

JOHN DRYDEN'S POETRY OF DEATH

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ABSTRACT

In this project, I explore John Dryden's scepticism about the possibility of encomium, lamentation, and consolation in his poetry of death. Drawing on close readings of individual poems, comparisons of each work with its literary precedents, and examinations of the poet's artistic ideals as expressed in his prose, I trace Dryden's development of a language of poetic commemoration that is individualistic, anti-conciliatory and anti-elegiac. The first two chapters focus on Dryden's attempts to reconcile ethical and social functions of the panegyric genre with his deep respect for the deceased individual and her grieving family members. The third chapter examines two short elegies in which Dryden bestows upon the public mourner a humanness missing from conventional elegies and mortuary rituals, and questions whether communal expressions of lament are able to capture the private feelings of individuals.

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Prologue

In the chapters that follow this prologue, I intend to investigate some of the salient concerns that shape the elegiac and panegyric poems of John Dryden – a writer who, according to T.S. Eliot, influenced much of the poetry that was to be written in the eighteenth century (“Dryden” 305). Contemporary literary critics have viewed Dryden’s moment as an anomalous interval in the evolution of the English elegy, a time when pastoral conventions were replaced by other literary modes of mourning. Critic Ruth Wallerstein claims that Dryden “is bending the elegy in the direction of his real interests and those of his age, but away from the spirit by which the elegy had taken shape” (144). These interests, according to Wallerstein, are “the social this-worldly” and the neo-classical tendencies that Dryden’s poems for the dead seem to assume (144). For Wallerstein, Dryden’s elegies, like those of his age, still look back to classical preoccupations, even if what they choose to emulate are not the pastoral conventions of antiquity. More recently, critic Peter Sacks has noticed in the long eighteenth century, which for him includes poets as diverse and distant as Ben Jonson, Dryden, and Thomas Gray, a “prejudice against the pastoral elegy” and its various conventions (119). In addition to this literary bias, Sacks believes that “during the interim” between John Milton’s “Lycidas” (1685) and Percy Bysshe Shelly’s “Adonais” (1821), “no one deliberately dared to reinfuse the pastoral conventions with the kind of personal passion and revisionary invention that alone could assure them a more than decorative survival” (118). Whereas Wallerstein sees in the eighteenth-century elegy an emergence of other

neo-classical concerns, and Sacks detects lack of talent and a prejudice towards pastoral codes, Jahan Ramazani, in a passing reference to the “satiric anti-elegies . . . [of] poets like Jonathan Swift and Matthew Prior,” appears to suggest that this time period was a precursor to the twentieth-century’s “anti-consolatory and anti-encomiastic . . . anti-conventional and sometimes even anti-literary” elegy (2-3). My study of Dryden’s poetry of death gets near to and confirms Ramazani’s suspicions. Dryden, it is my hope to show, questions some of the basic precepts of mourning in verse – such as the possibility of consolation, the credibility and utility of encomiastic portrayals, and the existence of a communal language of mourning by which private pain is articulated and understood. It is this scepticism about poetic consolation, encomium, and lamentation that marks Dryden’s panegyric and elegiac art.

As critic Earl Miner has pointed out, “the distinction between elegy and panegyric in Dryden’s mind is, like much else there, by no means easy to ascertain” (*Dryden’s Poetry* 209). In this project, I have adopted the term ‘funerary panegyrics’ to refer to poems that lament the dead and attempt to console the bereaved primarily by way of encomium. These poems, which include “To the Pious Memory of the Accomplisht Young Lady Mrs Anne Killigrew, Excellent in the two Sister-Arts of Poesie, and Painting” (1685), *Eleonora: A Panegyric Poem* (1692), and “On the Death of a Very Young Gentleman” (1692), all use the trope of apotheosis, or an elevation towards the divine. My conception of Dryden’s panegyric verse is thus strictly rooted in his poems’ funerary function. My aims are fundamentally different from the only other major study of Dryden’s panegyrics written by James D. Garrison, who, after the fashion of Mark

Van Doren, sees Dryden descending from a tradition of classical and humanist oratory, and focuses mainly on his political verse and his heroic portrayals of prominent, public figures. For Garrison, the panegyric “denotes a specific kind of public occasion (a ‘general Assembly of People’), a specific mode (‘a Speech’), and a specific subject of praise (‘a great Prince’),” and thus includes a wider range of poems (4). Whereas Garrison is interested in the genre’s representations of “a festival occasion, or holiday,” “[ideas] of national reconciliation,” and “royal virtues,” and whereas his study includes poems that have little to do with death, my first two chapters focus on the treatment of personal loss in Dryden’s funerary panegyrics (158, 167, 171). My third chapter examines Dryden’s elegies “To the Memory of Mr. Oldham” (1684) and “An Ode, on the Death of Mr. Henry Purcell” (1696), two poems that at least appear to be equally devoted to lamentation, encomium, and consolation.

Dryden’s funerary panegyrics, which he composed throughout his long career, gradually shed their claims to solace the living. The poet’s turn away from offering consolation is nowhere more noticeable than when he uses the same image twice. In the penultimate stanza of “Anne Killigrew,” Dryden urges the bereaved brother to look up at the sky, and if he sees amidst the nightly constellation of stars “any sparkles, than the rest, more bright, / ’Tis she that shines in that propitious light” (176-177). The poem’s ending is also “propitious,” offering visions of an afterlife favourable to the departed young lady. Seven years later, in *Eleonora*, the star is a little less visible to the poet’s “weak Opticks,” and Eleonora’s heavenly condition is less discernable from “Distance and Altitude” (268-269). Unable to speak with confidence about Eleonora’s “full

glories” in the afterlife, Dryden beseeches the star to cast a glimmer of hope on the grieving family:

And shed a beam of Comfort from above;
Give 'em, as much as mortal Eyes can bear,
A transient view of thy full glories there. (351-353)

What reasons moved Dryden to change his attitude about the possibility of consolation from one poem to the next? Since the funerary panegyric is a sub-genre of mortuary verse primarily concerned with encomium, how does Dryden’s method of creating an honorific portrait make possible or frustrate his attempts to solace the bereaved? More importantly, why did the panegyric appeal to Dryden so much that he continued writing in the genre even after it became clear to him that his encomiastic depictions were no longer able to comfort the mourner in poems that professedly attempt to do so? Instead of merely foregrounding this shortcoming for the reader, does he ever dispel the element of consolation from his purpose? I shall reflect on these questions by paying close attention not only to Dryden’s poetic language and form, but also to his critical views about representation of the dead in poetry. Eleonora, like the “Young Gentleman,” stands at a “Distance and Altitude” not just because she is dead, but because the idealising role of Dryden’s verse distances her from those she has left behind to the point that she becomes unrecognizable to them. In these later poems, consolation is not achieved because, instead of traversing the distance between the living and the dead, poetic description raises the deceased towards inaccessible Neoplatonic ideals. By the time Dryden writes “Young Gentleman,” he has moved on to a poetics of mourning that relies neither on description nor on the elegist’s putative knowledge of the deceased. In

“Young Gentleman,” Dryden no longer attempts to console grieving family members, because he has realised that he does not have access to their private feelings. In his strictly elegiac verse, where Dryden does not need to reconcile social and ethical ideals with his commemoration of the dead, we find the same scepticism about poems that seek to console an entire community of mourners. In these poems, Dryden seems to espouse the view that, in the words of Terry Eagleton, “suffering is a private event, to which no communal language could be adequate” (7). Consolation, encomium and lamentation are either missing or are significantly weakened in “To the Memory of Mr. Oldham,” a poem written for the small and specific audience of competing artists and elegists. Twelve years later, when lamenting the loss of his own friend and rival, Henry Purcell, Dryden questions whether his private feelings can ever find voice in the lamentations of his own small community of fellow poets.

1. “Anne Killigrew” and the Dialectics of Memory and Desire

As I mentioned in my introductory remarks, John Dryden’s funerary panegyrics gradually lose faith in their ability to offer consolation. In this chapter, I wish to examine “To the Pious Memory of the Accomplisht Young Lady Mrs Anne Killigrew, Excellent in the two Sister-Arts of Poesie, and Painting” (1685) as a poem that attempts to solace the bereaved. I shall mainly focus on Dryden’s methods of praising the dead with hopes of showing how they facilitate or thwart the possibility of consolation. Dryden’s encomiums for the dead are entrenched both in his Neoplatonic belief that art must present perfected visions of reality and in his goal of creating a redemptive moral exemplar in verse who, if properly imitated, has the power to lift an entire generation of readers out of their wretched condition. These ethical and social aims leave little room for the expression of personal emotions and divert the poet from tending to the pain of loss. I hope to show that it is a clash between the ideal and the actual – between “correcting Nature from what actually she is in individuals, to what she ought to be,” and drawing a faithfully representative portrait of the dead with their unique faults and virtues intermixed – that produces an emotionally unconvincing consolation in “Anne Killigrew” and, as we shall see in the next chapter, precipitates a radical change in Dryden’s attitude towards consolation in later panegyrics (“Parallel” 47).

In the climactic fourth stanza of “Anne Killigrew,” heightened emotions foreground one of the poem’s salient concerns and hint towards the posthumous social function that Killigrew holds in this poem:

O Gracious God! How far have we
Profan'd thy Heav'nly gift of poesy?
Made prostitute and profligate the Muse,
Debas'd to each obscene and impious use,
Whose harmony was first ordain'd above
For tongues of angels, and for hymns of love?
O wretched we! why were we hurried down
 This lubrique and adult'rate age,
 (Nay added fat pollutions of our own)
 T'increase the steaming ordures of the stage?
What can we say t'excuse our Second Fall?
Let this thy vestal, Heav'n, atone for all! (56-67)

The tone here is fuelled by moral rage, and the stanza's emotional fervour intensifies from the angry, yet somewhat collected, apostrophe to God to the poet's strident disapprobation of his contemporary culture. The end-rhymes conspire with the stanza's increase of intensity, first tiptoeing down the page in couplet-units before taking longer leaps in the *abab* rhyme scheme – until they regain slight composure as they settle into the final couplet. The second apostrophe ushers into the stanza a sudden burst of speed, as we stop at the caesura after “O wretched we!” only to be hurtled down the line through the fast-moving “why were we hurried down,” a phrase whose hushed consonants and terse syllables provide no obstruction to the line's pace. The phrase has a deflationary effect not only because of its unrestricted momentum and the ensuing enjambment, but also because it lacks rhythmic vitality and is thus more prosaic compared to all the other lines in the stanza. It seems as if the poet's moral condemnation – which he articulates in alliterative chains of turgid, multi-syllabic words such as “Profan'd,” “prostitute,” “profligate” – has no power to slow down the moral decline or to prevent a “Second Fall.” If the stanza's inner form (verbal texture and pace) and outer architectonics (end-rhymes) hint towards a decline, so do its the inner subject matter (characters and action)

and outer content (overall theme). Whereas the first Fall is a crime committed against “Gracious God,” the “Second Fall” is an offence perpetrated against an already “wretched” culture. The seemingly amorphous “we,” the poet claims in the second apostrophe, has “added fat Pollutions of our own” to “the stage” instead of rising above the “adult’rate” age that had already “Made prostitute and profligate the Muse.” The “Second Fall” is not another act of sacrilege, but a wallowing in one’s own “fat pollution,” even moving farther into it, as opposed to seeking baptism in the “Arethusian stream” (68) – a salvific solution to the “Second Fall” that I shall discuss much later.

The second-person pronoun in “O wretched we!” is not entirely amorphous, and Dryden leaves enough clues to suggest he has a specific group of offenders and a specific offence in mind. References to “the Muse,” “harmony,” “tongues of angles,” “hymns of love” in the first apostrophe and to “the stage” in the second intimate that Dryden’s moral rage is directed towards the poets of his age and the moral shortcomings of their art. The two models of aesthetic representation that Dryden entertains in this stanza – polluting the already polluted or, its implicit opposite, improving the current condition – allude to two ancient Greek conceptions of art. A look at these two theories will reveal not only the nature of this artistic effrontery, but also the specific way in which Dryden manages to avoid it in his own art. The first belongs to Plato, who, in applying his own theory of Ideas to the field of aesthetics, believes that artistic representation is dangerous because ultimately deceptive. Nature, according to Plato, contains imperfect copies of the paradigmatic Forms of objects; “we customarily hypothesize,” Plato’s Socrates tells his interlocutor Glaucon in *Republic*, “a single form in connection with each of the many

things to which we apply the same name” (*R* 596a). An artist is someone who produces further imperfect copies based on nature’s already imperfect copies of the paradigms, “someone whose product is third from the natural one” (*R* 597e). Art, from this point view, is an exercise in promulgating imperfection. Each time an artist imitates, she adds to a “lubrique and adult’rate age . . . fat pollutions of [her] own,” adding to nature’s original deficit a series of other imperfections – or, in Plato’s words, an artist’s act of “imitation is an inferior thing that consorts with another inferior thing to produce an inferior offspring” (*R* 603b). Amidst all artists, who are “by nature third from the king and the truth,” Plato believes that poets pose the most threat (*R* 597e). As critic Paul Woodruff has pointed out, Plato uses a painter-poet analogy in Book X of *Republic* in order to illustrate that the poet is able to fabricate deceptive illusions, bypassing the reader’s reason and incredulity far easier than painters and all other artists. “The point of the painter-poet analogy,” this critic argues, “is to show how silly the Greeks are to be taken in by poetry, when they are not deceived by painting, at least not in the same way or to the same degree” (77). In other words, the poet bestows upon the depicted object a moral and emotional content so convincing that it beguiles the reader’s ability to distinguish fact from fiction. As we shall see in a moment, Dryden’s panegyric project is partly that of a painter-poet; however, Dryden, as I hope to show, sees both artistic and, more importantly, moral merit where Plato saw only dangerous illusions and contorted duplication.

The second theory of art to which Dryden implicitly alludes belongs to Aristotle, who sees art not as inherently degenerative but as an act of gradual improvement. The

artist's consideration of an object in nature leads him to touch the realm of general or universal concepts (not Platonic Ideas) that lie beyond particular instantiations.

According to Aristotle, "poetry is a more philosophical and more serious thing than history; poetry tends to speak of universals, history of particulars" (*P* 51b1). In addition to its metaphysical benefits, mimesis holds moral merit in its ability to circumvent faint instances of virtue in nature and bring into visibility hidden universal virtues. Aristotle concludes that "in rendering people's particular shape," the artist must "paint them as finer than they are" (*P* 54b1). However, Aristotle's doubts about Plato's metaphysical idealism distance him from Dryden. Seventeenth-century Neoplatonic theories of aesthetics get far closer to Dryden, who still believes in the Platonic paradigmatic Forms, but thinks with Aristotle that representing particular objects in nature in no way diminishes the moral merits of an artwork and in fact helps us understand ultimate reality.¹ Critic Murray Krieger has written about a "wide range" of influential sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Neoplatonic thinkers and their main pronouncements:

¹ Biographer James Anderson Winn has maintained that it is difficult to know what Dryden read or what books he was exposed to during his days at Westminster School and Trinity College, and that all evidence to this end is "fragmentary and inconclusive" (63). However, critic Edward Pechter has suggested that the writings of the Cambridge Platonist Henry More along with Thomas Hobbes' *Leviathan* may have been "the context within which Dryden wrote his criticism" (142). Pechter writes,

in Henry More's *Enthusiasmus Triumphatus* (1656) poetry is not only essentially defined by, but valued for, its purposeful distance from the real experience of life; the argument being that, in proclaiming its own irrelevance and triviality, it renders itself harmless – an amusing, if trivial game. (141)

Hobbes, on the other hand, had stressed "the innocent nature of [poetry's] verbal play . . . as compared to moral abstractions" (142). Both More and Hobbes were attempting to defend poetry by claiming that it was not as dangerous as Plato had imagined. Dryden, according to Pechter, further vindicates poetry against the charge of deception in his insistence that "fancy and judgment must combine in the production of poetry" (145).

As Neo-Platonists whose doctrine derived from Plato's attack on sensible experience, they saw as their task the need to justify, even to celebrate, the mimesis . . . that Plato condemned. And they could do so only by separating mimesis from its dependence on sensible experience and relating it to the intelligible as the supersensible. It led them to an apparent paradox in which they urged that the poet use language to produce pictorial vividness – *enargeia* – like the visual artist, even while they condemned the sensible realm as unworthy of imitation. (117-118)

This Neoplatonic stance relies, as Krieger points out, “on its evasion – and transcendence – of the limitations of precise sensory definition” (122). Poetry, in this sense, is not deceptive and dangerous, as Plato had feared; it is rather a mode of perceiving and representing the natural world that constantly improves upon and transcends the limits of what it sees. Before I return to “Anne Killigrew,” I would like to associate more concretely Dryden's position on artistic representation with the theories that I have outlined. I shall do so by primarily looking at Dryden's “Preface of the Translator, With a Parallel betwixt Poetry and Painting” (1695)² which he appended to his translation of Charles Alphonse Dufresnoy's poem *De Arte Graphica*. I hope to show that Dryden's artistic project – and specifically his panegyric portrayals – is firmly grounded on his belief that art ought to make improvements on what it represents. By the time I return to “Anne Killigrew,” I will be in a better position to show that this poem is filled with a host of creative imitators such as Dryden the picture-poet, Dryden the panegyrist, and, of course, Anne Killigrew the character portrayed – all of whom improve what they copy in

Since judgement plays an important role “in poetry, Dryden [brings] poetry closer to real knowledge, to provoking a kind of belief that is not wholly disjoined from real significance” (146).

² Although Dryden wrote this prefatory essay ten years after “Anne Killigrew,” critics such as A. E. Wallace Maurer believe that the essay contains neither a revision of previously held beliefs and practices, nor a newly formulated set of ideas (345).

order to offer a cure to their “wretched” age. The panegyrist Dryden employs a language marked by “pictorial vividness [or] *enargeia*,” but not as an end in itself; this hybrid language shows how artistic vision is always progressive instead of degenerative, stepping towards the Ideal even when one form of art (poetry) is casting its vision upon another (painting). Dryden’s encomiastic portrayal departs from reality, touching the paradigmatic virtues which were represented, though only faintly, in Anne Killigrew. Killigrew herself is worthy of being praised in Dryden’s poem because she is an exemplary imitator, and makes improvements on the gifts she has received from her biological and spiritual progenitors, of whom she is in a sense a copy. Before I substantiate these claims, I would like to spend a little time reflecting on Dryden’s views about artistic representation.

Dryden begins his essay by quoting from Gian Pietro Bellori, an Italian Neoplatonic thinker and Baroque artist who sees the purpose of art not in perfect imitation, but imitating in order to perfect:

the Artful Painter and Sculptour, imitating the Divine Maker, form to themselves as well as they are able, a Model of the Superiour Beauties; and reflecting on them endeavour to correct and amend the common Nature; and to represent it as it was first created without fault. (40)

Art, in this sense, starts from nature intending to deviate from it. The ultimate image may not even exist in nature, though its inception owes to the artist’s imaginative borrowings from it: “the image,” Bellori writes, “taken by a Painter from several Bodies produces a Beauty, which it is impossible to find in any single Natural Body” (41). It is the job of the painter to seek out “the most elegant natural Beauties,” and then “perfectionate the Idea, and advance their Art, even above Nature it self, in her individual productions”

(45). Dryden criticises “the pompous Expressions [of] the *Italian*” for not extending these ideas to verbal arts, and proceeds to do so himself (45). Good art, according to Dryden, is a transaction between the actual and the ideal, bound to both, and always swerving towards the later. Borrowing a technical language for painting from Bellori and Dufresnoy, Dryden subdivides modes of representation in verbal arts into the two categories of “Panegyrick” and “Libel,” allowing the artist much leeway in the first while dismissing the second altogether. He writes,

In the character of a Hero, as well as in an inferiour Figure, there is a better or worse likeness to be taken; the better is a Panegyrick if it be not false, and the worse is a Libel: *Sophocles*, says *Aristotle*, always drew men as they ought to be, that is, better than they were; another, whose name I have forgotten, drew them worse than naturally they were. *Euripides* alter’d nothing in the Character, but made them such as they were represented by History, Epique Poetry or Tradition. Of the three, the draught of *Sophocles* is most commended by *Aristotle*. (70)

Dryden, whose outlook on life is never divorced from a strong sense of morality, attempts to reconcile his moral idealism with moral justice by reserving full praise for the heroes in his own art, while believing that a panegyric portrayal of “inferiour Figure[s]” is “outrageous” and that a show of compassion must replace aggrandisement in such cases. Referring to Antony and Cleopatra, the characters of his 1678 play *All for Love: Or, The World Well Lost*, he writes,

their Passions were their own, and such as were given them by History; onely the deformities of them were cast into Shadows, that they might be Objects of Compassion: whereas if I had chosen a Noon-day Light for them, somewhat must have been discover’d, which would rather have mov’d our Hatred than our Pity. (69)

Throughout the essay, he repeats the claim that “Imperfections” of characters can only be included in art so far as they leave in us “some grounds of pity in their misfortunes,” but

they should not be used to create “Farce,” which is “a lower sort of Poetry and Painting” (46, 55). It is this insistence on art’s duty to “correct and amend the common nature” that drives the various acts of correction or improvement in “Anne Killigrew.” In this poem, Dryden the panegyrist and Dryden the picture-poet, united in their purpose, apply the Neoplatonic ideas that I have identified to different media. The first uses it by “correcting Nature from what actually she is in individuals [such as Killigrew], to what she ought to be, and what she was created” (46). The panegyrist therefore elevates Killigrew until she approaches the paradigmatic Forms. The second employs the principle to improve upon the very methods of artistic representation available to him through literary tradition. As a poet, Dryden is only partially interested in the truth-value of these ancient theories, and would go on revelling in poetic language regardless of its metaphysical dangers or benefits. What interests Dryden far more is the possibility of applying these ideas (particularly those of progress and improvement) to methods of art-making, turning theory into methodology. His attempt at improving his medium is based on the belief that painting and poetry, because they are different, have positive contributions to make to each another. Before I explore these two subtle aspects of Dryden’s poem, I would like to examine a more explicit symbol of artistic progress, and return to Anne Killigrew, her relationship to the “wretched” age, and the promise of cleansing in Killigrew’s “Arethusian stream” (68).

After the apostrophes to “Gracious God” and to “wretched we,” the mood of the fourth stanza suddenly changes and the poet’s vision falls on the central character of his poem:

Her Arethusian stream remains unsoil'd,
Unmix'd with foreign filth, and undefil'd,
Her wit was more than man, her innocence a child! (68-70)

If the first two apostrophes represented turmoil, movement, and decline in poetic form, and moral degradation in content, the concluding triplet brings into the stanza a sense of perpetuity and purity. The prefix “re-” (back) in “remains” along with the recurring “un-” (not) keep pulling words back from their root verb and adjectives, hinting towards a return to an earlier state. The adjectives to which the “un-” prefixes attach themselves all derive from action verbs (to soil, to mix, to defile), and the ultimate compound adjectives intimate not just a negation, but a reversal of a wrong action. The cluster of consonants that emerges in the first syllables of “unsoil’d,” “Unmix’d,” and “undefil’d” brings the pace to a split-second pause, forcing us to slow our reading while we lift these heavy adjectives on the tongue. After the first two of the three, the grammar begins to move forward (“unsoil’d, / Unmix’d with foreign filth”) but after only four words falls back into the same group of phonemically tied adjectives (“Unmix’d with foreign filth, and undefil’d”). The effect is one of circularity and stasis as opposed to an uncontrolled downfall. It is as if the poet cannot go on, his mind slipping back into previous thoughts even as the grammar keeps nudging him forth. Once again, form and content move hand in hand. As Earl Miner, the modern editor of Dryden’s poetry, has pointed out, the reference to the Arethusian stream alludes to Theocritus’ “First Idyll,” Virgil’s “Eclogue X,” and Milton’s “Lycidas” (320). Although Miner emphasises the purity implied by the reference, I would like to explore some of its elegiac implications for Dryden’s poem.

“Eclogue X” begins by invoking Arethusa, a nymph who was transformed into a fountain and was celebrated in classical elegies as “the patroness of pastoral poetry” (Lee 125):

Permit me, Arethusa, this last desperate task
 For Gallus mine (but may Lycoris read it too)
 A brief song must be told; who’d deny Gallus song?
 So, when you slide along below Sicanian waves,
 May bitter Doris never taint you with her brine.
 Begin then: let us tell of Gallus’ troubled love,
 While snub-nosed she-goats nibble at the tender shoots.
 Not to the deaf we sing; the forests answer all. (1-8)

In these lines, Arethusa is both a symbolic figure and an actual character, both representing and putting to practice the putative solidarity between nature and its human inhabitants that has given us the concept of pathetic fallacy. As a symbolic figure, whose literary significance is already established by Virgil’s time, Arethusa reminds the speaker that the voice he projects into the woods will not go unheard: “Not to the deaf we sing; the forests answer all.” Moreover, Arethusa has herself suffered “troubled love,” and is thus able to sympathise or even sing with the speaker. The same sense of solidarity is invoked by Theocritus in his “Lament for Daphnis”:

Farewell now, wolves and jackals,
 Now farewell, mountain bears.
 You’ll see no more of Daphnis
 In your forests or your groves.
 Farewell to Arethusa,
 And fair Thybris’ streams. (79-85)

The speaker surveys his natural surroundings, calls forth different animals or features of the landscape – amongst them Arethusa – and reminds them of Daphnis’ death. The speaker’s address to nature is meant to awaken in its members a sense of sorrow so that

they may also sing songs of lament. The sense of solidarity reaches its climax in a dark physical union, as Daphnis joins the very fabric of nature by sinking below the water:

Fate took Daphnis to the river;
The waters closed above his head,
Took the man the Nymphs had cherished
And the Muses loved. (119-122)

Daphnis drowns just like Arethusa, who had submerged in water before she was transformed into a fountain. This shared bond of experience is the basis of Arethusa's empathy. And, finally, Milton, elegising the young Edward King who had drowned in the Irish sea, calls forth the figure of Arethusa in a section of "Lycidas" that is meant to mark the poem's transition into classical pastoral lament:

O fountain Arethuse, and thou honoured flood,
Smooth-sliding Mincius crowned with vocal reeds,
That strain I heard was of a higher mood. (85-87)

Dryden was fully aware of the symbolic values with which his allusion to Arethusa was invested, not only from the Latin and Greek education he had received under the antiquarian Richard Busby, but also from his own translations of Virgil's *Eclogues* that he published in *Miscellany Poems* (1684) and of Theocritus's *Idylls* in *Sylvae: or, the Second Part of Poetical Miscellanies* (1685) – both around the time that he was writing "Anne Killigrew" (1685). Dryden, however, does not use the figure of Arethusa in a conventional way, and his deviation from the conventions will help us understand the role Anne Killigrew plays in the poem in relation to her "wretched" age.

In her normative use, Arethusa represents the community to which the dead used to belong. Whereas this community was the natural world in Virgil and Theocritus, in Dryden it is the "wretched we." Instead of using Arethusa as a figure who, in a show of

solidarity, mourns for Anne Killigrew and offers solace to the speaker, the poet turns Killigrew into Arethusa or at least a guardian of Arethusa's fountain ("Her Arethusian stream"). Because it is "wretched," contemporary culture has become unable to empathise with the pain of other human beings. Killigrew, on the other hand, is an exception; she has not suffered the moral decline of her times, and thus represents an "unsoil'd" and "undefil'd" past when writers like Virgil and Theocritus could seek consolation in their communities and could rely on literary topoi, such as naturalistic personifications, to raise them out of their grief. The poem aims to raise the contemporary culture out of the "foreign filth" into which it has fallen by celebrating a moral exemplar, an emblem of Plato's paradigmatic Virtues, a figure who can become the "Arethusian stream" of Dryden's age.

The poet's attitude towards the past is not in any way unique to this poem. In his "Upon the Death of the Lord Hastings," Dryden presents the young man of his elegy as a moral exemplar, standing above "the nation's sin" (49):

His body was an orb, his sublime soul
Did move on virtu's and on learning's pole,
Whose reg'lar motions better to our view
Than Archimedes' sphere the heavens did shew. (27-30)

The poem elicits pathos by showing how this exemplary figure has become infected by the maladies of a wretched age – by comparing, for instance, "Each little pimple" of the Royalist Hastings' smallpox to the political rebels of the civil war, who were "with their own lord at strife" (59-61). In "Upon the Death of the Earl of Dundee," Dryden also voices the same sentiments, making the fall of a nation coincide with the fall of its best citizen:

O last and best of *Scots*! Who didst maintain
 Thy Country's Freedom from a Foreign Reign;
 New People fill the Land now thou art gone,
 New Gods the Temples, and new Kings the Throne.
Scotland and thou did each in other live,
 Thou wouldst not her, nor could she thee survive;
 Farewel! who living didst support the State,
 And couldst not fall but with thy Country's Fate. (1-8)

The narrative represented in these poems is one of decline – political, religious, physiological, and, in the case of Hastings' gift of "tongues," artistic (16). As James Winn has pointed out in his commentary on "Hastings," such sentiments illustrate the young Dryden's desire for a bygone age; they illustrate his

sense of having been born too late, his longing for an irrecoverable past. . . . the nostalgia they express lies in the complicated feelings Dryden and his readers had about their own times, particularly the passing of the court of Charles I, where ceremony and the arts had been prized as they would never be again. (55)

Winn's astute remark is applicable not only to "Hastings," or even to the epitaph for the Earl of Dundee, but more importantly to "Anne Killigrew" – a poem that also stands in time, fully conscious of its relation to the past, anxious about its future, and troubled by its unsettling location on that road; or, in the words T. S. Eliot, Dryden's modern-day disciple and the author of the twentieth century's own poetic narrative of decline, it is a poem stirred by the impulses of "memory and desire" (*WL* 3). However, since the purpose of "Anne Killigrew" is encomium more than lamentation, the poet emphasises Killigrew's merits as opposed to grieving her death, and thus turns nostalgia into a celebration of the past as opposed to a lament for an inevitable move into a dark future. In what follows, I examine how Killigrew functions as an exception to an age in decline –

a character who epitomises Neoplatonic artistic progress as opposed to the Platonic aesthetics of degeneration, and who, if properly imitated, can remedy her fallen age.

As I mentioned above, Arethusa bore a dual function in Virgil's "Eclogue X": she was both a symbol and a performer, a figure symbolically invested with the values of *lacrimae naturae* and an active mourner. Before I proceed to show the way in which Killigrew functions as an agent of change, I would like to demonstrate how Dryden presents Killigrew as a symbol of an "undefil'd" past and dramatises the qualities that make her so. In the poem's second stanza, Dryden writes,

If by traduction came thy mind,
Our wonder is the less to find
A soul so charming from a stock so good;
Thy father was transfus'd into thy blood:
So wert thou born into the tuneful strain,
(An early, rich, and inexhausted vein.)
But if thy preexisting soul
Was form'd, at first, with myriads more,
It did through all the mighty poets roll,
Who Greek or Latin laurels wore,
And was that Sappho last, which once it was before. (23-33)

This section of the poem is remarkably puzzling for its shifty indecisiveness. The religious dogmas referred to in this stanza are the *ex traduce* theory of the soul's origin (the materialist belief that the soul comes into existence along with the body from the parents) and the *ex nihilo* (the belief that God creates the soul out of nothing or, more accurately, out of no material substance). Dryden curbs religious controversy and leaves both options open by using two evasive conditional statements – evasive, because regardless of their antecedent, the consequent yields the same "Accomplisht" woman worthy of Dryden's praise. As a result, theological limits and contradictions dissolve into

possibilities that equally afford the poet an occasion to write a panegyric. But why did Dryden choose to praise Killigrew and her origins in such a backhanded way? Why did he not dispense with the ostensibly useless set of antecedents and just write an encomium? Editors of Dryden's verse have long noticed the heavy influence of John Donne's *The Second Anniversarie* on this section of the poem, and have pointed to the way the *ex traduce* and *ex nihilo* traditions loom large in both poets' commemoration of a young lady (Elizabeth Drury in Donne's case). What is always neglected, however, is the fact that Donne endorses the *ex traduce* view while Dryden does not commit himself to either of the theological positions. I would like to suggest that Dryden does not model his poem after Donne's content, but rather after his method of using theological dogmas in poetry. As Ramie Targoff has convincingly pointed out in a recent essay on Donne, "unique to *The Second Anniversarie* is not its advocacy of an *ex traduce* account per se but its deployment of this belief as a means to explain the soul's attachment to the body" (1501). Just as he does with ancient Greek metaphysics (turning philosophical theories into methods of art-making), Dryden emulates Donne in using theology as a means to an artistic end, leaving the origins of the soul uncertain in order to insist on Killigrew's own ability to flourish and achieve the same level of excellence regardless of her impressive past. Killigrew, as an offspring of her earthly "father" or the numinous "mighty poets" of antiquity, is not an imperfect, fallen copy. She represents an incremental elevation instead of a decline. The poet later depicts Killigrew as extending her reach beyond conditions of her birth and towards new areas of artistic achievement:

Born to the spacious empire of the Nine,
One would have thought, she should have been content

To manage well that mighty government;
 But what can young ambitious souls confine?
 To the next realm she stretch'd her sway,
 For painture near adjoining lay,
 A plenteous province, and alluring prey. . . .
 And the whole fief, in right of poetry she claim'd.
 The country open lay without defence. (88-94, 98-99)

Like a conqueror discontent with her “fief” (or “estate of inheritance”), and like a hunter motivated not by need but lured by ambition, Killigrew leaves her birthplace, the rich “empire” of epic and lyric poetry, history, flute, tragedy, mime, dance, comedy, and astronomy, and, desiring a land more “spacious” and a prey more alluring than the “Nine” muses offered her, she reaches towards painting, her tenth “plenteous province, and alluring prey” (*OED*). By using yet another theory of imitation, one that gives equal weight to origins and the agency of the imitator, Dryden articulates in the poem’s fifth stanza Killigrew’s control over her own development, her resolve not to remain confined to the circumstances of her birth and not to function as a mere replicator of inherited achievements.

In *A Defence of Poetry*, Sir Philip Sidney gives a prescription for the qualities that mark an ideal poet in the threefold formula of “art, imitation, and exercise” – with the third no more than a reinforcing mechanism for the first two artistic virtues (63). It is the combination of a poet’s creative faculties (art) and her mimesis of nature or other artist’s methods of art-making (imitation) – both perfected through exercise – that enables her to rise above the limits of what she imitates in the way that was advocated by Aristotle and the Neoplatonists. Sidney writes,

Only the poet . . . lifted up with the vigour of his own invention, doth grow in effect another nature, in making things either better than nature bringeth forth, or,

quite anew, forms such as never were in nature, as the Heroes, Demigods, Cyclops, Chimeras, Furies, and such like: so as he goeth hand in hand with nature, not enclosed within the narrow warrant of her gifts, but freely ranging only within the zodiac of his own wit. Nature never set forth the earth in so rich tapestry as divers poets have done; neither with so pleasant rivers, fruitful trees, sweet-smelling flowers, nor whatsoever else may make the too much loved earth more lovely. (23-24)

In this, Sidney himself was influenced by Seneca, who in *Epistles* had written, “I would have you resemble him as a child resembles his father, and not as a picture resembles its original; for a picture is a lifeless thing,” and had believed that “we must write just as the bees make honey, not keeping the flowers but turning them into a sweetness of our own, blending many very different flavours into one, which shall be unlike them all, and better” (281). According to both authors, art is a dialectic process between the artist and the object of mimesis, whereby perfect resemblance (which would mean for Plato an inevitable loss of significant content) yields to creative transformation, and the final artwork includes borrowed material from both the artist and the object imitated. The poet’s active “turning” and “blending” of what he imitates, his active meddling, rescues the artwork from losing substance through mere duplication, and instead elevates the object by adding to it “a sweetness of [his] own.” This theory appreciates the artists’ creative agency which Plato never saw in them, an ability to bring into life not just an original rendition but a re-making of the old. And it is this Renaissance humanist theory of art-making that Dryden projects onto Anne Killigrew in his poem’s fifth stanza, making her a symbol and an agent of improvement.

If the poem’s second stanza refused subjection to origins by its stealthy logical evasiveness, the fifth accomplishes the same by being playful:

Art she had none, yet wanted none:
 For Nature did that want supply,
 So rich in treasures of her own,
 She might our boasted stores defy:
 Such noble vigour did her verse adorn,
 That it seem'd borrow'd, where 'twas only born.
 Her morals too were in her bosom bred
 By great examples daily fed,
 What in the best of Books, her Father's Life, she read.
 And to be read her self she need not fear,
 Each test, and ev'ry light, her Muse will bear,
 Though Epictetus with his lamp were there. (71-82)

The stanza opens with a paradox, declaring that Anne Killigrew, who until now has been praised for her artistic accomplishments, neither had artistic skills nor desired them. The second line clears the paradox, but not without leaving an aftertaste by exploiting the clash between “Nature” and “Art” (artifice), and equivocating the word “want” (to desire, to lack). It is as if the words themselves refuse to be tied down to a single semantic origin, and instead fashion an interbred amalgam out of the wide range of meanings available to them. In this, they are following the example of Anne Killigrew herself, whose morals are born from nature and “bred” in her “bosom” (art), while at the same time they are “fed” by the example of “her Father’s Life” (imitation). Anne Killigrew is not a mere copy of the spirit of the “mighty poets” (*ex nihilo*), nor a mere copy of her father (*ex traduce*), but a synthesis better and more complete than either of her numinous or earthly progenitors standing on its own. As such, she represents generational progress in contrast to her “wretched” contemporaries, whose journey from the past into the future is marked by a “Second Fall,” or by a gradual moral decline as they “[add] fat pollutions of [their] own” to the already “steaming ordures of the stage.” However, if Dryden wants to present an ideal model that is meant “to be read” by a “wretched” culture, if he intends

to show that this “vestal” has the power to “atone for all,” if he is determined to demonstrate Anne Killigrew’s transformative powers, then he not only needs to depict an ideal imitator, but he must turn into one as well. He accomplishes this through his role as a picture-poet, a term that I am using to refer to a type of language he creates by combining verbal and pictorial elements.

Critics, such as Ian Jack, Ruth Wallerstein, and most recently Jean H. Hagstrum, have long noticed the pictorial elements of Dryden’s poetry. Hagstrum notes that in the case of Dryden’s longer pieces, “the poem, taken as whole, should be viewed as a painting” (181). In the case of his shorter pieces, he believes that even though they “may here and there be illuminated by an image . . . they do not unfold an organic and consistent relationship to that image . . . They resemble paintings only in the way in which they are inserted, like set descriptive passages, into the frame of the poem” (182). I do not fully understand what Hagstrum means, unless he is speaking metaphorically to an extent that would render his point insignificant. How can one form of art ever “be viewed” as another – a long poem as a painting, and a short verbal description as a small portrait within a larger frame? What does “should be viewed” exactly mean? The closest Hagstrum gets to giving us an inkling is by using phrases such as a poem’s “visual” or “pictorial detail” (182). But to what dimension of meaning may we understand a poem’s “visual” or “pictorial detail” referring other than its use of that vast group of words in the English language that denote objects as opposed to abstractions? The difference between a “consistent,” elaborate development and a short one, of course, does not solve the problem; it merely prolongs or shortens it. I tend to side with Murray Krieger who, in his

commentary on Jacopo Mazzoni, distinguishes between words and images by making a useful distinction between the intelligible and the sensible. Krieger's words deter us at least from accepting a literal reading of Hagstrum's statements:

The image placed before our eyes by the words of the poet cannot be the same as the image placed there by the visual artist, just as the intelligible cannot be the same as the sensible. Mazzoni, as a Neo-Platonist, makes the most of that difference, so that despite his visual imagery, the analogy between the verbal image addressed to the eyes of the mind and the visual image addressed to the eyes of the body is heavily weighted on the side of the verbal image. (120)

Elaine Scarry clarifies matters even further by taxonomising the contents of different kinds of art into three different categories: “*Immediate sensory content*,” such as music and painting; “*delayed sensory content*, or what can be called ‘instructions for the production of actual sensory content,’” such as musical scores; and, a third category that “has *no* actual sensory content, whether immediate or delayed” but contains “*mimetic content* . . . that shifts the site of mimesis from the object to the mental act,” such as the verbal arts (6). Poetry occupies a special place within these categories, since, although a member of the third, it is “a few inches to the left of the narrative” (8-9); it not only “retains strong engagement with delayed perception,” but it

Even has immediate sensory content, since the visual disposition of the lines and stanzas provides an at once apprehensible visual rhythm that is a prelude to, or rehearsal for, or promise of, the beautiful regulation of the sound to come. (7)

Particularly with regards to poetry, perhaps it is these subtle differences and illusory (yet compelling) similarities between the three categories, the porous perimeters that allow them to interact with one another, that have tempted critics to conclude that a Dryden poem “should be viewed as a painting.” Far more important to my purpose, Dryden's panegyric project in “Anne Killigrew” depends on differences between painting and

poetry, and depends on our reading of the work as a poem interacting with painting.

Before I return to “Anne Killigrew,” however, I would like to explore in what specific ways Dryden finds painting and poetry similar or different.

Throughout his career, Dryden was always intrigued by the relationship between the arts, and he articulated his thoughts on the subject in his prose as well as his poetry. The unity he saw between different forms of art was primarily with regard to their ultimate purpose, as opposed to the various methods they each employed in their attempts to advance towards that purpose. Sidney’s *A Defence of Poetry*, though never directly alluded to, is a strong presence in Dryden’s “Parallel,” and Dryden uses Sidney’s definition of poesy to link poetry and painting together. Sidney writes,

Poesy therefore is an art of imitation, for so Aristotle termeth it in the word μιμησις – that is to say, a representing, counterfeiting, or figuring forth – to speak metaphorically, a speaking picture – with this end, to teach and delight. (25)

Dryden does not use Sidney’s statement in a single-step application to painting and poetry. He first disassociates the two arts based on what intuitively seems to be the case: “Thus far the Parallel of the Arts holds true: with this difference, That the principal end of Painting is to please; and the chief design of Poetry is to instruct” (“Parallel” 51). After this, he undermines the element of instruction as “the chief design of Poetry” in order to bring poetry closer to “the principal end” of painting:

but if we consider the Artists themselves on both sides, certainly their aims are the very same: they wou’d both make sure of pleasing, and that in preference to instruction. . . . the means of this pleasure is by Deceit. One imposes on the Sight, and the other on Understanding. (51)

Now that both arts are united in producing pleasure by deception, Dryden makes his final move and shows that since both arts delight by depicting a nature “wrought up to a nobler

pitch,” and since this particular noble pleasure is really rooted in our “admiration” of what is depicted, then both painting and poetry must instruct also by exposing us to what is admirable:

For both these Arts as I said before, are not onely true imitations of Nature, but of the best Nature, of that which is wrought up to a nobler pitch. They present us with Images more perfect than the Life in any individual: and we have the pleasure to see all the scatter'd Beauties of Nature united by a happy Chymistry, without its deformities or faults. . . . When we view these Elevated Idea's of Nature, the result of that view is Admiration, which is always the cause of Pleasure. (60-61)

I have traced the step-by-step progression of Dryden's argument, because I wanted to demonstrate that Dryden could not have immediately applied Sidney's maxim to both arts. Dryden needed to distil each art into a set of principles (instruction and delight, linked by the third principle of admiration) before claiming that although they are different in practice, poetry and painting share the same purpose. Based on Dryden's own arguments, statements such as Hagstrum's, if taken literally, are a confusion between means and ends, methods and purpose, facts and values. Other sections of Dryden's "Parallel" organise themselves around the three principal divisions of rhetoric – *inventio* (the materials used in a work), *dispositio* (the ordering of materials), and *elocutio* (the presentation of materials). It is in these sections of "Parallel" and in his "Epistle Dedicatory for the Vocal and Instrumental Music of the Prophetess" (1691) that Dryden shows how poetry and painting at times differ from or resemble one another in the use of their distinct materials, or in their "Rules, which may direct them to their common end" ("Parallel" 56). One art may have a methodological advantage over the other, and in his

poetry Dryden shows how one art form can imitate the other, tap into the other's unique methodology, in order to achieve the shared ultimate purpose more effectively.

In "Epistle Dedicatory for the Vocal and Instrumental Music," Dryden points out some of the deficiencies of painting as compared to the "Sister" arts of music and poetry:

Painting is, indeed, another Sister, being like them, an Imitation of Nature: but I may venture to say she is a dumb Lady, whose charms are onely to the eye: a Mute actour upon the Stage, who can neither be heard there nor read afterwards. . . This is not sayd in disparagement of the noble Art; but onely to give the due precedence to the others, which are more noble; & which are of nearer kindred to the soule; have less of the matter, & more of the forme; less of the manuell operation, & more of the spirituall part, in humane nature. (324-325)

But what if a work of painting were able to approach the "more noble" arts by tricking us into thinking that it is not confined to the limitations of its genre? In Dryden's own words, what if it were able to "deceive nobly" and "make Shadows pass for Substances and even animate the brass & Marble"? (325) What if it made us believe for a moment that it were capable of manipulating reality and combining the strengths of different art-forms? Such a work would raise itself to the level of its "Sister" arts. It would get closer to the ultimate purpose of all art, because not only does it put to practice its own unique powers, but it also taps into the methodology of other arts. In his poem "To Sir Godfrey Kneller" (1694)³ Dryden praises the painter for having achieved such a "noble" illusion. Dryden appears to be making a pretence that Kneller's paintings are so perfect that they

³ The poem appears in Jacob Tonson's *The Annual Miscellany: For the Year 1694*, only a year before Dryden published "A Parallel betwixt Painting and Poetry," which he attached to his translation of Charles Alphonse Dufresnoy's *De Arte Graphica*. According to Wallace Maurer, Sir Godfrey Kneller was probably amongst the artists who in 1694 encouraged Dryden to translate Dufresnoy. As my commentary suggests, the poem to Kneller and Dryden's "A Parallel" share the same Neoplatonic conceptions of art.

overstep the limitations of their mute genre and emulate the strengths of poetry and music – a pretence that painting may not have been silent from the beginning, but became so because the muse of painting was dumbstruck when she looked at her work in Kneller’s art:

Once I beheld the fairest of her Kind;
(And still the sweet Idea charms my Mind:)
True she was dumb; for Nature gaz’d so long,
Pleas’d with her work, that she forgot her Tongue. (1-4)

Kneller’s painting deceives the onlooker into thinking that it has the power to bend reality to its own purposes, the power to give voice where there is only silence:

At least thy Pictures look a Voice; and we
Imagine sounds, deceiv’d to that degree,
We think ’tis somewhat more than just we see. (11-13)

Dryden is careful not to say that Kneller’s paintings have become capable of speech, or that they should be always interpreted as art-pieces that possess voice. He may utter paradoxes such as “thy Picture look a Voice,” but his diction keeps pulling us back into reality, reminding us that he was for a moment “deceiv’d to that degree,” or that he has merely “[Imagined] sounds,” or that we fancifully “think ’tis somewhat more than just we see.” In this poem, Dryden graciously gives us a glimpse of his own subjective experience, of a brief, magical moment when his faculties seemed to have sprung free from the grip of reality, and his thoughts nearly touched the paradigmatic Beauty that lies beyond the limitations of the physical world. Kneller’s art has been able to induce this experience in Dryden by making a “noble” illusion, by making it seem that it held the powers of two art-forms combined.

In this poem, Dryden witnesses physical reality melting away, “[imitated] life” becoming “loosen’d from the Frame,” objects being elevated by the painter’s brush to new heights of perfection, and a “Lovely Dame,” her flesh regaining warmth, springing back to life on the placid canvas (18, 21):

Though Nature, there, her true resemblance bears,
A nobler Beauty in thy Piece appears.
So warm thy Work, so glows the gen’rous frame,
Flesh looks less living in the Lovely Dame. (108-111)

Just like lines 11 to 13, Dryden is torn between the opposite forces of reason and emotions throughout the poem, and his words constantly oscillate between the transcendent and the tangible. At one point, reason insinuates itself into the poet’s emotional flight from reality by hinting towards the two arts’ disparate mytho-historical origins, perhaps in an attempt to disassociate them in the poet’s mind:

Our Arts are sisters; though not Twins in Birth:
For Hymns were sung in *Edens* happy Earth,
By the first pair; while *Eve* was yet a Saint;
Before she fell with Pride, and learn’d to paint.
Forgive the’ allusion; ’twas not meant to bite;
But Satire will have room, where e’re I write.
For oh, the Painter Muse; though last in place,
Has seiz’d the Blessing first, like *Jacob’s* Race. (89-96)

In the book of Genesis, the “Blessing” promised to “*Jacob’s* Race” is communicated to the Hebrew patriarch through a dream in which he sees “a ladder set up on the earth, the top of it reaching to heaven; and the angels of God . . . ascending and descending on it,” and he hears the voice of God saying that “the land on which you lie I will give to you and to your offspring” (Gen 18:13-14). The image of Jacob’s ladder appears again when the Jesus of the Gospels promises his followers that they “will see heaven opened and the

angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man” (John 1:51). In both Testaments, the ladder represents an elevation into a higher state, a crossing over from the fallen world into a promised land. Dryden’s words are not “meant to bite,” because the allusion to the Fall soon converges with Jacob’s ladder, thus turning criticism into a compliment: his words affirm painting’s fallen state as a mimetic art, only to praise Kneller’s accomplishment in elevating painting towards a higher realm, where it can move the onlooker into thinking that the combined art-form supersedes either one of poetry or painting standing on its own. This, of course, echoes the combination of the *ex nihilo* and *ex traduce* theories and the synergy between art and imitation that we encountered in “Anne Killigrew,” and I hope to show that the same merging of art-forms appears in that poem also. As I move to “Anne Killigrew,” I would like to interpret this method of combining arts as yet another way of elevating the object of mimesis. The reason I began with “To Sir Godfrey Kneller” is that the poem gives us an unparalleled opportunity to see Dryden interpreting a dual art-form; by seeing him interpret, we become attuned to what Dryden deems significant when two arts appear to interact with one another.

Before I began discussing the relationship between poetry and painting in Dryden’s prose and verse, I claimed that the poet of “Anne Killigrew” not only presents on the page an ideal imitator, but, as if to display her curative powers to a “wretched” age, also shows himself as having been transformed into one. I claimed that the poem taken as whole is an attempt to elevate nature, an exercise in “correcting Nature from what actually she is in individuals, to what she ought to be.” As such, “Anne Killigrew”

holds a number of different corrective mechanisms, all striving in their unique ways towards the same purpose. In addition to Anne Killigrew herself, Dryden takes part in this artistic venture through his roles as a picture-poet and a panegyrist. In what follows, I would like to consider these two roles in turn with hopes of demonstrating how Dryden elevates Anne Killigrew and her accomplishments towards the Platonic realm of paradigmatic Forms. In “Parallel,” Dryden identifies one of the advantages of painting over the verbal arts:

what this last represents in the space of many Hours, the former shows us in one Moment. The Action, the Passion, and the manners of so many persons as are contain'd in a Picture, are to be discern'd at once, in the twinkling of an Eye; at least they would be so, if the Sight could travel over so many different Objects all at once, or the Mind could digest them all at the same instant or point of time.
(54)

Although Dryden claims that he “[says] this to the advantage of Painting,” his comment manages to disclose one of painting’s disadvantages also: unlike the verbal arts, painting has the potential to convey multiple representations at once; yet this capacity is contingent upon the mind’s ability to receive the overwhelming influx of information “all at the same time” (54). Verbal arts, on the other hand, are more conducive to understanding, since they can lead the mind in a logical progression from one representation to another, but, unfortunately, “in the space of many Hours.” In a short ecphrastic section of “Anne Killigrew,” Dryden combines the two advantages of painting and poetry, and, using a polysyndetonic chain of eleven prepositions (“of,” “with”), five relative pronouns (“Which,” “Where,” “Whose,” “that”), and twelve conjunctions (“and,” “or”), offers to our mind’s eye a panoramic vision of multiple images drawn by Killigrew:

The sylvan scenes of herds and flocks,
And fruitful plains and barren rocks,
Of shallow brooks that flow'd so clear,
 The bottom did the top appear;
Of deeper too and ampler floods,
Which as in mirrors, show'd the woods;
Of lofty trees, with sacred shades,
And perspectives of pleasant glades,
Where nymphs of brightest form appear,
And shaggy satyrs standing near,
Which them at once admire and fear,
 The ruins too of some majestic piece,
 Boasting the pow'r of ancient Rome or Greece,
Whose statues, friezes, columns broken lie,
And tho' defac'd, the wonder of the eye. (108-122)

The stanza casts into our mind's vision a collage of opposite extremes: "fruitful" and "barren," "shallow" and "deeper," "bottom" and "top," "shades" and "brightest form."

Language facilitates the sudden leap from one sight to its opposite by gently leading our imagination in small steps through a series of grammatical connectors. These connectors move discrepant and clashing word-images to close proximity of one another, thereby creating an illusion of harmonious co-existence not possible in reality. The contribution of language to visual perception becomes part of the content – in addition to the mere presentation of that content – towards the end of the stanza, as we move from words that refer to scenes, objects and their physical qualities ("fruitful plains," "barren rocks," "shallow brooks") towards descriptions that belong a little more to the subjective judgements of the onlooker than the shapes and patterns painted on canvas ("admire and fear," and the association of what the poet sees to "ancient Rome or Greece"). On the other hand, painting also contributes to language by flooding us with countless visual references after the short interval of each grammatical connector. If critics such as

Hagstrum have been inclined to use phrases such as a poem's "visual" or "pictorial detail" when referring to passages like this, it is not because the stanza contains anything supra-verbal; rather, it is because they feel themselves overwhelmed in a short period of time with an influx of visual denotations – because the words on the page invite their mind's eye to "travel over so many different Objects all at once." As Krieger has pointed out, we cannot read this passage as a painting for the simple reason that the site of visual perception is lodged within our minds and not in our eyes. It is a testament to the power of lines such as these, the powerful joining of two art-forms to create a "noble" illusion, that theorists and critics (including myself) begin to disagree with one another – each moved by a particular quality that speaks more to him or her. We are moved by illusions as Dryden was when he looked at Kneller's paintings, and oscillate between the verbal and the visual as he did between reason and fancy. Regardless of these theoretical disagreements, the synergy between the verbal and the visual in this poem raises some doubts about whether Dryden's ecphrastic description bears any resemblance to the picture or pictures he supposedly had in front of him – and it is to this issue that I now turn.

The descriptions in the poem's sixth stanza very possibly bear only a faint resemblance to Anne Killigrew's paintings⁴ – not only because of the verbal

⁴ According to critic Earl Miner, "Actual portraits of James and Mary by Anne Killigrew [to which Dryden alludes in the poem] still exist. That of James . . . is part of the royal collection at Windsor . . . The National Portrait Gallery has a photograph of the portrait of Mary, which is in a private collection" (Commentary 322). However, it is not clear which of Killigrew's landscape paintings Dryden has in mind in the poem's sixth stanza. Miner points to a variety of popular paintings and movements which may have contributed to Dryden's lengthy description:

contributions and the unlikely arrangement of contrasting images, but also because it is Dryden's purpose to depict in his poem something more than what he sees. His poetry depends on altering reality, lifting it on Jacob's ladder, infusing it with his imagination, or merging it with methods belonging to another art-form, in order to transform mere physicality into art and mere reproduction into invention. "Without invention," Dryden writes in "Parallel," "a Painter is but a Copier, and a Poet but a Plagiary of others" (62). As someone with Neoplatonic sentiments, Dryden uses the word 'Copier' pejoratively to stress the indispensable role of invention – indispensable, because it is the only means of rescuing an art-work from gradually moving towards entropy and loss of content, a danger about which Plato had warned. The very act of collecting disparate images and bringing them together within the confines of a single stanza is itself part of this transformation or invention. Dryden bases this practice on Bellori's statement that I quoted at the beginning of this chapter – the belief that the content of art must be taken

The motifs of *fruitful Plains and barren Rocks* (l. 109) suggest Paul Brill (1554-1626) or, even more, Jan Sieberechts (1627-1703), whose residence in England produced such paintings as 'Nottingham and the Trent.' Joos de Momper (1565-1635) was popular for similar subjects. The river scenes, with or without mirroring effects (ll. 110-113), were sometimes depicted by the painters just mentioned but were better known in the work of Adam Elsheimer (1578-1610) and Esaias van de Velde (c. 1591-1630). The second major group of subjects described (ll. 114-118) features sylvan scenes with nymphs and satyrs, and is no doubt best typified by the paintings of Jan Both (1618-1652), whose work was highly popular in England where, indeed, much of the best of it still hangs. The third major group of landscape subjects – ruins (ll. 119-122) – represents the Italo-French classicism of the school of Claude Lorrain (1600-1682); it was widely popular and had many followers in the Netherlands. (321-322)

It is possible – though, given the absence of evidence, not conclusively ascertainable – that Dryden was borrowing small images from a host of different paintings by different painters, and coalescing all the pieces into a unified visual description, or a heterogeneous collage representing artistic accomplishments unique to each source.

from “several Bodies” in order to produce “a Beauty, which it is impossible to find in any single Natural Body” (“Parallel” 41). Dryden’s comment about Killigrew’s paintings – that they showed “So strange a concourse ne’er was seen before” – is equally applicable to Dryden’s own lines (124). In the words of Bellori, “Nature” or the immediate source of an artist’s mimesis, “is so much inferiour to Art,” inferior to the magnificent verbal-visual collage that Dryden’s imagination calls into being (41). As such, Dryden’s poetic representation of Anne Killigrew’s artistic achievement is necessarily grander than what she had actually managed in life. Based on historical information alone, critic Earl Miner gets close to my conclusions by claiming that Dryden turns a blind eye on areas where Killigrew was not particularly accomplished, such as writing poetry, and “says very little definite about it except that it sometimes dealt with love” (Commentary 318). By bringing two art-forms into collaboration with one another, and by collecting images from “several Bodies” to produce a single verbal-image, Dryden has improved upon both the object of his imitation (Killigrew’s paintings) and the medium (poetry); in other words, he has in both cases corrected “Nature from what actually she is in individuals, to what she ought to be.” As I move to Dryden’s self-dramatisation as a panegyrist in “Anne Killigrew,” I hope to show that interfering with and transforming reality is central to Dryden’s panegyric project.

In the poems I have examined so far, we saw the poet’s creative hand transforming the seen and experienced reality, meddling with it, improving it, lifting it towards “what it ought to be.” Anne Killigrew symbolised this process as she moved away from the “spacious empire” of her birth, and, as if unsatisfied with her inherited

blessings, “stretch’d her sway” towards the realm of “painture.” Dryden, as if discontent with powers of language, fashioned a seemingly hybrid medium of representation able to create a “noble” illusion more real than mere physicality and more lively than life itself, through which “[imitated] life” became “loosen’d from the Frame” and acquired a vitality it never possessed. In these poems, “Nature seems obedient to [the poet’s] Will” and “[bows] beneath her government” (“Kneller” 8; “Killigrew” 104). I have continuously claimed that such artistic methods facilitate progress as opposed to participating in the Platonic acts of metaphysical or aesthetic degeneration. At this point, I would like to suggest that what I have called ‘corrective mechanisms’ in “Anne Killigrew” are more than a prevalent characteristic; they are the very essence of this poem and indeed of Dryden’s panegyric project. To do so, I would like to examine the first stanza of “Anne Killigrew” and demonstrate how the panegyrist tampers with reality and makes it bow to his will. I shall trace the poet’s active interferences with reality in the first stanza’s grammatical moods and speech-acts, rhythmic motifs, and phonemic texture:

Thou youngest virgin-daughter of the skies, Made in the last promotion of the Blest; Whose palms, new pluck'd from Paradise, In spreading branches more sublimely rise, Rich with immortal green above the rest: Whether, adopted to some neighbouring star, Thou roll'st above us, in thy wand'ring race, Or, in procession fix'd and regular, Mov'd with the Heavens' majestic pace: Or, call'd to more superior bliss, Thou tread'st, with seraphims, the vast abyss. What ever happy region is thy place, Cease thy celestial song a little space; (Thou wilt have time enough for hymns divine, Since Heav'n's eternal year is thine.) Hear then a mortal Muse thy praise rehearse,	Apostrophe Indicative (past) Subjunctive (present) Imperative Indicative (future) Imperative
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In no ignoble verse. (1-17)

In this stanza, the degree of possible certainty over facts gradually changes without necessarily corresponding to the tone of confidence in the poet's voice. As my markings illustrate, the lines move down from the more assured indicative statements about the past to a number of subjunctive statements, whose hypotheses the poet entertains within a series of noncommittal conjunctions, "Whether . . . Or . . . Or," before giving up completely in the phrase "What ever happy region is thy place." Surprisingly, this phrase is not followed by resignation, but by the poet's forceful attempts to assert control over Anne Killigrew's fate in the final imperative statements and by a profession of knowledge in the embedded indicative statement about her future. The relative pronoun "What ever" rescues the tonal certainties in what I consider to be the stanza's second section from sounding completely out of tune with the first; it does so by intimating that the poet's brazen certitude about Killigrew's future resides within a wider dominion of the unknown; the poet's certainty may sound impenetrable on its own, but it stands on no firm ground. The poet is therefore well aware of the irony about the confidence he shows in the second half of the stanza – that such a show of conviction is no more than the mere craftwork of imagination and artifice; however, his self-knowledge does not deter him from steadily increasing the sense of confidence in, for instance, the stanza's grammar. In the first section's indicative statements, the poet uses the passive voice to create a mist of enigma around Anne Killigrew. We are told that Killigrew is "Made," is "plucked," is "adopted" – but whose commandments are making, plucking, and adopting, we are not told. In the second section, even though the poet is casting his indicative statements into

the unknown future, he boldly uses the active voice: “Thou wilt have time enough for hymns divine.” The “wilt” in this sentence is a modal verb, indicating possibility, implying knowledge. Furthermore, as if he were in no danger of uttering falsities, Dryden uses a possessive tenseless copula appropriate for indisputable facts: “Heav’n’s eternal year is thine.”

Since the irony that I have located in the poem’s first stanza is important to my argument about Dryden’s active meddling with reality, I would like to point out more ways in which the poet makes the stanza’s second half appear unnaturally forced and artificially constructed. The stanza begins with the musical motif of anapaestic phrases: “of the skies,” “in the last,” “with Immortal,” “to some Neighbouring,” “in thy wand’ring,” “with the Heavens.” These closely situated anapaests move the lines away from the rigid regularity of iambic verse and closer to the relaxed cadences of everyday speech – making the first part of the stanza sound more effortlessly constructed or more natural than, as we shall see in a moment, the second. Furthermore, in lines 1 to 9 the end-rhymes are unobtrusive even if mildly noticeable because of their variations, unlike the double thuds of couplets in lines 10 to 17. Following suit, the rhythm in the second section, unlike the first, is highly controlled. It is hard to believe, for instance, that the lines “Made in the last promotion of the Blest” (2) and “Hymns Divine, / Since Heav’n’s eternal ear is thine” (14-15) belong to the same stanza. The first sounds conversational and hardly iambic, while the rhythm in the second rises and falls so regularly that the words begin to acquire a sing-song feel; whereas the former speaks to us in understated, graceful musicality, the latter draws attention to its overwrought artifice by sounding like

a stiffly unnatural performance. Metrical variation indeed occurs in the latter half of the stanza, but not through relaxed, unshowy anapaests; rather, it takes the form of obtrusive first position spondees, with the first half of the foot louder than the second: “Cease thy celestial song” and “Hear then a Mortal Muse.” Although both openings exemplify metrical variation against the stanza’s iambic framework, they do not make the lines sound more natural or more commonplace in any way. This is because the poet uses the conspicuous accents to highlight the main verb in the imperative statements, thereby emphasising the unnaturalness of the situation: the earthly speaker’s attempt to demand the attention of a celestial being. Deviation from metrical norm moves in concert with a departure from reality, and such exaggerated collaboration between form and content further makes the second half appear like an overbred, highly self-conscious work of art.

There is another way in which the first section of the stanza presents itself as more natural than the second. In the first, alliterated words are both phonemically and thematically tied to one another. For instance, sonic resemblances in “skies,” “spreading,” “sublimely,” “star,” “superiour,” “seraphims” accompany notions of elevation or otherworldliness. “Promotion,” “palms,” “Paradise” intimate sainthood. “Procession,” “Pace,” and “Place” suggest movement from one location to another. However, the semantic relationship between phonemically related words in the second half creates a different, almost unsettling effect. In line 13, although the words “Cease” and “Celestial” are intricately linked by their *c* and *s* sounds, and although this connection looks forward to a semantic cooperation between the words, the first indicates a termination of the condition denoted by the second. “Song” and “space” in the same

line are unrelated. The first refers to that invisible and intangible sensation we detect only through the ear, while the second represents observable and palpable physicality. “Mortal” and “Muse” in line 17 sit uncomfortably next to one another and go against norms of poetic invocation. The phrase “Mortal Muse” insinuates that the poet is reaching from his earthly position towards the heavenly realms above, as opposed to asking the immortal gods of Parnassus to breathe inspiration into him below. Our expectations for harmonious cooperation between the poet and the muse are disappointed by his insolence, as he overreaches himself by demanding the immortal muse (Anne Killigrew) to “Hear” his song. Alliterating words in the first section thus sound apt and natural, while in the second they seem artificially fused together.

I have pointed out these features of the first stanza in order to demonstrate that Dryden begins this panegyric poem by foregrounding his desire to travel beyond the outmost escarpments of reality, to borrow from reality only exiguous fractions amenable to his own artistic purpose. This poem is about Dryden’s resolve not to surrender to the reality of death and not to let absence and void stop him from resurrecting past merits and virtues badly needed by his own age. The first stanza is hung between the past and the future, and, as the poet makes his journey from one side to the other, reality begins to lose its grasp over poetic lines while the poet paradoxically gains confidence and control. The unseen land of the dead, the current life of the departed, the future condition of Anne Killigrew – these find shape and colour within the precinct of art and imagination, and it is on these grounds that the poet can confidently tread. He makes us aware that we are entering unknown territory by constantly shattering our expectations; suddenly words

sound similar but bear no convincing relations to one another, and suddenly the outer scaffolding of poetic sounds holding up the stanza's semantic content seems unnatural and artificially assembled. All this goes hand in hand with the surreal elements of the stanza's content: just as Anne Killigrew had in life "To the next realm . . . stretch'd her sway," the poet reaches towards the dominion of the dead, towards their "happy region," and demands that Killigrew stop her celestial wanderings. We know already the second way in which Dryden changes reality; as we saw in the poem's subsequent stanzas, it is not the poet's purpose to represent faithfully, or mimetically, the life Anne Killigrew spent on earth; rather, he wishes to present her as a paradigmatic model, as a revived Arethusian stream, worthy of admiration and capable of edifying a "wretched" age. Reality and personal history supply the merest resources the poet needs in order to make his grand imaginative acts of alteration and improvement essential for the future betterment of a whole generation.

So the third 'corrective mechanism' of the poem functions in the same way as first two: just as Anne Killigrew had risen above her inherited blessings both through a combination of the *ex traduce* and *ex nihilo* traditions and through using in her own artistic efforts a mixture of creation and mimesis, or art and imitation; and just as the picture-poet showed himself transformed by Killigrew's example by fashioning a dual medium of art composed of both verbal and pictorial elements; the panegyrist creates on the page a portrait of Killigrew based both on her past life and on his imaginative reach towards a better future that he desires for his generation. However, it is this uneasy relationship between the personal and the communal – between the death of an individual

and her posthumous social function – that, although suitable for the poem’s panegyric purposes and its encomium of the dead, trouble its attempts at lamentation and consolation.

Throughout this chapter, I have pointed out the many ways in which Dryden’s encomiastic portrayal of Killigrew serves an ethical purpose for a “wretched” age, and the ways in which the poet presents her both as a symbol of universal, paradigmatic virtues and as a social agent of transformation. The elegiac ending of the poem continues to project communal significance on Killigrew’s individual identity in its depictions of her death and her future condition. Similar to the way he had described Hasting’s smallpox by comparing “Each little pimple” to the recalcitrant factions of the English civil war, Dryden describes Killigrew’s slow death and her loss of beauty in terms of the “Second Fall” that characterised a “lubrique and adult’rate” English society:

Not Wit, nor Piety could Fate prevent;
Nor was the cruel *Destiny* content
To finish all the Murder at a Blow,
To sweep at once her Life, and Beauty too;
But, like a hardn’d Fellow, took a prise
To work more Mischievously slow,
And plunder’d first, and then destroy’d.
O double Sacrilege on things Divine,
To rob the Relique, and deface the Shrine! (153-161)

The poet once again laments the death of an exceptional character by showing how, at the end of her life, she was undeservedly infected by the maladies of her fallen age, by a “double Sacrilege on things Divine.” Killigrew’s pain and death are therefore subsumed into a language simultaneously used to describe the plights and shortcomings of an entire generation and its “Second Fall.” Furthermore, the poem offers consolation neither by

speaking about Killigrew's welfare in the afterlife nor by claiming that her face has regained the beauty it once had before her sickness; rather, it tries to offer consolation by pointing to her prominent status amidst the community of the departed and the heavenly "Quire":

There Thou, Sweet Saint, before the Quire shalt go,
As Harbinger of Heav'n, the Way to show,
The Way which thou so well hast learn'd below. (193-196)

By showing "The Way" to others, Killigrew continues in the afterlife the social function she had in this poem, raising a "wretched" age out of its "steaming ordures" and acting as a "vestal" that "[atoned] for all."

Intervening between the poem's lamentation (stanza 8) and consolation (stanza 10), are lines addressed to Killigrew's "Warlike Brother":

Thou art wreck'd at home!
No more shalt thou behold thy Sisters Face,
Thou has already had her last Embrace.
But look aloft, and if thou ken'st from far,
Among the *Pleiad's* a New-kindl'd Star,
If any sparkles, than the rest, more bright,
'Tis she that shines in that propitious Light. (171-177)

The stanza ends here and the poem moves on to describe Anne Killigrew's sainthood.

Tucked between two other autonomous stanzas, each bordered by roman numerals, the poet's address to Killigrew's brother seems out of place. Throughout the poem, beguiled by a utopian outlook that pushed off history as it cast its imaginative gaze towards a desired future, enchanted by a language that defied reality as it elevated Killigrew towards the Platonic realm of paradigmatic Forms, we have been invited to forget about Killigrew's humanity while the poet praised her divinity. At this point, we may very well

find it difficult to imagine Killigrew as having a brother. Difficult though this may be for us, the poet not only makes references to Killigrew's grieving brother in the penultimate stanza of the poem, but also tacitly suggests that the description of her sainthood in the last stanza is sufficient consolation. But is Killigrew's heavenly status enough to console her grieving brother? Will her role "As Harbinger of Heav'n" quench the brother's need for his sister's "Embrace?" Is a "New-kindl'd Star" an emotionally satisfying replacement for his "Sisters Face"? Can he find any traces of Anne in a poem that on principle tries to depart from the past, from reality, and from mimetic depiction? Have the poem's three 'corrective mechanisms' destroyed the identity of a sister who was loved by her brother with all her virtues and faults uniquely intermixed? The poem does not provide any answers to such questions; however, I suspect that Dryden must have been bothered by them himself, because seven years later he writes two poems of apotheosis at the end of which he explicitly admits that utopian poems of encomium such as "Anne Killigrew" are unable to console mourners. In my next chapter, I would like to examine the two poems – *Eleonora: A Panegyric Poem* (1692) and Dryden's mock-panegyric "Upon the Death of a Very Young Man" (1692) – while paying particular attention to their methods of praise and the possibility of consolation.

2. *Eleonora* and a Celebration of the Past

In my last chapter, we saw that Dryden's utopian attempt to transmute cultural history into a desired future paralleled his attitude towards personal history, whereby commemoration of Anne Killigrew's past yielded to the poet's speculations about her sainthood in the future. Since the imagined moral exemplar was not necessarily meant to resemble the Killigrew who walked the earth, the poem was not able to offer an emotionally satisfying consolation to the grieving family. I suggested that Killigrew's brother, whose emotions the poet ventriloquises in the penultimate stanza, may have found neither a recognisable vestige of his sister in the poem nor had his heart's void filled and his pain abated by reading about Killigrew's eminent status in the heavenly community. In this chapter, I wish to trace the evolution of Dryden's thoughts about the dead, elegiac encomium, and the possibility of consolation in two poems that he wrote seven years after "Anne Killigrew": *Eleonora: A Panegyric Poem* (1692) and his mock-panegyric "On the Death of a Very Young Gentleman" (1692). As I hope to show, these poems try to reconcile the social and ethical functions of panegyric verse with an emotional need to articulate personal responses to death. I to some extent agree with Earl Miner's statement that

[in] *Eleonora*, Dryden chose a tone eschewing the elegiac, which suggests some personal involvement, if only of a theoretical kind, and sought instead that of the panegyric. The choice enabled him to speak entirely of his subject (except for the personal note, the *poëta loquitur* towards the end). By so choosing, he availed himself of several realms of value that he could share with his readers, since the loss is always to be considered in terms of the values held by civilised men. (*Dryden's Poetry* 216)

However, I believe Dryden's "personal involvement" in this poem finds outlets more subtle than explicit emotional outpourings or melancholic tonalities, and emerges instead in techniques of versification that celebrate the poet's vitality and creative energy. In the *poëta loquitur* to which Miner refers, Dryden pays deep respect to Eleonora's grieving husband and children by admitting that their suffering lies at a distance intraversable by the poet's gifts of language and imagination. In "On the Death of a Very Young Gentleman" Dryden satirically dramatises conventions of apotheosis in order to expose them as emotionally vapid. He ends this poem with lines that try to aid the work of mourning, instead of offering the hopeful yet spurious promises that belong to conventional tropes of consolation. Both poems ultimately reveal Dryden as a panegyrist ill at ease with literary conventions – as a poet pulled from one side by the force of literary decorum, and from the other by honest recognitions of his own response to death and his respect for the incomprehensible pain of others. My conclusions will hint towards a personal poetics of mourning, a theme that my third chapter more deeply explores in poems that feature Dryden as a mourner himself. I begin my examination of *Eleonora* by once again looking at Dryden's methods of representing the dead in panegyric verse.

By 1791, when James Boswell's *Life of Johnson* was published, panegyrics, in prose and verse, seem to have fallen into disrepute for their exaggerated praise of the dead. Boswell therefore carefully disassociates his work from the panegyric genre, claiming in his introductory remarks that Johnson

will be seen as he really was; for I profess to write, not his panegyrick, which must be all praise, but his Life; which, great and good as he was, must not be

supposed to be entirely perfect. . . . in every picture there should be shade as well as light. (22)

Boswell was admittedly following the example of Johnson himself, who in *The Lives of the Poets* had criticised Thomas Sprat's biography of Abraham Cowley – a biography in which, according to Johnson, "all is shown confused and enlarged through the mist of panegyric" (3). While the panegyric genre is inflected with a desire to draw portrayals not entirely plausible, because "entirely perfect," its opposite extreme, realism, holds its own set of problems. As critic Helen Deutsch has argued in her recent study of Johnson, biographers' obsession with exact, mimetic representation and their use of "anecdotal detail" also creates romantic and unrealistic portrayals, "[making] something out of nothing, turning the common sterility of a literary life into diseased, detailed fertility, inactive retirement into excessive interest" (66). Although questions of historical authenticity are secondary to poetry's main goal of aesthetic permanence, the panegyric genre forces the poet to confront the same problems of representation that biographers face; it forces the poet to reconcile idealised encomium with faithful depiction of past life, without falling into the pits that are present on either side. Dryden's moral conceptions of the genre add further weight to each of the opposing methods of representation: while the poem's ethical or social agenda calls for an idealised exemplar worthy to be imitated by an entire culture, the poet's ability to commemorate the dead and the possibility of consoling the mourners depend on a faithful (and familiar) portrayal of the departed. The choice may have been easier when Dryden was writing "Anne Killigrew" – for, according to biographer James Winn, Dryden knew the Killigrew family fairly well, had very possibly "met the accomplished young lady," and "had certainly

read through Anne's work either in manuscript or in proof" (417). However, as we shall see in a moment, Dryden did not personally know Eleonora Bertie, and had only heard a little about her from others. I hope to show that in *Eleonora* Dryden retains the ethical functions of the panegyric but not at the expense of an emotionally satisfying consolation. He overtly eschews faithful representation of the dead by furnishing his encomium with clear signs to the reader that his representation is not grounded in reality.¹ However, unlike "Anne Killigrew," Dryden does not use his idealised encomium as basis for consolation; rather, recognising the distance between familial bonds and a poet's invented postulations, and between personal loss and public mourning, Dryden ends the poem with a gesture of resignation, sincerity, and respect for the private feelings of the grieving family, and suggests that consolation can be reached only in private – in the hearts of mourners to which no poet has access.

I consider Dryden's dedicatory letter to the Earl of Abingdon, James Bertie, Eleonora's widower, as the poet's *summa* about elegies and encomia – an occasion in which we see Dryden casting himself as an elegist and panegyrist most intimately

¹ Non-imaginative, purely descriptive writing never appealed to Dryden. In his preface to *The Life of Plutarch* (1683), Dryden deems "*Biographia*, or the History of particular Mens Lives" as an inferior genre of writing, for it is

confin'd in action, and treating of Wars and Counsels, and all other public affairs of Nations, only as they relate to him, whose Life is written, or as his fortunes have particular dependence on them, or connection to them: All things here are circumscrib'd, and driven to a point, so as to terminate in one. (273)

"*Biographia*" thus suffers from a solipsism and narrowness of view that restrict a given work's ability to instruct readers or stir their imaginations. Dryden prefers "*Commentaries* or *Annals*" and even general "*History*," because he believes the writer of such works has more freedom with regard to both content and the writing style, and is therefore able to insert "Ornaments" into the text, "which render his work the most complete, and most instructive" (271).

concerned with the brevity of his own life. In this short document, Dryden foregrounds some of the major problems that find salient expression in his poem. Although the issues discussed in the letter may appear at best only loosely connected, I hope to show that their convergence in the poem discloses significant themes in Dryden's panegyric art, revealing in a unified fashion the impulses directing his poetic endeavours. As philosopher Geoffrey Scarre has recently pointed out, in addition to marking the passage of a person from life to death, all mortuary rituals serve another, more implicit function that is just as significant as the explicit commemoration of the dead: such rituals "are also rites of passage for those who remain behind, helping them to adjust emotionally, spiritually and practically to life" (136). A poet writing about death thus cannot entirely dissociate herself from the subject-matter of the poem; if she is a public mourner, she may feel emotionally indifferent towards the person who is dead, but never towards death itself. Dryden's dedicatory letter affirms this notion by intimating that the poet's own mortality was never far from his mind when he wrote the poem – for he wrote it "betwixt ill health," his wings of poetic creativity "[flying] slowly, in a damp air" (231). Dryden goes as far as indicating that he is suffering from a chronic disease, from which he may never break loose until death: "For the Doctors give me a sad assurance, that my Disease never took its leave of any man, but with a purpose to return"² (231). He then follows up

² This is not the only place where Dryden views opportunities for literary production as momentary flights from sickness and death. In his letter to Mrs. Elmer Steward, written on Candlemas-day, 1698, Dryden speaks about his recent "want of health" and the doctor's instructions for him to visit the town of Bath – a trip he avoided because of the town's bad quality of air. He writes,

the ayr may do us more harm than the waters can do us good . . . In the mean time, betwixt my intervals of physique and other remedies which I am using for

the remarks about his illness with the seemingly disparate issue of writing a panegyric about a stranger with unknown characteristics:

One Disadvantage I have had, which is, never to have known, or seen my Lady: And to draw the Lineaments of her Mind, from the Descriptions which I have receiv'd from others, is for a Painter to set himself at work without the living Original before him. Which the more beautiful it is, will be so much the more difficult for him to conceive. (232)

Given this difficulty, Dryden confesses that he has had to rely on his imagination (“Fancy” and “Wit”), while restraining his “Judgment” from pruning what excess of emotion and inspiration had infused into the character about whom he has written:

I was transported, by the multitude and variety of my Similitudes; which are generally the product of a luxuriant Fancy; and the wantonness of Wit. Had I call'd in my Judgment to my assistance, I had certainly retrench'd many of them. (232)

In this way, then, Dryden's panegyric resembles an act of creation as opposed to description, depending more on the poet's ability to call into life than mimetically depict the already dead. Because his verses are not restricted by a first-hand knowledge of Eleonora's characteristics, Dryden is free to create not just a good person with

my gravell, I am still drudgeing on: always a poet, and never a good one. I pass my time sometimes with Ovid, and sometimes with our old English poet, Chaucer; translateing such stories as best please my fancy; and intend besides them to add somewhat of my own: so that it is not impossible, but ere the summer be pass'd, I may come down to you with a volume in my hand, like a dog out of the water, with a duck in his mouth. – As for the rarities you promise, if beggars might be choosers, a part of a chine of honest bacon wou'd please my appetite more than all the marrow puddings; for I like them better plain; having a very vulgar stomach. (*Letters* 74-75)

Dryden tucks the report on his literary progress and the central metaphor, the product of his “fancy,” between the references to “gravell” and “vulgar stomach.” It was between bouts of sickness such as these that he pressed pen to paper, like a dog emerging from beneath the water both for a gasp of air and for presenting to the world a proof of his existence.

commendable qualities, but a paradigmatic object of praise, just as he had created in his poem “Anne Killigrew”; he writes,

And therefore it was, that I once intended to have call'd this Poem, the Pattern:
And though on a second consideration, I chang'd the Title into the Name of that
Illustrious Person, yet the Design continues, and Eleonora is still the Pattern of
Charity, Devotion, and Humility; of the best Wife, the best Mother, and the best
of Friends. (232)

Perhaps Dryden needed a human name for his creation to function as a wife, mother, and friend in addition to a virtuous paragon; or perhaps, in the words of Mark Van Doren, Dryden had to obey the imperatives of the “fat fee”³ he had received for his commission, and was left with little choice but to ascribe Eleonora’s name to the poem (89). Whatever the case may be, Dryden considers the poem as an “Apotheosis” – that is, “a transformation into a god,” or the elevation of a person to “divine status” (*OED*) – and, as we shall see, ‘Eleonora’ and ‘Pattern’ are indivisible, tautological terms in Dryden’s mind.

I have expounded at length on the contents of Dryden’s letter to James Bertie in order to suggest a connection between Dryden’s own mortality and his need to create – his need to find a second, more lasting life in the lines of his poem. By the end of his letter, Dryden boldly professes to his patron what until now has been only a tacit connection:

Yet, as Phidias when he had made the Statue of Minerva, cou’d not forbear to
ingrave his own Name, as Author of the Piece; so give me leave to hope, that by
subscribing mine to this Poem, I may live by the Goddess, and transport my Name
to Posterity by the memory of Hers. (233-234)

³ Biographer James Winn believes that although the commonly accepted figure of 500 guineas “is wildly exaggerated, . . . *Eleonora* may still have been more profitable than any of the four plays Dryden had staged since losing his government posts” (454).

As I move to the poem, I hope to show how Dryden's invention of the character Eleonora facilitates the poet's assertion of his surviving powers within the poem's fictive constructs. His self-consciously imaginative descriptions – borrowed from cultural and religious ideals – distance the Eleonora of the poem from the identity she possessed in past life, and ultimately render the poet incapable of offering consolation to the grieving family. Using John R. Searle's contemporary theories of metaphor and simile, I shall pay particular attention to Dryden's "multitude and variety of . . . Similitudes" as devices of poetic creation (232). With help from Peter Sack's study of the elegiac genre, I also hope to locate the many instances where Dryden seeks to re-create movements and activities that are essential to life.

Eleonora begins with an elaborate, carefully sustained simile, whose antecedent adverb 'As' is given a prominent position in the rare caesural first foot:

As, when some Great and Gracious Monarch dies,
Soft whispers, first, and mournful Murmurs rise
Among the sad Attendants; then, the sound
Soon gathers voice, and spread the news around,
Through Town and Country, till the dreadful blast
Is blown to distant Colonies at last;
Who, then perhaps, were off'ring Vows in vain,
For his long life, and for his happy Reign:
So slowly, by degrees, unwilling Fame
Did Matchless *Eleonora*'s fate proclaim,
Till public as the loss, the news became. (1-11)

It is striking that the poet appears to have more invested in the description of the "Great and Gracious Monarch" than in describing Eleonora. In the simile's antecedent, the lines' pace is at first held back by multiple caesuras; however, the syntax is gradually sprung free from both the intrusive halts and the lurching flow as it moves to the grand

proclamation in the enjambed lines five and six. Form and content in this way unite to proclaim the death of the monarch. On a more minuscule level, the poet re-creates the echoing whispers of mourners using adjacent phonetic repetitions: “Great and Gracious,” “Soft whispers,” “mournful Murmurs,” “sound / Soon,” “blast / Is blown,” “Vows in vain,” “long life,” and “his happy.” Thrust away to the end of an eleven-lined stanza, Eleonora’s description manages to occupy only a concluding triplet. The panoramic overview of the momentous event, the gradual acceleration of the lines’ pace, the drumbeat of the alliterations, the sad but spirited tone – all these features of the simile’s antecedent are condensed into the taciturn “slowly, by degrees, unwilling Fame / Did Matchless *Eleonora*’s fate proclaim.” Just as the lines’ elegantly varied rhythm congeals and becomes more tightly controlled in the triplet, there is little doubt that the exuberant tone of the first eight lines is exhausted by the time we hear Eleonora’s name. Even with their rhymed endings, Eleonora’s lines sound a little more prosaic compared to the monarch’s versified spectacle. The unequal distribution of poetic effects in the first stanza provokes a few closely related questions: Why does Dryden seem to privilege the hypothetical death of a monarch over Eleonora’s actual death? What purpose does the central simile serve in this stanza? Given that Dryden has told us that he knows very little about Eleonora, what does this technique of description contribute to the portrayal of Eleonora? In order to answer these questions, I would like to examine first the nature of the stanza’s central simile.

In this poem, Dryden uses two very distinct methods of linguistic comparison: one is literal, the other figurative; the first is what John Searle has called “literal simile”

or “literal statement of similarity,” and the second simile as a sub-genre of metaphorical speech (429); while the former functions “as a component of meaning,” the later acts “as a comprehension strategy” (415). The simile in the first stanza belongs to the first group, and, as we shall see a little later, Dryden even seamlessly oscillates between ‘literal similes’ and the more guileless ‘literal assertions of similarity.’ According to Searle, understanding the meaning of either a non-literal simile or a metaphor depends largely on the hearer’s mental ability to restrict meaning within a wide range of possible semantic associations. To do so, the hearer’s mind has to pass through three steps:

First, he must have some strategy for determining whether or not he has to seek a metaphorical interpretation of the utterance in the first place. Secondly, when he has decided to look for a metaphorical interpretation, he must have some set of strategies, or principles, for computing possible values of *R* [the intended constituents or meanings of the comparison], and third, he must have a set of strategies, or principles, for restricting the range of *R*’s. (422)

Dryden’s central simile in the first stanza makes none of these steps available to the reader. First, he chooses to use similes instead of metaphors, not only in this stanza but for the greater part of his poem. In a metaphor, the relationship between two different objects or ideas is constructed semantically, and the semantic connection between the two must be comprehended by the mind for the relationship to be cognitively maintained. In a simile, however, syntactic devices, such as the signifiers ‘like’ or ‘as’ explicitly make known the presence of an intended, underlying relationship between two objects or ideas. It is for this reason that, in his *Rhetoric*, Aristotle deems similes inferior to metaphors: “[since a simile] does not affirm that this *is* that, the mind does not inquire into the matter” (III.4.1406b). Because of the accented first-foot ‘As,’ we immediately know that Dryden in some sense wishes to compare the “Gracious Monarch” to Eleonora. Dryden

directs the reader's mind to read the first stanza in a certain way. Secondly, Dryden names the specific properties of the monarch and Eleonora that are being compared to one another. This is no ordinary simile; it is meticulously controlled. The poet singles out the fact of death and the manner in which the news was publicly made known as two specific points of similarity. And thirdly, Dryden not only names but explicates these points of similarity by supplying descriptive adverbs: "So slowly, by degrees, unwilling Fame / Did Matchless *Eleonora's* fate proclaim." Because of the mechanical restriction of meaning, and because the reader does not need to make imaginative inferences, I believe that the central comparison in this stanza is closer to a "literal statement of similarity" as opposed to that figurative device called simile. I hope to demonstrate that the use of a literal simile and the imposition of semantic restriction over the free-play of metaphorical inferences is necessary, because Dryden seeks to convey specific attributes from the world around him to the fictive character of Eleonora whom he is creating.

What induces the poet to use a carefully controlled 'literal simile' under the guise of figurative expression is the fact that the monarch and Eleonora are not on equal footing: Dryden knows far more about the fictive monarch, whom he has either imagined or more probably borrowed from common knowledge, than he does about the subject of his encomium. As James Winn has pointed out, the first stanza derives

power from public and private memory; readers would surely have remembered the recent death of that 'Great and Gracious Monarch' Charles II⁴; Dryden

⁴ Winn's claim becomes even more convincing when we notice that images and descriptions in the poem's first stanza very closely resemble those that Dryden had used seven years before in his *Threnodia Augustalis: A Funeral-Pindarique Poem Sacred to the Happy Memory of King Charles II* (1685):

Our *British* Heav'n was all Serene,

himself may have remembered kneeling in fruitless prayer for Charles I at Westminster on the fateful morning of the execution. (455)

Behind a thinly-veiled pretence of encomiastic description, Dryden thus infuses the empty referent ‘Eleonora’ with pieces of information he borrows from “public and private memory.” In Searlian terms, whereas in normative cases a simile functions “as a comprehension strategy,” helping us to understand the connection between two pre-existing entities, in this stanza the simile conveys “a component of meaning” from one concept with particular characteristics to an empty linguistic referent with none. The simile serves not as a device of comparison or comprehension, but a conduit of information. The significance of using this linguistic technique is twofold: it calls attention to the act of art-making and to the artisan as the creator of both praiseworthy virtues and a virtuous character; and it replaces the particular identity of Eleonora Bertie with general concepts drawn from cultural knowledge. There is, however, another aspect of the first stanza’s simile, which perpetuates the poetic act of creation. As I have already indicated, the comparison between the monarch and Eleonora imports in a controlled

No threatening Cloud was nigh, . . .
 Supine amidst our flowing Store,
 We slept securely, and we dreamt of more:
 When suddenly the Thunder-clap was heard,
 It took us unprepar’d and out of guard
 Already lost before we fear’d.
 Th’ amazing News of *Charles* at once were spread,
 At once the general Voice declar’d,
Our Gracious Prince was dead. (9-10; 15-21)

The spreading of the news, the change from an unperturbed to an agitated condition, the crescendo of sounds that either suddenly or gradually lead to the final proclamation – these features link Charles II to Eleonora Bertie, and suggest that Dryden, in a manner similar to what we saw in “Anne Killigrew,” is once again using a communal language of lament to describe the death of an individual.

fashion the gradual distribution of the news of death and the condition of being famous from one person to the other. However, standing on the peripheries of the central comparison are possibilities of semantic inference that fall outside the poet's control. The unequal distribution of information across the two sides of the simile generates a certain degree of overflow from one side to the other, fostering in the mind of the reader speculations and questions about Eleonora's character: given that the poet compares Eleonora's death and fame to the monarch's, was Eleonora "Great and Gracious" too? Did Eleonora's "Fame" also spread as far as the monarch's? What exactly prompted Eleonora's "unwilling Fame"? Did she also live a "long life"? Was hers "happy" too? The ensuing five stanzas substantiate Eleonora's fame by supplying the missing information, this time more boldly with the use of literal, albeit fictive, assertions of similarity, in addition to employing literal similes.

Whereas in the first stanza Dryden borrows from a hypothetical, well-liked monarch small particles of information, in stanzas two through seven he scours the Bible in search of more narratives and characteristics to assemble into the fictive monument of Eleonora. Alluding to Moses' feeding of the Israelites with manna in their post-Exodus journey to Canaan, Dryden describes the poor whom Eleonora fed as standing "prepared to see the manna fall" (21; Ex. 16:15). "Multitudes she fed," just like Jesus, who had with five loaves of bread and two fish fed five thousand people (22; Mt. 14:12-21). Like the archetypal "good and faithful servant" of the New Testament, who "[having] received the five talents came forward, bringing five talents more" to offer to his lord, "Of her five talents, other five [Eleonora] made" (24; Mt. 25:14-30). Following Jesus' commandment

“when you give alms, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing,” Eleonora offered her “alms” neither from “ostentation” nor “proud desire of praise” (Mt 6:2; 28-29). As he continues to catalogue stories, divine figures, and godly principles from the Bible and attributing them to Eleonora, we become aware that Dryden, who has already admitted his little knowledge of the person he is praising, is actively creating a character out of all that is culturally available to him. I have already identified the significance of this technique of art-making as the foregrounding of the artist as the poem’s underlying constant, who, by connecting the otherwise sequestered and unrelated ideas, summons into life a single entity out of a series of fragments. The artist in this way emerges as the source of meaning on whose creative rhetoric the volatile subject of the poem depends in order to find coherence and unity. But there is a second aspect of this method of description which I believe even more explicitly exposes Dryden’s attitude towards commemorating the dead in poetry: Dryden not only lets us see the artificiality of the collage he has created, but he discloses on the page the very steps involved in the process of artistic creation. I hope to show that it is partly through the emergence of this artificiality that Dryden ultimately concedes that he is unable to produce for the grieving family a consoling portrait of a deceased mother and wife.

One striking feature of *Eleonora* is its unpredictable movement. The poet, with a mind not yet made up, allows us to observe him formulating and re-formulating his thoughts, casting some away, while qualifying and carefully honing others. The following passage exemplifies this spontaneous process of thought-formation:

Scarcely she knew that she was great, or fair,
Or wise, beyond what other women are,

Or, which is better, knew, but never durst compare.
For to be conscious of what all admire,
And not be vain advances virtue high'r;
But still she found, or rather thought she found,
Her own worth wanting, others to abound. (97-103)

The lines are weighted down by syntactic halts, and this makes the poet appear tongue-tied as he desperately searches the recesses of his imagination and memory for praiseworthy characteristics. In this passage, we see one idea after another present itself to the poet. The words unfold in response to this central cognitive action, committing the spontaneously moving sequence to paper in a polysyndetonic chain: “great, or fair, / Or wise . . . Or, which is better . . . or rather thought.” Sometimes the conjunctions merely add information (“great, or fair, / Or wise”), but at other times they indicate the fluctuating movements of the poet’s thoughts. For instance, Eleonora’s humility is initially said to be a consequence of her not knowing that she is greater than other women. As if suddenly becoming aware that moral worth can never be divorced from a self-determined choice to be good, the poet quickly revises his thoughts about Eleonora, formulating a new characterisation that takes into account intention as well as moral disposition: “Or, which is better, knew, but never durst compare.” Both by drawing attention to himself as the active controller and creator of meaning behind the poem’s fictive constructs, and by representing the organic flow of his evolving thoughts, the poet is taking part in a long elegiac tradition, to which I now turn.

In his study of the elegiac genre, Peter Sacks traces the representation of creative movements in elegies and mortuary rituals: Ovid’s Apollo weaves a laurel wreath as a consoling substitute for Daphne; having lost Syrinx, Pan fashions a set of “cut and

bound” pipes “made of unequal reeds fitted together by a joining of wax”; and other elegists follow this traditional response to death by carving, creating, binding and inscribing – from the carved bowl of Theocritus’ “First Idyl,” to the woven basket in Virgil’s “Eclogue X,” and to Milton’s “Lycidas” where we see Camus making an appearance with “His mantle hairy, and his bonnet sedge, / Inwrought with figures dim” (Sacks 18; Milton 104-105). Sacks explains that this “self-dramatisation” helps

to assert and enhance the active responses of the living. The emphasis on the drama, or ‘doing,’ of the elegy is thus part of the crucial self-privileging of the survivors, as well as a way of keeping them in motion, ensuring a sense of progress and egress, of traversing some distance. For a stationary poet that distance may be figurative and purely psychological; but it is crucial to any successful mourning. (19)

It seems that Dryden, by materialising on the page the movements of his thoughts, is taking part in the tradition; however, he uses the trope subversively. Whereas in the cases of Apollo, Pan, and the rest of Sacks’ prominent literary mourners, life-affirming artistic creativity helps distance the dead from the bereaved, Dryden calls into life a flattering portrait of a person (bearing the name of Eleonora) with an ostentatious use of his art and imagination. Dryden’s meticulously controlled literal similes, his literal assertions of similarity, and his representation of spontaneous thought-processes in the poem are instances of “self-dramatisation” and “self-privileging” in addition to sites of life-creation. There is a downside to this technique of which Dryden seems acutely aware. The artistic handiworks of Apollo and Pan bear signs of the lost beloved by pointing to the moment of death and transfiguration (Daphne turns into a laurel tree at the banks of a river, and Pan’s last attempt to grab hold of Syrinx ends with him holding marsh reeds in his hand); however, Dryden’s linguistic embroidery is so fictively

constructed that its referentiality consists of pointing to the panegyrist's creative hand. We know from the dedicatory letter to the Earl of Abingdon that Dryden fashions the Eleonora of his poem neither based on "the living Original" nor necessarily on information received from others: "Every Artist is apt enough to flatter himself, (and I amongst the rest) that their own ocular Observations, would have discover'd more perfections, at least others, than have been deliver'd to them" (232). Instead, he imaginatively patterns Eleonora based on the best models of behaviour culturally and religiously available to him. The portrait that he creates thus finds no other real-life entities to refer to other than the artificer himself. In what follows, I shall attempt to demonstrate how this feature of the poem ultimately results in Dryden admitting that he is unable to offer emotional consolation to Eleonora's widower and her children.

One of the problems Dryden faces in the poem is the reconciliation of competing virtues and virtuous activities as they find expression in the fictive Eleonora. His attempts range from Eleonora's frugal management of time ("Business might shorten, not disturb her prayer" and "In praise alternate, and alternate pray'r") to a redefinition of activities in order to make them compatible: "Yet still she prayed, for still she prayed by deed" (112, 122, 115). The imaginative ardour driving these idealistic attempts eventually elevates Eleonora towards angelic qualities: Eleonora conducts her daily activities "Such as blest angels exercise above, / Varied with sacred hymns and acts of love" (120-121). This connection between Eleonora's earthly existence and her angelic counterparts ushers into the poem visions of the heavenly realm, as the poet's eye follows her ascension to the "offices of heav'n," looking at her as she is "sprung / Amidst the

choirs” (126-127). The poet’s apotheosis of Eleonora is suddenly interrupted and the poet is forced to drop his gaze as he realises that the distance between heaven and earth and between perfection and physical limitation is too far to be traversed by his naked eye alone:

Muse, down again precipitate thy flight,
For how can mortal eyes sustain immortal light
But as the sun in water we can bear,
Yet not the sun, but his reflection there,
So let us view her here in what she was
And take her image in this wat’ry glass. (134-139)

The poet, as if unable to sustain the flight of his vision towards heaven, decides to restrict his eyes to what is accessible to human perception. This withdrawal is only temporary, and the poet quickly endeavours to escape the confinements of the tangible and the ordinary by capturing visions of Eleonora’s perfection not with his eyes, but with poetry’s imaginative reach:

One, as a Constellation is but one;
Though ’tis a Train of Stars, that, rolling on,
Rise in their turn, and in the Zodiack run.
Ever in Motion; now ’tis Faith ascends,
Now Hope, now Charity, that upward tends,
And downwards with diffusive Good, descends (148-153)

and

As in Perfumes compos’d with Art and Cost,
’Tis hard to say what Scent is uppermost;
Nor this part Musk or Civet can we call,
Or Amber, but a rich Result of all;
So, she was all a Sweet; whose ev’ry part,
In due proportion mix’d, proclaim’d the Maker’s Art. (154-159)

Unlike the literal similes that we encountered at the beginning of the poem, which Dryden used to import into one monument specific pieces of information derived from

discrepant sources, the similes in these passages act mainly “as a comprehension strategy” (Searle 415). In other words, Eleonora, a constellation, and a mixture of perfumes share a condition for which there is neither a satisfying literal paraphrase nor a literal transference of properties; rather, the poet’s figurative language invites us to imaginatively infer Eleonora’s qualities from his descriptions of the constellation and the perfumes.

So the poet moves beyond a strategy that had implied the shortness of his imaginative purview, and invites us to comprehend through the figurative constructs of his language the nature of the densely intertwined nexus of Eleonora’s merits, all “in due proportion mix’d.” The use of two side-by-side similes may look as if the poet were, by force of accretion, trying to reinstate the imaginative powers he had relinquished a moment ago, but the move from the faraway constellation to the more accessible (even if exotic) perfumes suggests the poet’s attempt to bring closer the unreachable and to make intelligible what lies outside the grasp of blind senses. By the time the poet speaks again of the unreachable position of Eleonora –

As the true height and bigness of a star
Exceeds the measures of th’ astronomer.
She shines above we know, but in what place,
How near the throne and heav’n’s imperial face,
By our weak optics is but vainly guessed,
Distance and altitude conceal the rest (263-269) –

we know that even though Eleonora’s earthly life and her heavenly existence are inaccessible to us, the poem has replaced her by a set of linguistic constructions – literal similes to create an earthly past, and figurative language to postulate her heavenly condition. Just as the poet uses ‘literal similes’ to reconstruct what was historically

unknown to him, he employs figurative language to reach towards what is epistemologically at some distance. As with the case of literal similes, the poet dramatises on the page the difficulties involved in forcing clashing virtues to coexist in one person and thus draws our attention once again to the fact that his imaginative, “vainly guessed” conjectures and his tortuous apotheosis may not in any way represent the historical Eleonora Bertie.

The elevation or apotheosis of Eleonora, with Dryden’s recourse to a range of linguistic devices – literal similes, literal assertions of similarity, and metaphorical strategies of comprehension – reaches a climax when the poet praises the great figure for her utilitarian role in being a “Pattern” to others, similar to the way Anne Killigrew was held up by the poet as an exemplar worthy of being emulated by an entire generation. In addition to helping the poor, Eleonora further benefits not only her children, who as “New objects only multiplied [her virtues] more” (206), but also her friends:

Then wonder not to see this soul extend
The bounds, and seek some other self, a friend:
As swelling seas to gentle rivers glide,
To seek repose and empty out the tide;
So this full soul, in narrow limits pent,
Unable to contain her, sought a vent
To issue out, and in some friendly breast
Discharge her treasures and securely rest. (240-247)

Even more significant than Dryden’s turning of Eleonora into a “fruitful” paragon of virtue is how the poet brings the apotheosis to a close (194). At the end of my chapter on “Anne Killigrew,” I suggested that the poem’s move from lamentation to consolation was artificially forced and emotionally unconvincing. The stanzas in that poem were separated by roman numerals, which afforded them a degree of autonomy and freed the

poet from having to explain the connection between them. I also claimed that there was a tone of self-consciousness uneasiness lurking behind both the abrupt ending and the sudden leap from the highly personal lament of Anne Killigrew's brother to the poet's impersonal postulations about her heavenly condition. *Eleonora*, however, is not divided into disjointed sections, and the poet's thoughts need to flow smoothly from one stanza to another. But how can Dryden, already sceptical about the ability of poetic apotheosis to solace family members, justifiably dismiss his idealistic praise of Eleonora without causing offence particularly to a widower who has paid a large fee to see his deceased wife commemorated in verse?

The closing comes about as the poet indirectly attacks one form of cultural piety (the apotheosis of the deceased in panegyric verse) by showing how it interferes with another form of piety (the religious admonition against blasphemy). This stealthy technique, which would have enervated James Bertie's financially backed demand for an encomium of his deceased wife, appears again in "On the Death of a Very Young Gentleman," to which I shall turn shortly. In *Eleonora*, the poet appears to have suddenly caught himself in the middle of immoderate adulation; this realisation occurs at the moment when he draws an explicit parallel between Eleonora and Christ by pointing out that they both died at the age of thirty three⁵:

Her fellow Saints with busie care, will look
For her blest Name, in Fate's eternal Book;

⁵ Eleonora's comparison to Christ is foreshadowed earlier in the line "Death had found no entrance by her sin," which hints towards the Virgin Mary's putative Assumption – the belief that Mary was too perfect to have suffered the ultimate wages of sin, death, and was therefore physically lifted to heaven at the end of her life (173). There is an even more explicit allusion to Mary in line 170: "A second *Eve*, but by no Crime accurst."

And pleas'd to be outdone, with joy will see
 Numberless Vertues, endless Charity;
 But more will wonder at so short an Age;
 To find a Blank beyond the thirti'th Page;
 And with a pious fear begin to doubt
 The Piece imperfect, and the rest torn out.
 But 'twas her Saviour's time; and, cou'd there be
 A Copy near th' Original, 'was she. (291-300)

As if he were forced to return from a journey cut short by an impassable threshold, the poet's diction changes henceforth from hyperbolic words that intimated excellence and perpetuity – “immortal” (203), “durable” (227), “unexhausted” (234), “Perfection” (234, 273), “Numberless” (294), “endless” (294) – to phrases that portray Eleonora as “A Copy” instead of a “Pattern,” or that depict her as a finite and imperfect person: “A Copy near th' Original” and “almost pure” (300, 310). The poet, both here and in “Young Gentleman,” does not seem concerned with blasphemy *per se*, and drops the subject matter altogether soon after mentioning it; instead, he seems far more interested in the corollary of blasphemy; that is, if comparing the deity to one of His creatures offends Him by trivialising His divinity, then comparing the creature to the deity must also diminish or take something away from her humanity. In the remainder of the poem, Dryden seems to deem himself unfit to paint a convincing portrait of the deceased, unable to capture her humanity as a wife, a mother, and a friend, and therefore incapable of offering consolation to all whom she has left behind. He therefore puts an end to his deification of Eleonora, withdraws from all the roles he has played from the poem's beginning, and asks her to comfort the grieving family herself.

The poet enters into a delicate and tender colloquy with Eleonora, entreating her to give to her “sad children” and her “mourning lord” what his poem will never be able to offer them:

See how they grieve, mistaken in their love,
And shed a beam of comfort from above;
Give 'em, as much as mortal eyes can bear,
A transient view of the full glories there,
That they with mod'rate sorrow may sustain
And mollify their losses in thy gain. (349-355)

The poet's desire “to raise an emulation in the living to copy out the example of the dead” has ended in the mere guess-work of his “weak optics,” diminishing the possibility of consolation in the poem. Eleonora must intervene herself. As I have tried to show throughout this chapter, Dryden's poem treads on the tensions and discrepancies between the social function of the panegyric genre, and the poet's need to use the poem as an outlet for articulating his own personal reaction to death by celebrating signs of his own vitality; between the representation of a moral exemplar too perfect to have ever existed, and the bereaved family's need to find reflections of the person they loved in lines of poetry; between the possibility of emotional healing in funerary verse, and the poet's candid recognition that he is not privy to the emotions of family members and therefore cannot ease their pain. This poem dramatises from beginning to end the laborious process of finding a language that captures personal feelings about death amidst a cluttered heap of impersonal literary conventions, cultural or religious pieties, and financial agreements. Caught between clashing impulses of the personal and the communal, the poet ultimately chooses to respect the former at the expense of the later.

The poem ends with gestures of resignation and candour, as Dryden confesses his lack of knowledge through the vacuous relative pronouns “what” and “where”: “Be what and where thou art; to wish thy place / Were, in the best, presumption more than grace” (371-371). There will be no more guess-work, no pretence, no linguistic trickeries, and no attempts to build a moral exemplar on whom others can pattern their behaviour.

However, Dryden does not end the poem with this confession alone, but makes a bold tribute to Eleonora, one that is more flattering than he has ever paid to anyone before:

Let this suffice: Nor thou, great Saint, refuse
This humble Tribute of no vulgar Muse:
Who, not by Cares, or Wants, or Age deprest,
Stems a wild Deluge with a dauntless brest:
And dares to sing thy Praises, in a Clime
Where Vice triumphs, and Vertue is a Crime:
Where ev’n to draw the Picture of thy Mind,
Is Satyr on the most of Humane Kind:
Take it, while yet ’tis Praise; before my rage
Unsafely just, break loose on this bad Age;
So bad, that thou thy self had’st no defence,
From Vice, but barely by departing hence. (359-370)

In my first chapter, I suggested that Dryden’s early poetry lamented the passing of exemplary figures by showing how they were at the end infected by the maladies of their age: the poet compared the Royalist Hastings’ deadly smallpox pustules to supporters of parliament during the English Civil War; the Earl of Dundee’s death coincided with the demise of Scotland’s freedom; and Dryden used the phrase “double Sacrilege” to describe the way Anne Killigrew’s smallpox both ravaged her face and took her life – a phrase that echoed the “second Fall” of Killigrew’s generation with which the poem occupied itself from the very beginning. I further suggested that the personal pain of all these figures was subsumed into an impersonal language that the poet simultaneously

employed to describe an entire culture. Dryden's lament in all three cases carried undertones of rage and condemnation, as he pointed out how a society's moral depravity was responsible for the death of an exemplary citizen. Here, however, the poet restrains his anger and ends the poem "before my rage / Unsafely just, break loose on this bad Age." Eleonora departs unscathed, without being infected by the infirmities of her age, and without losing her individuality – of which the poet admittedly knows nothing – to a "bad Age" that is collectively and uniformly marked by its fallen condition. If Dryden's tribute is flattering, it is because he respects Eleonora's private life and her individuality. When Dryden ends the poem with the triplet

As Earth thy Body keeps, thy Soul the Sky,
So shall this verse preserve thy Memory;
For thou shalt make it live, because it sings of thee (375-377),

it is this individuality, safely locked in the private "Memory" of her family members, that the poem celebrates. Unlike "Anne Killigrew," this poem is ultimately not concerned with the dialectics of "memory and desire" (Eliot, *WL* 3), and does not attempt to transmute the past into an ideal future. Rather, it seeks to "preserve [Eleonora's] Memory." The word "Memory" may seem like an empty referent to Dryden and to us, but it carries emotional significance for James Bertie and his children. The very fact that words such as this mean one thing to us and another to the grieving family suggests that a collectively shared language of lament, encomium, and consolation may not be possible, at least not in the form of literary conventions such as apotheosis. This theme will be central to the poem that I am about to examine.

Dryden's "On the Death of a Very Young Gentleman"⁶ is remarkably similar to *Eleonora* in its imagery, its attitudes towards apotheosis, and in its seemingly quick change of mind towards the end of the poem. I consider it as either an early draft or a re-writing of *Eleonora*. It is, however, much shorter, which means that the poet needs to accomplish the same goals in a smaller space and with greater economy of effect. Instead of gradually leading us through drawn-out allusions to Biblical characters or elaborate episodes of linguistic experimentation, he praises the young man first through a list of qualities, and then through a central metaphor. The poem opens with an image we have already encountered in *Eleonora*, that of the missing page in the "Book of Destiny":

He who cou'd view the Book of Destiny,
 And read whatever there was writ of thee,
 O Charming Youth, in the first op'ning Page,
 So many Graces in so green and Age,
 Such Wit, such Modesty, such strength of Mind,
 A Soul at once so manly, and so kind:
 Wou'd wonder, when he turn'd the Volume o're,
 And after some few Leaves shou'd find no more,
 Nought but a blank remain, a dead void space,
 A step of Life that promis'd such a Race. (1-10)

Dryden does not know exactly what is written on each page, as the indefinite pronoun suggests in "whatever there was writ of thee." Despite his lack of knowledge, he suggests that the book catalogues a number of admirable qualities, which keep accumulating as the pages are turned. He represents the piling up of merits through a set of clauses, separated by caesuras, each beginning with adverbs 'such' or 'as': "Such Wit,

⁶ The poem first appeared in *Poetical Miscellanies: The Fifth Part* (1704). Scholars are not certain when this poem was written. The University of California editors of Dryden place the poem "for convenience after *Eleonora*" (501). They justify this decision, with which I am in agreement, by claiming that the poem bears "resemblances with *Eleonora*" (501).

such Modesty, such strength of Mind, / A Soul at once so manly, and so kind.” If the praise in these lines sounds too lofty to be convincing, that is because it really is too lofty, and the poet will explicitly criticise such language of adoration later in the poem.

Standing on its own, the praise may seem overdone and exaggerated because of the repetitions. The tone of the speaking voice suffers from a disingenuous chattiness, and the lines are overloaded not only with praiseworthy characteristics that sit close to each other, separated by the recurrent adverbs, but also with the sharp *s* sound. Each caesura conspires with the sibilant adverbs, making them sound more emphatic after the silence of the momentary halts. It seems as if the poet does not trust that we would take his adjectives seriously unless they are bolstered by other sonic or syntactic devices; the overly excited sounds, the stilted repetition of words – all these make the poet appear as if he were trying too hard to make us believe something that is not plausible on its own.

The poet then uses a metaphor suggesting that the young man’s accumulation of merits goes hand in hand with a gradual cleansing of his sins:

’Tis Sin produces Death; and he had none
But the Taint *Adam* left on ev’ry Son.
He added not, he was so pure, so good,
’Twas but th’ Original forfeit of his Blood:
And that so little, that the River ran
More clear than the corrupted Fount began.
Nothing remain’d of the first muddy Clay,
The length of Course had wash’d it in the way:
So deep, and yet so clear, we might behold
The Gravel bottom, and that bottom Gold. (27-36)

The river is neither muddied nor diminished through “The length of [its] Course,” and instead becomes entirely pure, leaving behind the original sin that it had inherited at its fountainhead. The young man, in this way, comes to resemble the second Adam (the

sinless Christ) just as Eleonora had resembled the second Eve (the Virgin Mary); and similar to Anne Killigrew, he represents the Arethusian stream and its promises of redemption and purification. Like all of Dryden's failed idealistic portrayals, the last two lines of the stanza risk becoming implausible in their visions of perfection: although the river is deep, the purity of water allows our eyes to see the very depths of the river down to its alluvium, which in this case is made of gold, as if the river flowed through heavenly grounds. Immediately after this image, the poet condemns a language of encomium that is suitable only for praising the divine, just as he had done in *Eleonora*:

As such we lov'd, admir'd, almost ador'd,
Gave all the Tribute Mortals cou'd afford.
Perhaps we gave so much, the Pow'rs above
Grew angry at our superstitious Love:
For when we more than Human Homage pay,
The charming Cause is justly snatch'd away. (37-42)

As I pointed out in my discussion of *Eleonora*, the poet broaches the possibility of blasphemy almost as a carefully planned excuse to move away from conventions of apotheosis and to point out that deification destroys the imperfect yet beloved humanity of the commemorated person. Despite all their similarities, what sets this elegy apart from *Eleonora* is that Dryden here fashions a private and intimate language of consolation instead of merely excusing himself from the responsibility of comforting mourners. Dryden's experimentation is bolder but still in the same spirit as that we witnessed at the end of *Eleonora*; he ends the poem not by promising consolation, but by aiding the work of mourning.

The poem ends with Dryden offering these words to young man's "mournful parents":

Hear then, ye mournful Parents, and divide
That Love in many which in one was ty'd.
That individual Blessing is no more,
But multiply'd in your remaining Store.
The Flame's dispers'd, but does not all expire,
The Sparkles blaze, though not the Globe of Fire.
Love him by Parts, in all your num'rous Race,
And from those Parts form one collected Grace;
Then, when you have refin'd to that degree,
Imagine all in one, and think that one is He. (45-55)

Dryden explores in these lines the possibility of ending an elegiac poem with a language that does not rely on knowledge or description, and is too open-ended to bring about emotional closure or offer definitive consolation. The lines neither contain descriptions of the young man's life beyond the grave, nor speculate about him holding a high position in heaven. The poet appears to be more concerned about the parents' "Flame," their psychological and emotional needs that have been left without an outlet or a means of expression, than he is about the death of the young man. By paying more attention to subjective emotions as opposed to actual loss, the poet shifts his purpose from helping parents to accept the death of their son to helping them continue their lives now that he is dead. If consolation depends on coming to terms with death, then it lies outside of this poem's purpose. But if the ending does not try to console the parents, then what exactly does it attempt to accomplish?

In the last stanza, Dryden aims to help the parents continue their lives after the event of death by encouraging them to spend small fractions of the love they had for their

son on other people or on their other children.⁷ Dryden builds this stanza around the parents' need to love. Since their love has lost its primary and grand object, it can now only attach itself to numerous other objects of affection significantly smaller by comparison. They must find a replacement to fill the void. Dryden's solution is for the parents to imagine the dispersed and exiguous pieces of love as uniting into the "Globe of Fire" that used to symbolise the fullness of their parental affection. This imagined love, the poet seems to suggest, may help them continue functioning in their community even if they have to pretend that the imagined "Globe" can replace the love they once had for their son.⁸ In all this, Dryden is taking part in what has always been the purpose of mourning. Peter Sacks, in his commentary on the prominent mourners in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, writes,

⁷ Dryden very possibly had in mind the concluding stanza of John Donne's "The Broken Heart," where the poet uses the metaphor of shattered glass to describe his fractured emotions:

Yet nothing can to nothing fall,
Nor any place be empty quite,
Therefore I thinke my breast hath all
Those peeces still, though they be not unite;
And now as broken glasses show
A hundred lesser faces, so
My rages of heart can like, wish, and adore,
But after one such love, can love no more. (25-32)

While Donne mourns his injured romantic emotions or sexual desires, Dryden sees hope in the survival of fractured emotions.

⁸ Dryden's solution is psychologically acute. Sigmund Freud, in "Creative Writing and Day-Dreaming," asserts that "we can never give anything up; we only exchange one thing for another" (439). Dryden's imagined "Globe of Fire" is not and does not even aspire to be a perfect replacement. Freud himself claims elsewhere that "No matter what fills the gap, even if it be filled completely, it nevertheless remains something else" (qtd. in Sacks 7).

The movement from loss to consolation thus requires a deflection of desire, with the creation of a trope both for the lost object and for the original character of the desire itself. The laurel and flute must symbolise not only Daphne and Syrinx but also the thwarted sexual impulse of the pursuers. . . . Each is left gasping the sign of what he lacks. (7)

“The healthy mourner,” Sacks later asserts, is one who “submits to a displacement of his prior attachments and to a disruption of his potential regression to dyadic fantasies” (17).

What displaces the original object of affection is “at an essential remove from what it replaces,” and coming to terms with the imperfect nature of this substitution is essential to healthy mourning (6). The last stanza in “On the Death of a Very Young Gentleman” is more conducive to this process than the tropes of consolation that Dryden uses in other poems, such as apotheosis and the building of encomiastic monuments. Dryden’s idealistic portrayal of Anne Killigrew’s past life and his postulations about her heavenly condition are both counteractive to the important acts of displacement and substitution; these descriptions not only bring the dead closer to mourners by pretending to depict their current condition, they also sustain and cultivate the mourner’s past affections by presenting a portrait of the dead superior to how they actually were in life. Poems such as “Anne Killigrew” may serve a purpose for the society or a fallen age by holding up a moral exemplar, but they destroy both the unique identity of the deceased and the mourner’s chances of healing.

I would also like to suggest that the ending of this poem is both consequentially and deontologically superior to tropes of consolation such as apotheosis and encomiastic portrayals. The poem’s ending does not rely on Dryden’s putative knowledge about the deceased. Like the anonymous title of the poem, the language crafted here is so general

that it paradoxically becomes private. In other words, the language is applicable to anyone who has suffered loss precisely because it is general enough to be inclusive. Love and imagination (like “Memory” in *Eleonora*) are feelings and faculties that we all share, but we employ them differently in our unique experiences and our unique relationships with others. The problem with conventional methods of consolation (such as the resurrection trope and apotheosis) was that they pretended to know the feelings of each mourner and were therefore too specific in the promises they made, for instance by assuming that Anne Killigrew’s brother longed to see his sister as the “Harbinger of Heav’n” or that James Bertie wanted to see his wife “sprung / Amidst the choirs” (“Anne Killigrew” 195; *Eleanora* 126-127). These visions were built on religious ideals, instead of the private wishes of the bereaved. Furthermore, “Young Gentleman” does not end with hopeful promises, because it knows that such promises are emotionally unconvincing. Solace and consolation can only be achieved through a long and arduous process that must be attempted privately by every person who has suffered loss. The poet, in his four directives – “Hear then,” “divide,” “Love him,” “Imagine all in one” – invites the parents to begin this process of healing, one that only begins when the poem ends.

In my next chapter, I shall continue reflecting on the unique relationship that the mourners once had with the deceased, one that produces equally unique responses to death that often cannot be captured in a collectively shared language of lament. From the beginning of his career, Dryden always conveyed a distrust for communal lament, and private mourning always seemed more congenial to him. Even in that early elegy, “Upon

the Death of the Lord Hastings” (1649), Dryden closes the poem with a sombre image of private grief and pain, whereby the dead Hastings’ memory is sealed within his wife’s breast:

so shall he live
In ’s nobler half, and the great grandsire be
Of an heroic divine progeny:
An issue which t’ eternity shall last,
Yet but th’ irradiations which he cast.
Erect no mausoleums: for his best
Monument is his spouse’s marble breast. (102-108)

From the writing of “Anne Killigrew” to *Eleonora* and “Young Gentleman,” it took Dryden seven years to reconcile the demands of the panegyric genre with the respect he always had for the private feelings of individuals. In what follows, I shall trace this theme in two short elegies, one written even before “Anne Killigrew,” in which, since encomium is not the primary focus of the poems, Dryden’s attitude towards private expressions of mourning finds sharper expression. In the following chapter, I shall examine “To the Memory of Mr. Oldham” (1684) and “An Ode, on the Death of Mr. Henry Purcell” (1696), two elegies in which Dryden is himself a mourner reflecting on the death of others.

3. Private Responses to Death: Two Short Elegies

I ended my last chapter by identifying Dryden's willingness to eschew apotheosis, encomium, and consolation in his panegyric verse. The poet deviated from these literary conventions in order to preserve the individuality of the deceased and, as we saw in "On the Death of a Very Young Gentleman," to aid the work of mourning. In this chapter, I shall continue to examine Dryden's poetry of death by tracing the development of an elegiac language that is attentive to the varied and complex forms of social relations in which the deceased used to be enmeshed, such as artistic competition. Since the poems I consider here represent the elegist's diverse and often conflicting responses to loss, they move away from literary conventions of mourning whose codified norms presuppose a uniformity of response to death. Dryden's poems contain neither strictly conventional lamentation nor encomium, because he conceives his elegies based on the relationship he once had with the dead, and not based on literary norms or cultural pieties. In "To the Memory of Mr. Oldham" (1684), artistic rivalry in life creates a sarcastic tone that undermines the poem's more explicit expressions of sorrow and praise. In "An Ode, on the Death of Mr. Henry Purcell" (1696), Dryden's envy and desire for eminence, coupled with his feelings of admiration and camaraderie for a fellow artist, produce a poem of fragmented form and warring voices reflective of the elegist's own divided emotions. In addition to lamentation and encomium, the poet also develops an unconventional attitude towards the element of consolation. According to Peter Sacks, in normative funeral elegies the mourner moves from expressions of sorrow to the creation of a consoling

substitute for the dead person. Consolation is the ultimate purpose of this process in literary works of mourning. In Dryden's elegies, because grief and sorrow – free from other emotions – are not always the elegist's reaction to the death of others, the search for consolation is sometimes impossible and at other times even undesirable. Dryden's honest expressions of his private emotions have a number of advantages over conventional elegiac tropes, which not only deny the mourner the ability to express a personal response to death, but, as we saw in "Anne Killigrew" and *Eleonora*, also erase the unique identity the dead possessed in life. By reading the varied responses that the deaths of Oldham and Purcell create in Dryden, we awake to the unique impulses that others inspire within us. Dryden's divergences from the conventional process of mourning also make his poems more realistic and thus more psychologically credible.

I begin this chapter with a discussion of two prominent features that the English elegy borrows from antiquity, and will proceed to demonstrate how Dryden revises these conventions in his poems. In "The forme of Poeticall Lamentations" from his *The Arte of English Poesie* (1589), George Puttenham writes,

Lamenting is altogether contrary to reioising, euery man saith so, and yet is it a peece of ioy to be able to lament with ease, and freely to poure forth a mans inward sorrowes and the greefs wherewith his minde is surcharged. This was a very necessary deuise of the Poet and a fine, besides his poetrie to play also the Phisitian, and not onely by applying a medicine to the ordinary sicknes of mankind, but by making the very greef it selfe (in part) cure of the disease. (135)

By bestowing upon the poet the duty to perform a cathartic dramatisation of sorrow, Puttenham hints at two assumptions that by this time had shaped the general precepts of the English elegy: lamentation as the universal response to death by the bereaved, and the dutiful, impersonal, and public identity of the elegist. The presupposition behind the

metaphors of “Phisitian” and “medicin” is that since people’s emotional response to loss is universally shared (like physiological operations of the body), an equally all-encompassing remedy can be formulated and prescribed. For Puttenham, this remedy consists of a purgative lamentation by a poet-physician. In explaining the duties of the elegist, Puttenham points to ancient cultures in which the deceased were mourned, out of respect and “civility,” by the use of “Poeticall mournings in verse” or “funerall songs” (137). “In Rome,” he writes,

they accustomed to make orations funeral and commendatorie of the dead parties in the publique place called *Procostris*: and our *Theologians*, in stead thereof vse to make sermons, both teaching the people some good learning, and also saying well of the departed. (137)

The sermons that in the seventeenth century had adopted the traditional healing function of ancient elegiac songs included Richard Allestree’s *The Whole Duty of Mourning* (1695), wherein the homilist offers consolation to mourners by redefining death as a “[deliverance] from the Miseries of this Sinful World, and all the Miseries you so Justly deplore” (154). Based on this redefinition, he recommends “Moderate weeping” and “Moderate” show of emotions as opposed to uncontrolled outpouring of grief (154-155). Thomas Playfere’s *The Meane In Movrning* (1616) in a similar way encourages mourners to rely on “reason” and “religion” so that they may avoid “immorderate weeping” (9). John Tillotson, in his “Sermon XXIII. Preached at the Funeral of Mr. Thomas Gouge” (1696), uses a philosophical lexicon and logical syllogisms in order to “offer [a] proof of the Resurrection” (242). Like Allestree, Tillotson’s redefinition of death as a “translation” as opposed to a termination of life supposedly enables him to quiet the emotional anguish of grievers (259). In these examples, grief affects an entire

community, and it is the job of a public figure first to acknowledge the mourners' pain and sorrow, and then to offer, like a physician, a remedy that prevents them from lapsing into hopeless melancholy or intemperate expressions of grief. There is a definite sense that Puttenham, in "The forme of Poeticall Lamentations," wants to emphasise, even to revive, the civic duty of the poet to help mourners in their grieving process as theologians of his day did from the pulpit – a duty that poets of ancient Greece and Rome carried out. After looking at the function of public mourners in antiquity, I would like to show that in Dryden's poetry sometimes a contradictory mixture of grief and joy, "Lamenting" and "reiosing," touches the bereaved person's heart, and sometimes the emotional detachment of a public mourner from the deceased makes him incapable of offering consolation.

Historian Margaret Alexiou has drawn our attention to the custom in the classical period of "hiring or compelling strangers to lament at funerals" (10). The songs written by these "professional singers" set the tone for mortuary rituals and supplied the words with which mourners grieved the loss of their beloveds (12). The professionalization of mourning extended to the early Roman Church, in which the benefit of hiring strangers rested in their lack of emotional connection to the deceased, and their "cold, rhetorical formality" served to "counteract the effects of what was considered the uncontrolled grief of the people" (31). Unscathed by emotions themselves, the cathartic dramatisation of sadness by these professional mourners had to be no more than a fictive and controlled performance since their ultimate purpose was to lead the grieving community out of sorrow. In this sense, elegies from antiquity copied the example of contemporary mortuary rituals.

Seventeenth-century religious sermons, the ceremonies of the early Roman Church, classical funerary rituals, and the classical elegy are united in their goal of helping their communities survive the death of an individual. The attitudes they encourage, the conventions they adopt, and the strategies they employ are also similar to one another, since these are inextricably bound to the shared underlying purpose. If expressions of grief are immoderate, then social harmony may break down; if death is the ultimate end, then the society may lose its will to continue living; if consolation is not offered, then nihilism may take over the entire community; if professional mourners do not possess “cold, rhetorical formality,” then they cannot carry out their important social function. As James George Frazer has pointed out, the best public mourner or most effective “public functionary” is one who is shrewd enough to have entertained such possibilities, but has come to realise that “the welfare of the tribe is supposed to depend on [his or her] performance” (215). Such a person would not allow his or her personal reaction to death or personal thoughts about funerary rituals to influence his or her social function. “The ablest members of the profession,” Frazer writes, “must tend to be more or less deceivers,” coolly detached and always eager to serve the common good through their performances (215).

We have already seen an example of such works of utilitarian deception in Dryden’s art. The poet elevates Anne Killigrew towards the divine and celebrates her as a moral exemplar who is able to edify a fallen age. In my first chapter, I suggested that the stanzaic organisation of “Anne Killigrew” hints at Dryden’s uncertainties about the poem’s social role. By the time Dryden writes *Eleonora*, he can no longer reconcile the

public demands of the panegyric genre with his own integrity and with his personal respect for the dead and for the grieving family members. If Dryden disputes the utilitarian function of encomium in his panegyric poems, in the following elegies he questions his duty as a public mourner to remain emotionally dead, even if he is not closely related to the deceased.

In its paradigmatic form, the pastoral funeral elegy offers a poetic speaker who, as a vocal member of a wider community of mourners, laments the loss of a particular person. The identity of the deceased is particular, solid, central, while the significance of the elegist is relationally constructed on the basis of the grieving community's supposed response to the dead. The speaker in "Thyrsis' Lament for Daphnis," for instance, is without identity, and merely unifies in one voice multiple expressions of communal lament:

For him the wolves were howling,
For him the jackals bayed.
When Daphnis died, the lions
Of the forest wept. . . .
Great herds of bulls and cattle
Were gathered round his feet
With crowds of lowing heifers
And their moaning calves. (86-89; 91-94)

The anaphoric "For him" constructs the poem's precinct of activity, placing at the centre the deceased, who is himself encircled by a community of lamenters. The elegist, absent from the catalogue of mourners, appears to describe, as if from some distance, the spectacle of mourning. We do not hear him voicing feelings about death, or how the event has affected him.

In the poem I am about to examine, by contrast, Dryden attempts to bestow upon the public mourner a humanness missing from such classical precedents. As the public mourner gains more significance in Dryden's verse, the elements of encomium and lamentation – two elegiac mechanisms that secure the external position of the mourner as one who ventriloquizes a community's expressions of sorrow – become weakened. "To the Memory of Mr. Oldham" was published in 1684 in a compilation of Oldham's works titled *Remains of Mr. John Oldham in Verse and Prose*, and Dryden's elegy serves as a public commemoration of a fellow poet. In this elegy we see Dryden distancing himself from Oldham to the extent that his words of lamentation lose their conventional emotional force and become replaced by the public elegist's concern for his own surviving artistic capabilities.

Contrary to what the title of Dryden's "To the memory of Mr. Oldham" suggests, the appearance of the word "Farewell" at the beginning of the first line implies the speaker's intentions to let go of Oldham's memory instead of keeping it alive. The poem begins with the line "Farewell, too little and too lately known" (1). This opening can be contrasted with Catullus' poem no. 101, in which the "*ave atque vale*" concludes, almost as a remorseful acceptance of the finality of death, a series of mortuary tributes such as the poet's offering of gifts and tears to his dead brother (10). In Dryden's poem, the caesural halt after the first foot announces the "Farewell" with an obtrusive thud against the first line's otherwise uniform texture of alliterative sounds and repeated words, and intimates that the poem will serve a purpose different from gently leading the speaker to come to terms with the fact of death. Acceptance and emotional closure have already

been reached. The opening “Farewell” not only symbolically but also literally distances Oldham from the speaker, since Oldham’s name does not appear past the poem’s title and is conspicuously left out of the poem itself. This omission is unusual for a poem with an elegiac title and runs contrary to a long classical and English tradition of repeatedly calling the name of the dead. The name of Adonis, for instance, reverberates throughout the opening lines of Bion’s “Lament for Adonis” and persistently asserts itself through the poem’s refrains. As Peter Sacks has pointed out, Milton’s “uncouth swain” in “Lycidas” also takes part in this tradition:

For Lycidas is dead, dead ere his prime,
Young Lycidas, and hath not left his peer.
Who would not sing for Lycidas? (Milton 8-11)

Sacks interprets the repeated calling of the dead person’s name as the mourner’s painful attempt to come to terms with the fact of death (19). This trope is one prominent example of the repetitive rhetoric of elegies. Sacks writes,

The repetition of words and refrains and the creation of a certain rhythm of lament have the effect of controlling the expression of grief while also keeping that expression in motion. It is as if the grief might be gradually conjured forth and exorcised. (23)

If Margaret Alexiou is correct in asserting that the function of such repetitions is to “rouse the spirit of the dead and establish contact,” then, depending on the context, the omission of the name can potentially suggest the very opposite – that is, to depart from the dead by putting them to rest, by bidding them “Farewell” (136). I shall return a little later to the treatment of this repetition trope in Dryden’s “Oldham,” but for now I would like to confine my observations to the fact that the poet does not feel the need to repeat Oldham’s name, and in fact tellingly omits it from the body of his poem. Furthermore,

“too little” is the knowledge out of which Oldham’s memory is to be resurrected, and that “little” knowledge, the speaker confesses in the first line, comes “too late” for Oldham’s loss to be a rich source of praiseworthy attributes. The first line of Dryden’s poem therefore subtly disappoints the title’s anticipation for a strong basis for encomium.

The first eight lines of the poem contain a chain of descriptions through which the speaker attempts to define his relationship with the “little known” Oldham. The diversity of the descriptions and, more importantly, the clash between them, reveal a speaker who is desperately searching after appropriate words to define his relationship with the deceased, casting out one inadequate image after another:

Farewell, too little and too lately known,
Whom I began to think and call my own:
For sure our souls were near allied, and thine
Cast in the same poetic mould with mine.
One common note on either lyre did strike,
And knaves and fools we both abhorred alike.
To the same goal did both our studies drive;
The last set out the soonest did arrive. (1-8)

Thinking and calling Oldham “my own” in a line furnished with the self-assurance of an almost perfectly regular iambic meter, immediately after the speaker has confessed lack of intimacy, is a shocking claim. Lines 2 and 3 are also contradictory, since ownership and alliance are different categories of social relations; one implies superiority and the other equality. “Near,” in the third line, is a double pun (‘intimately’ and ‘almost’), and the adverb disperses into a blur of opposing meanings, at once betraying and confirming the shaky affinity between the poet and Oldham. The centrality of the deceased and the peripheral position of the public mourner are tacitly questioned by Dryden’s search for a satisfying description or re-definition of the relationship. After this series of

contradictory images and ideas, Dryden nears the theme of competition which will set the tone for the rest of the poem. It is significant that the relationship between the speaker and Oldham is next compared to a “common note” struck on two different lyres. This Greek instrument was traditionally accompanied by song and recitation (*OED*). Dryden might well have described the relationship between the mourner and the dead by comparing them to a lyre musician and a singer, which would have suggested a sense of harmony and affinity between the two figures. Instead, Dryden has the two musicians plucking the same note on two lyres, and singing two “alike” songs to their music:

One common note on either lyre did strike,
And knaves and fools we both abhorr'd alike. (5-6)

These lines, instead of cooperation and accompaniment, imply two competing practitioners of the same trade, striving for a common “goal,” and this suggests that Dryden’s speaker and Oldham are not ‘intimately’ but rather ‘almost’ allied. The chain of jarring descriptions, extending from lines 1 to 10, reaches its final stage of development in an allusion to Virgil’s *Aeneid*:

Thus Nisus fell upon the slippery place,
While his young friend perform'd and won the Race. (9-10)

Just as in the first ten lines of the poem one proposition falls in order to promote another, and just as Nisus slips in a pool of blood and, by moving into the path of another competitor, helps his friend win the race, Oldham’s death also benefits Dryden. The poem, thus far, has moved away from the central/peripheral relationship between the dead figure and the poetic mourner, and has adopted a model of rivalry. In a moment, I shall examine how the poet turns Oldham’s death into an instrument for advancing his

own poetic art, and, by so doing, places the public mourner at the centre of mortuary poetry. Before I do so, however, I would like to pause and compare my interpretation of lines 9 to 10 with Peter Sack's reading of this passage. I hope this comparison will justify my belief that Nisus is meant to represent Oldham, and that his fall benefits Dryden.

In his commentary, Sacks points out the characters from Virgil's *Aeneid* who are analogous to the two artists of Dryden's elegy.

Nisus (Dryden) started ahead of Euryalus (Oldham) in the race (of life). Although closer to the goal (death), Nisus slipped, and Euryalus went on to win. Thus the allusion neatly captures the paradoxical reversal of expectation and consolingly converts Oldham's seeming defeat into a victory. . . . We recall that Euryalus won because the fallen Nisus had intervened on his behalf (Nisus deliberately tripped Silius, who had been running between him and Euryalus). While illustrating Nisus's selfless assistance to his friend, the detail invites us to recognise that it is, after all, the intervention of the elegist, with his fiction of the race, that allows the dead Oldham any such thing as a victory. (130)

From this point of view, Dryden's poem is a "gracious and compassionate farewell" and invites us to imagine Oldham's death as a victory that the elegist celebrates (127).

I agree that Dryden's elegy is ultimately a "gracious" tribute, but not on the grounds of the above analysis. I shall return to this conclusion later. For now, I would like to examine Sacks' interpretation of the race as a symbol of life and his association of characters across the two texts. Based on age alone, the critic is correct in linking Dryden with Nisus and Oldham with Euryalus. Dryden (1631-1700) was born earlier and lived longer than Oldham (1653-1683). Dryden seems to refer to this fact in the line "The last set out the soonest did arrive." The text of *Aeneid* identifies Euryalus as the younger of the two competitors:

First Nisus, with Euryalus, appears,
 Euryalus a Boy of blooming Years;
 With sprightly Grace, and equal Beauty crown'd:
Nisus, for Friendship to the Youth, renown'd. (V. 385-388)

Dryden, therefore, resembles Nisus who is older than Euryalus. Sack's comparison of the footrace to life's linear passage of time is a little less obvious. This is not just because the interpretation of death as a desired prize is counterintuitive, and not just because this view is too macabre for the Dryden who was unwilling to surrender to the reality of death and sought to bring Anne Killigrew back to life by asking her to stop her celestial wanderings.¹ Regardless of whether Sack's interpretation of death as a coveted prize is appropriate, I believe that there is another image in Virgil's tale that constitutes a more compelling symbol of death, namely the puddle into which Euryalus falls, one that is filled "with the Blood of Oxen, newly slain" (V. 429).² Although based on age alone the allusion to Virgil explicitly links Nisus to Dryden, this small detail in *Aeneid* suggests a

¹ Dryden, in fact, approaches the view of death suggested by Sacks in his epitaph "Upon Young Mr. Rogers of Glocestershire": "But, knowing Heav'n his Home, to shun Delay, / He leap'd o'er Age, and took the shortest Way" (7-8). However, unlike this epitaph, life after the grave is not a desired condition in "Oldham," for it represents a "gloomy night" (25). If death means a relocation to heaven, then it can represent a desired prize. This poem, however, presents visions of a different, darker afterlife.

² Sacks also notices this passage from *Aeneid*, but uses it to claim that the gory description of Nisus is "befitting a mourner" (130). The image indeed would have been "befitting" if Nisus had not fallen himself. He would, in such a case, symbolise the world of the living, or perhaps even represent Margaret Alexiou's mourner who wished to establish contact with the dead – a contact that is always desired in a mournful dirge but never actually established. The physical union between the fallen competitor and the dead oxen's blood, however, is too palpable to suggest a connection between the living and the dead. The image of Nisus covered with the blood of oxen foreshadows that condition where the bodies of all who are dead, animal or human, are together absorbed into the fabric of nature, or into the very ground on which the fallen Nisus lay.

subtler connection between the dead Oldham and Nisus. It is Oldham, not Dryden, who falls into the symbolic puddle of blood. Furthermore, the couplet “To the same Goal did both our Studies drive, / The last set out the soonest did arrive” refers neither to a teleological view of life with death as the ultimate goal nor to the linear passage of time, but to a contest that takes place in life and within constraints of time. The competition or the race is explicitly for literary accomplishment, and we see the two competitors training themselves in their “Studies.” The couplet claims that Oldham arrives first – an arrival that, contrary to Sacks’ interpretation, is defined in the poem by literary maturity or “ripe[ness]” (11), “wit” (15), and “rhyme” (21). However, I would like to suggest that, once again, this seemingly generous compliment embodies its own opposite intimations. I now turn to examine this element of irony in the poem.

So far I have pointed out that the poem’s first line suggests a tenuous basis for encomium, and that lines 1 to 10 step by step advance a relationship of rivalry instead of camaraderie between Oldham and Dryden. The elegist maintains this attitude towards Oldham, and praises his fellow artist in lines that carry hints of sarcasm or at least criticism:

O early ripe! to thy abundant store
 What could advancing Age have added more?
 It might (what Nature never gives the young)
 Have taught the numbers of thy native Tongue.
 But satyr needs not those, and wit will shine
 Through the harsh cadence of a rugged line. (11-16)

The fact that Oldham has an “abundant store” of “wit” and can write satirical verse is undermined by his stylistic shortcomings: Oldham, at the time of his death, has not mastered the “numbers” – that is, the metrical feet (*OED*) – of his “native Tongue,” as

exemplified in “the harsh cadence of [his] rugged line.” What is significant even more than this backhanded praise is that Dryden, with perfect control, artfully reproduces Oldham’s artlessness in poetic lines. The poet weaves a pattern of calculated regularity with iambic pentameter feet, only to spatter it with the “harsh cadence” of occasional ionic a minore (a spondee followed by a pyrrhic foot): “to the sáme góal,” “while his yóung fríend,” and “Through the hársh cádenche.” Wrapped about each of these occasional “rugged” feet is a tone of self-indulgence. I see also in them an anti-elegiac undertone: instead of even once supplying the name of the dead Oldham, Dryden marks this elegy with symbols of Oldham’s poetic shortcomings, while, at the same time, showing off the poetic prowess reflective of his own literary ripeness and achievement. This poem is a monument of Oldham’s artistic failures and a tribute to Dryden’s artistic mastery. The poem mimics from the very beginning Oldham’s inability to fashion a poetic form (“numbers”) that matches his ideas (“wit” and “satyr”). This incongruity becomes the very subject of Dryden’s verse, and Dryden’s ability to reproduce it in his poem suggests his artistic superiority. All the important features in this poem split into contradictory halves that clash against each other: the title that brazenly mentions Oldham’s name and the body of the poem that seems unwilling to commemorate Oldham and leaves out his name; the phrase “near allied” that implies distance as well as closeness; the allusion to *Aeneid* that declares Oldham a winner as well as a loser; the explicit words of praise that in their sounds mimic the inelegant voice of Oldham. All this mirrors the same irony that marks Dryden’s position as a public elegist. He assumes the role by writing an elegy that was to be published in a collection of tributes to Oldham,

but he begins to communicate sentiments that have little to do with the expression of grief for the death of a person.

By the end of the poem, the word “Farewell,” which we saw oddly located at the beginning of the poem, reappears, thus lending the poem a sense of circularity:

Once more, hail and farewell; farewell, thou young,
But ah too short, Marcellus of our tongue;
Thy brows with ivy and with laurels bound,
But fate and gloomy night encompass thee around. (22-25)

The repetition of the word “farewell” is itself significant, because instead of “[rousing] the spirit of the dead and [establishing] contact,” this repetition is meant to continually reassert Oldham’s departure. The poem’s circularity of form parallels the “fate and gloomy night” that “encompass” Oldham in the last line of the elegy. Unlike the sermons that I mentioned above, Oldham’s fate precludes any sense of continued existence. Oldham’s “brows” may be “bound” with “ivy” and “laurels;” however, these emblems, instead of symbolising immortality and artistic glory, are merely decorative, for Oldham is trapped in a position of dark circularity and stasis. Oldham does not need to be lamented and immortalised in a conventional way because he, as a lesser artist, has already served his purpose for Dryden. Oldham, like Nisus, has fallen, and Dryden, a fellow competitor in the race for literary accomplishment, has been inspired by Oldham’s death to produce a work of art.

The tone of the poem, however, goes against my interpretation. It is hard to read this poem, particularly for the first time, and not believe that it is a genuine lament. “Oldham” easily lends itself to this initial impression, partly because it is lucidly written, leading us through its smooth syntax and exciting us to hurry towards a level of meaning

that is too readily accessible. It is only after detailed analysis of words, images, and allusions that some elements of the poem begin to contradict their own immediate intimations. If T. S. Eliot is correct in claiming that “poetry can communicate before it is understood,” then “Oldham” is a poem that appears to contradict itself after it is understood (“Dante” 242). The poem splits into a courteous lament that the urbane tone seems to reflect, and the callous rivalry that the lines more subtly communicate. I have already suggested one reason for such instances of doubling. But is the poem a concrete, unified whole that merely embodies these minute sites of contradiction, using them for an ultimate purpose, or does its meaning remain unresolved to the very end? I do not believe that Dryden has created a work of art that systematically resists interpretation, because the polite, sympathetic tone of the speaker does not necessarily contradict the theme of rivalry. “Oldham” is a poem that is written for a very specific audience. It is an elegy written for other elegists and other poets. It is not intended to lament, praise, or console family members or an entire community. As such, it cannot fulfil the purpose that is shared by seventeenth-century homilies, and the performances of hired mourners in the antiquity and the early Church. Since Dryden’s aims are specific and personal – he writes an elegy about a younger, less talented artist – he is unable to assume the role of Puttenham’s poet-physician. He simply does not share the pain of Oldham’s friends and relatives. Dryden depicts a young man, lying in a pool of blood, having failed to reach his full potential. If the poem criticises Oldham’s shortcomings, it is not necessarily because it seeks to belittle the young artist; rather, it seeks to evoke pathos³ in other

³ Dryden, as I mentioned in my first chapter, always draws portraits of imperfect figures

artists, who are themselves running in the race, who may otherwise fail to see the sheer pain of disappointment that sudden failure brings. To a family member, building a poetic monument out of Oldham's failures may seem crude and unsympathetic; only other artists, to whom Oldham is a stranger and a rival, can begin to feel sadness for the death and failure of a young man who had shown passion and promise. The poem does not offer consolation and leaves Oldham in "gloomy darkness," because fellow competitors do not need to be consoled about the failures of their competitors. Dryden, however, invites them to feel sorrow, even if all they feel is happiness about their own favourable position in the race.

I have been trying to argue that Dryden's elegiac art is self-consciously unable to offer consolation to a large community of mourners, because the emotions from which it emerges are particular to the poet himself or to a small group to which the poet belongs. Dryden does not perform a cathartic dramatisation of grief for the benefit of a community, because grief is not the emotion that he feels. Instead, he pays tribute to the dead based on his own unique relationships with them. In the poem I am about to examine, Dryden is a mourner himself, suffering the loss of an acquaintance. As such, he hints towards his complex and often contradictory feelings that cannot be taxonomized into conventional categories of sorrow, grief, and lamentation. His response to the death of his friend is marked by conflicting shades of different emotions, because the two men's relationship in life was shaped by conflicting sentiments. "An Ode, on the Death of Mr. Henry Purcell" is a fragmented elegy, echoing ghostly whispers of other poems

in a way that incites "our Pity" so "that they might be Objects of [our] Compassion" (*All for Love* 69).

and structurally at war with itself, and it is one whose seemingly inelegant collage of disparate images and voices elegantly brings to visibility the poet's conflicted state of mind. He feels both happiness and pain as he contemplates the passing of not only a rival artist, but, according to critic H. T. Swedenberg, a man with whom he closely collaborated and for whom he felt "a genuine and personal admiration" (Commentary 753). Unlike "Oldham," this poem presents Dryden seemingly ill at ease even amidst a community of other poets; his emotions are so specific that they are not even reflected in the small community of his fellow artists.

One of the features that immediately sets "Purcell" apart from all other poems I have examined so far is the poem's formal architectonics. The poem's lineation does not seem to be organised according to any particular logic, housing with equal comfort two iambic diameters and, at the other extreme, a line with ten iambic feet: "With rival notes," "The godlike man," and "And list'ning and silent, and silent and list'ning, and list'ning and silent obey" (I.2, II.4, I.9). Dryden uses heroic couplets in "Oldham," which lend the poem a sense of regularity undermined only by one triplet. The rhyme-scheme of "Purcell," however, is surreptitiously complex and varies from one stanza to the next. Underneath the already volatile end-rhymes, the poet creates competing sets of phonemically related words embedded in the lines, such as "Mark," "Lark," and "Warbling," "Spring":

Mark how the Lark and Linnet Sing,
With rival Notes
They strain their warbling Throats,
To welcome in the Spring. (1-4)

These embedded rhymes suggest to our ears sonic associations that compete against those that our eyes more readily detect at the end of each line. Furthermore, lineation is not only strained by phonemic connections; it is also externally at war with grammar. In lines 2 to 4, the outer dependent clauses are each pulling the enveloped independent clause towards themselves, creating three different, equally viable sentences:

With rival Notes
They strain their warbling Throats,
To welcome in the Spring. (2-4)

If punctuation were left out, it would have been impossible for us to determine the poet's intended combination of clauses. I am pointing out these features of the poem because I wish to claim that the sense of fragmentation in the poem's form corresponds to the speaker's conflicted emotions. In what follows, I shall identify a particular community of mourners that is represented in the poem, and shall then examine the speaker's uncertainties about associating himself with this group.

As if unable to find new words to convey his new emotions, Dryden reaches towards the past, and calls into this poem ideas, images, and phrases from his former reflections on themes of death and rivalry. The lines "Alas, too soon retired, / As he too late began" (II. 5-6) exemplify this retrospective search for words, and remind us of passages from "Oldham" and Dryden's 1667 play *The Indian Emperour*: "To the same Goal did both our Studies drive, / The last set out the soonest did arrive" and "It seems my soul then mov'd the quicker pace, / Yours first set out, mine reach'd her in the race" ("Oldham" 7-8; *IE* I.ii.148-149). The words from the play – uttered by Guyomar, who is competing against his older brother to gain the affections of Alibech – convey the same

rivalry that is reflected in the passage from “Oldham.” Through these allusions, Dryden calls our attention to the theme of competition in “Purcell,” but, as we shall see, his attitudes differ from those expressed in “Oldham.” As the poem moves through its three stanzas, it tries to capture the conflicting emotions that rivalry and friendship have created in Dryden.

Using an allusion to “Oldham,” Dryden’s elegy for Purcell opens by depicting a community of artists who are competing against each other. In “With rival notes / They strain their warbling throats” we hear echoes of the line “One common note on either Lyre did strike” (“Purcell” l.2-3; “Oldham” 5). “The lark and linnet” in “Purcell” resemble the Oldham and Dryden of the past, who competed against one another as practitioners of the same trade racing towards the same goal. John Blow’s 1696 choral duet of “Purcell” represents this theme in music. Instead of having one voice singing the narrative of the poem, Blow has two countertenors, who sing in the same tonal range, echoing lines back and forth in a contrapuntal, fuge-like fashion. The voices come together as the two begin speaking about their common goal of “[welcoming] in the spring.” They drift apart as soon as this phrase comes to an end, and war against one another until they reach the line “They cease their mutual spite.” Blow was, of course, trying to emulate in music the modulation, clashing, and harmony of sounds that Dryden had created in verse. In the poem, the “mutual spite” of the two figures ends when Philomel (Purcell) enters the community of artists. This entrance is announced by a line of both regular alliterations and delicately balanced rhythm: “When Philomel begins her heav’nly lay” (l. 6). The repetition of the hushed *l* and *h* sounds stands in contrast to the

sharp alliterative consonants of the ensuing line that refers to the two competing voices: “They cease their mutual spite” (I.7). In this poem, the less important artists, the petty competitors, are forced into silence by the “God-like” artistry of Purcell, whose “Musick” they have no choice but to “drink . . . with delight” (II.3; I.8).

The first stanza ends with a set of pregnant silences that captures the emotional reaction of these artists to Purcell’s presence: “And list’ning and silent, and silent and list’ning, and list’ning and silent obey” (I.9). The lark and linnet are rendered speechless, and are unhappy about this change of their condition. They “obey” and “Drink in [Philomel’s] music with delight,” but not without reservations. The ten-footed line carries a mood of strenuous intensity, probably because its pace is lugubrious, speeding up only slightly in the intervals created by the unaccented, mono-syllabic conjunctions. The lark and linnet protest their forced obedience in their own small and inarticulate way. They try to escape their position by creating new poems and new lyrics, or, in other words, new arrangements of words and phrases. But their artistic limitations throw them back into the same position of inadequacy and quiet obedience. The poet recreates this futile process in a line that says very little, but in its lengthy repetition persistently and unsuccessfully attempts to utter new words. The two main verbs of the line, ‘listen’ and ‘silent,’ are rearrangements of the same alphabets, just as the line’s three clauses contain little more than the two verbs’ chiasmic exchange of positions; the line thus symbolises the lark and linnet’s inability to break out of their verbal or artistic limitations. The line bears signs of Philomel’s influence, her delicate harmony and rhythmic balancing of sounds, as if the two figures were trying to imitate the “God-like” artist. However, the

harmony created is not one of poetic genius, but monotonous repetition. The straggling, muted words fail to communicate much other than frustration, and the repetitive nature of the line gives the impression of restless and jittery anticipation. The two artists need to repeat what words they have in order to pass the time. Two repetitions will not do; it has to be three or more. Perhaps the lark and linnet are waiting for Purcell to “fall” in the race, so that they may sing again in the absence of his monopoly over artistic production, so that they may compete against one another as Philomel lies in a pool of ox’s blood, so that they may “strain their warbling Throats” by composing elegies about Purcell’s death, refusing to be bested by other minor artists in the competitive game of poetic mourning.

In “Oldham,” Dryden’s sentiments resembled those of the “rival Crew,” as he benefited artistically from Oldham’s death. In a moment, I would like to suggest that Dryden no longer shares the sentiments of the lark and linnet – at least not entirely. Before I do so, I would like to examine the attitudes of this community of minor artists to poetic mourning. In the second stanza of the poem, the lines

We beg not hell our Orpheus to restore:
Had he been there,
Their sovereign’s fear
Had sent him back before (II.7-10)

allude to a passage from Milton’s “Lycidas”:

Had ye been there—for what could that have done?
What could the Muse herself that *Orpheus* bore,
The Muse herself, for her enchanting son
Whom Universal nature did lament. (57-60)

The myth of Orpheus and Eurydice flows from its various classical versions to the medieval *Sir Orfeo* (from which Dryden very possibly borrows the bucolic setting of his

ode), and to prominent appearances in Milton's "Methought I Saw my Late Espoused Saint" and "Lycidas," until it faces revision by Dryden. In its normative elegiac use, the myth expresses the mourner's desire for the dead to be restored to life by Orpheus, a lyre-playing figure who goes to the underworld and rescues his wife. As Peter Sacks has pointed out, the questions of Milton's "swain" affirm the mourner's desire for and belief in the possibility of resurrection; "of course," Sacks writes,

there never effectively have been such guardians against mortality. But the question's creation of such a fictive addressee fosters the illusion that such a guardian was temporarily absent rather than permanently non-existent. (22)

In Dryden's lines, it is Orpheus himself, the guardian against mortality, who is in need of resurrection. The lark and linnet are unwilling to "beg" hell to restore Orpheus to them. They are content with leaving him in the "gloomy night" where Dryden had left Oldham. They claim that if Orpheus had been in the hellish underworld, then the sovereign of hell would have already sent him back. This is because the sovereign of hell would have feared the lyre-musician's ability to create harmony. Since Orpheus in his frequent visits had long ago destroyed hell's "jarring sphere," he must now be in the company of "the heav'nly choir," where he is enjoying a happy life (III.1). It is with this reasoning that the lark and linnet cunningly justify the dark fact that they do not wish to see Orpheus restored to life, even though their real reason is their desire for hellish competition on earth. The lark and linnet do not want guardians such as Orpheus to exist; they wish such figures to suffer permanent death. They do not wish the dead to be restored to life, because they want to compete at composing elegies for the dead. I would like to suggest that in this poem Dryden seems unable to decide whether to associate himself with "the

rival crew” or not, because his feelings for Purcell are too complex and contradictory to be captured by communal voices of artists and elegists.

Like the formal fragmentation of the poem, the speaker’s voice suffers from degree of instability. The poem begins with a narratorial voice, and the poetic persona, like the speaker in “Thyrsis’ Lament for Daphnis,” stands outside the poem’s line of action and invites us to listen to his descriptions: “Mark how the lark and linnet sing” (I.1). By pointing to and describing the lark and linnet, the speaker implies that he is standing at some distance from them. The same descriptive, narratorial mode of speech opens the second stanza: “So ceased the rival crew when Purcell came” (II.1). However, the speaker suddenly begins to use the first person plural “We” in “We beg not hell our Orpheus to restore” (II.7). It appears that Dryden has either joined the lark and linnet, or feels close enough to them to ventriloquise their words. Perhaps he has reverted to the sentiments he had about Oldham when he wrote that earlier elegy. However, this sudden alliance is troubled by the negative connotations that the poet attaches to the community of rival artists. The poet associates the lark and linnet’s love of rivalry and their “warbling throats” to the “jarring sphere” of hell. By the third stanza, as if he were troubled by the negative connotations of hell, the poet once again assumes the position of an outsider and, using the deictic, pointing term “Ye,” addresses the “rival crew”: “Ye brethren of the lyre and tuneful voice, / Lament his lot, but at your own rejoice” (III.5-6). The shift from the first person “We” to the second person “ye” and “your” indicates that the poet is not certain whether he belongs to the community of competing artists. These pronominal changes render elusive and indeterminate Dryden’s communal identity. He

may very well share some sentiments with these other artists, which might explain why he joins them momentarily. After all, this is the same Dryden who wrote “To the Memory of Mr. Oldham,” in which, unlike Puttenham’s paradigmatic mourner, he was lamenting and rejoicing at the same time – very much like the lark and linnet who “Lament his lot, but at [their] own rejoice” (III.5-6). However, he seems to have realised that he has less in common with these artists than he had imagined. Perhaps his heart aches too much for the passing of his friend Henry Purcell to allow for thoughts about the literary market. Perhaps he really holds nothing in common with minor artists who compete against one another. At this point in his life, Dryden is a prominent figure, having become Poet Laureate in 1668, and in 1670 Historiographer Royal. He already enjoys the eminence of the musician Purcell in the literary world. Perhaps Dryden is once again worried about himself and his own mortality; writing this poem at age 65, his mind might be troubled by thoughts about how other poets will pay tribute in their elegies to him. Perhaps, like the formal structure of his poem, Dryden’s response to Purcell’s death is a fragmented collage of all these emotions and thoughts. Whatever the case may be, Dryden once again refuses a communal language of mourning and a collectively shared response to death.

In the poems I examined in this chapter, we saw Dryden continuously forsaking communal expressions of lament and their manifestations in the conventions of the classical elegy. In “Oldham,” he puts to poetic lines his own private reaction to a fellow artist’s death, and creates a poem that does not contain the elements of lamentation, consolation, and encomium in their traditional forms. As such, his poem fails to carry out

the healing function of elegiac verse that was advocated by writers such as Puttenham. As a public mourner, Dryden does not pretend to share the emotions of an entire community, and thus does not perform cathartic dramatisations of mourning. He rejects communal responses to death even when voiced by members of a community (the lark and linnet) to which he belongs. Dryden shows that there are no literary conventions, no codified norms of mourning, and no public elegists able to soothe the grieving hearts of mourners. A poem of apotheosis such as “Anne Killigrew” may serve a purpose for a fallen age, but it ignores the private emotions of family members. Consolation and closure are privately achieved between the mourner and the dead, between Eleonora and her grieving family, and between the young gentleman and his parents. As a poet, Dryden does not pretend to hold special powers of healing; however, he sympathises with the pain of others, reaching, as he did in *Eleonora*, towards the unknown land of the dead and asking them to soothe the anguish of mourners.

Coda: The Purpose of Elegy, the Purpose of Art

I'd like to get away from earth awhile
And then come back to it and begin over.
May no fate wilfully misunderstand me
And half grant what I wish and snatch me away
Not to return. Earth's the right place for love:
I don't know where it's likely to go better.
I'd like to go by climbing a birch tree,
And climb black branches up to a snow-white trunk
Toward heaven, till the tree could bear no more,
But dipped its top and set me down again.

— Robert Frost, “Birches”

I wrote in my second chapter that passages in *Eleonora* display an evolution of emotions and thoughts, whereby new states of mind overrule previous others as the poet makes his way from the beginning to the end of the poem. It is not just *Eleonora*, but all the main poems I have treated that dramatise the poet's thought-processes instead of putting forth a point of view pure and unchanging. In “Anne Killigrew,” the shift from the highly personal lament of the grieving brother to the impersonal visions of the heavenly choir subtly betrays the poet's own uncertainties about the utilitarian function of encomium. In “Kneller,” the poet's mind swerves constantly, subjecting itself to the confines of reason or submitting to the lure of imagination. More important than localised instances, the poet changes his aims towards the end of *Eleonora*, and sets aside his efforts to transcend the physical world and to catch glimpses of the numinous and the unseen. “Young Gentleman” begins like a panegyric, but ends by criticising its own language of praise. “Oldham” is a poem that splits into contradictory halves reflective of

the poet's own divided mind. In "Purcell," the poet's communal identity remains forever elusive or at best mutable. When I first drew attention to the constant modulations in *Eleonora*, I suggested, with help from Peter Sacks, that the poet was celebrating his own signs of vitality. I still believe this to be true. However, since this trait touches a great number of poems written in the span of great many years – including "Kneller," which is not even an elegy – the turns and twists in the currents of the mind come to appear less as a minor feature of poems, but as something more general, something closer to the very purpose of Dryden's art.

It may be helpful for me to elaborate on the nature of the problem before I begin projecting these observations on Dryden's entire oeuvre. Everything I said in the above paragraph concerns the content of Dryden's poems. In addition to the content, I would like to suggest that the same internal divisions affect the poems' form also. If the content divides based on that which is high-minded or sublime (edifying a culture, praising the dead, catching visions of heaven) and that which is modest or merely human (admitting lack of knowledge, restricting the scope of writing to what is within the grasp of the senses, rejoicing over the fall of a competitor), then the poems' form splits into overbred, highly refined verse, and sounds and structures that are nearer to everyday speech and the spontaneous and imperfect workings of the mind. In "Anne Killigrew," the accretion of stanzas, united in purpose, presents cumulative examples of improvement and elevation; the poem itself seems to climb up the steps of Jacob's ladder until it reaches that implausible and ill-thought-out leap between the penultimate and the last stanzas. In *Eleonora*'s first stanza, the monarch's polished lines awkwardly sit next to the prosaic

description of the deceased woman. The poet's encomium of the "Young Gentleman" resembles parents' exaggerated, overly excited praise of their children, until he begins voicing his directives in the more down-to-earth, pragmatic diction and tone of the poem's ending. In "Oldham," the poet masterfully recreates the dead artist's rugged verse, while in "Purcell" he conveys his own uncertainties through pronominal realignments. The delicate harmony of lines that describe Purcell stands in sharp contrast to the uncouth mutterings of the lark and linnet. If the issue only concerned the poems' content, we could resolve the matter by saying that perhaps Dryden's mind was not made up; perhaps he needed to think on paper; or perhaps he was just confused. But since Dryden makes a special effort, year after year, to weave the mutations and contradictions into the very structure of his poems, the problem becomes one about poetry and art. In these poems, and in their clashes between the high and the low, Dryden is asking how far art, in its materials and its presentation, can diverge from reality while still meaningfully commenting on life. As my epigraph suggests, any poet, from any age and continent, must face this question if he or she seeks to write on the human experience in highly refined forms of art. How does Dryden ultimately answer this question? In my readings of "Anne Killigrew" and *Eleonora*, I argued that the poet eschews unrealistic flights of the imagination by the poems' endings. Again, this interpretation about specific poems is insufficient now that we have assumed a wider perspective through which we see Dryden continually dramatising the movements of the mind across his career. These movements, re-enacted throughout Dryden's poems, do not intimate a change of mind, but rather hint towards an essential aspect of art. Since the question is about Dryden's art in general, we

need not confine ourselves to Dryden's poems alone and can look elsewhere for an answer.

In 1663, when Dryden sits down to collaborate with his patron and future brother-in-law, Sir Robert Howard, an argument breaks out between the two men about the play *The Indian Queen* (1664). Dryden insists that the play should rhyme in couplets. Howard, along with a long line of Dryden's critics, thinks the idea outrageous. In his preface to *The Indian Emperour* (1667), Dryden quotes one such critic:

he tells me, *I pursue that which I call Natural in a wrong application: for 'tis not the question whether Rhyme or not Rhyme be best or most natural for a serious subject, but what is nearest the nature of that it represents.* (5)

Dryden wins the argument with Howard, goes on to defend his decision in his many essays, prefaces and letters, and continues writing plays in rhyming couplets. Dryden wants his plays to occupy a middle ground between what he calls "truth" and "fancy" in *The Conquest of Granada, Part I* (1670) or "Judgement" and "Fancy" in his dedicatory letter to James Bertie (V.i.428-439; 232). In his preface to *The Indian Emperour*, he takes "great pains to prove Rhyme as natural in a serious Play, and more effectual than blanck Verse," by arguing, in the fashion of Sir Philip Sidney, that "delight is the chief, if not the only end of Poesie" and that "Poesie instructs as it delights" (5-6). The excitement of the senses that structural devices such as rhyme can create goes hand in hand with the elevation of content that Dryden deems necessary in art; a "Heroick Poet," he writes in "Of Heroique Plays: an Essay" (1670),

is not ty'd to a bare representation of what is true, or exceeding probable: but that he may let himself loose to visionary objects, and to the representation of such things, as depending not on sence, and therefore not to be comprehended by knowledge, may give him a freer scope for imagination. (12)

Dryden, however, is mindful of not letting imagination and fancy – as expressed in both form and content – get out of control. His plays deal with political, social, and romantic themes, and do not represent “Gods and Spirits, and those Enthusiastick parts of Poetry” (“Heroique Plays” 12). In addition, the couplets serve a dual purpose by simultaneously aiding and restraining the imagination. In his dedicatory letter “To the Right Honourable Roger Earl of Orrey,” attached to the play *The Rival Ladies* (1664), Dryden contends that one of “the advantages which Rhyme has over Blanck Verse” is that “it Bounds and Circumscribes the Fancy” (100-101); he continues:

For Imagination in a Poet is a faculty so Wild and Lawless, that like an High-ranging Spaniel it must have Cloggs tied to it, least it out-run the Judgement. The great easiness of Blanck Verse, renders the Poet too Luxuriant; He is tempted to say many things, which might better be Omitted, or at least shut up in fewer Words. (101)

Dryden’s “Tumult of . . . Thoughts,” his art’s “disorderly kind of Beauty,” his “eagerness of Imagination,” are “Moulded in to . . . shape” so that delight may never take precedence over instruction (95). At the same time, form and content must be elevated from everyday narratives and everyday speech if they are to delight the reader and the audience. It is this striving towards a perfect balance between “fancy” and “truth” that creates the tensions we have noticed in Dryden’s art. This theoretical objective translates on the poetic page into the push and pull, the mismatchings, the dance that may strike our eyes as irreconcilable contradictions and changes of attitude.

Now that I have identified a driving force behind Dryden’s art, we can apply our observations to his poetry of death by returning to my original question. How does Dryden ultimately reconcile his poems’ divergences from reality with their more realistic

view of life? The answer, I suggest, can be found in these words that Dryden wrote in his letter to Orrery:

When I had Moulded it to that Shape it now bears, I look'd with such Disgust upon it, that the Censures of our severest Critiques are Charitable to what I thought (and still think) of it my Self: 'Tis so far from me to believe this perfect, that I am apt to conclude our best Plays are scarcely so. For the Stage being the Representation of the World, and the Actions in it, how can it be imagin'd, that the Picture of Human Life can be more Exact than Life it Self is? (95)

The rises and falls of emotions, the contradictory thoughts and feelings, the swerves of the mind and the heart, the high and the low – all these are the markers of a griever's emotional state. How can the poet speak about such chaos in exact terms? Dryden's art as a whole, whether it is about love or loss, captures the conflicting tensions that attend a heart visited by potent emotions. His art cannot be exact, because "Life it Self" is not exact. If Dryden firmly believes in a set of artistic principles – such as the Neoplatonic ideas I wrote about in my first chapter or the perfect balance between "fancy" and "truth" that he aims towards in his plays – he does not abide by them in every respect. In their representation of the human heart, Dryden's poems of death move from side to side as they circle around his ideals. Dryden's divergences from high encomium and high language are but a show of support to the bereaved. Dryden may not feel that he knows enough about the deceased and the mourners to offer consolation. But in a gesture of solidarity he points to the same emotions – at times tender, at times raging, always incalculable, always essential – that are the markers of the human race. These emotions run in the veins of everyone: the mourners, John Dryden's, and ours.

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