depends upon, as she must give into and avoid her primal interiority. Obvious in what Miller calls her “unmasking,” but what would more appropriately be termed her undressing, Hero forbids Leander from “touch[ing] the sacred garments which [she] wear[s]” while also inviting him to visit her “in the silence of the night” (344, 349). Marlowe does not depict the actual unraveling of Hero’s clothing, but the action of undressing can be intuited because Hero must redress in the morning: “Whereat she starts, puts on her purple weeds” (573). Her redressing can be read as a feature of “the true opposite of decadence”: “regeneration.” She does not require a complete regeneration from her non-sexual encounter, however, since she essentially retains her virginity. Especially important in this false act of restoration is acknowledging “the reassumption of livery”—that is, Hero is able to reinvest in herself because she has not soiled her sexual economic value. As a transaction, virginity is a losing game for the virgin, a currency to be lost, carrying with it the decadent connotation of decay through its use in death, morality, and culture. Therefore, Hero’s retention of her virginity seems to be a vestigial remnant of the dedication to and initial investment in a constructed social order that halts the progress of self-realization, an ineptitude for choice expression.

In discussing Hero’s tendency to seek refuge or flee in shameful situations, John Leonard refers to and questions W. L. Godshalk’s disparagement of the narrator’s trustworthiness. While Godshalk finds Hero’s resistance to be self-deceptive, Leonard “prefer[s] to see Hero as a puppet going through the motion of desire.” He claims that “the narrator delights to pay lip-service to Hero’s virtue while manipulating her into compromising physical positions.” However true that may be, both Leonard and Godshalk stop short of realizing the greater implications of the “cunning incompetence” that Marlowe bestows upon his untrustworthy narrator and the complicit Hero: this narrative incompetence is performed by Hero alone. Judith Haber describes the interruptions in the narrative progression as “the aesthetic of pointlessness,” following the assertion of Leander’s phallic point, which, due to Hero’s rejections, he fails to insert. These interruptions of Hero’s desire and subsequent reluctance to follow through are the rejections of expected continuity, the same false starts that M. L. Stapleton connects from Ovid’s Metamorphoses to Hero and Leander in order to qualify it as Marlowe’s Ovid. The very same script that decadence follows in performing failure in the style of Marlowe’s classicism, and in the awareness of Elizabethan classism, displays the antithetical nature of his writing. Thus, Hero is accompanied by Leander in rejecting expectations; Hero, through her lust and fashion, and Leander, with his inability to tame her, satirize the inherent difficulties of living in Elizabethan England with its hierarchical social requirements and rhetorical opportunities for self-performance. Hero’s intense desire to have sex with Leander eventually overtakes her in the final movement of the poem, returning to the earlier, unfulfilled aubade and presenting Hero’s actual engagement in sex. Even before the natural world has a chance to perform, Hero breaks from circadian rhythm and preemptively assumes the aubade’s occurrence; the act of the sun always rising becomes a meta-anxiety for Hero. She imagines “th’approaching sunne” in a menacing way when she actually needs the sun’s restorative powers. Unfortunately, she cannot decipher the contradiction of the “bright day light,” preemptively dreading its exposure of her sin rather than lavishing in the erasure of the previous night’s proceedings.

And now she wisht this night were never done,
And sigh’d to think upon th’approaching sunne,
For much it greev’d her that the bright day light,
Should know the pleasure of this blessed night. (785–788)

Hero expects the sun’s light will shine upon her. But, rather than a picturesque moment in the aubade serving as a regeneration as she redresses, Hero remains nude within the bed chamber. “Greev’d,” she anticipates an estrangement of the moment in the aubade serving as a regeneration as she redresses, Hero remains nude within the bed chamber. “Greev’d,” she anticipates an estrangement of the moment as an aubade. Yet the term cannot be quite right, since Hero refuses carnal knowledge and remains a virgin—she is not a lover leaving at dawn. The motif of the sun perseveres through the decaying of Hero’s morality, as the “sunne through th’orizon peepes” (583). The syntax characterizes the sun’s curiosity, “peep[ing]” over the horizon to see if Hero actually went through with losing her virginity. Since she did not follow through, Hero is neither equated with the rising sun nor compared to the organic features of the world. Nature itself continues unaffected.

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would imply Hero’s ability to forgive herself and, ultimately, to save herself through penance, which she would naively undertake in the vein of societal indoctrination.

Yet Marlowe’s contrarian aubade “is imperious and loud,” not redeeming; the humiliation unremorsefully quickly drains her cheeks of the embarrassed blush that filled during her womanish pageantry before Leander. In the final lines of the poem, the confusing syntax potentially conflates the reference to “she” with Hero and night, both sharing “anguish, shame, and rage.” Hero becomes “the night that she wished were never done.” The loss of her virginity results in the formation of her “consciousness of decadence,” resulting in self-examination and subsequently a “hysteria” in reaction to the strain of living according to the oppressive societal norms. Purity has been the center of dialogue between Hero and Leander throughout the poem. For Hero, it was a mandatory virtue—as an unwed maiden, her virginity is an expectation she should never marry.

When thinking of her misdeeds, Marlowe describes “her countenance” as a “kind of twilight breake” (802–803). Aligning with what Calinescu describes as the “usual associations of decadence with such notions as decline, twilight,” Hero’s predisposition to losing her virginity makes her incompatible with temporal progress, and the mental turmoil she inflicts upon herself forces her to succumb to the realized crisis of decadence. The inability to accept herself as no longer being the nun priestess of Venus results in her cultural suicide. Furthermore, society has seen her clothing, and Hero all but confirms the assumption of her being a “Venus Nun,” the only remaining confirmation is self-acceptance, an acceptance that in Elizabethan England is impossible: she cannot live or perform the vagrant role Marlowe costumed for her as much as she can accept the burning throne Apollo “offred as a dower” (7). Whether in her sumptuous garb or stripped within the privacy of her bedroom, Hero receives no sympathy:

Poore soldiers stad with fear of death deadstrooken, 
So at her presence all, surpris’d and tooken, 
Await the sentence of her scornefull eies. (121–123)

This scene describes a third party’s set of eyes on following the initial blazon that Miller describes as “transform[ing] the rapture of gazing on feminine beauty into the horror of beholding death.” Although Miller is not interested in the physical spectacle of clothing, the same judgment the “poore soldiers” receive develops into the final display of Hero’s inherent wrongness. Her nudity becomes an awful sight that, for Leander, deserves admiration but transforms into a tragedy. Even without sumptuous clothing, her quandary fashions her body into an object of scorn, projecting the soldier’s fear of death onto her

own through a masculinist gaze. Knowing that she stands in the presence of an audience, even if only constituted by her, forms the awaited self-realization of her impending demise as nature itself can no longer fathom her existence. The story (and Hero with it) had run rampant, and so Marlowe has no further detail to provide. The final silence is decadent in its very negation of detail. This, perhaps, is the reason Marlowe forcibly ended Hero’s existence, why Marlowe had to put down the pen.

Although Marlowe does not seem initially to condemn Hero, the satiric nature of the sporadic blazon begins by insulting Venus’s nudity and her inability to swoon Adonis. In light of this allusion, it is impossible to read Hero and Leander without considering Shakespeare’s Venus and Adonis—and especially impossible to discuss moral degeneration without giving attention to the mythos of Venus’s promiscuity. Through dress, Hero has the commensurate sexual power of Venus, who failed “to please the careless and disdainfull eies / Of proud Adonis” in the Shakespearean adaptation of the myth (13–14). She succeeds in her unintentional, yet yearnful, seduction of Leander, and this success seems to stem from a different form of beauty than that of Venus. Whereas Hero’s beauty is artificial, Venus’s beauty is natural and divine. Whereas Hero is pursued by her object of desire, Venus must perform the pursuit herself. Both texts conclude with deaths: Marlowe’s with Hero’s death and Shakespeare’s with that of the non-pursuing object of desire, Adonis. Hero’s death arises as a result of a moral crisis, while Adonis is killed by the jealous god Ares. Both victims of their respective narratives, Hero and Adonis demonstrated aversions to desire, and, as beauty demands attention, their resistance is not compatible with the reality of the progressively more public human conscience.

Hero begins the narrative with an unknowingly sumptuous body but is unable to commit to the persona required of her. Her constant degeneration, in response to the expectations of giving herself over to desire, is overwhelming and itself is a causation for death; desire is a means of fragmentation—there exists an endless number of possibilities to mull over, leading to an unsatisfying flow of constant desire that can never be accommodated within the restriction of a constructed society. Therefore, temporal progress requires a person’s comportment to and survival through degeneration: the will to accept what is contemporarily considered decadent.

As Hero demonstrates, however, the continuity of narrative and temporal dependency upon the very thing that destroys them: existence depends upon “the destructiveness of time and the fatality of decline.” In a Judeo–Christian tradition,” Calinescu offers, this fatality appears as the “approach of the Day of Doom... announced by the unmistakable sign of profound decay—untold corruption.” For Hero, the inexcusable decision wear purple silk and gold fringe, as well as the inability to accept carnal knowledge as progress, consequently
result in her suffering a crisis of “alienation from contemporary society”—“the despair of a [a] modern [woman].”52 And this is confirmed when religion fails Hero, as Cupid denounces “her prayers with his wings” (369). This does not, however, deny the fact of progress: rather, it is the experience of it through the anguish of the aforementioned crisis. Unfortunately, Hero is “o’recome with anguish, shame, and rage” of losing her virginity—alienating herself from the expectations of retaining her chastity in the exchange of vows—and “dang[s] downe to hell,” fulfilling the decadent prophecy of human catastrophe (818).53

Ruination, as the pinnacle of decadence, describes the modernity of catastrophe as “a vast implosion of a cultural tradition” and “the becoming of what we no longer are,” and Miller refers to such moments as spectacular.54 Hero’s undoing stands as the allegorical anticipation of an emergent, spectacular modernity. Humanity at its core is a trial-by-error experiment that Marlowe so carefully toys with. This “posthumous relation to a dying order” finds remarkable precedence in Marlowe’s *Hero and Leander*. Put simply, Elizabeth’s statutes were shrinking the freedoms of the will to live; Hero’s attempt to retaliate costs her life. She could not separate her actions from her beliefs, and rather than strutting in her purple dress, she reduces herself to a nude, fetal position, suffering the machinations of opposing conformity to the point that she cannot continue her rejection of identifying with a rigid society nor accept herself—the ultimate death of the self.

On the contested topic of the poem’s non-ending, then, I agree with W. L. Godshalk’s rejection of Marlowe’s poem as an unfinished product. But Godshalk assumes that the poet’s ultimate goal is Hero’s humiliation, that “the poem ends where most poems end: when the poet has said what he has to say.”55 Yet such a reading does not satisfy the larger discourse that Marlowe has left in the poem. In Haber’s words, Marlowe “leaves us not with the end, but with an image of the horror.”56 She rightfully phrases the text’s self-deprecation as “it acknowledges its own pointlessness ... as an incomplete artifact.” Yet, Haber does not condemn or tie Hero’s implication to the narrative even though her body was woven into the very rhetoric that constitutes the text since the premonition of her demise. Instead, Haber leaves her analysis of Hero incomplete the rest of his narrative, thus resonates with Stephen Spender’s hermeneutics, outlined in *The Struggle of the Modern*.57 Marlowe is unapologetically aware of his contemporary moment in Elizabeth’s England. Contemporary fashion is therefore only sumptuous because of limitations society places on its constituents, who knowingly follow institutionalized classism. Marlowe’s focus on sumptuous fashion, Ovidian reinterpretation, and outright satire of Petrarchan love poetry qualify the poet’s modernity by linking him to the decades prior to his poem. Nonetheless, and ironically, the contested fragmentation of this hypothesized unfinished poem is Marlowe’s right to remain silent, to disrupt the literary expectations of his contemporaries. Had Marlowe continued Hero’s tale, his pen would have forced a commitment to bipartisanship. Would he have punished Hero for transgressing the structured hierarchy or would he have romanticized her rebellion? With a touch of decadence, Marlowe instead collapses the fraying fabrics with which Hero desperately tries to cover herself, ending inconclusively. Although, in a sense, there is a conclusion; Marlowe dresses Hero only to break her.58 The sumptuous clothing is “the ‘obscure link’ between early and late modernity [as] the birth of a cultural ego already imbued with death,” and her undressing spins a manifestation of decadence through self-resentment.59 As articles of memory, her clothing on the floor signifies her giving herself over to sexual desire—an imitation of an impossible reclamation of free will. Insurmountably forbidden and prophesied from the beginning in “Hellespont,” there was never an inking of intention in letting a modern creation like Hero live beyond the final lines Marlowe wrote.

Yet George Chapman clearly buys into the cliché of disavowing modernity, mutating Marlowe’s manuscript into a more acceptable literature of early modernity. Of course, he depicts an exercise of holy matrimony between two lovers, Alcmane and Mya, and satisfies the desired deaths of Hero and Leander, which courtly readers would have delightfully anticipated. He disciplines the free-spirit of the poem, disciplines the wild Marlowe, and, unsurprisingly, disciplines Hero for her transgressive body and mind. The obvious problem with Chapman’s unnecessary addition to Marlowe’s adaptation is the backward logic of asserting himself into the literary canon, freeloading on Marlowe’s status as the poet looks to his own ingenuity and refashions himself with the iconic non-ending of *Hero and Leander*. Although Chapman does successfully make a name for himself through this addition, his need to preserve the norms of the immediate past and fading present are the very pronouncement of failed ingenuity. His fidelity to the tired mode of prolonging a presumed renaissance, as if it would dwindle into decadence, recalls the counter-intuitive idea of defining

This hunger for “historical otherness” is birthed from an acknowledgment of the unspeakable, from intentions of showing the radical without the ability to argue in its defense. The peculiarity of Marlowe’s ending, along with the rest of his narrative, thus resonates with Stephen Spender’s hermeneutics, outlined in *The Struggle of the Modern*. Marlowe is unapologetically aware of his contemporary moment in Elizabeth’s England. Contemporary fashion is therefore only sumptuous because of limitations society places on its constituents, who knowingly follow institutionalized classism. Marlowe’s focus on sumptuous fashion, Ovidian reinterpretation, and outright satire of Petrarchan love poetry qualify the poet’s modernity by linking him to the decades prior to his poem. Nonetheless, and ironically, the contested fragmentation of this hypothesized unfinished poem is Marlowe’s right to remain silent, to disrupt the literary expectations of his contemporaries. Had Marlowe continued Hero’s tale, his pen would have forced a commitment to bipartisanship. Would he have punished Hero for transgressing the structured hierarchy or would he have romanticized her rebellion? With a touch of decadence, Marlowe instead collapses the fraying fabrics with which Hero desperately tries to cover herself, ending inconclusively. Although, in a sense, there is a conclusion; Marlowe dresses Hero only to break her. The sumptuous clothing is “the ‘obscure link’ between early and late modernity [as] the birth of a cultural ego already imbued with death,” and her undressing spins a manifestation of decadence through self-resentment. As articles of memory, her clothing on the floor signifies her giving herself over to sexual desire—an imitation of an impossible reclamation of free will. Insurmountably forbidden and prophesied from the beginning in “Hellespont,” there was never an inking of intention in letting a modern creation like Hero live beyond the final lines Marlowe wrote.

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...
a specific moment as modern, when modernity transcends the idea of contemporaneity. The reality of modernity allows for the constant death and rebirth of modernisms, little renaissances that were invented to die.

The exposure to the unexpected that overturns continued expectation, condemning perceptions of new modernities, is requisite—the sources of anxiety in the context of Hero and Leander are specific to its temporality. Different ages profess different demands and norms. But, as Nietzsche proposes, decadence exists beyond the literary realm, tracing the continual increase of hysteria that runs parallel to time. With Elizabeth’s death and the coronation of James I, 1604 marks the end of sumptuary law. Giving rise to a new aristocracy, James appoints a new order of knighthood, another means of inculcating power that will eventually be usurped. Within any given time, as well as those that precede and succeed it, anxiety remains. Although it does not stem from the sumptuary statutes of 1574 as it does for Hero, anxiety is the result of decadence that elusively roots itself deep within humanity. Thus, reality is an imaginary ideal specific to individual perception of one’s temporality, with crafty decadence chipping away at morality along every temporal step until death. Indeed, desunt nonnulla (“some things are lacking”).

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NOTES
2. In their foundational work on Renaissance fashion, Ann Rosalind Jones and Peter Stallybrass, Renaissance Clothing and the Materials of Memory (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 2, explain, “Embedded in classical theories of rhetoric in which the logic of the argument was its ‘body’ and the figures of speech its ‘ornament’ or ‘clothing,’” fashion shapes the wearer.
3. Ibid., 2.
5. Jones and Stallybrass, Renaissance Clothing, 2.
6. For a discussion of the vestrian crisis, see Jones and Stallybrass, Renaissance Clothing, 4.
8. Miller, “The Death of the Modern,” 756
9. For a review of the desynonymization of conceptual modernity and contemporaneity, see Matei Calinescu, Faces of Modernity: Avant-Garde, Decadence, Kitsch (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1977), 86.
10. Ibid., 73.
11. Ibid., 76-77.
12. Ibid., 84-85.
13. There is an undeniable urgency in needing to reclassify the contemporary use of “the modern” as a period and aesthetic—similar to the detachment of “the Renaissance” from the early modern period. In literary historicism, this would be the very act of modernity, rejecting what has been proposed and accepted, acknowledging “the expression of the spiritual needs of a whole epoch” (Calinescu, Faces of Modernity, 72).
14. Calinescu, Faces of Modernity, 82.
15. Ibid., 180.
16. Enargia becomes a concept of degeneration. As Calinescu, Faces of Modernity, 161, explains, “the profuse use of description, the prominence of detail, and, on a general plane the elevation of the imaginative power, to the detriment of reason,” is a style of literary decadence.
18. According to the OED, “lawne” is a fine linen or cotton fabric used for making clothes.
19. At the time of Hero and Leander’s publication, this style of sleeve was especially popular in the Elizabethan court; see Eleri Lynn, Tudor Fashion (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2017), 51.
20. According to one entry of the OED, “greene” signifies newness. OED s.v. “green” adj. and n. 1
21. On June 15, 1574, Elizabeth I declared that “[n]one shall wear in his apparel: Any silk of the color of purple, cloth of gold tissued, nor fur of sables, but only the King, Queen, King’s mother, children, brethren, and sisters, uncles and aunts; and except dukes, marquises, and earls, who may wear the same in doublets, jerkins, linings of cloaks, gowns, and hose; and those of the Garter, purple in mantles only.” Although the purple silk is only in Hero’s gown lining, she is not of any of these ranks. The “guilt starres” on Hero’s sleeves, again, are reserved for women of higher prestige: “None shall wear ... cloth of gold, silver, tinselled satin, silk, or cloth mixed or embroidered with gold or silver or pearl, saving silk mixed with gold or silver in linings of cowls, partlets, and sleeves: except all degrees above viscountesses, and viscountesses, baronesses, and other personages of like degrees.” Elizabethan Sumptuary Statutes, edited by Maggie Secara, www.elizabethan.org/sumptuary (accessed February 17, 2019).
23. Ibid., 385.
25. “Ostranenie” is the transliterated Russian word for the theoretical concept of “estrangement.”
27. As Lynn, Tudor Fashion, 90, explains, the “use of symbolism had developed throughout
Elizabeth’s reign, both as a means of showing loyalty but also as a conscious device to mythologize her and was to be seen everywhere. The idea of signs is important to note here, because Hero’s “getup” is a failed imitation of creating importance and a failed assertion of her own modern importance: her dress exceeds the extent of her own constitution. According to Lynn, Tudor Fashion, 96, this type of embroidery was often done by high-born ladies.

Calinescu, Faces of Modernity, 156.

Calinescu, Faces of Modernity, 155, asserts that the idea “of modernity and progress” and the “idea of decadence ... are mutually exclusive only at the crudest level of understanding,” instead, “progress and decadence imply each other so intimately ... we would reach the paradoxical conclusion that progress is decadence.”

Hero believes that she must carry herself according to normative society and cannot act of her own free will.

Jones and Stallybrass, Renaissance Clothing, 5.

Ibid., 154.

Social categories must be understood as not “subjects ... prior to objects,” not “wearers to what is worn” (Jones and Stallybrass, Renaissance Clothing, 3).

Calinescu, Faces of Modernity, 156: “Along with their automatic antonyms: rise, dawn, spring, youth, germination, etc.—make it inevitable to think of it in terms of natural cycles and biological metaphors.”

Miller, “Death of the Modern,” 770.

Calinescu, Faces of Modernity, 156.

Jones and Stallybrass, Renaissance Clothing, 273.


Miller, “Death of the Modern,” 773.

Calinescu, Faces of Modernity, 154.

Ibid., 156.

Miller, “Death of the Modern,” 765.

Ibid., 767.

Calinescu, Faces of Modernity, 151-152.

Ibid., 221.

Early decadents “relished in the feeling that the modern world was headed toward catastrophe,” radically opposed to the alternative idea of “regenerationalists”: the possibility of indefinite progress that is merely a diversion from the reality of increasing spiritual alienation” (Calinescu, Faces of Modernity, 162).

Miller, “Death of the Modern,” 758.


Haber, “True-Loves Blood,” 386.


“The spirit of decadence is deceptive,” Calinesco explains, in that it underpins lowly living as its opposite; its disruption of normalcy is reassured to be a livelier version of reality (Faces of Modernity, 180).

Miller, “Death of the Modern,” 761.
“What Shall We Call Thee Then?”: Defining Femininity Outside the Male Heteronormative World in John Donne’s “Sappho to Philaenis”

Kristina Reinis

During the English Renaissance, men determined the identity and social standing of women. Manuscripts from this period that discuss gender relations and roles make this dependency clear, and, in particular, many of the essays that establish proper female conduct define respectable female behavior through a woman’s relationship to a man. For example, Robert Dod and John Cleaver state in their marital conduct book *A godly form of household government*, “… so the woman deserveth no commendation that, (as it were) contrarying her husband when he is merry, showeth herself sad, or in sadness uttereth her mirth. For as men should obey the laws of their cities, so women the manners of their husbands.” Dod and Cleaver make clear that the behavior, emotions, and actions of a woman are defined by a man (in this case, her husband), and, as a result, the identity of a woman is expected to be defined and fulfilled by the man. The dependency of femininity on masculinity is further shown in Henry Smith’s *A preparative to marriage*, where he states that “the philosophers could not tell how to define a wife, but called her the contrary to a husband, as though nothing were so cross and contrary to a man as a wife.” While Smith admits this is not scripture, he claims that this statement holds nonetheless: femininity is what masculinity is not. These two declarations on women’s behavior and identity suggest the larger understanding of gender at the time: in the Renaissance, the categorization of women depended on men.

However, when Queen Elizabeth I was on the throne and ruling without a king, male anxiety began to rise, and the validity of masculine authority came to be questioned. Describing the rising masculine anxiety in England in this period, Mark Breitenberg argues that the discourse at the time regarding gender roles slowly threatened the idea of the “natural” superiority of men. In the late sixteenth century, this environment helped set the tone for John Donne’s elegies and, in particular, his “Sappho to Philaenis.” In most of his love elegies, Donne challenges the stability of gender identity. Diane Benet observes that in much of that work, Donne seems to provide social commentary on the rising anxiety surrounding gender roles by focusing on “sexual transgressions,” especially those that challenge male authority, as in “Jealousy,” “Change,” or “Perfume.” In his elegy “Sappho to Philaenis,” Donne challenges this stability further by producing one of the first lesbian love poems in the English language. Barbara Correll argues, similarly to Benet, that this subject is not out of character for Donne, insofar as the crisis of signification and masculine gender identity structures many of his heteroerotic poems. In this elegy, Donne presents the romantic relationship between two women, Sappho and Philaenis, and their ideal world that excludes men. Due to its subversive subject matter, the elegy was censored, highly contested, and therefore, until recently, overlooked by scholars, who have struggled to place it in the canon of a poet whose work is typically characterized by a strong and dominating masculine voice. To begin to correct this critical neglect, Stanley Fish’s analysis of “On his Mistress going to bed” can prove useful, allowing us to contextualize “Sappho to Philaenis” within Donne’s body of work. In “On his Mistress,” as Fish observes, “Masculine authority can be asserted only in relation to a firmly defined opposite. … In order for him to be a man she must be unmistakable and essentially a woman.” Here, Fish points out two main elements present in John Donne’s elegies. First, he observes Donne’s recognition that men and women define each other through a comparative binary. Second, he notices the pervading fear that this gender identity could become unstable: without it, one’s masculine or feminine identity falls apart. Through “Sappho to Philaenis,” Donne expands on this anxiety by pushing on rigid gender categorization and by breaking the comparative binary. He does so by removing the man from the equation and centering his elegy on a homoerotic relationship between two women, leaving femininity to define itself.

In “Sappho to Philaenis,” Donne considers desire, language, and representation apart from a typical male-focused and heterosexual perspective. Donne places both Sappho and Philaenis outside the masculine-defined heteronorma-
Both her status and her intense need for Philaenis—desiring Philaenis: it also comes from Sappho's inability to "place" her desire and Philaenis, as both reside outside a male-centric heteronormative world. Shortly after Sappho introduces her struggle with speech and representation, she poses a question to Philaenis that hits at the core of her crisis: "For, if we justly call each silly man / A little world, what shall we call thee then?" (19-20).

Sappho confronted the belief that the ordinary man can encompass the world and serve as a representation of humankind. Noting this confrontation, H. L. Meakin observes that Sappho, by pointing to "man" as a false universal, reveals "woman's 'present absence' in the ubiquitous noun [i.e., man] which supposedly refers to human 'being.'" As a result, "Donne reveals a radical awareness of the gender politics which operate in language." Therefore, Donne's Sappho reveals two things when she asks Philaenis, "What shall we call thee then?" First, she reveals that Philaenis does not belong in the heteronormative masculinized world, and second, that there is no language to represent Philaenis and this female experience outside heteronormative categorization. In other words, Sappho asks how, if men serve as the representation of humankind, does one define a woman who exists outside of the bounds of heteronormative masculinity? This question works to contextualize Sappho's previous failure of language and her struggle to represent Philaenis in the first twelve lines. How can Philaenis be understood, identified, or represented when she resides outside the heteronormative world, and how can Sappho place her desire for her? Lines 19-20 reveal that Sappho's collapse of language and representation do not simply stem from intense desire. Sappho cannot identify or represent Philaenis because she does not belong in a typical heteronormative category, and therefore heterosexual male love poetry (and language) cannot describe or identify her.

Sappho continues to distinguish Philaenis and her desire by discarding the conventions of male heteronormative Petrarchan poetry. As a result, the identity of Philaenis becomes more abstract and isolated, as language continues to prove to be insufficient to identify both her and Sappho's desire for her. Addressing Philaenis, Sappho states,

\[
\text{Thou are not soft, and clear, and straight, and fair,} \\
\text{As down, as stars, cedars, and lilies are} \\
\text{But thy right hand, and cheek, and eye, only} \\
\text{Are like thy other hand, and cheek, and eye. (21-24)}
\]

argues, “Sappho to Philaenis’ is Donne’s crisis poem.” By introducing this struggle of signification, these first twelve lines help to provide a framework of failed representation through which the rest of “Sappho to Philaenis” can be understood.

This failure of language and representation does not simply derive from desiring Philaenis: it also comes from Sappho's inability to "place" her desire and Philaenis, as both reside outside a male-centric heteronormative world.

In the first twelve lines, Sappho contextualizes the elegy with the crisis of desire and the subsequent failure of language. Sappho begins the elegy by asking, "Where is that holy fire, which verse is said / To have? Is that enchanting force decayed? ... Thee, her best work, to her work cannot draw" (1-2, 4). In these lines, Sappho, an honored and esteemed Greek love poet, laments the loss of her poetic voice and her ability to use language. Both her status and authority as a poet emphasize the gravity and impact of this loss, and Sappho quickly identifies her desire for Philaenis as the source of this breakdown. She states, "Have my tears quenched my old poetic fire; / Why quenched they not as well, that of desire?" (5-6). In this moment, Sappho pinpoints Philaenis as the source of this loss of language. She states that her intense need for Philaenis—as represented through her tears—“quenched” her poetic ability. In these first six lines, Sappho centers the elegy around her failure of language. Through this introduction, Donne contextualizes the elegy around a crisis of language and desire, which leads to the further breakdown of her speech.

This separation of language from desire evolves into the breakdown of representation. When speaking of her image of Philaenis, Sappho states, “Only thine image, in my heart, doth sit, / But that is wax, and fires environ it. / My fires have driven, thine have drawn it hence" (9-11). Immediately after detailing the collapse of language, the breakdown of representation does not fall far behind. Frantically, Sappho attempts to capture the beautiful image of her lost love. In these three lines, Sappho's intense desire transforms into a raging fire. She states that just as fire changes wax, her desire melts and dismantles the remaining image she possessed of Philaenis. Sappho laments this melting image when she cries, “And I am robbed of picture, heart, and sense” (12). Her desire not only breaks down her power over language, but this “fire” also creates an unstable and intangible representation of Philaenis. This focus on the crisis of desire in the beginning of the elegy introduces Sappho's struggle with language and signification that continues for the rest of the elegy. As Correll

tive world, and, as a result, the crisis of both language and representation introduced in the beginning of the elegy escalates. As they move further outside the heteronormative world, the identities of both Sappho and Philaenis slowly break down until their individual images are deconstructed, and this breakdown of representation and language in the lesbian love elegy points to the limits and failure of a male-defined heteronormative world to identify women outside of men. Through the subversion of traditional gender roles, Donne destabilizes the security of gender signification and reveals the performative and constructive nature of gender itself. The final breakdown of representation reveals the struggle for women to exist outside of a heteronormative male-centric world, ultimately bringing into question the essentialist nature of the gender binary and of heterosexuality.

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In these lines, Sappho refers to the modes of comparison and the masculine love tropes often used in Petrarchan poetry. Throwing out these traditions, she declares that they are unable to fully capture Philaenis’ beauty. This is not Sappho’s only rejection of Petrarchan tropes in the elegy. In lines 15–18, Sappho undermines another trope: portraying a woman as a god-like figure. When Sappho states, “As gods, when gods to thee I do compare,” she insinuates that even the gods cannot fully represent the beauty of Philaenis’ image, as they are the ones who are honored by her comparison (16–17). Once again, language fails fully to represent the beauty of her beloved. However, the failures in both these moments are not simply the result of Philaenis’ unimaginable beauty. Instead, this absence is a result of Philaenis’ place outside the male heteronormative world. By referencing Petrarchan conventions—a male-centric heterosexual mode of love poetry—Sappho juxtaposes homosexual desire with heterosexual desire. By stating that the tropes of masculine heterosexual desire are insufficient, Sappho further separates her desire and Philaenis from the heteronormative world. This separation prompts an important question: what is left outside of this world? In lines 23–24, Sappho states that the only proper comparison that can be made for Philaenis is Philaenis herself. In other words, Sappho cannot find sufficient language to represent Philaenis, who is thus left to define herself. In this moment, her image begins to collapse in on itself, since there is no difference and no signification. Her identity becomes even more arbitrary than it was when she was first introduced, and, further, the need for Philaenis to rely on her own image for identification re-emphasizes the lack of language and modes of representation outside the male-centric society. As Sappho pushes Philaenis further outside categorization by dismissing the language of masculine Petrarchan love poetry, Philaenis’ identity becomes vaguer and more unrecognizable.

Philaenis exists outside of the heteronormative male world, but Sappho also separates herself from it. In lines 25–26, she states, “Such was my Phao awhile, but shall be never, / As thou wast, art, and, oh, mayst thou be ever” (25–26). In these lines, Donne references Ovid’s tale of Sappho and Phaon, found in the fifteenth epistle in his Heroides. In that story, Sappho throws herself off a cliff and commits suicide after her male lover Phaon rejects her. In line 25 of Donne’s elegy, Sappho rejects the myth that she killed herself. Instead, she states that her male lover Phaon rejects her. In this moment, as Stella Revard observes, Sappho makes the shift from a male heterosexual-reminiscent speaker to a firmly female homosexual speaker. In line 26, Sappho makes it clear that her love for Philaenis is superior to her love for Phaon, stating that Phaon will never be what Philaenis is for her. She thus dispenses with her existence in the heteronormative world and makes clear that her desire cannot be defined in the framework of heterosexuality.

To reinforce their shared position outside the male heteronormative world, Sappho villainizes men, portraying them as a threat to both Philaenis and herself. When attempting to bring Philaenis back to her, she states that the “soft boy” and “[h]is chin, a thorny, hairy uneveness / Doth threaten, and some daily change possess” (31, 33–34). This villainization, here positioning the male lover as a threat to Philaenis, continues as Sappho characterizes a man’s relationship to a woman in terms of agriculture, ownership, and theft. She says, “Thy body is a natural paradise, / In whose self, unmanured, all pleasure lies” (35–36). Sappho suggests Philaenis already possesses perfection similar to a beautiful and untouched land, and immediately after creating this image of paradise, she presents men as threatening it. She asks Philaenis, why “[a]dmit the tillage of a harsh rough man?” (38). Her use of agricultural terms such as “unmanured”—meaning unfertilized—and “tillage” figures women’s bodies as land that men seize and sexually “till”: dominate, compromise, and possess through pregnancy. Sappho further connects possession and heterosexual union when she warns, “Men leave behind them that which their sin shows, / And are as thieves traced, which rob when it snows” (39–40). By comparing men to thieves, she does not present their actions as not only dangerous but also criminal. In this passage, Sappho indicates that men and the male heteronormative world serve as a threat not only to Philaenis but also to women in general.

In addition to portraying men as a threat, Sappho also discounts any need for them in her world, thus triggering the dissolution of Sappho and Philaenis into one another. After presenting men as the enemy, Sappho states, “But of our dalliance no more signs there are, / Than fishes leave in streams, or birds in air” (41–42). Sappho celebrates love between women, claiming that they can find pleasure without degradation and can love without possession. However, Sappho’s characterization of this utopia highlights the issue that has been escalating since the beginning of the elegy: how can women be identified outside the heteronormative male world? In lines 41–42, Sappho admits that the removal of men introduces an absence of signification, an inability to identify both of them. Their love cannot participate in the language of domination that characterizes masculine love poetry. In their egalitarian relationship, the gender hierarchy that normally creates difference and identity in heterosexual relationships ceases to exist. Without men, there are no “signs” of what both Sappho and Philaenis are. This statement initiates the final collapse of representation and language found in the convolution of both Philaenis’ and Sappho’s identities towards the conclusion of the elegy.

Due to the absence of language and representation outside of a male heteronormative world, both Philaenis’ and Sappho’s identities begin to collapse into each other, and the result is an arbitrary representation of themselves. In lines 1–44, Sappho continually fails to capture the beauty of Philaenis. Her
comparisons of Philaenis to the gods, to nature, to Phaon, and to men in general all fail to represent or characterize Philaenis fully. Language proves to be insufficient, just as she lamented in the beginning of the elegy. In a final attempt at description, Sappho resorts to using her own body as a method of representation for Philaenis. She states,

And oh, no more; the likeness being such,
Why should they not alike in all parts touch?
Likeness begets such strange self flattery,
That touching myself, all seems done to thee. (47-52)

In an attempt to convince Philaenis to be with her, Sappho tries to craft a sense of visual unity between the pair by equating her own body with Philaenis’. Her stress on likeness and symmetry further perpetuates the egalitarian lesbian utopia that Sappho has been building throughout the elegy. However, since Sappho uses her body to create a tangible image of Philaenis, their identities begin to falter, resulting in the fusion of their identities. By stating that the act of touching herself translates into touching Philaenis, the two women’s separate identities form into one, as it “all seems done to thee” (52). While the mirror may seem to provide a desirable union, both women lose their individuality and end up with unidentifiable, indistinguishable images. Sappho understands that this union is another failed representation when she laments, “Me, in my glass, I call thee; but alas, / When I would kiss, tears dim mine eyes, and glass” (55-56). With the already unstable image of Philaenis, Sappho’s own image collapses too. As Sappho laments the dissolution of Philaenis, she also laments the loss of her own identity, which results from her having tried to place Philaenis through comparison. Finally, the image she has been trying to create throughout the elegy has disappeared along with herself. Sappho mourns the loss of her own identity through this method of comparison, crying out, “O cure this loving madness, and restore / Me to me; thee, my half, my all, my more” (57-58). In these two lines, Sappho recognizes that she lost her identity in attempting to represent Philaenis, and she begs to be made whole again. Ultimately, the elegy concludes with a deconstructed representation of both women, as they transform into one faulty image.

This final and arbitrary representation of both Sappho and Philaenis results from the inability of language to represent these two women fully outside the male heterosexual world. James Holstun argues that “[w]ithout the mediating domination of man, feminine identity liquefies; a woman’s relation to herself and her relation to another woman are equally insignificant.”22 As Holstun (together with Donne’s Sappho) observes, the traditional understanding of femininity collapses without men. The lesbian eroticism present in the elegy renders the gender binary useless, as the comparative roles of masculinity and femininity do not apply to the lovers’ relationship. Since the elegy discards the framework of the gender binary, the language and representation used to understand gender, women, and femininity is insufficient. Therefore, as Sappho pushes Philaenis and herself further outside the confines of the heterosexual world, language fails them, and their identities become increasingly unidentifiable and vague until they finally collapse into one another. By going outside the bounds of the gender binary, they push the limits of language and representation, causing their identities to fall apart.

Holstun argues that this collapse of identity and the failure of lesbian love explain and perpetuate the silence around lesbianism in the Renaissance.23 He claims that while Donne presents a rather sympathetic view of lesbianism, the poet masters lesbian eroticism by subordinating it to a patriarchal understanding of language and the world. Holstun argues that this subordination occurs through Sappho’s failure to create a love poem with a language not mediated by men, and this failure amounts to the censorship of the female voice, a way of neutralizing the threat of women to the patriarchy—it represents the overall victory of patriarchal ideals. Yet other readings are possible. Indeed, Elizabeth Harvey’s discussion of Donne’s appropriation of the fifteenth epistle from Heroides, taken alongside Judith Butler’s Gender Trouble, helps to explain how the deconstruction and failure of language, representation, and identity in the poem act to destabilize the construction of gender and patriarchal authority rather than affirm it.

Many scholars, including both Holstun and Harvey, have treated the subject matter and form of Donne’s “Sappho to Philaenis” as a direct response to Ovid’s “Sappho to Phaon.” As noted above, Ovid’s Sappho commits suicide by throwing herself off a cliff when her male lover Phaon rejects her.24 In Ovid’s story, Sappho details the failure of her poetic ability and vehemently dismisses her lesbian past, thus transforming herself into a heterosexual woman.25 Unlike Ovid, Donne portrays a lesbian woman who seeks to establish her own agency and her relationship with another woman away from male influence.26 Donne’s Sappho strives to create a utopian female eroticism and a new language to describe that experience. While the appropriation of female voices has served historically as a way to censor and silence women, the way in which Donne positions Sappho results in something different. Throughout the elegy, Donne has subtracted male influence, not only by centering the elegy on a lesbian Sappho but also by dismissing male Petrarchan ideals and by positing men as a threat to the lovers’ utopian union. Paula Blank argues that this dismissal of male influence is not related to sexuality and gender at all. She claims that Donne does not question lesbian desire in this elegy; rather he challenges homo-erotics, the method (popular among Donne’s contemporaries) of creating sexual identities through comparison in order to avoid loss or change.27 However, Donne’s
decision to portray Sappho as a lesbian woman, which contrasts with Ovid’s portrayal, proves otherwise. Even if Donne is not directly responding to Ovid, but rather attempting in some way to access the Greek poet herself, one idea still holds true: by making a point of Sappho’s sexuality, Donne places gender and sexuality at the forefront of the elegy. Donne’s use of a lesbian female voice makes his subtraction of the male influence not simply a critique of Petrarchism and his contemporaries, as Blank claims. Rather, it prompts questions about gender signification and essentialist notions about sexuality.

Harvey expands on this point, arguing that Donne’s ventriloquism of the female voice “continually subverts the ontological security of a text, its discrete historical boundaries, and its status as self-contained property, the phenomenon of transvestite phonocentrism.” While Holstun claims that Donne silences the lesbian voice, Harvey argues that this “ventriloquistic cross-dressing” destabilizes gender signification and allows for a marginalized voice to come forward. In “Sappho to Philaenis,” Donne transgresses the laws of gender by taking on the female voice. Harvey argues that this sexual transgression separates the author from the voice, destabilizing not only authorship generally but male authorship in particular. This borrowing of the lesbian female voice undermines male authorial power over the text, which ultimately works to dismantle phallogocentrism itself. This instability of authorial identity caused by assuming the lesbian female voice augments the challenge to the essentialist notion of gender that Sappho introduces in the elegy. As shown above, Sappho disregards the rules of signification as they relate to gender. She repeatedly questions the conventions of the male-defined world as she rejects Phaon, male love tropes, and men in general. Diane Benet confirms this challenge when she states that man’s superfluous status in the paradise Sappho constructs seems to be questioning conventionalized roles of gender. In questioning the fixed roles of gender, both Donne’s and Sappho’s identities are deconstructive. The loss of Donne’s masculine authorial identity (when he transgresses the laws of gender) mirrors the way in which Sappho and Philaenis lose their identities when they commit their sexual transgression by rejecting the male-defined heteronormative world. Harvey’s observation about Donne’s use of the female voice undermines Holstun’s conclusion about the victory of patriarchal ideals in “Sappho to Philaenis.” Donne’s use of the female voice does not silence Sappho, as Ovid had done. Instead, Donne uses the lesbian voice to subvert and destabilize the security of gender signification, which allows for new identities and questions to arise by breaking the normal categorization gender roles prescribe. Therefore, the failure of language and representation in Donne’s love elegy need not indicate the censorship of the female voice, as Holstun argues. Rather, this “ventriloquistic cross-dressing” permits a critique of the restrictive nature of gender essentialism and highlights the need for a new language to describe those who fall outside traditional categories.

This understanding of Donne’s ventriloquism as well as Sappho’s own subversive identity can be further understood in light of Judith Butler’s Gender Trouble, which explores the performatives of gender, arguing that gender identity is sustained through the performatives that constitute its reality. The expectations for gender identity are determined by society and pressed upon people, and only through reiterative performance does essentialist gender identity take shape. As part of this study, Butler explores the effect of subverting such performances through drag. “In imitating gender,” she writes, “drag implicitly reveals the imitative structure of gender itself—as well as its contingency.” Butler observes that when men mimic the cultural ideal of femininity, they reveal the constructed and performatives of gender itself. In other words, through subversion, they unveil gender’s construction. In the same way, Donne’s ventriloquism of Sappho reveals gender’s constructed nature. By using the female voice, Donne destabilizes the security of gender signification and male authorial power, as Harvey suggests. This idea also helps to explain the inner workings of the elegy itself. Sappho breaks the social performance meant to show femininity in women, and by doing so, she disrupts the world around her. Sappho’s act of breaking the performatives for her gender thus matches what Butler calls the proliferation of “gender configurations outside the restricting frames of masculinist domination and compulsory heterosexuality.” As a result, the language and representation defined by those conventions of gender no longer apply. For this reason, when both Sappho and Philaenis break their performatives, they also lose the language previously used to identify them. This subversion of the traditional gender binary initiates the deconstruction of their defined identities. Since they exist outside categorization, the language and representation of those categories no longer apply, and their identity begins to unravel. Therefore, the breakdown of feminine identity in “Sappho to Philaenis” does not reveal the triumph of patriarchal ideals, as Holstun argues. Rather, the breakdown of language and representation reveals the limits of the performative gender identity that the patriarchy requires of both men and women. Ultimately, in “Sappho to Philaenis,” both Sappho and Donne highlight the performatives of gender to reveal the constructed nature of gender expectations and the need for new language and representation to emerge.

Ultimately, this failure of representation signifies that women cannot exist outside the male-centric heteronormative world. This failure is reminiscent of the Lacanian idea that “the woman does not exist” and that women are “not-alls,” as they hold no universality. In response to this notion, French feminist Luce Irigaray claims that “the female all will come,” thus promising the
emancipation of women from men. In the same way, “Sappho to Philaenis” suggests emancipation—or at least performs an attempt of it. In the elegy, Donne both embraces and confronts male anxiety by creating a world in which gender roles are subverted and men are unnecessary. While this world ultimately collapses in a crisis of language and representation, Donne showcases the opportunity for the “female—all” to one day come, just as Irigaray suggests. Irigaray concludes her essay by commenting on the crisis of female language and representation: “If we (women) don’t invent a language, if we don’t find our body’s language, its gestures will be too few to accompany our story.” Sappho to Philaenis begins and ends with a crisis of representation. Sappho laments her inability to identify Philaenis as both language and image fail her, and she then pinpoints the source of this failure in the inability of the male heteronormative world to represent their experience. As a result, she tries to use her own body—to create her “own body’s language,” as Irigaray puts it—in order to represent their own experience and being separate from men. However, her body is not enough. Sappho does not have the “gestures” or “language” to tell her story. The crisis of language and representation escalates, and Sappho and Philaenis only define each other by themselves, producing a collapsed image of both women. Their inability to define themselves separately from men shows the need to create linguistic gestures of the body that resist existing categorization. By exploring the issue of female language and representation outside the realm of men, Donne questions the power of categorization and challenges the ways in which masculinity, femininity, and heterosexuality are defined, understood, and normalized.

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NOTES
2 Henry Smith, A preparative to marriage, in Renaissance Woman, ed. Aughterson, 83. For further examples, see Juan Luis Vives, The instruction of a Christian woman, and William Gouge, Of domestical duties, in Renaissance Woman, ed. Aughterson, 69-74 and 88-95, respectively.
5 While there was an awareness of gay men in the Renaissance, women lacked the freedom to establish a subculture in which lesbian identity could form. This inability to create this identity explains the lack of literary accounts of lesbianism. James, Holstun “Will you Rent our Ancient Love Asunder?” Lesbian Elegy in Donne, Marvell, and Milton,” ELH 54.4 (1987): 835, notes that since literature is a fraternal order, “we tend to find more accounts of men loving women or other men than of women loving each other.”
7 Many of John Donne’s elegies were censored in the late Tudor and early Stuart periods. “The Anagram,” “To his Mistress going to bed,” “The Bracelet,” “Love’s Progress,” “His Parting from her,” and “Sappho to Philaenis” were censored in part or in whole due to sexually explicit language, Ted-Larry Pebworth, “The Early Censorship of John Donne’s Elegies and ‘Sappho to Philaenis’ in Manuscript and Print,” Text 13 (2000): 193-201, explores how each instance of censorship deals strive to alter Donne’s work to make it conform to the norms of Renaissance England. In the case of “Sappho to Philaenis,” which was published with the full volume of Donne’s work in 1633, a section was censored (lines 51-54), thus transforming the poem from a lesbian love elegy into (as Pebworth says) an elegy about “idealized friendship between two women” (200). The elegy continued to be censored or dismissed well into the twentieth century, as many scholars—most famously Helen Gardner—believed that the subject matter, style, and voice were too out of character to belong in Donne’s canon. It was not until scholarship until the 1980s that “Sappho to Philaenis” began to receive proper attention. Recent critics have embraced the elegy and have argued that it provides further insight to Donne’s view of sexuality and gender roles. See Stella Revard, “The Sapphic Voice in Donne’s ‘Sappho to Philaenis,’ in Renaissance Discourses of Desire, eds. Cláude J. Summers and Ted-Larry Pebworth (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1993), esp. 63-64.
10 Sappho was a prolific Grecian female poet who lived from 630 BCE to 580 BCE. Her lyric poetry consisted of passionate love poems addressed to young women. She was revered by ancient commentators as equal to Homer, and Plato referred to her as the “Tenth Muse.” However, we only have fragments of her work, as the open lesbian desire depicted in her writings led them to be burned by the bishop of Constantinople in about 380 CE. See Shelley A. Thrasher, “Sappho,” in Dictionary of World Biography: The Ancient World (1998), 1-2.
11 The only information on Philaenis comes from epigrams in the Greek Anthology, where she is found at the center of a debate of disputed authorship. Her name was connected with what Elizabeth D. Harvey, Venitulozized Voices: Feminist Theory and English Renaissance Texts (London: Routledge, 1995), 125-126, calls an “erotic guidebook that furnished its readers with explicit information about diverse sexual practices and positions.” Harvey argues that Donne’s selection of her as the love object comes from the facts that both women wrote erotic works, that both were thought to be immoral and licentious, and that the sexuality of both prompted questioning about authorship.
14 As Donald Guss, John Donne, Petrarchist: Italianate Conjects and Love Theory in The Songs and Sonnets (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1966), 18, puts it, Petrarchan poetry
is characterized by “fantastic arguments, emotional extravagance, and peregrine comparisons.” In the sixteenth century, this mode of poetry became popular among male poets throughout Europe. Petrarchan poetry usually consists of a male-centered narrative in which the main character chooses love as his way of life. There are many tropes and themes that make up this tradition, such as the initiation of love, complaining against a woman’s stubborn will, grieving the end of a love, an elegy of a woman’s death, or the renunciation of love. See further Guss, Donne, Petrarchist, 49–50.

Scholars have understood Donne’s use of the Sapphic voice as borrowed from Ovid’s fifteenth epistle “Sappho to Phaon” in the Heroides, a collection of letters centered around women who write to lovers who had abandoned them (Harvey, Ventriloquized Voices, 119). In his epistle, Ovid presents Sappho as a straight, desperate, and suicidal woman who yearns for the attention a young man named Phaon, who continually rejects her until she feels pushed to take her own life. In her suffering, Ovid’s Sappho loses her ability to write and speak, and she laments the loss of the poetic skill and power she once possessed (Harvey, Ventriloquized Voices, 121). In addition, Ovid’s Sappho resists her lesbian past by chastising her previous female attraction in favor of her now heterosexual attraction. See Janel Mueller, “Lesbian Erotics: The Utopian Tropes of Donne’s ‘Sapho to Philaenis,’” in Homosexuality in Renaissance and Enlightenment England: Literary Representations in Historical Context, ed. Claude J. Summers (New York: Haworth Press, 1992), 106.


Harvey, Ventriloquized Voices, 131.

Ibid.

Holstun, “Lesbian Elegy,” 840 (see above, n. 5, for full citation).

Ibid., 843.

Ibid., 846–847.


Many scholars have understood Ovid’s use of the Sapphic voice as a way to subordinate Sappho’s own voice to his own. Harvey and Mueller argue that by taking away her poetic voice, lesbian identity, and ultimately her life in his epistle, Ovid creates a distorted vision of Sappho and feminine desire. Harvey, Ventriloquized Voices, 124, argues that his characterization ultimately turns Sappho into a parody of the female voice, ultimately offering Sappho’s own poetic voice for comic scrutiny.


Harvey, Ventriloquized Voices, 133.

Ibid.


Ibid., 187.

Ibid., 193.


Ibid., 75.

Ibid., 76.

S

toicism was one of the most popular philosophies in the Roman Empire, with practitioners ranging from the freedman Epictetus to the Emperor Marcus Aurelius. Reflecting this popularity, the courtier-author Petronius (d. c. 66) alludes to and satirizes stoicism, and particularly the stoic philosopher Seneca the Younger (d. 65), in his novel the Satyricon. Hunting for such allusions, for example, Sarah Ruden suggests that the freedman Macenarianus from Trimalchio’s dinner could be a reference to the aesthete Macenarius discussed in one of Seneca’s letters. Petronius’ irony makes it difficult to determine his opinions with any certainty, but his depiction of suicide, a practice acceptable and at times revered under stoicism, suggests his skepticism regarding the nobility of this philosophical system. Indeed, the Satyricon critiques stoicism by using exaggeration and bathetic circumstances to reveal the performativity of suicide and stoicism more generally.

In stoic philosophy, suicide was (as Ruden puts it) “a religious act, one signifying the ultimate transcendence of the human will over circumstance,” and, for a stoic, a greater crime than taking one’s life would be “acting as if life mattered.” In his sixty-fifth letter, for example, Seneca wrote of the body as nothing more than “a chain set around [his] liberty,” restricting his “free spirit,” and he maintained that his “flesh will never force [him] to suffer fear or adopt a pretense unworthy of a good man.” Instead, he would “break off association with it” (65.21–22). Some writers praised these suicides. Pliny the Younger wrote of Arria stabbing herself to convince her husband Caecina Paetus to do the same after a failed rebellion against the Emperor Claudius. According to Pliny, after stabbing herself, she reassured her husband, “It does not hurt,
Paetus.” Pliny writes that her deed was “glorious,” her words were “immortal, almost divine,” and she was “heroic” (3.16.6). From Pliny’s account, it is clear that Roman stoics saw virtue in this act.

Seneca also committed suicide rather than go to trial after being accused of conspiracy by Nero. Based on Tacitus’ account, Seneca addressed his weeping friends, asking, “Where were their philosophical tenets … they had pondered on for so many years to counter misfortune?” (15.62). Seneca’s words reveal the stoic perception of suicide as (at least in this scenario) something rational, as an extension of philosophical tenets, and not something to weep over. Seneca himself wrote about suicide in his letters, e.g., in his seventy-seventh letter: “Like the play, so is life itself: what matters is not how long it is but how well it has been performed. It does not matter when you end. End when you want; just put a good close on it” (77.20). Seneca writes that one should end life “when you want,” and that it is therefore not important how long life is, just that it is performed well, up to and including its end. The conception of suicide as freedom or exercising agency over life, choosing to end it on one’s own terms, echoes the sixty-fifth letter, but here Seneca’s theatrical metaphor further indicates that stoic suicide could be seen as a type of performance. Indeed, the Satyricon reveals that this performativity is more than a useful metaphor with which to critique stoic suicide and philosophy, but to understand the novel’s criticism one must understand the suspicion of performance in Imperial Rome.

Roman male identity was carefully policed, and this policing included suspicion of performance and a disdain for actors. Masculinity as an ideological concept was produced and reproduced societally in a twofold manner, summarized concisely by Maud Bleason, who notes that these gender norms (and social constructs of superiority in general) included “representing itself as natural and inevitable to outsiders, but stressing to insiders the importance of nurture and the vulnerability of the entire project to lapses in self-control.” The result of the second part of that production was internal policing. For example, physiognomy, reading character from facial expressions and gestures, was “like astrology and dream interpretation, a recognized technical specialty,” and it was used in an attempt to find hidden cinaedi, men thought effeminate for being the passive partner in intercourse with other men. This practice created a “universal atmosphere of suspicion” as everyone looked for hidden cinaedi while trying not to be accused of being one themselves. For example, men practicing rhetoric had to make sure that they did not sway too much, that their voice was not too pliant, and that they avoided the “versatility of a professional performer.”

Despite their popularity, then, actors were a “socially despised group” precisely because they acted to please their audience, the antithesis of the performance of masculinity. There were nuances, shifts, and exceptions to this attitude, of course, but this disdain is important to understand, because the Satyricon makes its critique of stoic suicide by bringing the act down from philosophy to acting, questioning the nobility of the action.

This suspicion or disdain for performance was common during the reign of Nero, under whose rule Petronius and Seneca lived. For example, Pliny derisively called Nero an “actor-emperor” in the Panegyricus (46.4). Though Pliny represents the opinion of someone living after Nero, Tacitus in his Annals demonstrates that taboos concerning performance and Roman elites were relevant concerns even in Nero’s lifetime. For example, Tacitus describes the controversy surrounding the Emperor Nero performing onstage by writing that the senate offered Nero “victory in singing … in order to keep hidden a scandalous stage performance” (16.4). The senate’s actions as described by Tacitus indicate the disdain for actors and performance: the senate tried to keep Nero’s performance hidden because his performance would have been considered a scandal. Though the Annals focus more on Nero, it does indicate that the hatred of actors and suspicion of performance described by Gleason was a feature of Roman society. The Satyricon exploits these suspicions by depicting stoic suicide as a performance or farce, bringing a noble philosophy down to the level of actors. The nobility of stoicism itself is thus called into question, with their purportedly noble ideals enacted in ignoble ways.

The Satyricon removes the pretension of suicide and depicts it as a theatrical event to highlight its performativity. One example of the “farcical suicide” occurs in Part 4 of the novel, when Giton catches Encolpius in the act of suicide, saves him, takes a razor from Eumolpus’ hired man, and apparently slit his own throat. When Encolpius tries to do the same, he discovers that the razor is now dull (94). The farcical quality of this scene is hard to deny. Giton tells Encolpius, “Here’s proof that those who really want to die never take long” (94), and he describes himself as an example of proper suicide by proving it does not take long. Giton could be read as a farcical adaptation of Pliny’s story of Arria, telling her husband “it does not hurt” (3.16.6). Both use their bodies to make a point: real suicide does not take long and does not hurt. However, as Jo-Ann Shelton notes, Arria was convincing her husband to do the same, so she was “praiseworthy” for acting “toward the welfare of her husband” by convincing him to uphold his honor. In the Satyricon, Giton chastises Encolpius for trying to die before him, and he uses himself as an example of “what you [i.e., Encolpius] wanted me [Giton] to find” (94). An act of preserving honor becomes the chastisement of lovers. Further, Giton’s wish to die with Encolpius could be a farcical adaptation of the loving wife committing suicide with her husband. Seneca’s wife Pompeia Paulina, for example, made what Tacitus describes as the “noble decision” of dying with her husband (15.63). But again, the circumstances are bathetic in the Satyricon. Giton and Encolpius are not bravely taking their lives into their own hands rather than going to trial. The pretense of no-
bility and politics is removed, and they are therefore only “lovers playing out [a] drama” (95), with the word “drama” pointing directly to the performativity of Giton’s actions. Giton is performing for Encolpius, and his razor is even dull, like a prop. Without the pretense of nobility in suicide, then, the novel can be seen as calling for a reconsideration of the act of suicide among the nobility and the stoics. If Giton is performing for Encolpius, perhaps one can consider Arria, Pompeia, and even Seneca as performing for themselves, their partners, and for Rome, attempting to prove their devotion to their partners or to their ideas. Given the Roman disdain for actors, the novel could be read as a critique of stoic suicide, revealing it has more in common with a drama than with true philosophical doctrine.

Petronius made his own suicide into a farcical performance. Like Seneca, Petronius committed suicide, but he did not treat the act with the reverence of a stoic. According to Tacitus, he “bandaged [his veins] and opened them again, as he felt inclined” (16.19). Instead of discussing serious philosophy like Seneca, Petronius chatted about “light poetry and playful verses,” which were not topics “that would win him glory for his resolve” (16.19). Instead of dictating a long, eloquent work like Seneca, Petronius composed a list of the “emperor’s depravities” (16.19). He did not commit suicide as a point of honor, but as Ruden suggests, his suicide could be read as a parody of Seneca’s: perhaps Petronius recognized the performativity of stoic suicide, the “speechifying show” of Seneca’s suicide. He recognized Seneca was pleasing his admirers by demonstrating good stoic virtue. Petronius therefore dropped the pretension, making the act actually an act, making the metaphorical play Seneca described real, and bringing stoic suicide down from nobility to the level of an actor.

To return to the Satyricon, the novel also can be read as acting out this criticism of stoicism in its form. The Satyricon critiques stoicism more generally by placing philosophical statements in fiction, a type of performance meant to, like drama, please. The characters are actors created by Petronius, performing absurd scenarios to please the Roman reader. When the Satyricon mimics stoic rhetoric, the rhetoric becomes part of that framework. For example, washing up on shore after a shipwreck, Encolpius bemoans the futility of human life, exclaiming: “This is what mortal plans come to; this is the result of all our great dreams and ambitions. A man in this world is simply at sea!” (115). Encolpius’ speech could easily be read as stoic, since he talks about the futility of human life and endeavors, implying one should not care about life too dearly—a stoic position. Indeed, Ruden reads this scene as a parody of Seneca’s shipwreck motif. But, the “awful pun”—“A man in the world is simply at sea”—and the bathetic context of a “sordid erotic adventure involving at least five people” add to the entertainment of the scene, making Encolpius’ speech more melodramatic and humorous than an attempt to offer serious insights derived from reason. The narrative works to please its readers with philosophical ideas. Encolpius acts out stoicism like an actor on stage. His speech is not persuasive, but pleasing like that of an actor the Romans despised. Further, considering the “emotional, melodramatic style” of Seneca, Petronius may be showing the divide between dignified content and undignified form. On a formal level, then, he critiques the performativity of stoicism by placing its philosophy in the context of pleasing literature, bringing philosophers down to the level of farcical characters, potentially showing they are more similar than previously thought.

The Satyricon parodies and critiques the stoic suicide by exaggerating its performativity, thereby transforming a philosophy popular among aristocrats into a farce or drama and making the characters that say and do stoic things into caricatures acting out bathetic situations. The Satyricon uses its status of fiction to reinforce this critique. Without the pretense of honor and doctrine, the very nobility of stoic suicide, and potentially of stoicism itself, is made doubtful. Perhaps Petronius, in his project to show the ignobility of Roman society, showed the ignobility of stoicism by revealing that stoics are little more than actors themselves, people more worthy of suspicion than admiration.

Carl Teegerstrom is a senior majoring in English and Ancient Mediterranean Studies. He prepared this essay as part of Professor Thomas Jenkins’s seminar on Daily Life in Ancient Rome (CLAS 1308) in Spring 2018.

NOTES
1 All quotations of Petronius’ Satyricon, cited parenthetically according to the ancient text, are from Petronius: Satyricon, tr. Sarah Ruden, (Indianapolis: Hackett, 2000).
2 Ibid., 54-55.
3 Ibid., 186 (emphasis in original).
8 Ibid., 75-76.
9 Ibid., 78.
10 Ibid., 79, 82.
11 Ibid., 82.
13 Ibid., 188
14 Ibid., 187.
15 Ibid.
16 Ibid., 186.
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