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Writing New Rites: John Donne's and John Milton's Elegies as Mourning Ritual

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Writing New Rites: John Donne's and John Milton's Elegies as Mourning Ritual

For the degree of Master of Arts

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WRITING NEW RITES: JOHN DONNE'S AND JOHN MILTON'S ELEGIES AS
MOURNING RITUAL

A Thesis

Submitted to the Faculty

of

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by

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of

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West Lafayette, Indiana

For my parents and twin sister.

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ABSTRACT

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In this study, I read John Donne's *The Anniversaries* and John Milton's *Lycidas* in the context of the changing funeral and mourning ritual since the Reformation and England's turn to Protestantism, approximately begun in the 1540s. In Donne's *Anniversaries*, I find that he is exploring how the body can sign spiritual health or sickness, as well as negotiating how the dead (body and spirit) might be exemplum for the living. I argue that this negotiation is particularly Protestant in that the body, despite conventional notions about Protestantism's tendency to privilege the soul, is still important in divining the quality of the soul. In *Lycidas*, the speaker's concern for the dead body of Lycidas is striking, although as an imagined absence/presence, rather than as a spokesperson for the soul. I argue that Milton's *Lycidas*, although attempting new Protestant mourning rites, also exhibits reluctant continuity with some of the funeral and mourning rituals that were practiced before the Reformation in England. This thesis works to challenge typical periodization, as it is possible to see funeral and mourning rituals continue in these early modern elegies.

CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

There is a square; there is an oblong. The players take the square and place it upon the oblong. They place it very accurately; they make a perfect dwelling-place. Very little is left outside. The structure is now visible; what is inchoate is here stated; we are not so various or so mean; we have made oblongs and stood them upon squares. This is our triumph; this is our consolation.

–Virginia Woolf, *The Waves*

The seeds of my argument that John Donne's *First Anniversary* and John Milton's *Lycidas* participate and create new Protestant memorial ritual (and the related mourning experiences they address) were planted long before I had read either poem. When I was twelve years old, my father, 62 years old, died from colon cancer. The ritual, my father's memorial service, was much like the one described by the narrator Rhoda in Virginia Woolf's *The Waves*; my mourning experience of the service and its participants, our family and friends, seemed to be shapes that resisted the reality of that moment. Not a casket, but an oblong. Not a gravestone, but a square. No mourners, just players. In the intervening years between then and now I have lost my aunt, my maternal grandparents, and most recently, my uncle.

By the time I encountered Milton's *Lycidas* in autumn 2012, I was admittedly prepared to understand it not only as a work of art, but also as an aid for mourning. The pastoral elegy spoke of one young writer's calibration of his mourning in response to the life of a specific individual. As one of several elegies in a multi-author publication, *Iusta Eduardo King*, *Lycidas* participated in a public process of mourning, a process that was becoming increasingly popular at the time (Kay 219). Soon after, in spring 2013, I read Donne's *First Anniversary*, and found that this elegy too was concerned with the right (rite) way to mourn. At his patron's insistence, Donne published *The Anniversaries* in 1611 and 1612 respectively, making both poems available to a wider readership and thus participating in a public form of mourning. The critical tools and contexts I acquired during those readings, in graduate courses, did not diffuse but rather prompted my questioning, that, if I could read *The First Anniversary* and *Lycidas* as kinds of personal expressions of grief and as mourning rituals, then wasn't it possible that Donne's and Milton's contemporaries, and their subsequent readers, also read these elegies in a similar manner?¹ It is likely that such has been the case with these poems in particular, as both elegies are occasional. *Lycidas* was originally published as part of an anthology of poems, *Iusta Eduardo King*, commemorating the life and death of Edward King, and penned by his fellow Cambridge students. Donne's *First Anniversary* was written in memory of Elizabeth Drury, the daughter of his patron Sir Robert Drury. It is very likely that this elegy was some part of Sir Drury's mourning. Historian Peter Marshall notes that by the 1630s "funeral verses—elegies, odes, and laments—which were sometimes attached to

¹ This kind of reader response is no longer excluded from critical consideration, as it was in the second half

hearses or placed on tombs and church walls, were increasingly finding their way into print” (273). Thus, Donne’s *First Anniversary* and Milton’s *Lycidas* were written and read in the context of mourning and funeral rituals, which traditionally took the form of religious services at the burial and subsequent times.

Because these elegies were composed in the tumultuous wake of the English Reformation—a time when the traditional (Catholic) funeral rites were deemed inappropriate and ineffectual in this new, Protestant England—they had the opportunity to do more than merely reflect the funeral and mourning rituals of their day. I propose that these canonical and innovative elegies create funeral and mourning ritual. By funeral and mourning rituals I mean the actions, internal and external, which facilitated laying the dead to rest at personal and societal levels. These can include overlapping practices related to *memento mori*; the personal selection and use of specific prayers for personal solace; the institutional selection and use of specific prayers to be used at public services, the primary ones at burials as well as the subsidiary but no less important related gatherings such as wakes and anniversary memorials; the expected dress and comportment of the grieving in private and in public. Amid the institutional, societal, and idiosyncratic practices, my literary focus is, appropriately enough, on those whose expressions were verbal.

Reformation religious and cultural history clarifies how central the dead were to the Protestant reformers’ campaign against the Catholic Church. Early modern scholar² Marshall asserts that “the status of the dead was among the most divisive issues of the

² For this study, I have chosen to focus mainly on early modern scholars of the English Reformation. I am interested in the reader reception of early modern scholars and how this reception has paralleled the literary one of *The Anniversaries* and *Lycidas*. For a project of greater scope, I would include more work from medieval historians and scholars.

early Reformation; it was also arguably the theological terrain over which in the reign of Henry VIII official reform travelled furthest and fastest” (47). As he notes, the Catholic doctrine of Purgatory was one of reformers’ main targets; in spiritual and doctrinal terms, the toppling of the doctrine of Purgatory meant that the efficaciousness of prayers for the dead was challenged. In terms of practices, it altered burial rites, many now no longer considered necessary, even considered indulgent or dangerously encouraging of prayers for the dead³, which, in the early years of the Reformation was too redolent of Catholicism for reformers (154). Understanding the centrality of Purgatory to pre-Reformation mourners and how it generated the many funeral and mourning rites that helped survivors grieve and honor their dead is key to understanding how Donne and Milton’s elegies devise and enact new Protestant rituals. Additionally, as one might expect, the Reformation was not at all a smooth transition from Catholic to Protestant. Martin Luther’s development of his ideas about sacraments is uneven; for example in his polemical answer to many of his detractors, *The Babylonian Captivity of the Church*, there is some inconsistency within the text of his ideas about which sacraments of the church are actually sacraments. Although Luther defines the sacraments as three, baptism, penance, and bread, near the end of *The Babylonian* he writes that “the sacrament of penance, which I added to these two, lacks the divinely instituted sign” (244), suggestive of the confusion attendant with the reformation.

Marshall argues that the “prominence of the dead in late medieval Latin Christianity was a result of the conjunction of two compelling ideas” (7). The first is that

³ These prayers did not need to be any particular kind, although it is noted that the “most efficacious of all prayers...[is] the Sacrifice of the Mass” (Toner).

most people did not go directly to heaven but instead “underwent a painful purgation of the debt due for their sins” (7); the second that the living could and should ease the purgatorial sufferings of the dead by remembering them. For the medieval faithful this did not mean recalling pleasant times with deceased loved ones. Instead, remembrance involved ritual prayer and action. Much of the remembrance was prompted by a deceased’s will. A testator might set aside funds for alms to the poor, or a funeral monument requesting intercessory prayer; they might also donate money to create a chantry, where the monks’ single purpose was to say prayers for the deceased benefactor. Marshall notes that the “most common” ritual was that of the obit where the entire funeral would be repeated on the anniversary of death, including “the bell-man going forth once more, candles, mass and *dirige*, doles to the poor, even the presence of a hearse in the parish church” (20-21).

What happened to these rituals when England began its turn to Protestantism in the 1540s? The doctrine of Purgatory came under attack from reformers because of the lack of scriptural corroboration of Purgatory. Additionally, reformers argued that Purgatory was

inconsistent with the doctrine of justification by faith, which declared that an individual could be put ‘right with God’ through faith, thus establishing a relationship which obviated the need for purgatory. Having dispensed with the idea of purgatory, the reformers saw no pressing reason to retain the practice of prayer for the dead, which was henceforth omitted from Protestant liturgies.

(McGrath 480)

Not just liturgy, but various rituals surrounding mourning and burial were simplified because of the attack on Purgatory. Literary texts in the early seventeenth century, such as funeral sermons and elegies, began to bear the burden of ritual.

Some Scholarly Responses to Early Modern (Reformation) Literature

Several historians mark the Reformation and the disassembling of the doctrine of Purgatory as truly transformative of the experience of death and dying; however, many of them disagree about what the Reformation meant for mourners. Claire Gittings argues, wrongly I think, that “the early modern period was characterized by an increasing anxiety over death which showed itself in a variety of ways” (13). She points to the increased importance of the individual in the early modern era: “the more stress is laid on the uniqueness of each individual, the harder it becomes to contemplate the exit of a particular person from this world, since one who is unique can, by definition, never truly be replaced” (9-10). Gittings’s assertion that people of the medieval period thought their friends and family replaceable does not hold up, especially when we have such texts as Geoffrey Chaucer’s *The Book of the Duchess*, which describes the prolonged mourning of John of Gaunt for his dead wife Blanche. Can we truly measure the level of anxiety about death at this historical distance? Gittings’s additional claim that early moderns were more anxious about death is doubly confusing when we consider the critical history of the medieval funeral and mourning rites. The judgment that medieval people were morbid and obsessed with death is so commonplace that Eamon Duffy must counter it in his book on traditional religion with the observation that all the rites and rituals around death and dying “provide abundant evidence not of morbidity, but of a practical and

pragmatic sense of the continuing value of life and the social relations of the living, with a determination to use the things of this world to prepare a lodging in the next” (303). These competing views of late medieval and early modern attitudes towards death are suggestive of the confusion of ritual and belief caused by the Reformation.

Not only is Gittings invested in the Reformation as incredibly distinct from the late medieval period, in terms of their funeral practices, she also finds in post-Reformation England the seeds of contemporary attitudes towards death. She attributes the beginning of contemporary revulsion regarding death to the growing importance of the individual in early modern England. Patrick J. Geary too marks the Reformation as one of several catalysts leading to our present attitudes about death: “death seems unnatural, a failure of our technological society, of our medical system, of our quest for personal fulfillment...never before have humans been able to kill so many people so efficiently, or to forget them so completely” (1-2). Like Duffy, Geary finds the medieval understanding of the relationship between the living and the dead to be both positive and life affirming. According to Geary, in the Middle Ages, “death marked a transition, a change in status, but not an end” (2). The living still had dealings with the dead. Purgatory ensured that survivors were responsible for its inhabitants, not only friends, and family, but also the anonymous dead. Through prayer, and in the repetition of the names of the deceased and their good works, survivors might shorten their loved ones’ sentence in the Purgatorial fire.

With the Reformation, funeral ritual was greatly reduced. Ceremonies that reformers deemed too similar to prayer for the dead, such as tomb inscriptions asking for intercessory prayer, were prohibited. There were even mild injunctions regarding the

ringing of church bells for the dead: “broad parameters were set in the early 1560s when the ‘Interpretations of the Bishops’ provided that bells were to be rung for the dying, and that there was to be ‘but one short peal’ after a person’s death, and two others before and after the burial” (162). In mentioning the various value judgments of scholars regarding both pre- and post-Reformation funeral rites I mean to show how much historical baggage the Reformation carries. Almost five hundred years after this religious and cultural upheaval, scholars are still invested in understanding one kind of relationship with the dead as better than another.

My research works against the claims, such as Gittings’s and Geary’s, that early moderns experienced death in a radically different way than those living and dying on the eve of the Reformation. Based on my initial inquiries into the Reformation, I do not believe that it was the beginning of the end of a satisfying relationship between the living and the dead, or that early moderns were more or less fearful of death. By close reading Donne’s *The Anniversaries* and Milton’s *Lycidas* in the context of the English Reformation, I hope to show some insight into how this cultural and religious event affected how these poets and their readers might have mourned differently without the sanction of prayer for the dead. Although not completing a survey of elegies, I believe that focusing on Donne and Milton is particularly fruitful because of their similar religious positioning as radical and experimental poets. Additionally, I find in both *The First Anniversary* and *Lycidas* continuities with the old rituals and concerns of the officially abandoned Catholic faith. In *The First Anniversary*, I find that a (what we might call Catholic) concern for the body to be refigured in Protestant terms by Donne, perhaps the early modern poet *most* consumed with the relationship between body and

soul. Donne's use of the poetic theme of anatomy suggests a desire to make the body (of Elizabeth Drury, Donne's Ideal Woman, and of the world) talk. In *Lycidas*, the narrator's concern with the body of the dead shepherd is striking when we consider the general truism about the Protestant faith: the soul's primacy over the body.

A fundamental question of this study, then, is: what are the early modern Anglo-Protestants' experiences of death as captured by these poems? Further, can an understanding of these experiences as seen through *The Anniversaries* and *Lycidas* help us to better understand the effects, if any, of the Reformation? Were these experiences of death actually different than those of medieval people? The difficult and perhaps expected answer is, "both...and" (Alpers 97). Here, I echo Paul Alpers in his summary of various reactions to *Lycidas*: "many readers of *Lycidas* ask, like the students in John Berryman's short story about teaching the poem, "Wash Far Away," whether it is about King or Milton. The answer, as Berryman's students help their teacher realize, is not 'either...or' but 'both...and'" (97). The Reformation was transformative for mourners; yet hundreds of years later we may read elegies from pre- and post-Reformation times and discover that deep and personal sense of loss in each.

In troubling the hard demarcation that some critics have claimed the Reformation represents for Western mourners and their dead, I align my work with that of Jennifer Summit and David Wallace whose article, "Rethinking Periodization," points to problems with traditional time markers, such as "medieval" and "early modern." On the one hand, "we cannot not periodize" while on the other, these markers are a "massive value judgment" (447), misrepresenting both the medieval and the early modern periods—the medieval as a dark collective only interested in the next world, the early modern as the

birth of the individual. As Margreta de Grazia argues, the early modern period is “characterized...not through its novelty...but through its backward-looking identification with the antique past” (447).⁴ Not just the antique past. Even in its reformation of Catholic faith and culture, Protestant poets such as Donne and Milton echo old traditions.⁵ Thus this thesis has two objectives: one, to understand how *The Anniversaries* and *Lycidas* create new Protestant ritual; two, to show how both elegies write the past into the present through their descriptions of the body.

Some Challenges

Before proceeding, I would like to explain the selections and limitations of this study. The elegies I have chosen are very different stylistically: Donne uses sprawling metaphysical conceits; Milton uses blank verse and classical allusions. Even though both are generically experimental, they are so in very different ways. *The Anniversaries* are such a diverse amalgamation of genres that they have delightfully frustrated critics about the appropriate approach to these poems. Are they epideictic, anatomies, meditation, *contemptus mundi*, funeral sermon, etc. (Lewalski, *Donne's Anniversaries* 7)? And how do these various genres help us to understand these poems? *Lycidas* is generically experimental in that critics, in his time and later, have found the genre of pastoral elegy

⁴ Further study would include Anthony Grafton's *Commerce with the Classics*.

⁵ Clayton Lein's work on Donne has been especially helpful to me in refashioning the terms of the changes in his religious affiliation. Special thanks to Angelica Duran for sharing her knowledge about recent scholarship that has uncovered Milton's amelioration of church rituals, for example in the work of Edward Jones showing Milton's payment for his second wife's traditional church burial services. Additionally, Robyn Malo's suggestion to consider periodization and new formalism in relationship to this thesis was particularly helpful in formulating the stakes of my argument.

inappropriate for commemoration of the dead. Samuel Johnson's infamous criticisms of the genre and Milton's elegy have inspired critical debate about the power of pastoral.⁶

Additionally, Donne does not wholly share the historical and religious context that allows and inspires Milton to write the new rites he does in *Lycidas*; and neither writer is univocal in terms of religious themes or activities. Witnessing the sometimes brutal silencing of Puritan friends, Milton was radicalized in school and inclined toward reforming the Anglican Church (Lewalski, *The Life of John Milton* 39). Yet, in 1658, paid for and likely attended his second wife Elizabeth Minshull Milton's church burial. Donne too lives through a time where the established church was incredibly hostile to his co-religionists, and he saw many of them executed. According to John Carey, Donne took "steps to present himself to the great of the land as a militant Anglican, fit and willing to abuse, in public, those valiant Catholics who had gone to the scaffold for their Faith" (31). Yet many other scholars of Donne have refused this negative interpretation of him, such as Ben Saunders who argued that Carey's work was "hostile" and "judgmental" (20). Milton published his poems, while Donne was a coterie poet, and primarily circulated his work in manuscript form among his friends. Milton saw poetry as another kind of ministry, and claims the profession of poet in published verse, namely *Ad Patrem*. Ramie Targoff notes that "Donne seems to be indifferent to poetry as a vocation: he more or less abandons the medium of verse once he enters the church; he never publishes his collected poems; and he never presents himself in either private or public as a dedicated poet" (24). He did, however, publish *The First Anniversary* in 1611, a striking contrast to his

⁶ The genres of Donne and Milton's elegies are explored in more detail in chapters one and two respectively.

unwillingness to put his other poems in print. That these two poets from such wily and different backgrounds form and publish such similar projects shows how, despite the tremendous amount of change and religious upheaval experienced by citizens of England at this time, these two radical poets are able to tap in to the power of elegy.

Of course, there is a precedent for linking Donne and Milton's elegies. Ruth C. Wallerstein, in her *Studies of Seventeenth Century Poetics* (1950), studies Donne's elegy for Prince Henry alongside Milton's *Lycidas*. Wallerstein foreshadows claims of later historians that the dead and their commemorative trappings were crucial territory for the Protestant reformers when dismantling Catholicism in England: "The elegy is a distinctive seventeenth-century form. No theme takes us more deeply into the temper of the seventeenth century than its attitude toward death" (5). Such historians as Patrick J. Geary (*Living with the Dead in the Middle Ages* 1994), Eamon Duffy (*The Stripping of the Altars* 1992), and Peter Marshall (*Beliefs and the Dead in Reformation England* 2002) have made similar claims. Marshall agrees with Duffy's argument that Purgatory was the defining doctrine of the late medieval period, and that the status of the dead was central to the battle for reform in England (Marshall 7). Although Wallerstein laments that "we do not yet pick up most seventeenth-century poems with that sense of being at home in their modes and patterns" (3), she confines her investigations into elegy to literary "modes and patterns." Her focus is on the Christian poetic legacy that Milton inherits, by way of Augustine and Spenser (111-12). This is the similar impetus in Scott Elledge's inclusion of another of Donne's (few) published elegies, "Elegie upon the Untimely Death of the Incomparable Prince Henry," in the section titled "The Tradition,

Contemporary Elegies” in his *Milton’s “Lycidas.”*⁷ The “modes and patterns” which are yet unexplored in conjunction with Donne’s *Anniversaries* and Milton’s *Lycidas* are the burial rites and mourning practices so radically altered by the English Reformation.

Elledge’s collection rightly implies both Donne’s and Milton’s recognition of their elegies as a part of that tradition—one which fostered commentary on contemporary political and religious issues, making it an appropriate genre for religious innovation. Elegy particularly suited early moderns who now viewed the dead as potential examples for right living, and their funerals as opportunities for didactic sermons. This element of moral teaching is evident in both Donne’s and Milton’s poems. Donne instructs via dissection of the old, sick world, to “try, / What we may gain by thy anatomy” (59-60). Milton too takes a didactic tone when he accuses the “blind mouths” (119), or greedy clergy, who are poor shepherds of their flocks, and provides an alternative in the surprising “uncouth swain” in the *ottava rima* that ends the elegy. These didactic elements to both Donne’s and Milton’s elegies show how these poems are a part of this Protestant conception of the dead as positive exempla.

It is at this point that I would like to self-consciously examine the critical method that I am using to find the ritual in the poetry. I am using new historicism to contextualize both poems. Recent discussion about new historicism, in particular by proponents of new formalism, has suggested that it has transformed “literary studies into sociohistorical study over the past twenty years” (Levinson 560). The implied critique is that literary studies is not enough, and that sociohistorical study is what makes this kind of work still

⁷ As Elledge notes, “this poem was first published in *Lachrymae Lachrymarum* by John Sylvester (London 1613)” (126).

relevant in this utilitarian world. Certainly my thesis does some cultural work in trying to understand the values that might have influenced Donne's and Milton's poetic choices. I hope, however, to show throughout how understanding *The Anniversaries* and *Lycidas* in the turbulent context of the English Reformation illuminates just how human these works of art are. In her article "What is New Formalism?" Marjorie Levinson draws a distinction between two kinds of new historicism: the worst kind that "flatly refuses the meaningfulness of form, of the aesthetic, and of literature except as mystification" (565); and the best kind which "drives context into text, world into work, thus delivering up form—the unique way that each artwork tries to make symbolic what experience has suggested as actual—as the privileged analytic object, exposing history in tension with ideology" (Levinson 565). This thesis reaches towards understanding and "exposing history in tension with ideology" (565), and, more specifically, art in tension with its use.

The exposition of material in Chapters One and Two, indeed, reflects this fusion of methods. I treat Donne's and Milton's poems separately in the two chapters, appraising how each author responds to the Protestant reformation of some aspects of burial rites by creating their own. My direct references to Milton in the Donne chapter and vice versa are kept to a minimum in part as a continuation of such an approach but also as a response to the different historical, social, and religious contexts that arise from a sensitive reading of the two sets of poems. Finally, my close readings of the unique literary works *as* unique literary works governs the minimal references to both these authors' other works and to the works of other early modern English poets of elegies. It is my hope that these close readings will promote an awareness of the rich results of my

approach to Donne's and Milton's, elegies, textual monuments to the dead but by no means dead monuments.

CHAPTER 2. THE NEGOTIATION OF THE BODY AS SIGN IN DONNE'S *FIRST AND SECOND ANNIVERSARY*

In the first chapter of his much-cited and provocative biography *John Donne: Life, Mind and Art*, John Carey claims that the “first thing to remember about Donne is that he was a Catholic; the second, that he betrayed his Faith” (15). Carey’s use of the word *betrayed* is striking. Where he might have used a more neutral word, such as *left*, Carey instead uses one with strong connotations of corruption, disloyalty, and villainy. Yet *betrayed* serves well not to vilify Donne but rather to convey for Carey’s present-day readers the emotional and moral weight that apostasy carried in Donne’s time. In late sixteenth-century England, practicing Catholicism, such as its seven sacraments (baptism, confirmation, Eucharist, penance, anointing of the sick, holy orders, and matrimony) might lead to discovery, torture, and even public disembowelment. One of Donne’s great-uncles, Thomas Heywood, was a former monk of St. Osyth; in 1574 he was discovered, arrested, and “put to death in the usual obscene manner” (20). Another uncle, Jasper Heywood, was educated abroad at a Catholic college, became a member of the Jesuit order (particularly despised in England), and returned home only to be captured in 1583, at which time he was exiled on pain of death (20). In 1594 Donne’s brother Henry died of plague in Newgate prison after authorities discovered he knowingly harbored a priest named William Harrington (24). Carey posits that Donne’s conversion to Protestantism

invalidated the efforts of his family to preserve the “one true church” (29) in England, as well as damning him to hell in the eyes of his erstwhile coreligionists.

By recounting Carey’s opinion about Donne’s apostasy, I mean not to condemn Donne, as Carey seems to do in his biography, but rather to show briefly how scholarly approaches to Donne treat the effect of Donne’s status as a former Catholic during the persecution of his coreligionists and his recusant family on his poems, sermons, and letters. This critical tendency makes one part of this study’s claim rather pedestrian: that Donne exhibits reluctant continuity with Catholic Offices of the Dead in *The Anniversaries*. The “Catholic potential” (38) which Carey sees in the love lyrics and *Holy Sonnets*, which Helen Gardner teases out in *La Corona*, and which Theresa DiPasquale sees as “Eucharistic elements” (DiPasquale 147) in the *First Anniversary* seems well-rehearsed in regards to Donne’s writings.⁸ Indeed, Carey’s work is so thorough and expansive in its exploration of Donne’s apostasy and its affect on Donne’s poetry and verse that, according to Ramie Targoff, it “has informed nearly all subsequent accounts of Donne’s collected writings” (4). “And yet,” Targoff continues, “the reduction of Donne’s life to these two central ‘facts’—apostasy and ambition—has come at a cost. It

⁸ Although obvious, I should note that one of the ways in which *The Anniversaries* exhibit continuity with Catholic funeral rites is in their titles. Calling these two poems “anniversaries” is reminiscent of such rituals as obits (also, tellingly, referred to as anniversaries (Marshall 20)). Additionally, in both poems the speaker alludes to the time that has passed since Elizabeth’s death. In the *First Anniversary*, he says, “some months she hath been dead” (39); in the *Second Anniversary*, we are told that the elegy is his “second year’s true rent” (520) suggesting that both elegies serve as a way to mark time since Elizabeth Drury’s death, in the same way that Catholic funeral ritual did.

is difficult to find critics or readers who consider Donne's career without impugning his motives and accusing him of bad faith" (4-5). Donne continued to make radical and significant choices, in verse and in life, after his conversion to Protestantism; therefore, it only makes sense to attempt to understand Donne and his work as more than a constant reaction and apology for his apostasy.

The challenge (and the heart of this chapter) is to show how Donne is not merely reactive—continually working through his choice of apostasy via his poetry and verse—but also proactive, creating a new Protestant mourning ritual in his elegies, namely in *The Anniversaries*, two of the few poems published during Donne's lifetime in 1611 and 1612 respectively. The publication of *The Anniversaries* contributes to the project of public mourning that elegies engender. Both poems were written, as their secondary titles state, "by Occasion" of Elizabeth Drury's death, daughter of Donne's patron at the time, Sir Robert Drury. Thus, it is responsive to an actual death, as are burial rites and mourning. In *Donne's Anniversaries and the Poetry of Praise*, Barbara Lewalski explores how Donne transforms this "Occasion"; elegy becomes an opportunity for Donne "to discover or understand something about the nature of reality by means of—through—the person praised" (45). According to Lewalski, *The Anniversaries*, which "provoked vehement critical denunciation for their outrageous flattery" in Donne's time and ours, are actually "analytic epistles of a sort" (43). The very extravagance of Donne's praise in these analytic epistles allows Donne to reach for the highest "religious or philosophical truth" (46).

Lewalski argues that *The Anniversaries* are an example of Donne's creation of a new genre, a "'metaphysical' poetry of praise" (41). I propose that in addition to the

generic innovation evident in these two elegies is ritual innovation in the form of a new, Protestant understanding of the relationship between the living and dead. In the *First Anniversary*, Donne's focus on the ability of Elizabeth's body (alive and dead) to sign the spiritual health and wellness of the world is evocative of Protestant's hyper-focus on the body, as explored in the following section. In the *Second Anniversary*, our ability to interpret the signs of the body correctly is called into question. This ultimately threatens the speaker's confident conclusion of the *First Anniversary* that the readers or mourners may know something about goodness through the body of Elizabeth, and something about sinfulness through an anatomy of the world. Ultimately, both elegies depend on the Protestant transformation of the dead into positive examples. Such a relationship is in contrast to one pre-Reformation branch of understanding relationship between the living and the dead, where the deceased, although beloved, were negative examples, a reminder to the living to confess and correct their sins before Purgatory. In this chapter, I will focus my analysis on *The First Anniversary* as it has received the most scholarly attention of the two elegies. I will, however, briefly address how *The Second Anniversary* continues the work of the first as well as, through its differences, demonstrates the fluid nature of this matter.

The Importance of the Body in Post-Reformation England

While differing on many issues, Targoff and Carey both seek the abandoned Catholicism in Donne's work. Of Donne's radical ideas about the relationship between soul and body, Targoff notes that "the notion that the soul was 'scarse...content' to leave the body for heaven was not a conventional Protestant position even if it may have reflected an

existential truth” (149). Protestantism, perhaps more than Catholicism, placed much importance on the soul’s primacy over the body. Targoff argues that Donne’s *Second Anniversary*, in particular, stands “in striking contrast to a traditional Protestant narrative that celebrates the soul’s ‘liberation’ at the moment of death” (88). However, while Protestantism intensified an appreciation for the soul, early modern culture was not univocal in its appreciation or understanding of the role of the body, alive or dead.⁹ The intensity of early moderns’ focus on parts of the body—in poetry, medical texts, meditations, anatomies, etc.—has inspired David Hillman and Carla Mazzio to proclaim that “the early modern period could be conceptualized as an age of synecdoche” (xiv). Pieces of the body took on such particular and significant meaning that they often stood *as* the whole, and *for* the whole.¹⁰ Further, these meaning-heavy parts, in their successful encoding of “social and psychic conditions” (xi) had the power to both disrupt and stabilize the whole. This ability of body parts to both disrupt and stabilize is evident in Marjorie Gerber’s essay “Out of Joint.” In this essay, Garber discusses how the early modern knee joint could signal both homage and rebellion. She points to the scene in Shakespeare’s *Richard II* when the Duchess of York kneels to the usurper Bolingbroke in order to receive pardon for her rebellious son Aumerle. Her husband, the Duke of York, kneels in “obeisance rather than supplication, compliance rather than revolt” (26). While the Duchess’s kneeling discomfits the new King and threatens his understanding of social hierarchy, Garber argues, the Duke’s kneeling signals his willingness to accept Bolingbroke’s rule. In this brief example, we can see how parts of the body speak for the

⁹ Certainly culture and religion overlap variously, yet a contradiction develops between stated Protestant theology and the actual practice of early moderns.

¹⁰ The “whole” is the whole body, as well as the system of signification for which the body stood.

intentions of the soul; we can also see the extent to which interpretations of body language varied depending on their context.

In their introduction to *The Body in Parts: Fantasies of Corporeality in Early Modern Europe*, Hillman and Mazzio naturally call upon Donne—in particular his *Devotions Upon Emergent Occasions*, a meditation on his long illness of relapsing fever—to illustrate early modern obsession with wholeness.¹¹ Hillman and Mazzio point to Donne’s fear of fragmentation in *Devotions*. Donne compares his body to water: “Why dost thou melt me, scatter me, pour me like water upon the ground so instantly? (Donne, *Devotions* 10). Donne’s *Devotions*, Hillman and Mazzio argue, “speak to the energy generated by (and devoted to) individual organs” (xiv).

Most relevant to this study, the body in general gained new interest as an agent or spokesperson for the soul in line with the example from Marjorie Gerber’s work, explored above. In Expostulation 22 of *Devotions*, Donne, after asking how he can purge the leaven from bread (the original sin from body and soul), addresses God and says, “I know that in the state of my body, which is more discernible than that of my soul, thou dost effigiate [i.e., portray] my soul to me” (143). The body, for Donne, is necessary in order to understand the soul and prevent compounding original sin “as that he may prevent his danger in a great part” (143).

The belief in the body’s ability to “effigiate” (Donne 143) or show the quality of a person’s soul and faith was not exclusive to Protestants. Pre-Reformation worshippers

¹¹ Donne’s obsession with wholeness is not just that the pieces of the body be made and remain whole, but that the soul and body may stay united, even after or into death. For a sustained reading of Donne’s repeated return to the idea of body and soul unity, see Ramie Targoff’s *John Donne: Body and Soul*. For example, of the Second Anniversary, Targoff argues that it is not the uncomplicated and triumphant joy of a soul’s progress out of the body, but a reluctant leaving of the earthly existence (103).

had an equally complicated understanding of the relationship between body and soul. According to Stephen Greenblatt in “Meaning and Mutilation,” “pious men and women in the Middle Ages were not content only to read the sacred book of Christ’s wounded body; they longed for Christ to inscribe his truth on their own bodies and in particular on their hearts” (223). Conversely, Protestants were intensely suspicious of “self-inflicted wounds and other signs of somatic holiness” (230). Greenblatt argues that this distaste was a sign of a shift in cultural perspective, viewing the body on a natural and unnatural axis, instead of on a sacred and demonic axis (230-31). He turns to the work of physician John Bulwer whom he terms a “little-known English Savant” in order to illustrate this cultural shift (231). Bulwer, author of *Pathomyotomia, or A dissection of the significative muscles of the affections of the minde*, was fascinated with how the body had its own kind of language communicated through facial muscles, hand gestures, eye movements, and the like¹². For Bulwer, this embodied communication is more authentic and revelatory about the soul than speech or writing. Thus Bulwer renames the muscles of various body parts to correspond to their supposedly natural or inherent meaning: “the Reverentiall paire,” “the Muscles of Worship or Adoration, or the Muscles of the yoke of submissive obedience,” “Muscles of Rejection,” and the “Muscles of Supplication” (qtd in Greenblatt 233-34). Greenblatt asserts that Bulwer’s later work, *Anthropometamorphosis*, does not have the same confidence as his original (if still fiercely desired) hypothesis that there is a single, universal meaning for each muscle. In *Anthropometamorphosis* Bulwer investigates, with horror, the self-mutilation and decoration of other cultures (e.g.

¹² Bulwer’s work is in contrast to Gerber’s reading on knee joints; he does not seem to want to allow for multiple meanings for each part of the body.

piercings, genital mutilation, body sculpting); condemningly, he draws parallels between the body altering in these cultures to the extravagant, attention-catching dress of his contemporaries. According to Greenblatt, Bulwer's work is evidence that, for Protestants, the body now fell on the natural and unnatural axis, and so was bled drop by drop of its role in the medieval drama of faithfulness and faithlessness.¹³

Despite and because of the general distrust of sacred wounds, the body remained significant in Protestant worship, but differently so. While the conventional view on Protestantism might argue that its privileging of soul over body, internal over external, is evidence of a movement away from the body, this very shift actually suggests a hyper-focus. One might readily think of the dramatically present absence of the crucified Christ's body at the ending of Donne's "Goody Friday: Made as I was Riding Westward that Day" (1613). The increased attention on the internal workings of the soul demanded an equal attention to outward signs. The body was still incredibly relevant. The same feeling that inspires fourteenth century Dominican monk Heinrich Seuse to engrave "the name of Jesus (IHS) over his heart" with a sharp stylus (an example of self-scarification which was rare, and mostly metaphorical) also inspires Protestant reformers like William Tyndale to study the bodies of those in prayer in order to determine their heart (Greenblatt 224; Targoff, *Common Prayer* 8). The body, alive and dead, was still the means by which worshippers could demonstrate their faith.

Greenblatt recognizes in Bulwer and others a tendency to describe and interpret body language as natural and unnatural, as opposed to sacred and demonic; however, I

¹³ A positive expression of this separation can be derived from Angelica Duran's study of the manner in which Milton's sonnets on blindness deter readings of blind eyes as signs of "divine judgment" or the poor state of the blind person's spiritual health (155).

argue that the body still plays a major role in public and private faith. In *Common Prayer: the Language of Devotion in Early Modern England*, Ramie Targoff intriguingly argues that the now-conventional idea that Protestantism fostered individual and personal expression was, in practice, not true for Reformation England. Her work shows how the body was integral to the reforming liturgy, which supports my conclusion that Donne's focus on the body in *The Anniversaries* is particularly Protestant. Thomas Cranmer, editor and compiler of the original *Book of Common Prayer* (BCP), the official liturgy of the Anglican Church, went to some effort "to shape the otherwise uncontrollable and unreliable internal sphere through common acts of devotion" (6). As evidence of the seeming paradox of an individual and yet public faith, Targoff draws our attention to one of the bones picked over by Catholic and Protestant polemics; should church service be in the vernacular or in Latin? While Catholic writers such as John Christopherson argued that understanding the priest's prayers would only distract worshippers from their own "fervent praying" (qtd in Targoff 15), Protestant polemics asked how individual men and women could assent, with an "Amen," to a prayer they could not understand? They protested that lay worshippers could not be educated by a service they could not understand (although many medieval sermons or devotional works were in the vernacular, such as Walter Hilton's *Epistle on the Mixed Life*, a devotional work targeted towards lay people and written in the vernacular). This program demanded that church service be in the vernacular, and that worshippers be attentive, with their external, embodied ears and eyes, to the preacher's sermon, as opposed to their own less-apprehensible prayers. However inaccurate reformers' depictions of Catholic lay involvement and education,

this stated preference for more standardized and common prayer parallel the desire to also control and limit ritual around death.

During the reign of Elizabeth I, religious policies demanded outward obedience, not inward compliance; “rigid laws governing church attendance were rarely accompanied by probing inquiries into personal faith, so long as worshippers came to services on Sunday” (Targoff, *Common Prayer* 2). In today’s parlance, these policies operated on the principle of “fake it till you make it.” Church and state authorities depended on the transformative power of action; consistent attendance of Anglican services could influence the body’s “unreachable inwardness,” i.e. the soul (2). The early modern English church recognized no “absolute divisions between sincerity and theatricality, inwardness and outwardness” (4). This perspective reveals how dangerous continued use of pre-Reformation rites was to the established church. If consistent but (at first) spiritually empty attendance at Anglican sermons could make an early modern a believer, then enacting a Catholic rite such as prayer for the dead signified where a body’s allegiance lay more than any private protestations. In other words and at its most extreme, their (what a modern worshipper might think of as private) prayers for their dead signaled their public allegiance to the Pope and not to the Queen.

This belief in the power of habitual, outward action to change a person’s inward beliefs corresponds to an increased scrutiny of the body. How can the body communicate commitment to the Church of England? Dedicated reformers like William Tyndale sought the evidence of inward faithfulness in the motions of the body during prayer. Targoff notes in Tyndale a remarkable “insistence on the bodily pleasure of true prayer” (8). According to Tyndale, prayer done with a true heart is easy and revives the body as

well as the spirit; conversely, prayer lacking good intent is difficult and laborious: “ ‘the tongue, lips, eyes, and throat...roaring” (qtd in Targoff 8). Tyndale’s conception of bodily signs of prayer differs from Martin Luther’s in that, while Luther claims that false prayer is indeed labor intensive, true prayer is easy and “manifests no bodily response whatsoever” (8). For both, the body mattered. Moreover, reformers might not have been interested in sacred wounds, but many like Tyndale, and as I will show Donne too, still depended on the body to determine true believers from those merely laboring in their faith.¹⁴ This understanding of how the body might sign faithfulness is a striking contrast to the, as the Protestants might term it, extravagant physical suffering and signing of pre-Reformation worshippers.

While early reformers showed how worshippers’ bodies could sign authenticity, officials of the established Church of England, such as clergyman and influential theologian Richard Hooker, would accuse later Puritan reformers of investing too much in an individual preacher’s physical gestures for the success of a prayer. Puritans strenuously objected to the BCP because it encouraged reading instead of praying. According to Targoff, reading, at this time, “[cultivated] at best passivity, at worst hypocrisy” (39). Puritans such as Thomas Wilcox and John Field, authors of the first *Admonition to the Parliament*, argued that common prayer was a kind of play-acting, and the BCP a kind of script and set piece that encouraged “confusion” (39) and distractedness during services; they demanded that preachers be given more freedom.

¹⁴ According to John Carey, priests and Jesuits circulated terrifying stories about the consequences of Catholics attending Anglican services in order to escape fines for recusancy: “a certain Francis Wodehouse of Breccles in Norfolk, it was related, had found, as soon as he entered the polluted sanctuary, that his stomach became a raging furnace” (21). Wodehouse was eventually saved after being shaven by a priest, thus recommitting him to the Catholic faith and recusancy. This is yet more evidence showing the importance of the body in signing spiritual status.

Hooker defended the BCP in his *Lawes of Ecclesiastical Politie*, arguing that the Puritan push for spontaneous and individual sermons was too contingent on the learning and principles of individual preachers; in other words, the BCP's standardization of church services ensured a kind of quality control.¹⁵ Hooker criticized reformers like Wilcox and Field, whose desire for original prayer seemed to him to rest in the person of the preacher, and not the prayer itself: “Whereupon it must of necessity follow the vigor and vital efficacy of sermons doth grow from certain accidents which are not in the [sermons] but in their maker; his virtue, his gesture, his countenance, his zeal, the motion of his body” etc. (qtd in Targoff 49).

Like Hooker, Donne endorsed public prayer. In a 1622 sermon, Donne shares that his attempt to pray in private is futile: “I lock my door to my self, and I throw my self down in the presence of my God, I divest myself of all worldly thoughts, and I bend all my powers, and faculties upon God, as I think, and suddenly I find myself scattered, melted, fallen into vain thoughts, into no thoughts...” (qtd in Targoff 53). Donne's private preparation for prayer is intensely physical. He locks the door, creating a separate physical space for this spiritual exercise. He throws himself to the floor, and “divest[s]” himself of worldly thoughts, as if he were shrugging off his clothes. Although Donne's difficulties are spiritual, he conceptualizes these difficulties in physical terms: “scattered, melted, fallen.” For Donne, private prayer opens him up to distraction; it is likely to result in absorption of the self, instead of absorption of the divine. Public prayer, on the other hand, ensures that good examples of prayer are available in the forms of neighbors in the

¹⁵ Future work would include the strong echo of Psalms in Adam and Eve's untutored prayers in *Paradise Lost*, especially in conversation with Mary Ann Rodzinowicz's *Milton's Epics and the Book of Psalms* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1989) and in relation to the correspondence of right praying.

next seat. And, of course, this good example of prayer is understood by how the body appears in service of the soul. In *The First Anniversary*, Donne explores how Elizabeth Drury's body when alive signals the spiritual health of the world, and when dead signals the spiritual illnesses of the world.

The Protestant Body in *The Anniversaries*

In this next section I show how the turn towards the body as a sign of spiritual health or sickness informs Donne's *First Anniversary*, and how this turn allows him to begin to negotiate how exactly mourners may learn from the body of Elizabeth, and the body of the world. Donne's highlighting of the body in this spiritual and social context works against Greenblatt's claim that early moderns had begun to move away from interpreting the body in terms of the divine based on his readings of Bulwer, as well as travel histories from the late medieval and early modern periods. The *First Anniversary* reasserts the importance of the body of the deceased (Elizabeth) as an earthly and embodied example of Protestant perfection in funeral and mourning ritual.

The role of Purgatory in pre-Reformation funeral arrangements was incredibly important. Because testators, someone who has made a will or legacy, believed that remembrance through prayer for the dead reduced their time in Purgatory, they frequently left provisions in their wills for funeral ritual designed to keep them alive in the memory of their survivors.¹⁶ These rituals ranged from requesting a monument such as a brass plaque asking for intercessory prayer, to alms for the poor. In her analysis of late

¹⁶ According to Peter Marshall, charitable donations in wills were one of the continuities between pre- and post-Reformation funeral ritual. Benefactors of parishes were often referenced by name in sermons, acting as a kind of memorial or prayer for the dead (282-283). Marshall notes the "annual commemorative sermons at St Botolph Aldgate in the early seventeenth century" as paralleling the old obits (283).

medieval wills, Claire Gittings records that the “most striking feature of all the details concerning the cost of burial in late medieval England is the level to which expenditure on the funerals of the aristocracy had risen by the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries” (25). For Gittings, this expenditure is illustrative of the importance placed on funeral ritual as Purgatorial succor. It is this great expense that fueled reformers’ arguments that Purgatory was merely a moneymaking scheme of the Catholic Church (Marshall 60-61). Moreover, not addressed by Gittings, but equally important to recognize is the increasing cost may also account for the reduction in elaborate funeral rites during the economic depression that occurs in nation-states when civil wars and internal divisions occur, as they did in seventeenth-century England.

The concept of Purgatory motivated many of the pre-Reformation funeral rituals. Purgatory also conceptually shaped the relationship between the living and dead. Before the Reformation, the inhabitants of Purgatory were viewed as negative examples; the suffering of the dead, purportedly painful in the extreme, recalled the living to the necessity of good works, prayer for the dead, and confession in order that they might avoid a long sentence in Purgatory. In her exploration of the conventions of the Protestant funeral sermons, Barbara Lewalski argues that the sometimes hyperbolic and idealizing praise of the deceased in post-Reformation funeral sermons were justified by the “Protestant denial of purgatory,” which “meant the departed soul could be envisaged as enjoying heavenly glory at once, and the Protestant disavowal of the idea of personal merit meant that any praise of the deceased’s good life redounded not to that individual

but to God working in him” (179)¹⁷. After the Reformation, the dead served as positive examples of how to be in life, as Elizabeth Drury does in *The First Anniversary*.

Donne’s elegy strikingly incorporates the post-Reformation cultural perception of the body as a spokesperson for the soul in his descriptions of Elizabeth as a positive example for her mourners, very similar to Milton’s move to make Lycidas the Genius of the Shore at the end of his pastoral elegy. It is not only Elizabeth’s “rich soul” (Donne, *FirAn* 1) we must attempt to understand and emulate, but also her physical presence on earth, her body alive and dead. As Lewalski argues that “nature reversed topos” is un-ironic in Donne’s Anniversaries (“speaker eschews all ironic qualification of the topic, professing instead to see and describe the real world as dead and decaying” (40)) I argue that we may also understand the descriptions of Elizabeth’s *physical* necessity to the health of the world as un-ironic. For example, the speaker of *The First Anniversary* claims that Elizabeth was “the cèment which did faithfully compact / And glue all virtues now resolved and slacked” (49-50). She is also the world’s “intrinsic balm and...preservative” (57). Elizabeth’s embodied presence on earth was the glue that held the world’s virtues into a cohesive, spiritual whole.

In another move to illustrate how necessary Elizabeth Drury’s body is to the world, Donne show’s how her death has compromised the physical and spiritual health of the world. He places much emphasis on Elizabeth’s body as also necessary in understanding the intangible of the world, its thinking faculties, recalling the conflation of the physical and spiritual that Tyndale makes in observing the faithful at prayer. Not

¹⁷ Further research would involve researching the sermons, Catholic and Protestant, preached and published at the time of the Reformation.

only is the world “sick” (23); it does not know it is “in a lethargy” (24). More seriously, this sickness has harmed the world’s understanding of the sign of Elizabeth’s death. There is a “perplexed doubt / Whether the world did lose, or gain in this [Elizabeth’s death]” (14-15). The speaker confirms that her loss causes ambivalent feelings: “Because, since now no other way there is / But goodness, to see her, whom all would see, / All must endeavor to be good as she” (16-18). Elizabeth’s ascension to heaven means that those who love her will attempt to be as “good as she” in order to see her again. However, this world can no longer “see her”; in other words, this world can no longer read her body for signs of her goodness, and in some sense her didactic power as an example seems to have lessened as she is no longer on earth.

In addition to throwing the world into a “fever” (20), a very embodied response, Elizabeth’s death has also affected the world’s ability to understand itself. This inability to understand is incredibly problematic as it renders the physical signs of moral decay unreadable, evidence of Donne’s back and forth thinking about how effective the body (or in this case, the world) is as a spokesperson. Almost accusingly, the speaker says

Her death did wound and tame thee then, and than
 Thou might’st have better spared the Sun, or Man.
 That wound was deep, but ‘tis more misery,
 That thou hast lost thy sense and memory.
 ‘Twas heavy then to hear thy voice of moan,
 But this is worse: that thou art speechless grown.
 Thou hast forgot thy name thou hadst; (25-31)

The speaker blasphemously claims that Elizabeth's death was worse by far than that of the Sun (Jesus) or Man (humankind). "That wound was deep" seems to refer to the Son's death. Additionally, these lines are reminiscent of the metaphorical sacred wounds privileged as signs of a true and intimate faith in pre-Reformation times; however, in these lines Donne turns the idea of the ability of a bodily wound to "speak" on its head. The wound signs, not speech or faith, but lack of both. Elizabeth was the world's "sense and memory" (28), and without her the world cannot even remember its own name. The ability of the world to understand itself, the ability of the soul, to use Donne's word from *Devotions*, "to effigiate" (143) or portray itself through the body, is compromised by Elizabeth's death.

Memory, we soon understand, is key to recognizing how sick this world is compared to the world of our ancestors. Without memory, it is impossible to understand the current state of the world, or to reach back for purer ritual and practice, as Donne would like to do. The speaker is the privileged anatomist who can recall our former goodness and our present sinfulness: "I (since no man can make thee live) will try, / What we may gain by thy anatomy" (60-61). In his examination of the world's present sinfulness, the speaker again looks to the physical and how it may sign the spiritual health of the world. Hence the essentialness of the body in Protestant mourning—in order to understand Elizabeth's spiritual greatness and the world's spiritual decline, we must see the signs through a dissection of bodies, humankind's and the world's. This is in contrast to the often-metaphorical wounds of mortification of the live Catholic body.

The speaker begins the anatomy, appropriately, at the beginning: birth. He points to the children "that...come not right nor orderly / Except they headlong come and fall

upon / An ominous precipitation” (96-98), interpreting the position of the baby at birth, head first, as an indication of humankind’s destiny to incautiously “fall upon” sin. As evidence of how far the world and its inhabitants have fallen since the beginning, the speaker recalls the great size of our ancestors. He complains, “There is not now that mankind, which was then, / Whenas the sun and man did strive / (Joint tenants of the world) who should survive” (112-14). Instead, “we’re scarce our fathers’ shadows cast at noon; / Only death adds t’our length” (144-45). Here, the speaker imagines a past that puts the present in true perspective. Our fathers were “joint tenants” with the sun, a massive heavenly body we can now only wonder at from afar. And, in keeping with the Protestant continuation of the tradition for finding signs of faith in the body, our ancestors’ spiritual superiority is communicated by their great size: “And when the very stature, thus erect, / Did that soul a good way towards heaven direct” (125-26). From giant men, each with their own kingdom (123-25), to seas so deep that whales, “being struck today” die tomorrow before they have reached the bottom (289-291), the *First Anniversary* conveys a world of incredible scale. It is as if the world of Donne’s elegy was built for those original giants, and Donne’s contemporaries are terribly inadequate replacements.

Our ancestors were both physically and spiritually greater than Elizabeth’s contemporaries. Elizabeth escapes this fate because she is the embodied “Idea of a Woman,” (Lewalski 3), as Donne will claim in his response to various criticisms of the hyperbolic praise of *The Anniversaries*. Donne admits that this physical shrinking would

not be so bad if only “our less volume hold / All the old text” (147-48).¹⁸ However, as *The First Anniversary*’s main poetic theme anatomy suggests, the physical communicates the spiritual. Donne concludes, “as our bodies so our minds are cramped” (152), strongly confident of the body’s ability to tell or show the state of souls.

The speaker punctuates *The First Anniversary* with the phrase, “And learn’st thus much by our anatomy” (239, 327, 371, 429). These lines seem to operate like a chorus as well as the close of an argument, a reaffirmation of both the poem’s purpose (to dissect the corpse of the old world in order to instruct the new) and its success. However, the repetition also connotes a kind of nervous energy, as if to say, can we really learn “much” by this anatomy? This is where we begin to see Donne troubling his formerly confident claims about what we can know about the soul via the body. Indeed, near the end of the poem the speaker brings these doubts into the open. Signaling the end of his interpretive work on the body of the world, the speaker claims that

But as in cutting up a man that’s dead,
The body will not last out, to have read
On every part, and therefore men direct
Their speech to parts that are of most effect,
So the world’s carcass would not last if I
Were punctual in this anatomy; (435-440)

The purpose of an anatomy is to make the body talk, and here we find that the speaker has been unable to do so. However, these lines hint that there are parts of the body that

¹⁸ “All the old text” (148) is an intriguing allusion. While editor Robin Robbins suggests that in this line Donne references “Adam’s perfection in earthly knowledge” (829), the old text may also refer to the abundant “text” surrounding Catholicism, e.g. devotional literature.

will not speak, that, unlike the physician Bulwer discussed earlier, the elegy's narrator has no confidence in the natural and single meaning of every muscle and organ.

The Second Anniversary, although a very different elegy than the *First*,¹⁹ seems to continue this tension between valuing the body as a spokesperson for the soul while at the same time acknowledging the difficulties of bodily interpretation. The unnerving description of a beheaded man whose postmortem writhing seems to be a “[beckoning] and [calling] back” of his soul that begins *The Second Anniversary* is endemic of the unsettled reconfiguration of the dead body for this Reformation writer (14). This image is followed by the conclusion that “all these motions which we saw / Are but as ice which crackles at a thaw” (17-18). The speaker concludes that the beheaded man's motions signify nothing, or nothing more than the sounds produced by inanimate things that can be heard every winter. The sound of the ice is a reminder of the season in which Elizabeth died (December 1610), and calls readers back from a philosophical consideration of the beheaded man to the embodied experience of listening to ice thaw and winter creep away.

In *John Donne: Body and Soul*, Ramie Targoff presents a compelling argument for not taking Donne at his word, namely that *The Second Anniversary* is an exploration of “the Incommodities of the Soul in this Life,” as the secondary title states. Targoff proposes that, “despite [its] saturation in *contemptus mundi* and *vanitas* traditions, despite its piling of negative attributes upon everything earthly,” *The Second Anniversary* relates the “difficulty of divorcing soul from body” (103). Like Targoff, I find the soul of *The*

¹⁹ Ramie Targoff notes, “the complexities of *The First Anniversarie* have been thoroughly considered,” while “the radical nature of *The Second Anniversarie* has been almost entirely neglected” (*Body and Soul* 81). This disproportionate critical attention to the two elegies is suggestive of their profound differences.

Second Anniversary unwilling to part from the body. This unwillingness is evident when we consider the section of the elegy where the speaker orders his soul to “think” of the body and this life as easily shed. In thirty-six lines, the soul is ordered to “think” approximately twenty times.

The order to “think” is an attempt to direct the soul’s attention away from how it feels, away from its embodied experience. Like the lines about the crackling ice earlier in the elegy, these lines too resonate aurally. The speaker commands the soul to “think thyself lab’ring now with broken breath, / And think those broken and soft notes to be / Division, and thy happiest harmony” (90-92). The labored breath of the dying, which is typically interpreted as difficult and painful, is here refigured as a kind of music, where paradoxically, “division” is “harmony.” Despite the beauty of this image, the next eighteen commands to “think” undermine its persuasive power. How many times must the soul be directed away from the body?

The *Second Anniversary* continues the ritual innovation of the *First*, asserting the importance of the body – Elizabeth’s body, the body of the world – for our understanding of how to interpret the deaths of loved ones as Protestant ideals. However, even as Donne affirms the importance of the body in understanding the soul, in life and death, he shows the problems with interpreting the spiritual through the physical—are the bodily motions communiqués from the soul? Or is it only “motion in corruption” (*SecAn* 22)? These seem to be the two extreme arguments (that the body can reveal the soul or that the body is merely that, the earthly which has nothing to do with the heavenly) of Donne’s *Anniversaries* between which he ping-pongs back and forth.

CHAPTER 3. RELUCTANT CONTINUITY WITH PRE-REFORMATION
MOURNING RITUAL IN MILTON'S *LYCIDAS*

Ay me! Whilst thee the shores, and sounding seas

Wash far away, where'er thy bones are hurled,

Whether beyond the stormy Hebrides,

Where thou perhaps under the whelming tide

Visit'st the bottom of the monstrous world. (155-8)

Although only a small part of the 193-line poem, this six-line passage from John Milton's pastoral elegy *Lycidas* is powerful and oppressive. The repetition of the soft "s" and "sh" sounds in the first two lines mimic the sound of the waves carrying the body of the dead Lycidas further and further from the shore. Additionally, the repeated references to Lycidas's corpse in the second person, as if Lycidas were still alive —"thee," "thy bones," "thou" — evidences the speaker's fixation on the body of his friend and the desire to retain that body's link to its personal soul. The narrator poetically drowns Lycidas a second time as he imagines his body is "hurled," pushed, and held down by the "whelming tide" (156-7). These few lines seem to belie Dennis Kay's claim that Milton's elegy is "less pessimistic" than other elegies, and that the poem "displays a certain confidence in the power of art...to uncover some meaning and purpose in early death" (222). Instead of soothing, these lines can overwhelm readers, as Lycidas is overwhelmed by the waves. Coming directly after Lycidas's fantasy funeral and the poet's assertion

that these “frail thoughts” (153) might “interpose a little ease” (152), these lines illustrate that, although the poet and his audience wish to dwell on the fantasies of the flower-decked hearse, they are instead left predominantly uneasy by the bleak image of a body left untended, ceremonies undone.

I am not the first to notice that this passage has a power disproportionate to its length. Poet, scholar, and short-story writer John Berryman was also captured by Milton’s image of a body eroded by but also returning spectrally from the restless waves. His prose fiction meditation on *Lycidas*, “Wash Far Away” (1957), explores one (unnamed) professor’s experience of teaching Milton’s pastoral elegy, an experience the professor credits with helping him come to terms with his wife Alice’s death (367). However, it is not Alice, but rather Hugh, his good friend and more successful colleague, who must be laid to rest in the course of the story and the professor’s re-encounter of *Lycidas*. Throughout “Wash Far Away,” some of the echoes from *Lycidas* ring clear, while others are quieter but no less powerful. It is unclear when Hugh dies, only that it is too soon. Like *Lycidas*’s, Hugh’s death is one of frustrated potential. The professor feels not only the loss of his friend, but also his friend’s brilliant future as a scholar and writer, made all the more bitter by his conviction that without Hugh the professor is nothing more than a lackluster teacher (368); similarly, the “uncouth swain” mourns a talented fellow poet and shepherd (Milton 186).

The quieter parallels between *Lycidas* and “Wash Far Away” are those that suggest both *Lycidas* and Hugh received inadequate burial rites: *Lycidas*’s body is lost to the waves, and his funeral only a fancy in the swain’s song, while the professor is haunted by Hugh’s restless, ambitious memory, suggesting that whatever ceremonies

occurred were insufficient. The professor remembers Hugh as a cadaverous body, “chiefly teeth and eyes,” a “wandering mind,” reminiscent of a ghost (Berryman 371). Berryman’s synecdoches capture the relentless return to the body of the deceased beloved, as I argue Milton does in *Lycidas*. Conversely, it is not so much Hugh’s dead body that concern’s Berryman; rather, it is the professor who, in the beginning, is like an animated corpse: “He had been teaching for seven years and he felt quietly that he had been dead for the last five. The Dostal’s garden, anemones, snapdragons, crimson, yellow, rose-pink; colors swimming, the air sweetened, he went by. He thought: I enjoy myself, I quarrel, but I am really dead” (368). Berryman echoes *Lycidas*’s fantasy funeral with the cataloguing of flowers in the Dostal’s garden (368). This imagined funeral, however, is for the professor, someone who is only technically alive, whose talents, ambitions, and confidence have been buried along with his dead friend, due to insufficient rites.

Like those brief lines in Milton’s pastoral elegy, Berryman’s “Wash Far Away” explores funeral ceremonies, not so much undone, as poorly done; the professor has been—mistakenly and metaphorically—buried alive with his friend. Teaching *Lycidas*, a kind of ceremony in its own right, helps move the professor “into the exacting conviction that he was...something...not dead” (386). Berryman’s short story highlights a preoccupation with the power of ceremony—to lay the dead to rest, or to revive the living—that I argue is endemic to *Lycidas*. A key difference between Berryman’s and Milton’s concerns with ceremony is that Milton’s is reluctantly entangled with Catholic funeral rites, even as, I argue, the main thrust of his project is to create particularly

Protestant ritual in order to fill the vacuum left by the dismantling of pre-Reformation funeral and mourning rites in England.²⁰

Lycidas betrays a powerful anxiety about the fate of the body after death, an anxiety that surprises when we consider various treatments of the poem. Many scholarly projects that address *Lycidas* tend to focus on the success, or lack thereof, of its use of the genre of pastoral elegy. For example, Paul Alpers and Jeffrey Hammond offer competing views of Milton's intentions in using pastoral elegy. Alpers claims that Milton attempts, and succeeds, in holding the "conventions of pastoral to a searching critique," which ultimately sustains "their uses and intent"²¹ (*What is Pastoral?* 93). Conversely, Hammond argues that "the poignancy of *Lycidas* arises mainly from the speaker's tacit awareness of the inadequacy of his tropes" (51), an approach to pastoral that is quite typical since Samuel Johnson's infamous criticisms of the genre and Milton's pastoral elegy. All this is to say that scholars' preoccupation with the genre of *Lycidas* is at the expense of its content, namely the poem's revelation of reluctant continuity bridging pre- and post-Reformation burial rituals, surfacing like the body of the lost shepherd.

Elegy as Political Occasion

Lycidas was originally part of an anthology of elegies composed by Cambridge scholars in memory of their peer Edward King who died at sea. In his book entitled *Melodious Tears: The English Pastoral Elegy from Spenser to Milton*, Dennis Kay notes that the

²⁰ Peter Berger's *The Sacred Canopy* (1967), the culmination of a decade of shorter studies on religion, marked a major religious transition into the secular West, just ten years after Berryman's "Wash Far Away."

²¹ Yet, we can readily apply Alpers's definition of the pastoral mode as comprised of "representative anecdote[s]" of humans seeking to find and gain their strength relative to the world, their particular natural and social worlds, to this study (22).

Cambridge anthology, *Iusta Eduardo King* (1638), was a part of a “move towards anthologies and mixed genres” (221) for commemoration and remembrance of the dead. This rise in textual rite corresponds historically with a decrease in England’s use of church ritual in funeral rites. Within the commemorative book *Iusta Eduardo King*, Milton’s poem is one of a textual group of mourners gathered to grieve Edward King’s death and to celebrate his life. Elegies were written in Latin and Greek, followed by the ones written in English (*Variorum Commentary* 546). Some of the contributors included John Pearson, Henry More, Thomas Farnaby, Joseph Beaumont, and John Cleveland, whose elegies in *Iusta Eduardo King* constituted as a kind of mourning ritual, and themselves as the privileged (because they were writing/speaking) mourners. *Lycidas*, however, has since been divorced from its original anthology, and is now often read as *the* elegy for Edward King. Since *Lycidas* is the only pastoral elegy in Milton’s own anthology of poems published first in 1645 and again in 1673, it is possible that Milton saw the political and religious significance of *Lycidas* beyond its occasion, specifically its importance as Protestant ritual.

Kay argues “Milton’s ‘monody’ represents the next great innovation in the history of the English elegy, and has traditionally constituted both the starting-point for historians of the genre and a standard against which later specimens are judged” (222). Readings of *Lycidas* as a singular work of art tend to focus too narrowly on generic conventions in an effort to draw connections between Milton and his supposed inheritors of the pastoral elegy. For example, in his survey of elegy from its classical beginnings with Theocritus’s “First Idyll” (12) to its modern counterpart in Virginia Woolf’s “elegy-as-novel” (1), David Kennedy focuses on the connections between elegies past and

present, and how the concerns and conventions of this genre have transformed over time.²² Although Kennedy's study is certainly useful for a consideration of genre, it tends to efface the elegies' historical context. For example, in his chapter entitled "What was elegy?" Kennedy argues, "By creating a space apart and by often creating that space from previous elegiac spaces, the elegist signals that he is writing a different type of poem. The special space of elegy also figures the fact that graves are physically set apart from society" (27). Although an intriguing parallel, the equating of the "special space" of elegy with "graves...set apart from society" (i.e. cemeteries) seems dangerously inaccurate; in Milton's time many were buried in their church, and so survivors sat near (or, in some cases, on) their deceased, suggesting that they were not so much in a "space apart" as Kennedy assumes. Milton's *Lycidas* is not a space apart, despite its deceptively pastoral setting; it is as engaged with King's space as if he set it in the middle of Cambridge campus. It seems commonsensical that elegiac conventions change, not just in response to previous elegies, but also, and perhaps more importantly, to suit the particular time, place, people, and ideologies they serve. The effect of an interpretation like Kennedy's is that it divorces elegies from the everyday and creates an exclusive community of super-educated elegists. Such an interpretive act ignores one of the basic conventions of elegy, that it is prompted by an occasion, i.e. a death. Reading *Lycidas* as an office of mourning opens up the poem's audience to include those who have loved and lost at a time of religious upheaval, not only future poets intending to imitate and surpass. A responsible conversation about genre can never be purely literary, particularly for the elegy. By this I

²² In a conversation with William Butler Yeats, Virginia Woolf said that the only poem "to which she could come back unsated" was *Lycidas* (Alpers 107). This careful reader, thus, appreciates the poem as rewarding recursive reading, as is the function of liturgy and ritual.

mean that a valuation of the literary conventions of Milton's pastoral elegy is also a judgment of the funeral and mourning conventions of Milton's time. This is particularly apparent in Samuel Johnson's infamous criticisms of *Lycidas*.

Johnson's criticism of *Lycidas* in his *Lives of the Poets* (1779) continues to polarize critics around the issue of the poem's genre (e.g. the arguments of Alpers and Hammond mentioned previously). *Lycidas*, Johnson declared, is "not to be considered as the effusion of real passion; for passion runs not after remote allusion and obscure opinions" (201). Referring to the opening lines of the pastoral elegy, Johnson writes, "passion plucks no berries from the myrtle and ivy, nor calls upon Arethuse and Mincius, nor tells of rough satyrs and fauns with cloven heel. Where there is leisure for fiction there is little grief" (201). For Johnson, Milton's mixing of Christian and Pagan imagery²³ and characters is "indecent" and "approach[es] to impiety" (202). Finally, the genre of pastoral is "easy, vulgar, and therefore disgusting" (201); Johnson finds its literary conventions wholly exhausted. His conclusion is that no one could have read *Lycidas* with pleasure unless they were friends of the author (202); in other words, it is an elegy only its mother could love.

Johnson's criticisms of *Lycidas* are not, however, strictly generic as he first leads his readers to believe. His critique of the genre is ultimately a mask for his critique of Milton's efforts at creating new Protestant funeral and mourning ritual. Although he claims that "the diction is harsh, the rhymes uncertain, and the numbers unpleasing" (201), it is not only the form but also the content which troubles Johnson. He desires

²³ Milton's resort to Greek vocabulary in *Lycidas*, which Samuel Johnson found so "indecent" (Johnson 202), might be a way to invoke a guiding and protective presence without invoking saints, which would smack of Catholicism.

passion, sincerity, and authenticity from his elegies, pastoral or otherwise. What Johnson and many scholars after him fail to take into account is that the standards for decency and piety regarding mourning are a product of their time, as Milton's are of his. By the time Milton was writing elegies, the genre had already been proven, and used, as a vehicle for political, social, and religious arguments (Kay 204). For example, in his elegy for Prince Henry entitled "Three Sisters' Teares," Richard Niccols takes the opportunity to "call to repentance for specific sins" and to castigate Rome "that would and will be Monster-head / Of all the world" (Wallerstein 61, 348).

As Donne does in his *Anniversaries*, as explored in chapter one, in *Lycidas* Milton reproaches the wicked of this world, namely false shepherds, or preachers, who do not feed the spirits of their "hungry sheep" (125). To ensure that this contemporary religious allusion is not lost on his readers, Milton adds a brief introductory proem to the 1645 edition of *Lycidas*, stating that "in this monody the author bewails a learned friend, unfortunately drowned in his passage from Chester on the Irish Seas, 1637. And by occasion foretells the ruin of our corrupted clergy then in their height" (41). Tacked on at the end of a simple description of the poem's occasion, Milton's claim of prophecy points to the, by then, common practice of elegists to link the death of the subject with other political issues of the day, such as corrupt clergy. Death prompts elegists to mourn the ills of their world, as much as it does to mourn the subject of the elegy. Everything in *Lycidas*, from the shepherd's fantasy funeral, to the disposition of his body, and finally his apotheosis, is politically charged.

Elegies are a particularly appropriate genre for ritual innovation. The abolishment of the doctrine of Purgatory meant the abolishment of many of the ceremonies formerly

deemed suitable for funerals and mourning; these ceremonies were meant to shave years off of a purgatorial sentence by encouraging prayer for the deceased. For example, testators might task their inheritors to fund not only the funeral, but also the obit, a ceremony where the entire funeral is repeated, right down to the “presence of a hearse in the parish church” (Marshall 21). For those who no longer held onto the idea of Purgatory, old ceremonies like obits were no longer efficacious. There was no need to ensure descendants pray for their deceased, who were in Heaven or Hell at the will of God and not survivors. However, the lack of these ceremonies (and the prayers for the dead that they inspired) was not a comfortable vacuum for Protestant mourners, evidenced by the many lay communities that continued to practice pre-Reformation rites, such as the Catholic custom of bell ringing on All Souls night, reminding listeners to pray for their dead.

Historian Peter Marshall argues, “the status of the dead was among the most divisive issues of the early Reformation” (47). Just as Johnson questions the appropriateness of *Lycidas*'s conventions, so did mourners of early modern England question old and new funeral traditions. Some desired that funerals should be made simpler in the name of “decencie”; for the same reason, others thought “simplicity could be overdone” (Kay 3). These biases seem prophetic of Samuel Johnson's critiques of *Lycidas* explored earlier. Elegists certainly saw themselves as a part of the shifting funeral conventions of their day. Some took on the role of herald for the deceased in order to celebrate their social accomplishments and status in this life (4). These elegies are highly conventional, the deceased of the poem typically being celebrated as paragons of virtue, their death the result of the world's moral decline. Others, such as Donne and

Milton, recognized the political, social, and literary power of the elegy as a space to celebrate both the uniqueness of the deceased and the poet (4).

Of course, one did not need to write elegy to challenge mainstream funeral rites. Francis Gawler, Quaker and author of a treatise entitled “The children of Abrahams faith who are blessed, being found in Abraham’s practise of burying their dead in their own purchased burying places, are not to be reproved: but therein are justified in the sight of God, and the practice of holy men in former ages” (1663), argues that Quakers should be allowed to bury their dead on their properties as opposed to the custom of burying them in the churchyard. He reaches back to Hebraic traditions in order to validate this practice.

The living Spirit in their Brethren leads them to inter or bury their bodies apart in their own burying places (as was the practice of the holy-men of God in former ages) bearing a testimony against the idolatry and superstition of hallowed ground, and Popish Consecrations, and vain traditions, which the living Spirit of the party deceased, whilst in the body, stood Witnessse (for God) against; and now being out of the body, yet in the union with his brethren in the body, cannot fulfil and satisfie the wil of the contrary spirit, and therefore it is disturbed and tormented about the dead body, and exceedingly rageth in many places; and as the Devil did strive with *Michael* about the body of *Moses* (who was a faithful servant of God in his life, and the God of his life would not suffer the wicked spirit to satisfie his wil with his body being dead) and the Angel brought not a railing accusation against him, but said, *The Lord rebuke thee.* (para. 2)

Drawing on the authority of Michael and Moses, Gawler argues that the Quakers are led by God to bury their dead “in ... union with [their] brethren.” Burying their dead in

ground that Quakers “might purchase or contribute to for that end” does two things: first, it allows those “alive to righteousness” (i.e. Quakers) to denounce the “superstition of hallowed ground” by burying their dead elsewhere; second, it frustrates the devil by preventing his appropriation of the faithful’s dead body, thus causing the devil to “exceedingly rage in many places.” The pronouns in this passage seem to be deliberately confusing; is it the “living Spirit” now out of the body, which is “disturbed and tormented?” Or is it the “contrary spirit,” the devil? This confusion is perhaps due to the Catholic and Protestant scuffle over the validity of ghosts. While Catholics believed ghosts were proof of Purgatory’s existence and had tales of encounters between ghosts and priests, such as the *Gast of Gy*, many Protestants believed that ghosts were the devil in disguise (Marshall 249). Gawler’s confusing pronouns seem to signal an awareness of the Protestant depiction of ghosts as tricksters or illusions.

Not just the living but also the dead bear “Witnesse...against the idolatry and superstition of the present times” (Gawler para. 2), suggesting that the dead and their attendant rituals were still a lightning rod more than a century after the beginning of the English Reformation. The formal publication of this treatise suggests that Gawler is responding to objections to Quaker burial practices, proving a complicated print discourse regarding funeral rites, of which both Gawler and Milton are a part.

While Gawler’s treatise and Milton’s poem might not speak for every mourner in England, one text did try: the *Book of Common Prayer* (BCP). The BCP was the sanctioned liturgy of the Reformation in England. The numerous complaints leveled against it, as well as its many revisions, show not just the difficulty of replacing entrenched and (at least at the local level) valued Catholic rites for burying the dead, but

also the ongoing problem of filling the void left by the abolishment of Purgatory.²⁴ If the official liturgy of the Reformation could be challenged and changed, this means that the work of creating ritual was no longer only the purview of the divines of the church; a poet like Milton could also write new rites.

Still-Reforming Liturgy

When *Lycidas* was published in 1638, 121 years had passed since Martin Luther's first salvo against the Catholic Church, and 111 years since Henry VIII's first request for the annulment of his marriage to Catherine of Aragon, thus setting England's reformation in motion. However, one hundred years was not long enough to settle the many contentious debates raised by those early reformists. For example, the BCP was under heavy and almost constant revision since its inception in 1549. There were more than "350 different imprints before the date often referred to as the 'first' edition of 1662"—twenty-four years after the publication of *Lycidas* (Cummings xiii). Only a few years after the initial publication of *Lycidas* in 1638 and in the year of its publication in 1645 *Poems*, the Scottish Parliament approved its replacement text for the BCP, the *Directory of Public Worship* (1645) and was used variously in England. The *Directory* speaks also to the state of flux that official, public ritual was in.²⁵

From the beginning, the BCP was challenged on many different fronts, but particularly on its rites for burial of the dead. Ramie Targoff notes that many of the complaints came from "the church's early Puritan opposition," which "sought to replace

²⁴ In *Stripping of the Altars: Traditional Religion in England, 1400-1580*, Eamon Duffy argues that, on the eve of the Reformation, Catholicism was a rich and thriving faith (4).

²⁵ Future work will tackle a more thorough investigation of the *Directory for Public Worship*.

the Prayer Book with an order of service that privileged original prayers and sermons over readings from liturgical texts” (37). In *An Admonition to the Parliament* (1572), “the first high-profile criticism of the reformed burial order,” Puritans John Field and Thomas Wilcox “castigated the authorities...for making a clerical monopoly out of a duty that pertained to every Christian” (Marshall 151). Master of Trinity College, Cambridge John Whitgift attacked *An Admonition*. Other Puritan critics of the BCP took issue with the language that seemed to suggest universal salvation. For example, in the 1549 edition of the BCP’s Order for the Burial of the Dead, the priest, after “castyng earth upon the Corps,” is instructed to say:

I commende thy soule to God the father almighty, and thy body to the grounde, earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust, *in sure and certayne hope of resurrection* to eternall life, through our Lord Jesus Christ, who shall chaunge our vile body, that it may be lyke to his glorious body, accordyng to the myghtie workyng wherby he is hable to subdue all thynges to himselfe. (82-3) (Italics mine)

For those like the Suffolk ministers who petitioned the Church in 1584 to revise the burial rites, the words “in sure and certayne hope of resurrection” suggested universal salvation, a “promiscuous promise of eternal life to all departed souls” (Marshall 152), even for the ones with whom the Puritans would rather not share Heaven. Not only was the phrase so loose as to suggest universal salvation, it could also be interpreted as, and therefore encourage, prayer for the dead, something the Reformation was supposed to render unnecessary with the abolishment of the doctrine of Purgatory (154).

The 1559 edition of the BCP's Order for the Burial of the Dead added the qualifying phrase "Forasmuche as it hath pleased almightie God of his great mercy to take unto hym selfe the Soule of our deare brother," which is then followed by the "sure and certein hope" of resurrection (172). This additional phrase is perhaps a concession to this long-held Puritan criticism of the BCP's liturgy, as it reinforces the idea that it is only God who may grant mercy, regardless of the hopes and prayers of a priest, living friends, or dead saints.²⁶ The slippery language of the Order of the Burial of the Dead was addressed again at the 1661 Savoy Conference,²⁷ at which Presbyterian ministers brought ninety-six complaints against the BCP, including its offensive "in sure and certein hope." The bishops conceded just seventeen points out of ninety-six (Cummings xlv); however, a note at the beginning of the 1662 Order for the Burial of the Dead suggests another attempt to further clarify and restrict "sure and certein" salvation: "*Here is to be noted, that the Office ensuing is not to be used for any that die unbaptized, or excommunicate, or have laid violent hands upon themselves*" (451). Editor Brian Cummings states that this prefatory note in the 1662 edition is still "in line with *Canons* (1604), LXVIII, which forbade the minister to refuse burial on any other grounds...the refusal to bury the excommunicated had been explicit in medieval canon law and applied throughout the history of the BCP" (782). However, the decision to make this rule of burial unequivocal

²⁶ Although not concession enough. "Our deare brother" was equally problematic for those Puritans who thought the words were pure hypocrisy when burying a sinner. Separatist leader Henry Barrow attacked this seeming absurdity: "that almightie God hath taken the soule of that their brother or sister unto him, be he hereticke, witch, conjurer, and desiring to meete him with joy in the resurrection" (Marshall 153). In arguments regarding the *Book of Common Prayer*, it was Protestant polemic against Protestant polemic; Oxford divine Thomas Hutton was aghast at what seemed to him a "deeply socially divisive" discourtesy to cut the phrase "dear brother" (155).

²⁷ The 1661 Savoy Conference was called after the tumultuous Civil War (1642-51) and Oliver Cromwell's protectorate (1653-59), during which a new prayer book, the *Directory of Worship*, replaced the BCP.

in the 1662 BCP (whereas it was only implied in the 1549 and 1559 editions) suggests that further instruction was needed.

In its many versions from 1549 to 1662, the BCP comes with a carefully worded Preface. First written by Chancellor Thomas Cranmer, who borrowed heavily from a revised breviary by Catholic Cardinal Francisco Quiñones (1535), the Preface states that “There was never any thing by wit of man so well devised, or so surely established, which (in continuance of time) hath not been corrupted: as (among other thinges) it may plainly appere by the common prayers in the Church, commonlye called divine service” (6). The target of this argument is certainly scripturally absent doctrines such as Purgatory (and indeed he later refers to the “the uncertain stories, Legendes, Responses, Verses, vaine repetitions, Commemoraracions, and Synodalles” of Catholic ritual). However, Cranmer is on dangerous ground. If “any thing by wit of man so well devised” is inevitably corrupt, then what does this mean for the BCP? At the end of the 1549 Preface, Cranmer directs those with doubts or questions to “alwaye resorte to the Bishop of the Diocese” (6), re-affirming church hierarchy.

Perhaps the Bishop of the Diocese was not up to the task of answering the innumerable and vitriolic complaints²⁸ against the BCP, as additional language appears in the 1662 version, making it clear who has authority to rewrite ritual, and who does not: “the wilful and contemptuous transgression and breaking of a common order and discipline is no small offence before God” (215). Therefore, “no man ought to take in hand, nor presume to appoint or alter any publik or common Order in Christs Church,

²⁸ Targoff calls the early Reformation arguments the “pamphlet wars” (37), suggesting the fierceness of both the offensive and defensive responses.

except he be lawfully called and authorized thereunto” (215). This passage is most certainly in response to a print culture where polemics proposing new ritual abounded, such as Francis Gawler’s pamphlet mentioned earlier. Although not a polemic, Milton’s pastoral elegy is also a part of this culture, not just because it was published, but because Milton intended it be a kind of ministry, and the lost shepherd a kind of minister (Lewalski 71).

Milton as Christian Poet

Given the constant challenges to the BCP, I believe that Milton would have seen an opportunity to seek a medium other than the liturgical to create ritual for mourning and burial. As Targoff shows in her book *Common Prayer*, Milton, like those early challengers to the BCP, believed that having a prescript order for prayer was “to prefer humanly authored texts to divine ordination—to commit the act of idolatry” (37). This is a position Milton would take in his polemic justifying the execution of Charles I, *Eikonoklastes* (1649), almost a decade after the publication of *Lycidas*.²⁹ However, it is clear that, early in his career, Milton was committed to Puritan reform, and to poetry as another kind of ministry. This is suggested not only by the attack on Laudian clergy found in *Lycidas*, but also by his claim in *Ad Patrem* (circa 1637) that “the role of poet [was] the essence of his self-definition” (Lewalski 73). Addressing his father, Milton states, “Now, since it has been my lot to be born a poet, why should you think it so strange that we, who are so closely joined by blood, should pursue sister arts and kindred

²⁹ Targoff’s *Common Prayer* deals more extensively with Milton’s position on common prayer in *Eikonoklastes*.

interests?" (*Ad Patrem* 577). Here, Milton refers to his father's interest in composing music, and argues that his father has set a precedent for a fruitful career in the arts.

Although Milton's educational program suggests that he would eventually take orders, the Laudian takeover of the Church of England, of which the BCP was a main textual component, made the ministry "less and less viable" (Lewalski 53) as a career. Granted the position of archbishop of Canterbury in 1633, William Laud ran a vigorous campaign to reintroduce ceremony and grandeur to the Church, making many Puritans fear the return of Rome in England.

New ordinances required fixed altars rather than communion tables, the full panoply of vestments and sacramental rituals, strict adherence to the *Book of Common Prayer*, and diligent supervision by bishops to enforce all this. Bishops were also to eject Puritan-leaning ministers and to control lectureships and private chaplaincies—common resorts for Puritan preachers outside the parish structure. Orders designed to silence Puritans forbade any dispute in sermons or tracts about the meaning of any of the Thirty Nine Articles. (55-6)

The purposeful muzzling of Puritan preachers suggests a political and religious climate hostile to reform. These sanctions from on high also imply the tenacity of pre-Reformation ritual. Both of these elements—the perceived need for reform by Puritans and the lingering trappings of the pre-Reformation church—are evident in *Lycidas*.

Although the imposition of Laud's aesthetic on the Church enraged many Puritans, Milton witnessed the violent censorship of reformists at close hand. One of Milton's few but close friends, Andrew Gil, made the mistake of celebrating in verse the assassination of the king's favorite, George Villiers, the Earl of Buckingham. The Court of Star

Chamber punished Gil by stripping him of his “ministry and his Oxford degrees, [fining] him £2,000, and [sentencing] him to lose both his ears” (33). With the aid of his father and friends, Gil was able to keep his ears; however, he spent two years in prison. It is little wonder then that Milton’s early published poems, such as the *Maske* and *Lycidas*, carried only his initials; this decision suggests Milton’s awareness of the subversive elements in his pastoral elegy, which he was not yet willing to lay claim to with the first publication of *Lycidas*. He not only criticizes Laud’s clergy, but also works to create new Protestant ritual, expressly forbidden in the Preface to the BCP. Not until 1645 would Milton add the proem and fully claim both this pastoral elegy and its politics, not coincidentally, the same year that William Laud was executed, and the BCP was abolished (Jones 227).

Reluctant Continuity and New Protestant Ritual in *Lycidas*

Milton creates new Protestant ritual in *Lycidas* with a pastoral elegy that relies on the pattern of Catholic ritual, evident once we place the poem in the context of seventeenth century’s still-Reforming Church of England. I am not suggesting that Milton is in any way consciously betraying Catholic sentiment, only that *Lycidas* expresses continuity with the older rites given Milton’s religious and political milieu. As explored in the introduction to this thesis, many of the pre-Reformation funeral and mourning rites existed because of the doctrine of Purgatory, which inspired testators to set aside funds in their wills to ensure prayer for their souls, thus trimming the deceased’s sentence in this middle land of cleansing fire. Purgatorial easing took many forms, such as donations to chantries, where the monks were housed and fed by estate donations so that they could

continuously pray for the dead, or memorial plaques placed in a public space so that passerby could read them and think again of the deceased. The deceased left money to parish churches so that they would be placed on the bede-roll, where their names would be publicly read and prayed for, sometimes for many decades. All of these ceremonies helped survivors to direct personal grief and mourning into action (i.e. prayer) on behalf of the deceased. The end of the doctrine of Purgatory also meant the end of the necessity of prayer for the dead, and thus chantries, obits, bede-rolls, etc. Although Purgatory was officially as dead as its inhabitants, this did not prevent the people in England from continuing these old funeral rites as Peter Marshall notes:

Much more widespread was the continued use of funeral and commemorative customs whose clear rationale was a belief in the ability of the living to ameliorate the condition of the dead. A comprehensive itemization of such practices, ‘wherein the papists infinitely offend,’ was supplied by Bishop Pilkington of Durham in 1562: ‘masses, diriges, trentals, singing, ringing, holy water, hallowed places, year’s, day’s, and month’s minds, crosses, pardon letters to be buried with them, mourners, *De profundis*, by every lad that could say it, dealing money solemnly for the dead, watching of the corpse at home, bell and banner, with many more that I can reckon.’ (127)

The loss of Purgatory (and thus the many avenues it generated for expressing grief) was not only a religious wound, but an emotional one as well. For many mourners, “the preservation within the prayer book pattern of the old rites of passage and some of the old forms of reverence made a totally fresh beginning an impossibility, doubtless to the relief of most of the population” (Duffy 4).

Although perhaps not a part of the “most of the population” that Duffy references as relieved at the persistence of Catholic rites at the liturgical level of the BCP, Milton still wrote a pastoral elegy, which, while creating new Protestant funeral rites, also exhibits reluctant continuity with “the old forms of reverence” (Duffy 4). As noted at the beginning of this chapter, the five lines imagining Lycidas’s drowning undermine the fantasy funeral that precedes it and exhibit a striking concern for the corpse. Without the appropriate funeral rituals, is Lycidas’s dead body at the mercy not just of the tide and its creatures, but also the devil? As Gawler fears for his fellow Quakers, Lycidas is “for want of a place” of burial, and thus at the mercy of “that spirit whose cruel hatred hath slain the body,” i.e. the devil (para. 2). The imagined and sung funeral, however inadequate, is perhaps the uncouth swain’s answer to this fear; the swain “bid[s] amaranthus all his beauty shed, / And daffadillies fill their cups with tears, / To strew the laureate hearse where Lycid lies” (Milton 149-151).

The elegy seems to find recourse in its representation of the “laureate hearse,” which is vacant and which critics have not yet recognized as a possible link to the Catholic past. Lycidas’s fancied funeral is markedly like the Catholic rite obit mentioned above where funeral ceremonies are repeated on their anniversary right down to the minutest detail, but with an empty casket (Marshall 20). Both *Lycidas* and obits ask that mourners imagine the deceased’s body to be in the mourners’ presence and/or to come to terms with its absence, and both propose this imaginative act as comforting. This is perhaps why Lycidas’s fantasy funeral is so unsatisfactory: while pre-Reformation mourners participating in an obit might know that their dead are buried in the churchyard, all the uncouth swain has is “false surmise” (153). Additionally, both Milton’s pastoral

elegy and obits are examples of protracted mourning. *Lycidas* was published in *Iusta Eduardo King* (1638), several months after King's death in late summer of 1637, re-emerged in Milton's 1645 *Poems*, and continues to be read many years after Edward King's (*Lycidas*'s) actual death; obits occur on the one-year anniversary of a loved one's death. In creating new Protestant funeral ritual in *Lycidas*, Milton echoes Catholic funeral rituals.

Finally, the moment when Milton seems to suggest the lost shepherd's triumph over death—when *Lycidas* is made “the Genius of the shore” who “shalt be good / To all that wander in that perilous flood” (183-5)—is also a moment highly evocative of pre-Reformation belief in Purgatory. Specifically, Milton's “Genius” is incredibly reminiscent of Catholic ghosts who visited the living to testify to the existence of Purgatory, its purpose, and its pains.

Unlike the Catholic Church, the reformed Church of England minimized ghosts. Increasingly, for Protestants, ghosts were illusions, designed by Catholics to support the false doctrine of Purgatory. Or, ghosts were the devil wearing the skin of a loved one to trick the ignorant. Despite scornful Protestant polemic, belief in ghosts was not so easily laid to rest, and, “more than any other manifestation of popular religious culture,” ghosts “challenged the Protestant maxims that the dead had no interest in the affairs of the living, and the living no role to play in securing the happiness of the deceased” (Marshall 234). In significant ways, *Lycidas* as the Genius of the shore is very like the ghosts in Catholic stories about visits from Purgatory. In particular, the *Gast of Gy* has significant and intriguing parallels.

The *Gast of Gy* is an English translation of a narrative about a ghostly visitation in Alès, France in 1323-24. In the *Gast of Gy*, a widow goes to her prior and seeks his help in a haunting; she believes her dead husband is tormenting her from the afterlife. The prior investigates the haunting with two scholars of theology and philosophy, as well as two hundred armed men. The investigation indeed reveals the ghost of the widow's husband, Gy. What follows is a long conversation about Purgatory between Gy and the prior. It is in the course of this conversation that the parallels between Milton's Genius and Gy are revealed. The prior asks how Gy can be a good ghost if he is so clearly not in Purgatory. To this, the ghost replies

‘I declare that there are two purgatories: general purgatory and individual purgatory.’ The prior said to that voice, ‘Now I refute you because you are a liar, for it is certain that no soul may be punished in different places at the same time and hour.’ The voice answered, ‘That is true, and for this reason, I am punished by day in this individual purgatory and by night in general purgatory with other souls.’ (*The Gast of Gy* 75)

Gy suffers in the common Purgatory, and then is tortured (and tortures) again in his wife's bedchamber where he committed his most grievous (never named) sin. In *Hamlet in Purgatory* Stephen Greenblatt calls this a “very early conception” of Purgatory (114); although not a part of an orthodox conception of Purgatory, this idea of two Purgatories, and the ghost of Gy, survives at least as late as the “early sixteenth century,” when “the ghost who had appeared almost three hundred years earlier in the south of France was still sufficiently well-known that he could be lightly alluded to—linked to the fabulous and the exotic—in a popular entertainment” (132).

I am not claiming direct influence, that Milton read the *Gast of Gy*, rather I bring in this anecdote and critical assessment because of the clear parallel with the dead-Lycidas's new job as "Genius of the shore": the figure and the poetic telling takes part in a similar figuring of the relationship between the dead and the living in which the dead and the living may still be aids to each other. Gy haunts his wife's bedchamber because it is also the place of her most grievous sin. Gy asks of God that he "be able to reveal to [his] wife her peril" (80), thus alerting her to the importance of confession and indulgences, as well as ensuring she pray for his soul in Purgatory. Similarly, the uncouth swain proposes that Lycidas will be rescued and "mounted high, / Through the dear might of him that walked the waves" so that he could aid "all that wander in that perilous flood" (Milton 172-73, 185), preventing future loss of bodies and souls. Like Purgatory, Lycidas's role as ghostly shepherd of the shore is to direct what Greenblatt calls "potentially disruptive psychic energy" (102). Instead of leaving his readers with the disturbing image of Lycidas's/King's corpse "under the whelming tide" (157), Milton makes Lycidas a guide, and gives solace to those who loved and lost King through a belief in an enduring relationship with his spirit who still cares for the living, much like Gy in Purgatory.

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