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**“THE WELL-DISSEMBLED MOURNER”: LIGHTNING’S
(DIS)COURSE IN THE STILL LIVES OF THOMSON’S
“CELADON AND AMELIA”**

What a poor Substitute for a Set of *memorable Actions*, is *polished Alabaster*,
or the *Mimickry* of sculptured Marble!

—James Hervey 44–45

INTRODUCTION

This essay considers the lives—and deaths—of the characters in the “Celadon and Amelia” episode of James Thomson’s *The Seasons*, in which two lovers are parted when “the beauteous Maid” is struck by lightning (“Summer” 1216).¹ The instantaneous tragedy caused by the thunderbolt turns the couple into figurative statues, and interrupts the poem’s “memorable actions” with a poetic rendering of what James Hervey would later term, with scornful emphasis, the “Mimickry of sculptured Marble” (45). Mimesis, as we will see, is in fact a key theme in the episode, where repeated uses of terms denoting semblance—especially in the competing senses of “likeness, image or copy” and “outward seeming of something which is not actually there”—prompt us to examine and compare the relative memorial and mimetic authenticity of poetry and funerary sculpture, as well as to appreciate Thomson’s imitation of stone’s stillness in the medium of verse (“Semblance,” defs. *n.5* and *n.4a*). But the pair were also extremely mobile, and lived many lives and deaths, both before the earliest publication in 1727, in verses, letters, and newspaper articles on the unlucky Oxfordshire couple who inspired the episode, and after the poem’s completion in 1746, in the anthology pieces, allusions, and visual art through which Celadon and Amelia lived on in the British imagination. Siting Thomson’s episode between its multifarious sources and an important later incarnation, and paying close attention to the discourses of lightning in the text and its contexts, I suggest, allows us to comprehend the significance of statuesque or sculptural semblances in *The Seasons* as

a whole, and to find in Thomson's careful balancing of stasis and process, ethics and aesthetics, a valuable example of how mid-century poets were deploying the resources of their genre to incorporate and even dominate alternative discourses and media.

A number of the later incarnations have been discussed productively in recent scholarship, which has traced the way in which Thomson's interpolated narratives, as reader favorites, took on semi-independent existences beyond the poem itself. The frequent excerption and illustration of Thomson's tragic-sentimental tales endowed the episode (and its protagonists) with new life, whether as a specimen of the best British poetry in a pedagogical anthology, as an inducement to taking proper precautions against lightning strikes, or as a sublime icon in Romantic-era paintings and engravings.² As Sandro Jung argues, the shifts in criticism, anthologizations, and illustrations of the tale from the poem's publication in 1730 through to the end of the eighteenth century reveal a transformation in reading practices whereby, broadly speaking, moral and religious interpretations give way to readings that stress the story's sentiment and sublimity.³

These re-appropriations and re-contextualizations are apt, given Thomson's own methods of composition, which involve the careful assemblage and poetic transfiguration of materials from a wide variety of sources.⁴ By returning to some of the numerous depictions of the lightning-struck lovers, my aim here will be to consider what particular sources and adaptations can tell us about the tale's balance between narrative and description, progress and stasis, and to probe the modes of representation and interpretation described in the verse itself, particularly in the final, 1746 text. In the process, I hope further to elucidate the tale's "complex syntax of ideologies," with particular reference to Thomson's sources for his account of lightning, in which religious, natural scientific, and sentimental discourses mingle in ways that prefigure the monumental fate of Celadon and Amelia (Jung, "Painterly" 72). This composite discourse, I argue, is used by Thomson to claim for his poetry the kind of function and eminence associated with the funerary monument.

THOMSON'S STATUES

We begin with a sculpture in Petworth House, Sussex, currently sited in a corridor of the North Gallery alongside a collection of antique statuary and a *Pastoral Apollo* by John Flaxman.⁵ The sole "modern" statue among the classical, mythical subjects, John Charles Felix Rossi's *Celadon and Amelia* stands out, depicting as it does characters from a popular poem

rather than mythical pagan deities. Even more striking are the lovers' dynamic postures, which make a strong contrast with the stillness evoked by the figures around them. For John Kenworthy-Browne "the vigour and drama in this group make it quite unlike Rossi's other known works; it is indeed unlike any other English neo-classical sculpture" (371). Captured in the moment before Amelia is struck by lightning, the pair compose an energetic helix or ogee that encapsulates at once the "Friendship heighten'd by the mutual Wish" and their differing responses to the storm ("Summer" 1180). "Caught" on their "tender Walk" the couple look as if they had paused mid-stride, but their attitudes are already marked by the imminent tragedy as they register the oncoming storm (1191). Celadon stands just behind Amelia, interposing his torso as though to protect his lover from "the Tempest" (1191). Their bodies are aligned and their heads turn back and up to face the approaching storm, while Celadon raises his left arm in a protective gesture that also expresses his (unfounded) confidence in the indemnity afforded them by his lover's virtue. His right arm embraces the cowering Amelia, who looks anxiously back, compelled to confront the tempest but utterly unable to shake off her sense of dread.

These details allow us to pinpoint the lines being illustrated:

Heavy with instant Fate her Bosom heav'd
Unwonted Sighs, and stealing oft a Look
Of the big Gloom on CELADON her Eye
Fell tearful, wetting her disorder'd Cheek.
In vain assuring Love, and Confidence
In HEAVEN repress'd her Fear; it grew, and shook
Her Frame near Dissolution. He perceiv'd
Th' unequal Conflict, and as Angels look
On dying Saints, his Eyes Compassion shed,
With Love illumin'd high. "Fear not, he said,
"Sweet Innocence! thou Stranger to Offence,
"And inward Storm!...
.....
"Tis Safety to be near thee sure, and thus
"To clasp Perfection!" (1195–1206, 1213–14)

The statue shows us Amelia's heaving bosom, her terrified "Look" at the "big Gloom," and the gesture Celadon evokes in "thus / "To clasp Perfection." Rossi was "not held in the highest esteem by his peers" (Byrant). Flaxman, a more talented and successful contemporary, was

critical of Rossi's monuments in St. Paul's Cathedral, and the painter and diarist Joseph Farington accuses him of farming out major commissions to "ordinary men at low wages," with less than impressive results (qtd. in Roscoe 1056).⁶ *The Seasons*, however, seems to have been a favorite source of subject-matter for Rossi. His known works include a statue of Thomson "in his study" as well as a "Musidora," while his frieze beneath the pediment of Buckingham Palace appears to owe a debt to the poem's allegorical seasons.⁷ Furthermore, the fact that he chose to exhibit *Celadon and Amelia* at the 1821 Royal Academy show suggests that he himself considered it one of his better efforts, a view endorsed by the avid yet discriminating collector George Wyndham, Third Earl of Egremont, who purchased the piece shortly thereafter.⁸ However much Rossi may have skimmed on large public commissions, in this work both the details of the narrative and its overall evocation of fate's rapid approach are admirably captured in finely worked white marble, as is the complex of emotions and beliefs that animates the couple just before tragedy strikes.

My contention is that Rossi's decision to represent Celadon and Amelia responds to Thomson's own bias towards sculpture, and that the statue offers a useful way of thinking about the complex interplay between liveliness and deathliness, narrative movement and static description, novelty and exemplarity, at work both in this specific episode as well as in *The Seasons* as a whole. Kenneth Gross contends that "the statue," in general, "represents a stopping point; it represents the reification of something once living and mutable, its death as it were.... We might even take the statue as the image of a telos or fate" (15–16). This is doubly true of Rossi's statue, one subject of which has indeed died in Thomson's poem, and in a manner which invites us to attribute the event to "a telos or fate." Yet unlike so many contemporary visual representations of the tale, Rossi's statue depicts Amelia in life, thereby acquiring what Bruce Haley terms the "ambiguity" of the monumental sculpture, which "recall[s] a living person while marking [her] death," an ambiguity which is exaggerated by the energetic composition (1). This uncertainty is underscored by the inscription identifying the couple as "Celadon and Amelia," which figures the work as both a memorial portrait and a "history" or narrative, and amplifies yet displaces the statue's meaning by invoking a poetic source.

That Thomson's poetry should find refuge in stone is, of course, somewhat incongruous. Readers of *The Seasons* have repeatedly characterized it as representing ceaseless seasonal change, an interpretation which might be said to follow the poet's own view of the work. His "Hymn," placed at the end of the 1730 subscriber's edition of *The Seasons*, apostrophizes a

“varied God” and suggests that the poet’s main concern is the mimesis of continuous seasonal process (rather than, say, the depiction of arresting tableaux):

MYSTERIOUS round! what skill, what force divine,
 Deep-felt, in these appear! A simple train,
 Yet so harmonious mix’d, so fitly join’d,
 One following one in such enchanting sort,
 Shade, unperceiv’d, so softening into shade,
 And all so forming such a perfect whole,
 That, as they still succeed, they ravish still.
(“A Hymn” 24–30)⁹

Early critics were quick to emphasize this successiveness. John Aikin celebrates the work as a new species of “descriptive poetry” designed to “paint the face of nature as changing through the changing seasons; to mark the approaches, and trace the progress of these vicissitudes . . . and to give animation and variety to the whole,” a kind of literary equivalent of motion pictures (x). Samuel Johnson similarly notices in his *Lives of the Poets* how Thomson in the poem “leads us through the appearances of things as they are successively varied by the vicissitudes of the seasons” (4: 104).

It is perhaps not surprising, then, that modern critics have likewise tended to focus on the undeniable liveliness of the poem. A typical expression of this view is found, for example, in David Morse’s *The Age of Virtue*: “Thomson depicts a world that is constantly changing and transforming itself, where everything circulates, deploying a characteristic vocabulary that makes extensive use of such terms as ‘pours,’ ‘swells,’ ‘rolls,’ ‘spreads,’ ‘pervades,’ ‘diffuses,’ ‘rises,’ ‘bursts,’ ‘whirls,’ ‘rushes’ and ‘flows’” (51). Scholars engaging more fully with the poem offer further nuances to such a reading but, nonetheless, likewise tend to understand the poem as dominated by change and movement. Ralph Cohen’s landmark study *The Unfolding of “The Seasons”* is particularly astute at identifying the dynamic principles underlying the poem’s sequence of topics: “within the view of successive space, [Thomson] saw a constant shifting and interrelating of men and nature in which objects were transformed, as were the words that Thomson used to express them” (7). More recent critics continue to describe the poem in these terms. W. B. Hutchings draws on mid-eighteenth-century German aesthetics to argue that Thomson responds to literature’s perceived affinity for narrative and process by conveying description through narratives of perception. Building on such insights,

Ingrid Horrocks understands the poem as dramatizing human experiences of the landscape rather than replicating it cartographically, and Zoë Kinsley suggests various ordering tropes which set the poem's landscapes in motion. For Richard Terry, this dynamism extends to the type of attention the poem demands: *The Seasons*, he argues, "forces its readers to enact the mental process of theodicy," piecing together the different parts of the poem into a coherent and cohesive vision of divine providence ("Through Nature" 267, emphasis added).

Although these analyses are compelling, and seem to leave little room for further debate over whether or not *The Seasons* is a dynamic poem, Thomson in his "Hymn" also suggests a certain immobility with the artful chiasmic juxtaposition of stillness and succession in "as they still succeed, they ravish still" (30). This should remind us that motion in *The Seasons* often alternates and combines with its opposite, as Alan Dugald McKillop indicates when he notes that Thomson's

sweeping descriptions of natural phenomena are full of movement,... he describes events, not motionless prospects. But it may be added, as a secondary but significant point, that in the midst of his scenes he often puts stationary figures,... he was always fascinated by the idea of human figures frozen or petrified in natural postures. (71)

Here McKillop draws attention to the intriguing recurrence within the poem of the "statuesque," echoing Jean Hagstrum's comment from a few years earlier that "Thomson placed a statuary in his gardens and marble figures in his forests.... [He] conceived of his idealized human figures as classical marbles" (McKillop 70, Hagstrum 249). Despite perennial concern with Thomson's rendering of visual landscapes, few critics since Hagstrum and McKillop have paid much attention to this insight, but the "statuesque" is indeed as characteristic of *The Seasons* as the idiosyncratically intensive use of verbs and the dynamic descriptions.¹⁰ Furthermore, as McKillop intimates, the poem's sculptural mode is not blandly ideal but rather prioritizes stasis produced by violence, whether natural and physical or human and emotional. A catalogue of Thomson's poetic sculptures would include, among others, the "disaster'd" shepherd frozen to death in a blizzard and the lover "fix'd / In melancholy Site," Sir Hugh Willoughby's search for the North-East Passage which ends in disaster as "he with his hapless Crew, / Each full-exerted at his several Task, / Froze into Statues," and an episode from the 1730 edition describing "statue-folk," inhabit-

ants of a petrified city (“Winter” 278–321; “Spring” 1022–23; “Winter” 933–34; “Summer” 1730 ed. 727):

by the nitrous penetrating salts,
Mix’d copious with the sand, pierc’d, and preserv’d,
Each object hardens gradual into stone,
Its posture fixes, and its colour keeps.
The statue-folk, within, unnumber’d crowd
The streets, in various attitudes surpriz’d
By sudden fate, and live on every face
The passions caught, beyond the sculptor’s art.
(“Summer” 1730 ed. 723–30)

The poet’s art, however, rises to the challenge and produces a catalogue of sentimental figures, including a pair of lovers whose happy expressions form an affecting contrast with their sad condition:

Here leaning soft, the marble-lovers stand,
Delighted even in death; and each for each
Feeling alone, with that expressive look,
Which perfect Nature only knows to give. (731–34)

“Leaning soft” yet made of stone, these figures embody sculpture’s paradoxical combination of physical rigidity and gestural and emotional expressivity. By attributing it exclusively to “perfect Nature,” however, the implication once again is that statuary is incapable of such fidelity, while poetry takes up the mimetic challenge. Although they were excised from the 1744 and 1746 editions, the petrified city and the “marble-lovers” nonetheless help to suggest the nature of Thomson’s “statuesque,” which combines the ekphrastic challenge of versifying sculpture with the supersession of that art form by an appeal to the superior art of “Nature” from which the poet takes his models.¹¹

The “sudden fate” and “surpriz’d” attitudes of the marble lovers also, of course, prefigure in more literal form the “marmoreal conclusion” of “Celadon and Amelia” (McKillop 71):

From his void Embrace,
(Mysterious Heaven!) that moment, to the Ground,
A blacken’d Corse, was struck the beauteous Maid.
But who can paint the Lover, as he stood,

Pierc'd by severe Amazement, hating Life,
Speechless, and fix'd in all the Death of Woe!
So, faint Resemblance! on the Marble-Tomb,
The well-dissembled Mourner stooping stands,
For ever silent, and for ever sad. (1214-22)

For McKillop this is “mawkish” and “distasteful” (71). The sentimental tragedy is certainly melodramatic, but it is consonant with the Ovidian flavor introduced by the figurative metamorphosis; and besides, it is at this point in the tale that awkward syntactic confusion recedes in favor of a subtle poetic representation of sudden disaster. The shift from narrative to stasis represents meteorological process—and possibly the providential will behind it—as physically and psychologically immobilizing. Amelia, struck by lightning, is rendered both motionless and lifeless. Celadon is “pierc'd by severe Amazement,” that is, by his own emotional response to the loss he has sustained, which “fixes” him in the emotional equivalent of lifelessness, “the Death of Woe.” The verse replicates the narrative by switching from Thomson's trademark enjambments to consistently end-stopped lines, the rhythms of which are constrained by numerous punctuation marks. Finally, the mourning swain is stationed in the static, present-tense confines of a simile, in which flesh is figured as marble, and “that moment” lengthens to an eternal “for ever.” Thus sculpted stone is the ideal art form in which to illustrate the tale, where the rapid sequence of the storm's approach is punctuated with a brief yet semantically dense moment of stasis that alludes self-consciously to the “sister art” of sculpture.¹²

In aspiring to monumentality, Thomson's verse here mounts a challenge to the art form which in early eighteenth-century Britain competed and sometimes combined with poetry to commemorate the dead. It was in this period that funerary sculpture became part of the capital of an increasingly commercialized culture, contending alongside print, performance, and other media in the burgeoning market for improvement and amusement.¹³ The conventional funeral monument united image and text, much like the popular print, with sculpture and epitaph interacting to produce a composite record of the deceased's character and appearance and, in many cases, those of surviving family members.¹⁴ Thomson, however, challenges the ability of the monument's composite record accurately to memorialize the dead and their survivors, a function he claims for his own medium and genre. He dismisses the “Resemblance” offered by even the “well-dissembled” monumental image as no more than “faint.”

Similitude (resemblance) and deceptive or false imitation (dissembling) are thus played against each other in ways that compare and contrast the arts of poetry and sculpture, to the former's advantage. The connotation of duplicity in "dissembled" jars with the prelapsarian "undissembling Truth" invoked at the start of the tale, and adds to the negative undertone by implying that such mimicry not only fails to capture its subjects but when done "well" will create a false, flattering ideal, simplifying the complexities of human nature and divine justice into a clichéd image (1179). The poem's figurative semblance of a statue, by contrast, preserves the distinction between similarity and identity, which paradoxically allows it to move beyond "faint resemblance" and to suggest a fuller, more nuanced account of human tragedy.¹⁵

EXEGETICAL AMBIGUITY AND LIGHTNING'S MEMORIAL: A "LOOK BEYOND THE GRAVE"?

Thus, if Rossi's statue prompts the question of what we miss when we overlook or underestimate the significance of Thomson's "statues" in *The Seasons*, one answer might be that they show Thomson the poet imitating and competing with the mimetic techniques and conventions of sculpture. The compelling yet problematic exemplarity represented by the mute motionlessness of Thomson's stricken bodies appropriates the statue's stillness and its role as memorial, yet critiques its aesthetics and ethics. The poet undermines and supersedes funerary iconography by setting virtue against vanity, sincerity against duplicity, pathos against irony, holding them in tension within a complex network of natural and providential causes. By prolonging the moment of perception with the temporal adverb "forever" while remaining silent as to the moral logic of natural disaster—Celadon's sentiment in lines 1205 to 1214 having been violently contradicted—the episode urges the reader's engagement with a scene that is dense with affect and moral resonance, and yet refuses to resolve different readings into an authoritative interpretation.

Thomson in *The Seasons* rarely explicates the natural phenomena which intrude intermittently to rob creatures of motion and agency. Here he places particular emphasis on the hermeneutic aporia by introducing his narrative with the lines "GUILT hears appalled; yet not always on the guilty Head / Descends the fated Flash" (1170–71). This negative moral comes after an account of lightning-stricken nature but before the tale of Celadon and Amelia, as though to alert readers to the problems of interpretation they are about to face. Cohen's laconic observation that

"Celadon and Amelia illustrate the ironic unenlightenment of lightning" is elaborated by Sambrook, who asserts that "T[homson]'s irony is directed against Celadon's simple view ... of a moral universe," and instead "shows God's power and man's incomprehension of God's purposes" (Cohen 160; Thomson, *The Seasons*, ed. Sambrook 355). The foreknowledge provided by the prefatory maxim certainly shadows Celadon's confident speech with dramatic irony that is heightened by the knowing angel/saint simile in lines 1202 and 1203 and sharpened to a violent point in the conclusion. However, as we have seen, irony not only disrupts the elucidation of divine purpose by characters within the narrative, but challenges the conventional wisdom and mimetic techniques of the monument. It also, in the process, destabilizes the meaning of the tale itself, and hence the very notion of reading divine will into natural disaster or drawing positive wisdom from a tragic story. Shaun Irlam has understood the poem as enacting a unidirectional process of sensory and semantic occlusion followed by an exegetical re-inscription of meaning upon the "Face of Nature": with this "statuesque" description, however, process is arrested and exegesis refused, challenging the reader to provide an appropriate epitaph to the funerary monument. Are Celadon and Amelia simply victims of a fallen, imperfect Nature? Or, "Devoting all / To Love," perhaps they themselves are marked by Original Sin, their "Passion," tainted despite its guilelessness, distracting them from rendering due devotion to God (1182–83). Is the metaphysical framework of the episode even Christian, or is it informed rather by the deistic physico-theology that becomes increasingly prominent in later versions of the poem, and thus merely to be explained in natural philosophical terms as the result of chemical and meteorological processes?

These alternatives illustrate the semantic openness of the monument, but they also limn the constellation of ideas and problems associated with lightning strikes in the period. Representing a particularly acute example of the unpredictability and mysteriousness of natural processes and human mortality, the phenomenon was discussed across a range of genres and registers, many of which are perceptible in Thomson's verse tale. Sambrook traces the story's origins to that most transient of genres, the newspaper report, in an account of a thunderstorm that occurred at the end of July 1718 in Oxfordshire. On 16 August that year, a provincial correspondent for *The Weekly Journal or Saturday's Post* announces

We hear from Oxford, that within five Miles of that City, a young Man and a young Woman, sitting under a Hay-stack were struck

Dead by a sudden Flash of Lightning; and that their Bodies being view'd by several eminent and skilful Surgeons, they [all] gave it as their Opinion that they were suffocated by the Stench which had gone up their Nostrils; their being no visible Marks of any Wounds, where any Thing may have penetrated. (16 Aug. 1718: 524)¹⁶

“Surprising” or “terrible” occurrences of death-by-lightning were standard fare in the weekly press of the time. A rival paper, three months earlier, had relayed the “surprizing” death by lightning of one John Bean (carpenter) of Inverness whose body continued to smolder for “three hours” (*Weekly Journal or British Gazetteer* 10 May 1718: 1036). Stories from abroad were equally common; in April, for example, the *British Weekly Mercury* had reported from Palamos in Spain that “Flashes of Lightning fell in five Several Places in the Town, killing 12 Persons” (4).

In addition to the numeric specificity that lends these accounts an air of scientific authority and verisimilitude, the news item from 16 August reinforces its philosophical credentials by detailing the surgeons’ examination. As the improbable diagnosis suggests, however, lightning in the early eighteenth century remained a phenomenon for which existing explanatory theories were still inadequate. The link between lightning and electricity would not be made until later in the century, with Benjamin Franklin’s experiments and the various controversies over the adoption of lightning rods.¹⁷ In the meantime, lightning was a matter equally for learned speculation, religious reflection, and popular curiosity. All of these contexts, I would argue, inform Thomson’s account, and are therefore worth considering in some detail.

Newspaper reports of lightning strikes are in fact close relations of contemporary natural philosophical reports. McKillop’s lucid survey of the traditions and sources that inform Thomson’s lightning scene focuses particularly on the passage describing a lightning-stricken shepherd that appears in the 1727 version of the “Summer” storm but was dropped after 1738 (Thomson, *The Seasons*, ed. Sambrook 112–13). As McKillop points out, this figure “represent[s] just such a case as amateur scientists and purveyors of local curiosities loved to report,” and he suggests that it was based on an item in John Morton’s 1712 *Natural History of Northampton-shire*, later discussed by the mathematician and natural philosopher John Wallis in the *Philosophical Transactions* (McKillop 72).¹⁸ Wallis was particularly interested in lightning strikes and contributed several letters on the topic to the *Transactions* in which he speculates as to the nature and physical effects of lightning. Thus, in “*A Letter of Dr. Wallis to Dr. Sloane, concerning*

the Generation of Hail, and of Thunder and Lightning, and the Effects thereof," he suggests that "the violent Explosion of Gunpowder, attended with the Noise and Flash, is so like that of Thunder and Lightning, as if they differed only as Natural and Artificial" (655). He finds the evidence for his hypothesis in the fact that lightning, like gunfire explosions, "may kill Men or Cattle, tear Trees, fire Gunpowder, break Houses, or the like"; furthermore, "there is in Lightning a Sulphurous Vapour, [which] is manifest from the Sulphurous Smell which attends it, especially when Hurt is done," indicating the presence of sulfur, a key constituent of gunpowder (656).

Wallis's theory reflects his classical education and literary learning as much as his empirical method. The letter not only demonstrates the blend of curiosity and detachment, news and science, so characteristic of the period, but also echoes many details of the meteorology found in Lucretius's *De Rerum Natura* or *Of the Nature of Things*, in which lightning is composed of seeds of fire expressed from clouds when they are ruptured by wind or by colliding with other clouds. Lucretius makes the association between hailstorms and thunderstorms, draws an analogy between lightning and ballistics, and identifies sulfurous gases as a characteristic attribute: "But now what SEEDS the THUNDER Parts compose, / Their STINKS, their MARKS, and sulph'rous ODOUR shows" (Book 4.226–27). The poem, rediscovered in the Renaissance, was particularly popular in the wake of the admired translation of 1682 by the classicist Thomas Creech, and influenced both poetry and natural philosophic discourse of the period.¹⁹ It has long been recognized as a major source of *The Seasons*' scientific and especially meteorological lore; McKillop notes numerous passages that show its influence, and Thomson in fact owned a copy of the poem with Creech's notes.²⁰ These, and the still more copious annotations by John Digby in the 1714 edition, gloss the passages on lightning with a veritable compendium of literature on the topic, from Milton's Satanic firearms in Book 6 of *Paradise Lost*, to the theories of Pliny, Aristotle, and many others.²¹ Thomson seems to use much of the material in Creech's and Digby's notes for his summer storm, blending Lucretian science with Milton's poetry as "Niter, Sulphur, and the fiery Spume / Of fat Bitumen" combine to "latent Flame" ("Summer" 1108–10).²² Thus "occasional" or "curious" sources are anchored by canonical poetry, and news becomes permanent, monumental.

Equally important, perhaps, for our reading of "Summer," is the rhetoric by which Creech manages the different kinds of authority implicit in each source or discourse. Lucretius in his poem expresses scornful skepticism

regarding traditional explanations of thunderbolts as portents of disaster or punishment from Jupiter. The poet reasons

For if these BOLTS were thrown by GODS above,
Or if they were the proper Arms of JOVE;
.....
Why [do] GOOD and PIOUS MEN these BOLTS endure?
And VILLAINS live, and see their Fall secure?
(Book 4: 384–85, 393–94)

The question, of course, is the common concern of seventeenth- and early-eighteenth-century theodicy, and Creech struggles to address the crux in his notes, commenting that the suffering of the good and triumph of the wicked have

been the Subject of many solicitous Disquisitions: Disputes have been multiplied; and some have been as industrious to vindicate the Methods of Providence from all seeming Irregularities, as others to defame them. Some have sent us to look for Retribution in another World, and indeed this is an easie way of solving the Difficulty, and with little Pains deducible from the immortality of the Soul, which I have already asserted. But because to look beyond the Grave, requires a sharp and stedy Eye, I shall observe the Reasons of the Philosophers. (2: 644)

Thus as a supplement to his orthodox assertion of the soul's immortality, which Lucretius vehemently denies, Creech trawls through classical literature for explanations that are independent of Christian belief. Not willing to counter the brilliant poet solely with the "easie" solution, he invokes the "sharp and stedy Eyes" of Plutarch, Martial, Seneca, Plato, and many other pagan authors.

There is nothing unusual in such an approach; authoritative classical sources had long been invoked to add weight to Christian doctrine. But it remains unclear whether quoting pagan philosophers is intended as a means of looking "beyond the Grave" or as an alternative to it. The ambiguity is worth noting because Creech's *mélange* of moral authorities and traditions inflects Thomson's use of Lucretius in his thunderstorm passage, both in the first version of 1727 and in later editions. Like Creech's, Thomson's theodicean perspective mixes classical and Christian traditions, so that superstition and credulity are dismantled even as atheism

is strategically erased from the inherited Epicurean discourse. Sambrook suggests that Thomson makes his storm "more Lucretian" in the 1744 and later editions of "Summer" by removing a phrase implying a divine cause, "The high Command," found in line 745 of the 1727 text (Thomson, *The Seasons*, ed. Sambrook 354). Instead, we get an echo from *Paradise Lost*, "the Touch ethereal" (1113). Yet these two phrases seem equally ambiguous in terms of assigning divine agency. The difference is that the latter uses a gunpowder metaphor. Combined with further additions, a comparison of "the baleful Cloud" to "a Magazine of Fate" and a "War / Of fighting Winds," the later version turns the storm into a battle resonant with allusion to Milton's war in heaven even as it echoes Lucretian science and its afterlife in natural philosophical publications. The "Magazine of Fate," much like "high Command" and "Touch ethereal," suggests a providential frame without being explicit about it (1112, 1114–15, 1112). Rather than describing "merely" natural causes, Thomson's language in the later text of "Summer" removes direct references to "God"²³ only to replace them with terms that produce an allusive subtext of implied supernatural agency while simultaneously conforming with modern science.

This is the context of the first set of statues created by Thomson's poetic lightning. The storm approaches, and birds, beasts, and men wait with "Listening Fear, and dumb Amazement" ("Summer" 1128); it breaks, rain and hail descend, and "Th'unconquerable Lightning struggles thro," making monuments as it strikes (1144–46, 1147):

the smouldring Pine
Stands a sad shatter'd Trunk; and, stretch'd below,
A lifeless Groupe the blasted Cattle lie:
Here the soft Flocks, with that same harmless Look
They wore alive, and ruminating still
In Fancy's Eye; and there the frowning Bull,
And Ox half-rais'd. (1150–56)

Just as "Ethereal Touch" and "Magazine of Fate" skirt the problem of assigning divine intentionality to the phenomenon of lightning, so here the ironic "harmless"—now doubly representative of the animals' disposition—quietly introduces the questions of guilt and justice posed in Lucretius's challenge.

In Thomson's summer storm, then, lightning's mysterious, "statuesque" effects are proffered as occasions for reverent wonder and moral interrogation, so that even before the Celadon and Amelia episode and the explicit

comparison with funerary art, lightning-stricken creatures have been introduced as silent monuments to “Fate,” providence, or the “Etherial” powers of nature. This highlights another element in the discursive hybrid, a kind of physico-theological transformation of the accounts of lightning found in the Bible, particularly in the Old Testament, where the Psalmist alternately instructs his audience to “Stand in awe” of the Lord and all His creation, including thunder, lightning, and attendant smoke, and prays that God will “rain snares, fire and brimstone, and an horrible tempest” upon the wicked (*King James Bible* Ps. 4.4, 35, 11.6). Lightning is both a divine weapon with the potential to smite the sinful and, more generally, a sign of divine power. However, when this reading is adopted in devotional manuals and prayer guides of the period, lightning’s ability to create stricken “memorials” of God’s power is contrasted with the living monuments of those he spares for future repentance and virtue, suggesting further possible pre-texts for Thomson’s natural statues.

In *The Whole Duty of Prayer: Containing Devotions for Every Day in the Week, and for Several Occasions*, “A Prayer in Time of Thunder and Lightning” praises the divine power of the storm in language borrowed directly from Psalms 18.14, asking “Who would not stand in awe of thy Majesty? Who would not fear thy Judgments, when thou shoots [sic] forth thy Arrows of Thunder and Lightning?” (123–24). Having survived, the supplicant continues, “O make us living Monuments of thy Mercy, that we may work out our Repentance unto Salvation” (124). Theophilus Dorrington’s *Devotions for Several Occasions ... Collected from the Holy Scriptures* also evokes God’s power to create monuments to his own attributes. Strikingly, Dorrington’s “In a Storm with Thunder and Lightning” appears in a section containing “DEVOTIONS for the four Seasons of the Year,” directly after “For the Summer” (205–06, 203–09, 204–05). The poem echoes, among others, Psalms 18, 35, 144, and 148:

By undiscerned Force he makes
 the Vapours to arise
 Which frame the Clouds, where Fire unquench’d
 mingled with Water lies.
 From thence the dreadful Lightnings burst,
 and rains are poured down;
 He brings his boisterous Winds and Storms
 from Treasuries unknown.
 Supported by thy glorious Works,
 thy Fame can never die;

But thy Memorial shall endure
to all Eternity. (5–16)

“Memorial” here seems to signify both “memory” (in the sense of “remembrance, recollection”) and that which preserves memory for a divine “Eternity.”²⁴ As in the previous example, the self-confirming circularity of this mechanism recalls those of the sublime poetics which Thomson learned from predecessors such as John Dennis and Aaron Hill (see Inglesfield). Lightning functions self-reflexively, as a display of divine power which memorializes that power for the benefit of God’s creatures. This, I would suggest, also constitutes one of the key functions of Thomson’s perplexing statues: as his storm scene mingles the “Vapours” of biblical paraphrase with those of classical poetry and natural philosophical discourse, his thunderbolts produce monuments to the medium in which they are embodied, the poetry that memorializes Thomson’s own creative powers.

LETTERS AND MONUMENTS: POPE’S NARRATIVES OF JOHN HEWET AND SARAH DREW

Having traced the topos of death by lightning through a range of different sources and discourses, from the most ephemeral—the newspaper—to those that aspire to the most lasting influence—the prayers—we can more clearly understand the “mawkish” pathos of Thomson’s tale and its “distasteful” sentiment as operating within a particular matrix of cultural discourses, and that the difficulty of interpreting the tale is perhaps due at least in part to the ambiguity attending contemporary accounts of lightning (McKillop 71). We have also seen how, responding to the kind of debates found in *De Rerum Natura* and in Creech’s notes, Thomson holds these multiple frames of reference in place and blocks superstitious or overly simplistic moral readings of his storm scene by fine-tuning references to divine agency via metaphor, allusion, and the double muteness of his animal statues.

The link between the victim of lightning and the monument or memorial that we find in the prayers, however, brings us to another source for Celadon and Amelia, one which adds further nuances to this account of Thomson’s lightning bolts as self-reflexively asserting the power of poetry against that of the funerary monument. It leads us back, ultimately, to another piece of stone, this time a tablet mounted on the façade of the parish church at Stanton Harcourt in Oxfordshire, which is inscribed with

an epitaph commemorating the deaths of John Hewet and Sarah Drew, a couple “contracted in marriage who ... were both in an instant killed by lightning on the last day of July 1718” (qtd. in “Three Epitaphs” 200). These seem to be the same couple mentioned in the *Weekly Journal* of 16 August, fortuitously transposed from newsprint to a more solid medium. Before achieving this monumental posterity, however, the couple led an intermediate life after death in the manuscript accounts and draft epitaphs that circulated among the acquaintance of Alexander Pope, connoisseur of tombs and aficionado of epitaphs.²⁵ Here, epistolary intersubjectivity mediates the suddenness of the lightning strike and the finality of death, and transposes them into a variety of personalized discursive frameworks. The event, an “accident,” “News,” or “novel” of the variety found in the popular press, becomes the occasion of elaborate narrative embroidery variously evoking tender sentiment, gallantry, moral reflection, or satire, depending on the relationship between author and recipient. As Joshua Scodel has argued, Pope’s letters on this occasion “reveal his use of the dead to portray himself as a benevolent commemorative poet. [He] appears both as the Christian teacher, correcting uncharitable judgments upon the dead, and as the man of sensibility, sympathizing with true lovers, however lowly their condition” (278). Yet these various roles are not played simultaneously. By entering into epistolary dialogues with individual correspondents, Pope in his fictions must adjust to different audiences and weather responses which contest his own narrative of events. These letters, then, help to suggest the exegetical instability of the lightning-stricken lovers and the hermeneutic vulnerability of the monument, which Pope’s epitaphs self-consciously attempt to mitigate.

A letter dated 6 to 9 August and addressed to Martha Blount from Oxfordshire, starts with a characteristically extravagant flourish: “Dear Madam,—The only news you can expect to have from us here, must be News from heaven, for we are separated from the earth, & there’s scarce any thing can reach us except the noise of Thunder” (Pope, *Correspondence* 1: 479). Pope goes on to narrate the tragic tale of “Two Lovers, no way yielding to those you so often find in a Romance under a Beechen shade” in tones that veer from pathos to mock-gallantry, extending improbably minute circumstantial detail into sentimental speculation about the couples’ activities in the moments preceding their death, a vivid account of an almost Jobean thunderbolt with “so loud a crack that Heaven seemd burst asunder,” and a description of the corpses—Sarah’s “singd” on the eyebrow and breast—that resembles those of *Philosophical Transaction* reports (1: 480, 481). Pope includes in his *Letters and Works* an almost identical

version of this narrative in a letter he identifies as written by John Gay to a Mr. F— on 9 August, and thus presumably sent at around the same time as Pope's to Martha Blount. As George Sherburn notes in his commentary to the Clarendon Press edition, "one may doubt whether he or Gay was the real author of the letter," and a letter from Lord Bathurst dated 14 August thanks "Mr. Gay and you for your melancholy novel you sent me of the two unhappy lovers," suggesting that the tale may have been composed jointly, with copies sent to different correspondents (*Correspondence* 1: 482, 1: 488).

There are differences, however, that indicate the different relationships in each case between author and recipient. The tale as relayed to Martha Blount offers an occasion for shared affect and witty gallantry, with a faintly prurient allusion to the marks upon Sarah's body and a pious prayer for his correspondent's well-being:

I could not but tell you this true and tender Story, and should be pleas'd to have you as much mov'd by it as I am. I wish you had some pity, for my sake; and I assure you I shall have for the future more Fear, for yours; since I see by this melancholy example, that Innocence & virtue are no security from what you are so afraid of. May the Hand of God (dear Madam) be seen upon you, in nothing but your Beauties, and his Blessings! (*Correspondence* 1: 483)

The event becomes exemplary and is read for its moral content, which in turn is diverted into a flirtatious compliment with an embedded reference to lightning as "the Hand of God." A similar tone is taken with another female correspondent, Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, to whom Pope presents the story as "an accident that happen'd just under my eyes, and has made a great Impression upon me," and concludes that "I can't think these people unhappy... The greatest honour people of this low degree could have was to be remembered on a little monument; unless you will give them another, that of being honoured with a Tear from the finest eyes in the world" (1: 494, 498). Here Pope claims for his narrative the immediacy of an eye-witness account, while a ruthless circumscription of laboring class expectations forms the basis of a parallel between the monument and the sentimental token he requests of Montagu, so that cultured, feminine affect becomes a kind of memorial in its own right. The six-line epitaph sent in these earlier letters reflects the sentimental narratives in which it is set, comparing the couple to "Eastern lovers" and assigning the event to a

“pitying heav’n that virtue mutual found, / And blasted both, that it might neither wound” (“Three Epitaphs” I.1, 3–4).

This romantic epitaph was apparently judged unsuitable by Lord Harcourt, perhaps not surprisingly, given that it was to be displayed in an Anglican churchyard; so Pope composed a more conventional text in the psalm meter of Sternhold and Hopkins. Nor was the sentimental tale suitable for every audience. With a male friend such as John Caryll, Pope takes a more detached tone and perspective, writing in early September that:

the country people are hardly in charity with their minister for allowing them Christian burial. They can’t get it out of their heads but it was a judgment of God. It is odd enough to consider, how people who fancy themselves good Christians are so absurd as to think, the same misfortunes, when they happen to others, are a punishment of vice, and when they happen to themselves an exercise of virtue. On the contrary, true piety would make us know that all misfortunes, may as well be blessings, and even sudden death itself only a timely and speedy reward of good life. (*Correspondence* 1: 497)

After transcribing the second version of the epitaph, Pope continues this rather conventional train of thought, and quotes approvingly from Plutarch’s strictures on superstition before concluding: “I believe there is not in the whole course of the Scripture any precept so often and so strongly inculcated, as the trust and eternal dependence, we ought to repose in our Supreme Being” (1: 499). Similar reflections are presented a few days later to Bishop Atterbury, Dean of that magazine of funerary monuments, Westminster Abbey, and thus particularly qualified to give, as Pope requests, his opinion on “the doctrine and the poetry” in the epitaph (500).

Pope, then, turns local “News” into a “true and tender Story” or a “melancholy example,” depending on the context and his correspondent, trying out his epitaph on different readers to gauge its affective impact, moral orthodoxy, and poetic value. Not all correspondents responded as he seems to have wished them to. In her reply, Montagu deflates his high-toned sentiment, observing that “I see no reason to imagine *John Hughes* and *Sarah Drew* were either wiser or more virtuous than their neighbours.” She concludes with Epicurean skepticism that “Time and chance happen to all men” and counters his sentimental epitaph with a comical poem in jaunty tetrameter couplets: “Here lies John Hughes and Sarah Drew; / Perhaps you’ll say, What’s that to you?... Now they are happy in their

doom, / FOR POPE HAS WROTE UPON THEIR TOMB" (1: 523; Montague qtd. in *Correspondence* 1: 523). Pope, Montagu points out, has made himself "their doom" or fate, and despite the compliment, her poem seems to challenge his supremacy as narrator and interpreter. Similarly, Bishop Atterbury takes Pope's modest invitation to criticism at face value and picks numerous holes in the versification, expression, and theology of the altered, more orthodox epitaph (Atterbury qtd. in *Correspondence* 1: 501–04).

The stone, however, was duly inscribed with a text that preserves the idealistic tone and incorporates only some of Atterbury's suggestions:

Think not by rigorous judgement seiz'd,
A pair so faithful could expire;
Victims so pure Heav'n saw well pleas'd
And snatch'd them in Cœlestial fire.

Live well and fear no sudden fate;
When God calls Virtue to the grave,
Alike tis Justice, soon or late,
Mercy alike to kill or save.

Virtue unmov'd can hear the Call,
And face the Flash that melts the Ball.

(Pope, "Three Epitaphs" II.1–10)

Although, unlike the letters, it must settle for its genre's conventional brevity and compression, the inscribed epitaph is immune to the critiques of individual readers.²⁶ Writing to posterity in a form he masters, speaking at once to everyone and no-one, Pope achieves a fine balance of power between author and reader, exegetical lucidity and hermeneutic openness. Just as in his many "epitaphs on himself" he "pits ... epitaphic self-definitions against ... others' attempts to define him," so this verse reasserts his authority to describe and interpret death in the face of his correspondents' critiques while closing on a suitably modest note (Scodel 252).

CONCLUSION

The first epitaph did not make its way into print until the publication of Pope's *Works* in 1737, but this second version was reported from September 1718 onwards in London weeklies, as well as in anthologies of Pope's poetry.²⁷ It is likely, then, that Thomson had come across it by the

time he wrote *Summer*, especially as the earliest newspaper descriptions and transcriptions of Pope's epitaph place it on "a Marble Tomb" linking it still more persuasively with the "Marble-Tomb" of Thomson's simile, which thereby becomes an ironic commentary on the straightforward morality of the epitaph genre and the commemorative aspirations of the supposed tomb (*Weekly Packet* 2; "Summer" 1220).²⁸ The metamorphoses that Thomson wreaks on Pope's epitaph, furthermore, amount to a sophisticated critique of the particular logic the epitaph encapsulates, and a strategic attack on lapidary verse in general.²⁹

The "eternal dependence" Pope recommends to Caryll, described as "unmov'd Virtue" in the epitaph, is converted into the motionlessness of the grief-stricken Celadon and his likeness, the pendant tomb sculpture that "stooping stands" ("Summer" 1221). The purity of the victims, which Thomson like Pope asserts in his poem, is undercut by the elaborate Miltonic simile in which it is framed, "such their guileless Passion was, / As in the Dawn of Time inform'd the Heart / Of Innocence and undissembling Truth" (1177–79). The comparison with Edenic innocence only emphasizes the postlapsarian setting and the radical fallibility of the protagonists. The intrinsic imbalance of simile, where the vehicle may be understood as epistemologically subordinate to the tenor, and in which "semblance" is necessarily partial, mirrors Thomson's partial reproduction of the source narrative's double death and upsets, deliberately it would seem, the neat temporal equivalence that Pope's "Justice" supposedly makes between "soon or late," and the correspondence made by "Mercy" between "kill or save." Such reassuring moral "semblances," the narrator of "Summer" implies, do not hold for these lovers, but rather "dissemble" their necessarily time-bound predicament. The specific degree of "lateness" is, as such, crucial to Thomson's depiction, which paradoxically imitates and outdoes the sculpted tomb's ability to imitate death's stillness by drawing attention to the successive nature of human experience.

Lateness also characterizes Thomson's relation to his sources. As I have argued, attention to the episode's textual origins, and to the transpositions and metamorphoses that occur between source and imitation, allow us to recognize both the firmness with which Thomson denies readers hermeneutic satisfaction, and the way in which our attention is diverted away from enquiry into lightning's ultimate cause by a complex discursive matrix. Operating within a cultural environment where different genres and media compete and interact, Thomson's "statuesque" is designed to transcend its own limitations, both the material and the conventional. By melding allusions to canonical verse with the occasionality of the news

item, natural philosophical enquiry, and the divine violence of the Psalms, poetry itself seems to emerge victorious as the ultimate source of authority, and the "semblance" of figurative language to offer the only possible terms for depicting the conundrum of sudden death. With the implied critique of Pope's epitaph, even the conventions of memorial inscription are problematized. Thomson accordingly arrogates to his own composition not only the monument's compelling stasis and mimetic authenticity but also the interpretative authority of its text. Rossi's vigorous statue and its brief inscription, then, are only trying to reclaim for stone what Thomson had stolen from it.

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NOTES

¹ This and (unless otherwise stated) all subsequent quotations from Thomson's *The Seasons* are to James Sambrook's Oxford English Texts edition. For "Celadon and Amelia" and other interpolated narratives in *The Seasons* as examples of the "tragic-sentimental verse tale," a new generic hybrid which adapts elements of the classical "kinds" for a new cultural and commercial context, see Jung, "Tragic-Sentimental Verse Tale."

² See, for example, Enfield, many times reprinted; Apyrexia; and Bartolozzi's engraving of the popular 1793 painting by William Hamilton, produced for a lavish 1797 subscriber's folio edition of *The Seasons* but also sold separately as a decorative print. See Lethbridge, "Anthological Reading Habits," for an argument that such excerption testifies to the poem's intrinsically "anthological" structure.

³ For Jung's comprehensive accounts of *The Seasons*' "reception history" in the visual arts and print culture see "Visual Interpretations" and "Print Culture"; the Celadon and Amelia episode is discussed in further detail in his "Painterly 'Readings,'" which usefully reproduces and analyses the many paintings of the episode. The American reception up to 1870 is explored by Stevenson in her discussion of Thomson's commodity value in American material culture. Scholars including Terry, Fulford, Barrell, and Guest have also demonstrated how the poem, widely reprinted and transmitted via different media throughout the eighteenth century, took on a variety of ideological emphases; see the valuable essays collected by Terry in *James Thomson: Essays for the Tercentenary*.

⁴ McKillop identifies many of the sources for the poem's "scientific" content and Sambrook carefully charts Thomson's debt to earlier poetry in his edition of *The Seasons*. More recently, scholars including Lethbridge and Lisa Steinman have examined in still further detail the methods by which Thomson's poem engages with and incorporates the poetry of the past.

⁵ For a description of the sculpture collection at Petworth, see Vermeule and Kenworthy-Browne; also National Trust 23–26.

⁶ Rossi's memorial sculptures for military heroes in St. Paul's Cathedral include the monuments to Captains Mosse and Riou, to Marquess Cornwallis, to General Le Marchant, and to Lord Rodney. See Roscoe 1058.

⁷ For the statues of Thomson and Musidora see the obituary in *Art-Union*, "Charles Rossi, R. A." These works, as well as the frieze and other sculptures for Buckingham Palace, are catalogued in Roscoe 1057–61. While Thomson's poem was a popular source of subject-

matter for artists of the period, full-scale statues of subjects drawn from it were relatively uncommon; compare for instance Flaxman's *oeuvre*. Probably the best-known statue of Thomson in this period is the 1762 monument in Poet's Corner at Westminster Abbey, designed by Robert Adam, which depicts the poet seated, not in a study but in the ideal space of memorial iconography, accompanied by the symbolic accouterments of poetic fame (lyre, laurel crown, tragic mask). See Connell 575–76.

⁸ The exact date of Egremont's purchase of the statue is unknown, but a letter currently in the Petworth House Archive states that "It was in 1821 that Lord Egremont bought the group of Celadon & Amelia from Rossi" (Phillips). For Egremont as collector and patron of the arts see Wyndham 315–24.

⁹ "These" in line 25 refers to the seasons, but implicitly applies to the four parts of *The Seasons* as well. Various changes were made to this passage in later editions but "simple Train," "softening" "Shades," and "still succeed" are retained; see *The Seasons*, Sambrook ed. 254–55.

¹⁰ One exception to this neglect is Sambrook; see *James Thomson* 144. Thomson's wider enthusiasm for sculpture is evident in his letters from Rome, for example that to George Dodington on 28 November 1731 (*Letters and Documents* 78–80); see also Hagstrum 245–50.

¹¹ The excision does not seem to reflect any diminution of Thomson's interest in such themes, as he later produced a similar interplay of stasis and motion in Book 4 of *Liberty*, with the figurative animation of stone sculpture. As part of his narrative of the revival of the arts after the fall of Rome, he describes at length the energetic re-emergence of a "marble Race" of famous Greek and Roman statues from "the Cavern dark and damp, / Their Grave for Ages" under the aegis of a personified "Sculpture" (*"Liberty"* 4.135–36).

¹² The classic account of the concept of the traditional "sister arts"—visual arts and poetry—in eighteenth-century Britain is Jean Hagstrum's. Modern criticism has tended to focus primarily on this relationship and, to a lesser extent, on that between poetry and music; for a wider perspective see Mace, "Parallels between the Arts."

¹³ See Baker and Bindman on the audience and viewing contexts of funerary monuments (9–23); Baker, *Figured in Marble* for a survey of the commercial and social contexts of eighteenth-century British sculpture; Connell on the "commodification" of commemorative sculpture, particularly the literary monument (560); and Sicca and Yarrington on networks of patronage and trade of sculptural art.

¹⁴ See for example Baker and Bindman on the iconography of Roubiliac's funerary sculpture, and Giometti on that of monuments influenced by the 3rd Earl of Burlington (Baker and Bindman 33–49).

¹⁵ Here one might usefully recall Aristotle's definition of poetry as imitation (3) and his statement that "the important thing [for a poet] is to be good at using metaphor ... the successful use of metaphor is a matter of perceiving similarities" (37). Thus poetry's imitations are dependent on the discovery of similarities between the thing described and some other object, event or quality.

¹⁶ Sambrook follows John Butt's notes to Pope's "Three Epitaphs" in citing *Mist's Weekly Journal* for the eighteenth of the month, presumably referring to number 88 of the journal's earlier incarnation, *The Weekly Journal or Saturday Post*, for 16 August, the only "Mist's" journal issue in which the deaths are reported.

¹⁷ See Mitchell 310.

¹⁸ See also Morton 345 and Wallis, "A Letter ... of Jan. 11 1697/8." As Stephen Shapin has shown, the line dividing amateur from specialist is hard to distinguish in this period; given that he served as Professor of Geometry at Oxford and was a founding member of the Royal Society, Wallis was hardly a provincial curiosity-monger. For further examples

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of items concerning lightning see, for example, *Philosophical Transactions* 1 (1665–66): 222–26; 8 (1673–74): 92–100; and 43 (1744–45): 472–77. As in newspaper reports there is a noticeable emphasis on the “Dismal and Surprising Effects” of “Terrible and Unusual” thunderstorms (19 [1695–97]: 782–83).

¹⁹ The “Lucretian revival” has attracted widespread interest in recent years, see for example Greenblatt; a more narrowly focused account may be found in Passannante. On seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Epicurean thought see Norbrook and Janowitz respectively, both of whom view Lucretius as an important contributor to discourses of the sublime in literature and visual art of the period. The reception of Lucretius in the Restoration and early Enlightenment is also addressed in an earlier article by Szykharuk, who explores an eclectic selection of poetic engagements with Lucretius from “Cowley to Thomson.”

²⁰ A 1717 Latin edition of Lucretius, with a Latin translation of Creech's notes, is listed as item 40 in the 1749 catalogue for the sale of Thomson's effects following his death; see *Catalogue* 56.

²¹ The publication history of Creech's translation is discussed by Hopkins, see esp. 702–03, n2. It was first published in 1682, with a fifth edition by 1700. My quotations are from the 1714 two-volume edition (the first to contain the additional notes by John Digby). For the notes on lightning, including the references to Milton, see, for example, Digby's notes to 6.119–21 in 2: 615–16.

²² *Paradise Lost*, of course, alludes frequently to Lucretius; see Norbrook for an illuminating analysis. For Satan's gunpowder and firearms, and a comparison to thunder, see especially 6.478–91. As well as borrowing Milton's “fierie spume” “touched / With heavens ray,” Thomson also, as McKillop points out, echoes the “tumultuous cloud / Instinct with fire and nitre” (Milton 6.479–80; McKillop 69; Milton 2.936–37).

²³ For instance, 1744 and later texts remove the 1727 line in which the thunder is “inflate[d]” “by the powerful Breath of God” (“Summer” 1730 ed. 851 and *The Seasons*, Sambrook ed. 111).

²⁴ See “Memorial,” defs. B.n.1.a and B.n.2.a.

²⁵ See Sherburn's annotation in Pope's *Correspondence* 479. For a much fuller reading of the nuances of Pope's correspondence and epitaphs on the lovers that also offers an excellent assessment of its class, religious, and gender politics, see Scodel 278–86. Roger Lund reads Pope's epitaphs on the couple, including the comic couplet produced slightly later, in terms of generic constraints and tonal instability (70–72). See also Brownell on Pope's interest in funerary sculpture (329–61, esp. 338–39).

²⁶ Epitaph was categorized in neoclassical criticism as a subgenre of epigram, widely considered an intrinsically brief form: thus, according to the Renaissance scholar J. D. Scaliger, “Brevity is the *proprium* of the epigram” (qtd. in Lund 69).

²⁷ The epitaph originally appeared in Sept. 1718 in *The White-hall Evening Post* and *The Weekly Packet* and was included in the second volume of Edmund Curll's 1719 reissue of the *Court Poems* or *Pope's Miscellany*. See Pope, “Three Epitaphs” 200 and *The Seasons*, Sambrook ed. 355.

²⁸ Describing the memorial plaque as a “Tomb” is not necessarily a sign of a poorly-informed correspondent, since as Baker and Bindman point out, “Funerary monuments were usually referred to as tombs in eighteenth-century England, though in reality they hardly ever contained actual corpses ... the body was interred elsewhere” (1).

²⁹ Thomson is known to have tried his hand at monumental epitaphs. He also, however, wrote several mock-epitaphs in which he undercuts the seriousness of the genre (see “Epitaph on Miss Stanley,” *Liberty* 303; “Epitaph on Solomon Mendez, esq.” and “Epitaph on Mr. Jacob Mendez,” *Liberty* 304).

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