Apostrophe as Play in Seventeenth-Century Lyric

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In the last two decades of early modern literary scholarship, the stock of the figures of speech, long denigrated as mere ornaments, has risen immensely. Numerous studies have confirmed their value as tools for understanding early modern literature, not just in formal and stylistic terms but also in its broader cultural and historical context. The edited collection *Renaissance Figures of Speech*, for example, considers thirteen figures of speech not merely as they are put to use in literary works but also as keys for analyzing "the period's characteristic modes of perception, forms of argument, states of feeling or styles of reading."[1] In *Outlaw Rhetoric*, Jenny Mann extends this project by demonstrating that the most seemingly "outlandish" figures of speech were in fact central to the constitution of a distinctively English "vernacular eloquence," shaping not just English literary style but also, by means of "transactions between figure and plot," "a series of particularly English stories."[2] More recently, in *Indecorous Thinking* Colleen Rosenfeld argues that by enabling the creation of "distinctive channels of relation" that allow us "to see something in its capacity to be otherwise than it is," the figures of speech are actually what underlie and facilitate the "world-making" powers of Renaissance literature more generally.[3]

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[1] Sylvia Anderson, Gavin Alexander, and Katrin Ettenhuber, "Introduction: The Figures in Renaissance Theory and Practice," in *Renaissance Figures of Speech*, ed. Anderson, Alexander, and Ettenhuber (Cambridge University Press, 2007), 11–12.

[2] Jenny C. Mann, *Outlaw Rhetoric: Figuring Vernacular Eloquence in Shakespeare's England* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2012), 24–25.

[3] Colleen Rosenfeld, *Indecorous Thinking: Figures of Speech in Early Modern Poetics* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2018), 7–8.

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These studies have all drawn new and welcome attention to the literary and cultural significance of a range of figures of speech from the familiar (e.g., simile and hyperbole) to the relatively obscure (e.g., paradiastole and syncrisis). One figure, however, has so far been largely overlooked. *Apostrophe*—defined by Quintillian as "speech 'averted' from the judge" and addressed to another—is unquestionably one of the most widespread figures in the period, and yet it is mentioned only in passing in these and similar scholarly works.[4] Its comparative neglect is all the more striking given how central it has been to other discussions of poetic language more generally. Most notably, Jonathan Culler has theorized apostrophe in terms that make it little less than the master figure of all lyric poetry. Lyric, Culler argues, should be conceived not as "the fictional representation of an experience or an event so much as an attempt to be itself an event."[5] He thus frequently likens lyric poetry to a kind of ritual, liturgy, or incantation, a text devised for the "event" of its recitation. And inasmuch as it "foregrounds the event of address" and thereby creates "the impression of something happening now," apostrophe, Culler argues, is the crucial rhetorical means of creating that "event."[6] It is the principal vehicle of what he calls "effects of presence"—that is to say, the sense that the persons or beings poems address are alive, present, and responsive to lyric summoning.

Culler's account is unabashedly ahistorical, and he draws on examples from classical through medieval and Renaissance to modern poetry in making his case. Examples from early modern poetry are, however, sparser than those from Romantic and modern lyric in his account, and indeed—in the only sustained critical reflection on apostrophe in early modern lyric—Paul Alpers has argued that Culler's theory of apostrophe is more apt for Romantic poetry, with its vatic presumptions, than for Renaissance lyric. In Renaissance poetry, Alpers argues, apostrophe takes what he calls "presumably solid realities" for granted, functioning as a metonymic and metaphoric representation of those realities rather than a poetic event that seeks to summon them into being in a manifestation of poetic power.[7] Thus it is not possible, Alpers argues, to transfer Culler's reading of apostrophe in Blake's "Rose, thou art sick" to Edmund Waller's "Go, lovely rose": "Where the romantic poet provides the breath of life that makes the flower resemble a human being, the seventeenth-century poet takes the likenesses (from the red color to attractive loveliness to mortality) as aspects of reality, and his mode of address is therefore easier and cooler."[8] Alpers's account is certainly intelligible in classical and Renaissance rhetorical terms, in which the plausibility and "reality" underlying potentially extravagant figurative language is guaranteed by a sense of decorum—that is, appropriateness to audience and circumstance according to a shared sense of what is natural.[9] In this regard his understanding of apostrophe also fits in with a well-established school of thought, going back to scholars as different as Rosemond Tuve and Michel Foucault, which asserts that the at times extravagant "resemblances" of Renaissance poetic rhetoric reflect a network of real cosmic connections that are no longer available to modernity and thus whose "solid reality" is simply less apparent to us.[10]

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[4] Quintillian, *The Orator's Education*, ed. and trans. Donald A. Russell (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001), 55. Renaissance usage of apostrophe is briefly discussed in Gavin Alexander, "Prosopopoeia: The Speaking Figure," in Anderson, Alexander, and Ettenhuber, *Renaissance Figures of Speech*, 107–8; and Rosenfeld, *Indecorous Thinking*, 93.

[5] Jonathan Culler, *Theory of the Lyric* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press), 16.

[6] Ibid., 187.

[7] Paul Alpers, "Apostrophe and the Rhetoric of Renaissance Lyric," *Representations* 122, no. 1 (Spring 2013): 8, 10, 13.

For critics such as Rosenfeld, in contrast, the "distinctive channels of relation that figures afford" are ways of seeing the given world differently, and thus open the possibility of creating a new and "indecorous" reality. In *Five Words* Roland Greene lends theoretical support to such accounts by charting a shift in sixteenth-century rhetoric from the Ciceronian understanding of *inventio* as "'the excogitation of true things or seemingly true things to render one's cause plausible'" to invention as a cognitive power that "remakes the world in which it takes place."[11] The pretense of an apostrophe, of course, is that the being addressed is already "there" in some sense, and thus that poetic exclamation is nothing more than a response to a reality that is merely discovered—"invented" in its etymological and classical rhetorical sense. Yet according to Culler that pretense is itself, effectively, what makes the being present and conjures it into life: the poet purports merely to assume that its addressee could respond to lyric summoning, but in fact this assumption is itself what makes the addressee potentially responsive—all on the level, of course, of a performative effect in which readers or listeners temporarily acquiesce. Seen in this way, apostrophe covertly aspires to turn words that would ordinarily be mere representations into something more, endowing them with the illusion of concrete presence and conjuring a sense of reality in which we readers are invited to share. And in this regard, it might in fact seem like a signal instance of what Greene and several other scholars have characterized as a fundamental tension in Renaissance literary culture—between a sense of reality and matter as given, on the one hand, and the human power to shape and remake that reality on the other.[12]

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[8] Ibid., 8.

[9] It is to the idea of decorum that Alpers implicitly alludes when he writes that the "degree of humanization [in an apostrophe] is a matter of rhetorical tact and performance" (ibid., 11).

[10] See Rosemond Tuve, *Elizabethan and Metaphysical Imagery: Renaissance Poetic and Twentieth-Century Critics* (University of Chicago Press, 1947); and Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Vintage, 1973), 17–44.

[11] Roland Greene, *Five Words: Critical Semantics in the Age of Shakespeare and Cervantes* (University of Chicago Press, 2013), 25, 29.

Apostrophe's powers of summoning or conjuration, as described by Culler, are anticipated in the early modern period by John Hoskins's definition of the figure in his *Directions for Speech and Style*, which applies them to both human and nonhuman addressees: "feigning the presence or the discourse of some such persons as . . . are not at all. . . . Sometymes the occasion is to some quallitie, or thing, that yo^{r} selfe giues shewe of life to."[13] Most early modern rhetorical treatises, however, place more emphasis on the figure's digressive quality: in his *Art of English Poesy*, for example, George Puttenham defines it as that figure whereby "when we haue runne a long race in our tale spoken to the hearers, we do sodainly flye out & either speake or exclaime at some other person or thing."[14] Thus it is not entirely surprising that scholars working on early modern figuration, focused as they are on a primarily historical understanding of rhetorical practice, have not dwelled extensively on apostrophe's evocative and creative powers—let alone in relation to lyric, a genre that was itself relatively undertheorized in this period.[15] In both recent scholarship and early modern poetic theory itself, the poet's power to "make a world" of his or her own is usually associated not with lyric but fiction: the "making" of a fictional plot and of the mimetic world in which that plot unfolds.[16] And yet if we take as our guide what early modern lyric poets do, in addition to what they say about they do—wagering that we can infer a "historical poetics" from poetic practice even in the absence of overt statements—we will see that apostrophe is not merely a central figure in early modern lyric but also one by virtue of which it participates in the kinds of creative powers that have usually been ascribed to other genres in the period. According to Genesis 1:3–14 (Vulgate), God's power of Creation was exercised by making each element of the world in turn: in a series of fiats ranging from the light created on the first day [*Fiat lux*] to the creation of the firmament on the second [*Fiat firmamentum*], the stars on the fourth [*Fiant luminaria*], and man on the sixth. The fiat is the fundamental expression of the Christian God's power to create ex nihilo: in other words, to give not only form but being itself to what he creates—in opposition to the Platonic demiurge of the *Timaeus*, who creates out of preexistent matter and in accordance with the eternal ideas.[17] Understood as the fiat's power to summon its objects into existence ex nihilo, divine creativity might be seen as a model not for the cosmopoiesis associated with mimetic fiction (which arguably resembles demiurgic rather than ex nihilo creation) but rather for lyric's capacity to evoke anything that it wishes before us by means of the figure of apostrophe. Poetic worldmaking might thus describe not just the making of an autonomous fictional world but also a series of lyric acts that insist on their own ability to conjure the world before us piece by piece, like the sequential fiats of Creation itself.[18]

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[12] For foundational studies emphasizing a shift between divine and human forms of creation in the period, see David Quint, *Origin and Originality in Renaissance Literature: Versions of the Source* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1983), esp. 1–31; Harry Berger Jr., *Second World and Green World: Studies in Renaissance Fiction-Making* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), esp. 3–41; and Gordon Teskey, *Delirious Milton: The Fate of the Poet in Modernity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006), esp. 20–44.

[13] John Hoskyns, "Direccions for Speech and Style," in Louise Brown Osborn, *The Life, Letters and Writings of John Hoskyns, 1566–1638* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1937), 162. I have modernized the author's name and the title of the work in the main text.

[14] George Puttenham, *The Art of English Poesy*, ed. Frank Whigham and Wayne A. Rebhorn (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2007), 323.

[15] This primarily historicist approach is the one taken, e.g., in Alexander, Anderson, and Ettenhuber, *Renaissance Figures of Speech.* Culler's account of lyric as event and iterable performance is in fact very well suited for the rhetorical poetics of the early modern period inasmuch as rhetoric itself treats language not simply as statement but as efficacious performance, culminating in the *actio* or delivery of a speech. Indeed, if the figure of apostrophe is overlooked in early modern poetics as in recent scholarship, it is perhaps in part because (with its live, present-tense effect) it is so central to such performance that it is taken for granted, implicit in almost every poetic work in the period—whether directed to the readers addressed by an epic poet or to the audience addressed by characters in a play or the speaker of a poem.

It is, perhaps unsurprisingly, in poetry addressed to the world of Creation itself that such power is mostly fully illustrated, for it is against the nonhuman and inanimate elements of Creation that poetry's own power to give life and create can most clearly be measured. And as we will see, apostrophe—of a kind far from the "easier and cooler" examples considered by Alpers—is the defining rhetorical feature of such poetry across the Italian, French, and English traditions. Of course, the beings addressed in these poems are arguably the most "solid realities" of all—indeed, reality itself as ordained by God in the beginning, which far from providing scope for the poet's own powers would seem to be the ultimate ground of all rhetorical decorum, plausibility, and verisimilitude. Yet just as the way one human being addresses another is never neutral in its implications, so too, when directed to something nonhuman, the act of apostrophe has a rhetorical effect on what it addresses, to begin with in its intrinsic "enthusiasm": at the very least singling an object out for attention and thus implicitly heightening its value, and at the limit giving it life, conjuring its presence before us in a creative verbal act that overlaps with the action of Creation itself. Over the course of the seventeenth century, and in conjunction with increasingly elaborate modes of lyric figuration, apostrophe's power of "making present" becomes the rhetorical vessel of a power of lyric fiat, which transforms the nature of what it addresses by means of a creative decree unfolding in the present of the poem. While that power often depends on some sort of embedded metaphor, it is what we might call the "baroque apostrophe" that turns that metaphor into an event, no longer simply a fanciful description of difference but a self-conscious production and performance of difference unfolding in the rhetorical present of the poem. Apostrophe is the crucial element in that performance, providing the final breath of vitality that conjures the alternate reality evoked by other seemingly more "colorful" figures into being and life.

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[16] In addition to Berger, *Second World and Green World*, see Ronald Levao, *Renaissance Minds and Their Fictions: Cusanus, Sidney, Shakespeare* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985); and Giuseppe Mazzotta, *Cosmopoiesis: The Renaissance Experiment* (University of Toronto Press, 2001).

[17] See Gerhard May, *Creatio Ex Nihilo: The Doctrine of "Creation Out of Nothing" in Early Christian Thought*, trans. A. S. Worrall (London: Clark International, 1994).

[18] Though I refer throughout this essay to apostrophe's powers of conjuration, summoning, and evocation, these are intended above all as metaphors for the poems' self-presentation and rhetorical stance. What may seem to us the "magical" quality of language in these poems, I am suggesting, is underwritten by their relatively self-conscious conflation of rhetoric as the art of efficacious language with the divine fiat as the ultimate exemplar of such language—i.e., they are not so much insisting on their own incantatory power over the world as self-consciously performing their own creative purchase on the world through their rhetoric. Creativity itself becomes a rhetorical effect in these poems, generated precisely by their use of apostrophe.

In early modern studies, the notion of literature as event has been more often associated with drama than with lyric poetry (as in Culler's account).[19] And indeed, in Petrarchan sonnet sequences, which are often taken to stand in for early modern lyric *tout court*, the power of the single poem as a "happening" is subordinated to the narrative logic of the sequence as a whole, so that a more extended sense of temporality can seem to predominate.[20] Poems to the Creation, however, draw on classical genres of the hymn and ode for their paradigms—types of poems frequently dominated by apostrophe and that (conceived as they were for religious rituals or athletic events) thus constitute an enunciative "event" in Culler's sense much more clearly than a sonnet (indeed, Culler draws on Pindar and Horace as paradigmatic classical exemplars).[21] When these genres are repurposed for a Christian audience and specifically for the Christian notion of ex nihilo creation, the enunciative event of the poem is made to coincide rhetorically with the ur event of Creation itself, and specifically with the iterable and infinitely creative verbal event comprised by the fiat. The idea of the event—that which, as opposed to action, is uncaused and unpredictable, impersonal and radically contingent—may seem to sit ill with traditional visions of the Creation as the divine foundation of a rational and benign order, designed for both the well-being and the spiritual edification of man.[22] But under the influence of late medieval and Reformation theology, a different and more voluntaristic concept of the Creation—as the ultimate instance of God's inscrutable power rather than as an anthropocentric manifestation of harmony and order—was gaining ground in the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, exemplified, for example, in William Davenant's ekphrastic murals of Creation as an inscrutable act of sovereign power, centering on the arbitrary fiat, in *Gondibert*.[23] It is such a vision of Creation, I suggest, that the baroque apostrophe bears out in the creative fiats of its own, each of which evokes wondrous, even monstrous singularities testifying to a power transcending all order.[24] A crucial part of the poem's own rhetorical stance, that wonder at the same time implicitly redounds to the poem itself as a created marvel that recapitulates the wonder of Creation. Where Creation is grasped as an event and, accordingly, as a power of free play—God's own ability to make the world other than it seems to us at any time, transcending hierarchies of high and low or differences of genus and kind—that event is one the poem may itself recreate in its own present tense, through its own rhetorical techniques, and above all by means of the figure of apostrophe.[25]

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[19] For accounts of the "event" in early modern literature, see Jacques Lezra, *Unspeakable Subjects: The Genealogy of the Event in Early Modern Europe* (Stanford University Press, 1997); and Michael Witmore, *Culture of Accidents: Unexpected Knowledges in Early Modern England* (Stanford University Press, 2001). See also Michael Witmore, "Eventuality," in *Early Modern Theatricality*, ed. Henry S. Turner (Oxford University Press, 2013), 386–401.

[20] Colin Burrow resists the narrative reading of the sequence but argues that the poems should be seen as comprising "events" in the early modern rather than modern sense of the word—that is, as indicating a "contingent future occurrence, which could turn out one way or another," for they "suggest that their full force will operate only in the future" ("Shakespeare's Sonnets as Event," in *The Sonnets: The State of Play*, ed. Hannah Crawforth, Elizabeth Scott-Baumann, and Clare Whitehead [London: Bloomsbury, 2017], 98, 107).

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[21] Apostrophe's centrality to the genre of the hymn in particular—ranked by Scaliger, along with paeans, as one of the two "most excellent kinds of poetry" (Giulio Cesare Scaligero, *Select Translations from Scaliger's Poetics*, trans. Frederick Morgan Padelford [New York: Holt, 1905], 20)—is implicitly recognized by Philip Rollinson when he describes its three parts: "The exordium usually invokes the Muse and apostrophizes the god or goddess to be praised. . . . The main body of the hymn will consider in more detail some major characteristic referred to or suggested by the catalogue. . . . The peroration almost always contains some sort of apostrophe and prayer" ("The Renaissance of the Literary Hymn," in *Renaissance Papers 1968*, ed. George Walton Williams [Durham, NC: Southeastern Renaissance Conference, 1969], 13–14).

[22] Lezra, for example, defines the event, in opposition to action, as that which "has no properties of its own except those of having occurred unforeseen, unpredicted, and as it were unpredicated" (*Unspeakable Subjects*, 8).

[23] For the rise of antirationalist, voluntarist accounts of Creation and divine power in this period, see Eugene M. Klaaren, *Religious Origins of Modern Science: Belief in Creation in Seventeenth-Century Thought* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1977); and Francis Oakley, *Omnipotence, Covenant and Order: An Excursion in the History of Ideas from Abelard to Leibniz* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1984). For Davenant's hexameral murals in *Gondibert* as depictions of Creation in terms of sovereign power, centering on the fiat, see Giulio J. Pertile, "Marvell and the Poetics of Creation," in *Imagining Andrew Marvell at 400*, ed. Matthew C. Augustine, Giulio Pertile, and Steven N. Zwicker (Oxford University Press, 2022), 171–76. The belief that the world is not a manifestation of necessary order but could have been created differently—and, relatedly, that other, differently constituted worlds are possible—was perhaps the clearest expression of this idea, seen in *Gondibert* and in Milton's description of "his dark materials to create more worlds" (*Paradise Lost*, ed. Alastair Fowler [Harlow: Longman, 2006], 2.916).

I. THE POWER OF ADDRESS IN GIROLAMO FONTANELLA'S HEXAMERAL CANZONIERE

A genre unto itself in this period, poetry celebrating God's Creation of the world is usually associated with Guillaume Du Bartas's *La sepmaine, ou creation du monde* (1578), which like its most prominent followers—Torquato Tasso's *Mondo creato* (1594) and the inset hexameron in book 7 of Milton's *Paradise Lost* (1667)—took the form of narrative epic. The dozens of other hexameral works that appeared in the near century between the poems of Du Bartas and Milton, however, took a range of different forms; the sheer multiplicity of the created world often resulted in a tendency toward lyric in particular. Gaspare Murtola's *Creatione del mondo* (1608), for example, is nominally in narrative form, but its ottava rima rhyme scheme means that passages describing individual created things can easily be isolated, and in fact each day in his poem comes with a table of contents listing what are effectively discrete poems addressing different elements of Creation in turn.[26] Murtola's more famous rival, the Neapolitan poet Giambattista Marino, had himself at one point envisioned a series of literary hymns dedicated to each element of Creation, the *Polinnia*, and he seems to have been working on it around the time that he wrote a satirical sonnet deriding Murtola's own efforts in this direction.[27] The last Italian hexameron of the century, Girolamo Semenzi's *Il mondo creato diviso nelle sette giornate*, was comprised of over three hundred sonnets paraphrasing and expanding on the first chapter of Genesis in piecemeal fashion.[28]

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[24] Arguing that the early modern period increasingly witnesses the blurring of the distinction between action and event—"between events (which simply happen of themselves) and actions (which are directed from without)"—Witmore suggests that such blurring can be observed, for example, in the reevaluation of monsters and other anomalies, now treated not as failures or exceptions to order but rather as singular and signal manifestations of divine creative power (*Culture of Accidents*, 8).

[25] For the idea of divine creation as play in the Renaissance, see Kepler's *Tertius interveniens*: "Just as God the creator has played, so he has taught Nature, his image, to play, and indeed to play the same game that he has played before her" (quoted in Paula Findlen, "Between Carnival and Lent: The Scientific Revolution at the Margins of Culture," *Configurations* 6, no. 2 [Spring 1998]: 259). The idea goes back to Wisdom's description of herself as *ludens in orbe terrarum* in the book of Proverbs (8:31). For a valuable recent account of early modern play, see Joe Moshenska, *Iconoclasm as Child's Play* (Stanford University Press, 2019).

[26] Gaspare Murtola, *Della creatione del mondo poema sacro* (Venice, 1608). For a rich overview of Creation poetry in late sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Italy, see Giacomo Jori, *Le forme della creazione: Sulla fortuna del "mondo creato"; Secoli XVII e XVIII* (Florence: Olschki, 1995); for discussion of Murtola's poem, see 47–76.

Perhaps the most original lyric hexameron to emerge from this period, however, is book 1 of the Neapolitan poet Girolamo Fontanella's *Ode*, first printed in 1633 and republished, in an expanded version, in 1638. The 1638 edition includes ninety-nine odes divided into three "books": the first consisting of forty-seven odes dedicated to created entities, the second containing thirty-two odes dedicated to friends and patrons, and the third containing twenty poems of praise dedicated to the nobility and religious figures. While the second and third books clearly imitate the classicizing, "Pindaric" odes of Ronsard and Chiabrera, focusing on the gods and elevated persons, Fontanella's first book is little less than a lyric book of Creation as a whole, moving from odes to the sky and the angels to odes to bees and a grasshopper.[29] In contrast to the self-conscious gravitas often associated with the genre of the ode in this period, the poems in Fontanella's first book thus take in all of Creation from high to low, in accordance with the unclassical egalitarianism of the Judeo-Christian tradition. And as the titles of the poems suggest—almost every one begins with "A" or "To"—they are dominated by the figure of apostrophe. The collection looks very much like an attempt to make good on Marino's vision for the *Polinnia*, which Fontanella could have read about in the letter appended to the 1614 edition of Marino's *Lira*.[30]

The first poem in book 1 of the *Ode*, "Al cielo" (To the heavens), serves as something of a proem to the collection as a whole, addressing its subject as the "first-born" child of nature that contains and controls everything else in Creation—that is, everything that subsequent odes will go on to describe:

AL CIELO	TO THE HEAVENS
Pompa de l'Universo	Pomp of the universe,
Tempio d'eternità, trono di Dio,	Temple of eternity, throne of God,
Ornamento diverso,	Diverse ornament,

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[27] See Emilio Russo, *Marino* (Rome: Salerno Editrice, 2008), 240–46.

[28] Girolamo Semenzi, *Il mondo creato diviso nelle sette giornate: Poesie mistiche* (Milan, 1666). On Semenzi, see Jori, *Le forme della creazione*, 99–118.

[29] For the most comprehensive account of the revival of the ode in the Renaissance, see Carol Maddison, *Apollo and the Nine: A History of the Ode* (London: Routledge, 1960).

[30] See Russo, *Marino*, 241.

Che 'l Fattor de la luce intorno ordio,	Which the maker of light arranged all around,
Primogenito parto almo e fecondo,	First-begotten birth, lifegiving and fecund,
Dal bel sen di natura uscito al mondo.	From the bosom of nature come to the world.
Trasparente volume,	Transparent volume,
Ove a lettere d'or scrive il destino,	Where destiny writes, with letters of gold
Infra righe di lume,	Between lines of light,
Quanto dispose il gran voler divino,	All that the great divine will disposed,
Ne' cui fogli lucenti ognor si legge	In whose lucent leaves we may always read
Del mondo inferior l'eterna legge.	The eternal law of the lower world.
Luminosa scultura,	Luminous sculpture,
Ove imagini ardenti impresse il fato,	Where fate impressed its glowing images,
Ingemmata scrittura,	Bejeweled writing,
Ove nota gli annali il tempo alato,	Where winged time writes its annals,
Et ove pur ne la superna corte	And where even in the supreme court
I decreti di Dio segna la sorte.	Fate signs the decrees of God.
Ricca e lucida scena,	Rich and lucid scene,
Ch'hai d'eterno splendor fiaccole ardenti,	With glowing torches of eternal splendor,
Ove a l'ombra serena	Where under serene shadow
Rappresentan le stelle atti lucenti,	The stars perform lucent acts,
E di vari guerrier mostran l'istorie,	And show the stories of various warriors,
Che traslati han là su perpetue glorie.	Whose perpetual glories are transported up there.
Spaziosa campagna,	Spacious country,
Cui le stelle son fior, gli angeli augelli,	In which stars are flowers, angels are birds,
Et ove corre e stagna	And where a river of ambrosia
Il torrente d'ambrosia in più ruscelli,	Runs and gathers in many streams,
Che spargendo d'influssi ampi canali,	Which spreading the ample channels of their influence,
Empion d'alti favor l'urne fatali.	Fill the fatal urns with high favors.
Edificio sovrano,	Sovereign edifice,
Che meraviglie scopri a parte a parte,	Uncovering marvels part by part,
Fabricato per mano	Made by the hand
Di quel gran Mastro, onde Natura ha l'arte,	Of that great Master, from whom Nature has its art,
Composto sol d'incorruttibil tempre,	Composed only of incorruptible tempers,
Per star sicuro e per resister sempre.	To stay secure and resistant always.

Velocissima rota,	Swiftest wheel,
Che fai nel corso tuo perpetuo giro,	Which make in your course your perpetual circle,
E con tua forza ignota,	And with your unknown force,
Ogni stato girar fai teco in giro,	Make every state turn around with you,
Volubil sì, ma non mutabil mai,	Flighty indeed, and yet never mutable,
Per l'usato sentier ritorni e vai.	You return and go by the same path.
Musico armonioso,	Harmonious musician,
Che movi al moto tuo gli organi eterni	Who move according to your motion the eternal organs,
E con piè luminoso	And with luminous foot
Fai le stelle danzar fra i moti alterni,	Make the stars dance in alternate motions,
E le cose qua giù varie e discordi,	And things down here, various and discordant,
Col bell'ordine tuo tempri et accordi.[31]	Temper and tune with your beautiful order.

The structure of this poem is typical of the odes that follow in the first book of the *Ode*: each stanza begins with an apostrophe that introduces an elaborate conceit describing the being addressed from a new, figurative point of view. In "Al cielo," each conceit characterizes the sky, in a different way, as a container for the whole of Creation—a volume inscribed with laws, a sculpture impressed with images, and a theatrical "scene" showing the deeds of heroes. And each of those metaphors is contained in turn by the culminating metaphor of the heavens as cosmic harmony and dance, which thus provides the master conceit of the poem, unifying the potentially overwhelming multiplicity of all the others just as the sky itself unifies all the lower and more transient "marvels" of Creation.

Of course, if one had never seen the heavens before, it would be difficult to say what they looked like on the basis of this poem, in which the word "cielo" only appears in the title. But the poem depicts its subject not representationally but rather through the internal operations of its own rhetorical processes: the heavens are (in the loosely Neoplatonic terms lying behind the poem) a dynamic principle of emanation and containment, captured by the rhetorical development of the poem itself, the way its own tropes unfold into a multiplicity that is finally contained in harmony. And apostrophe is as crucial to those rhetorical processes as figuration. For the poem's characterization of the heavens as a great harmonious stage in which all other more mutable beings appear and disappear is performative as well as descriptive, closely dependent on apostrophe's "effect of presence," its seeming power to conjure and then withdraw each new vision of the sky in succession and make it present simply by naming it, like so many stage sets. If the unfolding of the sky’s many aspects anticipates the generation of the infinitely varied *meraviglie* of Creation as a whole, then within the poem itself this power of generation is conveyed by the rhetorical magic of apostrophe, which appears to summon each new item into our presence as if out of nothing.

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[31] Girolamo Fontanella, "Al cielo," in *Ode*, ed. Rosario Contarino (Turin: Edizioni RES, 1994), 7–8. All quotations of Fontanella's poetry are from this edition, hereafter cited parenthetically by page number(s). Translations are my own.

Other Renaissance poems to the heavens—such as Michele Marullo’s neo-Latin hymn “Ad coelum” and Pierre de Ronsard’s French imitation of it—begin with an invocation, itself of course a form of apostrophe, but explicitly characterized by both poets as a form of prayer: Ronsard, for example, concludes his version by asking the “Sky, great palace of God” to “fulfill his prayer” that he and Jean de Morel, to whom the poem is dedicated, may be received there after his death.[32] Something very different is going on Fontanella’s use of this figure. Where invocation represents an acknowledgment of a power prior to and outside the poem, the figurative apostrophe is a more overtly assertive form of address, appropriating for itself the rhetorical power to give shape and form to what it describes. We can see this distinction more clearly if we turn to the eighth ode in the first book, “Ai fiori,” which in contrast to the previous odes begins by addressing itself not directly to the flowers that are its subject, but rather to Flora as the power that produces them, and that the poet in turn invokes for his own writing:

AI FIORI	TO FLOWERS
O Flora, tu che miniando i campi	O Flora, you who illuminating the fields
Pingi con bianca man l’erbe novelle,	Paint the new herbs with your white hand,
Tu che sui colli stampi	You who print on the hills
Minute gemme e pargolette stelle,	Minute gems and the smallest of stars,
E fra pompe novelle,	And amidst new pomp,
Col tuo dipinto e colorito velo	With your painted and colored veil,
Fai de la terra inamorare il cielo.	Make the sky fall in love with the earth.
Scendi, figlia del Sol, madre d’Aprile,	Descend, daughter of the Sun, mother of April,
Che sì belli nei prati opri lavori,	Who work such beautiful handiworks in the fields,
Fa’ leggiadro il mio stile,	Make graceful my style,
Va’ ne’ miei versi incatenando fiori,	Keep entwining flowers in my verses,
Che fra nodi canori	And on the Castalian mount
Io ti prometto in sul castalio monte	I promise to crown your front,
De le mie note incoronar la fronte.	Amidst singing knots, with my notes.

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[32] “Ciel, grand Palais de Dieu, exauce ma priere” (Pierre de Ronsard, “Hymne du ciel,” in *Oeuvres Complètes*, ed. Gustave Cohen [Paris: Gallimard, 1950], 193; my translation).

Fa', bella Dea, che del tuo nobil ago	Let my pen, beautiful goddess,
Sia la mia penna emulatrice industre;	Ingeniously emulate your noble needle,
Fa' che placido e vago	Let my labor, serene and lovely,
Il mio lavor col tuo lavor s'illustre,	Find honor by means of yours,
Perch'eterno et illustre	So that, eternal and illustrious,
Ne faccia poi con ammirabil arte	It may, then, with admirable art,
Fiorir le rime et odorar le carte.	Make my rhymes flower and my pages fragrant.

Non si vanti via più l'Argo stellato,	Let starred Argo vaunt no more,
Se raggira là su tant'occhi intorno;	That it revolves so many eyes up there;
Che mille occhi anco il prato	The meadow, too, marvelously adorned,
Girando va, mirabilmente adorno,	Keeps revolving its thousand eyes,
Et aprendo col giorno	And opening with the day
Le molli stelle de' bei fiori sui,	The soft stars of its lovely flowers,
Contender può di parità con lui.	It can contend equally with him.

(17–18)

A few earlier odes had concluded with prayers to the objects addressed, but this is the first proper invocation in the collection and by far the most extensive. This ode is, moreover, the first poem in which the role of the poet's own writing, and its relation to what it describes, is overtly acknowledged. As "volume" and "scena" of the world, the sky invoked in the first ode was already metatextual, but in this poem the invocation makes much more explicit the parallel between the entity it addresses and its own poetic practice. The optative mood and the "Non . . . più" of the transitional fourth stanza go as far as to suggest that the power of Flora and her products to rival the heavens is one that is activated "now," in the present, in and by and as the poem itself. And it is literally now, in the next stanza, that the poem finally directly addresses the flowers that are its subject, taking up after a delay the apostrophic and figurative mode with which most of the other odes in this book begin:

Fiori, fregi d'April, pompe de' colli,	Flowers, April's ornaments, pomps of the hills,
Stelle picciole e belle, occhi de' prati,	Small and beautiful stars, eyes of the fields,
Gemme tenere e molli,	Tender and soft gems,
De la terra e del ciel parti odorati;	Fragrant births of sky and heaven,
Vaghi anelli gemmati,	Lovely bejeweled rings,
Graziosi profili, almi ricami	Gracious contours, lifegiving embroidery,
Distesi in foglie et intrecciati in rami.	Stretched out in leaves and entwined in branches,

Voi del foco d'amor vaghe faville,	Lovely sparks of the fire of love,
Mute lingue del suol ricco e fecondo,	Mute tongues of the rich and fecund ground,

Delicate pupille	Delicate pupils
Degli occhi belli che raggira il mondo;	Of the beautiful eyes that the world turns around;
Del terreno giocondo	Quiet mouths
Tacite bocche, che per voci fuore	Of the jocund earth, who in place of voices
Spargete incenso et esalate odore.	Exhale incense and fragrance.
(18)	

By framing his usual apostrophes with an invocation to Flora, the poet enables us to see that invocation actually working, so to speak: it is as though his poem will now illustrate for us, in the present, the fertility of the creative power he has just called on. It will do so, moreover, through a variety of figures that replicate the abundance of flowers not through naturalistic description but rather through sheer profusion, through a rhetorical "growth" that takes place, as it were, under our eyes, as the poet's own powers of figurative redescription are exercised in a performative display of the rhetorical fertility he has just asked for. And again, the figure of apostrophe is not merely a convenient rhetorical device but rather the most basic vessel of that fertility, the breath of vitality that the poet borrows from Flora (or from the dew or the breeze in other poems) and then imparts to the things he describes by recreating them in words—the means, in other words, by which the poem itself comes alive.

Fontanella's tropes here are rarely original, but the point is less that the poet has himself created these metaphors than that he has activated Flora—or rather Nature behind Flora—as the power that produces such resemblances in nature, and that here she enters the spirit of his own poem. The transition from apostrophe as invocation to apostrophe as act of renaming creates an effect of generative potency at work, activated in and as the poem itself, in the rhetorical present of its composition or recitation. The poem, in other words, does not directly stake a claim to creative power, but its deft use of apostrophe's "effects of presence" enables it to stage a temporary transfer of that power from its origin in Nature (and ultimately God) to poetic language. And that transfer hinges on the understanding of creation—both human and divine—not as "solid reality" but as the power of producing it, vested by God in Nature (traditionally understood as God's "viceroy") and temporarily captured for the poetic word in turn by apostrophe. The apostrophes do not alone give vitality to what they describe (as for Culler), since that is what Nature does, but they do seek to conjure the moment of a being's vitalization, in the present of the poem, by means of and indeed as their own rhetorical effects.

What I have tried to characterize as the typical effect of these poems—an effect of creative potency at work, under our eyes as it were, in the present of recitation or reading—would not be achieved by metaphors alone.

It is apostrophe that gives them their vitality, the sense that the creative spirit pervading the universe has entered the poem itself. We can see this clearly if we compare the next two poems in the collection, "Agli uccelli" (To the birds) and "All'iride" (To the rainbow). "Agli uccelli" is structured in the same way as the other poems in the *Ode* but without the apostrophes:

Sono arcieri volanti,	They are flying archers
Che saettano i cori,	Who pierce hearts
Quando al tempo de' fiori	When at the time of flowers
Dal bell'arco del sen vibrano i canti.	They shoot their songs from the bow of their breast.
Van per l'aria vaganti,	They go wandering through the air
E in ascoltargli ogni bell'alma ardente	And hearing them every ardent soul
La saetta non mira e 'l colpo sente.	Does not see the arrow but feels the blow.

Sono musici alati	They are winged musicians
Sovra l'aria raccolti,	Gathered above the air,
Spiriti semplici e sciolti,	Simple and free spirits,
Di purità, d'agilità dotati.	Endowed with purity and agility.

(20)

We have here the same structure as in the other odes that make up this first book, but the metaphors take the form of third-person statements about the world rather than apostrophes directed to it in the second person. And as such they lay bare the fact that the "likenesses" they describe are little more than hollow proclamations, rather weak when we are presented with them as statements putatively about the real world.[33] In contrast, the apostrophe directed to the inanimate thing is not a statement about the thing at all but, rather, an act of addressing it which turns renaming into recreating. As such an act, the apostrophe is not true or false, for it is in Culler's terms better understood as an event rather than a mere redescription—recapitulating the act of Adamic naming, in which a thing's essence is identified, as an act of poetic creation, in which that essence is reimagined. But the particular content of each metaphor is less significant than this act of present-tense recreating that, in the form of an apostrophe, it enables. Nowhere is this truer than in the next poem, "All'iride," which is perhaps the most relentlessly figurative of all Fontanella's poems, indeed little more than a list of metaphors—all, however, in the form of apostrophes:

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[33] In relation to Fontanella's more normal, apostrophic mode, this poem thus functions much as, in Culler's de Manian account, Baudelaire's poem "Correspondances" stands in relation to his "Obsession": "an anti-lyric—a demystification of the lyric—that helps us to observe the play of apostrophe and prosopopoeia and the production of an image of voice in the other exemplary lyric" (Culler, *Theory of the Lyric*, 82).

ALL'IRIDE	TO THE RAINBOW
Cara nunzia di pace,	Dear messenger of peace,
Che nel campo de l'aria esci ridente;	Who emerge smiling into the field of the air,
Verginella fugace,	Fleeting virgin
Ch'entro nube di fior t'ascondi ardente;	Who hide glowing in a cloud of flowers,
Primavera del ciel, pinta dal Sole,	Spring of the skies, painted by the Sun,
De la bella Taumante umida prole.	Moist child of the beautiful Thaumante.
Graziosa pittrice,	Graceful painter,
Ch'a la dea de le piogge il carro adorni;	Who paint the chariot of the rain goddess,
Messaggiera felice,	Happy messenger,
Che lieta parti e baldanzosa torni;	Glad when leaving and joyful on return,
E mentre i tuoni e le tempeste scacci	And while you chase away lightning and thunder,
Con bell'arco di pace il mondo abbracci.	Embrace the world with the arc of peace.
Trasparente figura,	Transparent figure,
Che fra linee dipinte hai varie liste;	Who have various bands between painted lines,
Vaga e bella pittura,	Gentle and beautiful painting,
Ch'allegrezza e stupor rechi a le viste;	Who bring happiness and wonder to our sight,
E qual barbaro drappo, almo lavoro,	And like a foreign curtain, glorious work,
Di diversi color scopri un tesoro.	Uncover a treasure of diverse colors.
Meraviglioso ponte,	Marvelous bridge,
Ch'in sembianza di Luna in forma d'arco	Who in shape of the Moon in crescent form,
Da l'estremo orizzonte	From the furthest horizon
Ne scopri il calle e ne disegni il varco	Show us the path and draw the passage
Per gir là su, dove si movon quelle	To go up there, where the clear waters move
Acque chiare, del ciel musiche e belle.	Of the sky, musical and beautiful.
Ingemmato monile,	Bejeweled necklace,
Ch'a le candide nubi adorni il collo;	Who adorn the neck of the white clouds,
Specchio terso e gentile,	Limpid and gentle mirror,
Dove suol vagheggiars'il biondo Apollo,	Where blond Apollo is wont to admire himself,
Vaga mole del ciel, sferica lampa,	Graceful mass of the sky, spherical lamp,
Chiara pompa del dì, lucida stampa.	Clear pomp of the day, lucid stamp.
(22–23)	

There is little connection here between one conceit and the next. Rather, each stanza of the poem undertakes a new act of poetic naming that is inescapably creative in nature, supplanting what has come just before and recreating reality on new terms, ex nihilo as it were, each time. There is no main verb at all in the poem, which is essentially a sequence of poetic fiats; instead, it simply culminates with four apostrophic conceits in rapid succession, like the finale of a fireworks display. Thus, the poem does not offer a description of or statement about reality, not even in symbolic or allegorical form. Instead, it recreates, as a texture of verbal experience, a reality that is itself a transient and ever-evolving spectacle: the poem is a rainbow of words whose "resemblances" are not observed features of the cosmos but rather rhetorical flourishes as dazzling and fleeting as the colors of the rainbow itself. This sense of reality as something happening in the present, as a tissue of unfolding events rather than as a collection of static objects, is crucial not just to "All'iride" but to each of the odes and to the vision of Creation that they imply, and apostrophe's "effects of presence" are therefore crucial as well, enabling them to recapitulate Creation, understood in such a sense, as the creative "event" of the poems themselves.

In an ingenious reading of the *Ode*, Nicola Catelli—one of the few modern scholars to have analyzed the collection in depth—argues that Fontanella's careful *dispositio* of its contents reflects the order of the cosmos itself, from the heaven first created to the Resurrection of the final ode and thus culminating in a "movement towards height," which in this way avoids reflecting back "the image of a fragmented and deconstructed reality."[34] This reading, however, requires us to treat each ode as effectively equivalent to the entity to which it is addressed in order to collocate them in a coherent larger system—something that the elaborate figurative language of each poem, in which the heavens can become a field of flowers and vice versa, makes all but impossible. And yet the profusion indicated by those figures need not be seen as, in Catelli's terms, an "excess of fullness" that runs the risk of fragmentation and dispersion.[35] On the contrary: it is in profusion and multiplicity themselves that, I suggest, Fontanella locates the real essence of divine Creation, for they are indices not of the "fullness" of the cosmos per se but rather of the infinitely variable, infinitely creative event of its production, whose seeming contingency is not a threat to divine power but an essential manifestation of it. If that profusion may organize itself into larger structures such as those which Catelli identifies, those structures may themselves, under the influence of *elocutio,* turn out to be nothing more than forms of that relentless play that is, I think, a truer characterization of the Creator's activity as Fontanella sees it—a freedom from rules that is equally the freedom to create rules of its own.

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[34] Nicola Catelli, "'L'invisibile compasso': Osservazioni sulla 'dispositio' delle 'Ode' di Girolamo Fontanella (1638)," *Annali della Scuola Normale Superiore di Pisa: Classe di lettere e filosofia* 6, no. 2 (2014): 831, 842.

[35] Ibid., 842.

II. CREATION AND THE USES OF APOSTROPHE IN FRENCH BAROQUE LYRIC

Fontanella seems to have been well known or at least well connected in Naples, where he was a member of the Accademia degli Oziosi. It is hard, however, to ascertain how well known he was beyond the Kingdom of Naples's borders. His influence can likely be felt in one of the main texts of the French poetic baroque, the *Descriptions poëtiques* (1649) of the Jesuit poet Jean de Bussières, who according to his seventeenth-century biographer Claude-François Menestrier was widely read in the most recent Italian literature of his day.[36] The *Descriptions,* published eleven years after Fontanella's *Ode,* are similarly structured as a lyric hexameron, moving downward from the sky to sublunary things. Bussières also classifies them (mostly) as odes, and almost all of them are governed by serial apostrophes, à la Fontanella, to the entities described. Yet Bussières's apostrophes are usually qualified by a note of self-doubt absent in Fontanella, an anxiety that human and divine forms of creation may not be in harmony. His poem on the rainbow begins with a series of apostrophes much like Fontanella's poem on the same theme, but qualified by skeptical questions:

> Doux charme de mes yeux, Tromperie innocente,
> Miracle du Soleil, Peinture surprenante,
> Grand Triomphe de l'Air, belle Arcade de fleurs,
> Meslange consommé des plus vives couleurs;
> Que n'ornes-tu le Ciel d'un Tableau veritable?
> Ou si ton lustre est faux, pourquoi n'est-il durable?[37]

> [Sweet charm of my eyes, innocent trumpery, / Miracle of the sun, surprising painting, / Great triumph of air, beautiful arcade of flowers, / Mixture made up of the most vivid colors / Why do you not adorn the sky with a truthful tableau? / Or if your lustre is false, why is it not durable?]

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[36] See Jean de Bussières, *Les descriptions poëtiques,* ed. Geoffrey R. Hope (Paris: Biblio, 1990), ii. All quotations of Bussières follow this edition; translations are my own. The classic work on French baroque poetry is Jean Rousset, *La littérature de l'âge baroque en France: Circé et le Paon* (Paris: Corti, 1953), in which Bussières plays a central role.

[37] Bussières, "L'Arc-en-Ciel: Elegie," in *Les descriptions poëtiques,* 74.

By the end of the poem those questions are answered in a series of statements that provide a harsh counterpoint to the wondrous invocations of the opening:

> Beauté vous me trompés; vous vous trompés mes yeux,
> Vous croyez à l'eclat d'un Rayon specieux;
> Rayon qui n'est ny Ciel, ny Tableau, ny Parterre,
> Mais un bien passager, plus fresle que le verre.
> C'est un Neant vestu, c'est un Masque trompeur,
> C'est un Leurre couvert, c'est un foible imposteur,
> C'est de mille beautez un illustre Mensonge,
> C'est ce qui ne sera que l'ombrage d'un Songe.[38]

> [Beauty, you deceive me; eyes, you deceive yourselves, / Believing in the splendor of a ray that is specious; /A ray that is neither sky, nor picture, nor foundation, / But a transient good frailer than glass. / It is a dressed-up nothing, a deceptive masque, / It is a covered illusion, a weak imposture, / It is an illustrious lie of a thousand beauties, / It is that which will be no more than the shadow of a dream.]

Those opening, ecstatic expressions of admiration are negated one by one as poetic rhetoric is replaced by propositional truth, and specifically as the creative power of apostrophe, its pretense to magically summoning reality before us, is exposed as the "nothingness" of a hollow verbal trick, empty and fleeting as the rainbow itself. If (as Geoffrey Hope suggests) "nature is rhetorical" for Bussières,[39] if the divine cosmos and human language coincide in his poems as in Fontanella's, it is for the opposite reason—because they are both fundamentally unreliable. Yet if Bussières's poems treat apostrophe with suspicion, as a power that is potentially false or deceptive, then in that very measure they also testify that it may be "creative"—but in the pejorative sense of altering or distorting the deeper reality of God.

Closer in spirit and style to Fontanella's *Ode* are the biblical paraphrases of the Capuchin poet Martial de Brives (1600?–1653), whose *Oeuvres poétiques et saintes*, published in the year of his death, celebrates the variety and mutability of Creation without qualification. Martial's practice of enriching traditional biblical and liturgical paradigms for praising Creation with elaborate figuration is particularly evident in his paraphrases of Psalm 148 and of the "Benedicite omnia opera Domini" canticle. Loosely following the order of divine Creation in Genesis 1, the Psalm enjoins all parts of Creation to praise God in turn, and the canticle, used during the Liturgy of Hours and also known as "The Song of the Three

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[38] Ibid., 76.
[39] Ibid., ii.

Children," following a passage in the book of Daniel, observes a very similar pattern. Both paraphrases consist of ten-line stanzas that describe each element of Creation addressed in the original line with a more extended and detailed apostrophe, culminating in a reiterated injunction to bless the Lord. The result in each case is a poem that looks formally and stylistically very similar to Fontanella's odes, though in Martial each stanza is dedicated to different entity, rather than each poem as in Fontanella. Thus, in Martial's paraphrase of the "Benedicite" canticle, which was originally published in 1639, one year after the final edition of Fontanella's odes, he divides the line "BENEDICITE, glacies et nives, Domino, benedicite, noctes et dies, Domino" into four stanzas, one dedicated to each element, such as this second one on snow:

> Belle soye au ciel raffinée,
> Neige dont l'air se deschargeant
> Comme d'une toison d'argent
> Rend la Campagne couronée:
> Blanc du Ciel par qui sont couvers
> Les lieux qui souloient estre verds,
> Tremblant albastre de nos Plaines;
> Benissez l'auguste Grandeur
> Du Juge des grandeurs Humaines
> Qui veut qu'on le benisse en esprit de Candeur.[40]

> [Beautiful silk refined in heaven, / Snow which the air discharges, / As if with a fleece of silver / Crowning the countryside: / White of the sky by which the places / Which used to be green are covered, / Trembling alabaster of our plains; / Bless the august grandeur / Of the judge of human grandeurs, / Who wishes that one should bless him in a spirit of purity.]

Such figuration—the snow as silk, fleece, alabaster, and so on—represents what was by this point a fairly well-worn poetic mode, going back (as we have seen) to Marino, Murtola, and Fontanella, and in France taken up by poets such as Marc-Antoine de Saint-Amant and Tristan L'Hermite.[41] Yet if we compare Martial's version of the canticle to that of his contemporary Antoine Godeau, the distinctiveness and boldness of Martial's choice to apply this style to liturgical paraphrase becomes clear. Both paraphrases are written in similar stanza forms, but where Martial dedicates a full stanza to each element of Creation, varying it with a range of multiple figures,

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[40] Martial de Brives, *Les oeuvres poétiques et saintes (1653)*, ed. Anne Mantero (Grenoble: Millon, 2000), 74–75. Unless otherwise noted, translations of Martial are my own.

[41] For Marino's influence on French poetry of the 1640s and 1650s, see Jean-Pierre Chauveau, *Poètes et poésie au XVIIe siècle* (Paris: Garnier, 2012), 101–12.

Godeau compresses multiple created entities into each stanza, giving himself much less scope for elaborate rhetoric. For Martial "neige" is the starting point for a whole stanza comprised of metaphors, whereas for Godeau it is merely one word in a list:

> Prin-temps qui fais pousser les herbes,
> Hyver couronné de glacons,
> Esté dont les riches moissons,
> Rendent nos campagnes superbes;
> Gresle, Neige, Brouillars espais,
> Louez le Seigneur a iamais,
> Celebrez son nom adorable,
> Tout ce qu'il produit est parfait,
> Et cét Univers admirable,
> De son divin pouvoir n'est qu'un petit effet.[42]

> [Spring that causes the herbs to grow, / Winter crowned by ices, / Summer of which the rich harvests / Make our fields proud; / Hail, snow, thick fogs, / Praise our Lord forever, / Celebrate his beloved name, / Everything he makes is perfect / And this admirable Universe / Is but a small effect of his divine power.]

Godeau, who was Malherbe's biographer and a founding member of the Academie Française, writes in a more measured and rhetorically restrained style, avoiding not just the baroque figuration but also the more overt personification and apostrophe of Martial's version and emphasizing more exclusively the "divin pouvoir" of the Creator.

Yet Martial's baroque elaborations of religious texts are more than mere ornaments, or "the literary convulsions of an artistic current . . . nearing its end" faced with the rising influence of neoclassical restraint as espoused by figures such as Malherbe and Godeau.[43] The "Benedicite" paraphrase opens with a generalized invocation to all of Creation that is absent in the liturgical text but that explains much of what follows, providing something like a theological and philosophical justification for the apparent "eccentricities" and "exaggerations" of Martial's style.[44]

> Estres qui n'avez rien que l'Estre,
> Estres prenans accroissement,
> Estres pourveus de sentiment,
> Estres capable de cognoistre:
> Par des tressaillemens sacrez

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[42] Antoine Godeau, *Oeuvres chrestiennes de Godeau* (Paris, 1633), 133.

[43] Paulette Leblanc, *Les paraphrases françaises des Psaumes a la fin de la période baroque: 1610–1660* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1960), 177. There is scant other discussion of Martial's poetry in French scholarship.

[44] Ibid., 177.

Franchissez les divers degrez
Soit du Genre, soit de l'Espece;
Et prenez soin de vous unir
Et benir le Seigneur sans cesse;
Puis que sans cesse il prend le soin de vous benir.[45]

> [Beings who have nothing but being, / Beings who take on growth, / Beings provided with feeling, / Beings capable of knowledge: / By sacred leaps and bounds / Break free from the different degrees / Of genus and of species; / And take care to unify yourselves / And bless the Lord without cease; / Since without cease he takes care to bless you.]

The first four lines set out a hierarchical list of orders of being, organized into degrees according to the powers of their souls—mineral, vegetal, animal, and human—in terms familiar from Aristotle's *De anima* and its scholastic successors. But the poet then vehemently enjoins all of these beings to break the bounds of those "divers degrez" and unite in praising God without cease. Where traditionally the stability of everything in its degree was seen as evidence for the wisdom of a God who, as Du Bartas puts it in his *Sepmaine*, "nature in her nature holds," for Martial exactly the opposite is the case: the things that make up the world can truly reflect the power of God only inasmuch as they break out of the bounds of their hierarchical locations and the ontological classifications that confine them there.[46] The use of apostrophe implies, moreover, that the poem itself is in some way needed to exhort them to do so, in the present of its recitation.

It could not be clearer, then, that the nature and existence of the beings addressed, far from being taken for granted, are profoundly at stake in Martial's apostrophes to them. His addresses to rain as an "alembic exhalation," to winter as the "syncope of the aging year," or to snakes as "mobile labyrinths" are not merely ornaments added to a familiar liturgical text but rather—as apostrophes—rhetorical means of making good on the injunctions of that first stanza and its exuberant vision of a cosmos in which all beings break free from their ontological bounds in order to unite before God.[47] For while it may be Martial's metaphors that lay out some terms for that liberation, his apostrophes are what purport to effect it, summoning the beings addressed to break free from their limits and change their natures in the poem's present tense: apostrophe turns those conceits into creative events in the present of the poem, not merely transforming the nature of what is addressed but also, more importantly, opening up Creation itself to the radically contingent power of the event. Far from being presumptuous or impious, it is only in this way that the poem can truly evoke the spirit of that divine power that was originally exercised in the events described in Genesis 1, and yet which is always in principle available to God—evoke it, that is, as a power of free play that can make whatever it wants rather than as the particular body of objects it initially produced, however "orderly" they may have appeared. The specific conceits with which Martial describes them, in other words, are less important than the more general possibility of recreating them that his rhetoric thereby reveals, and this can only be done by an apostrophe that treats them not as abstractions but as present and responsive beings, endowed with life, temporality, and openness to God's transforming power, for which the poem's own creative language is a proxy. Hence the poem's tone of exaltation and breathless, almost carnivalesque enthusiasm: it leads all things of the world not merely in collectively praising God, but in temporarily escaping their own natures and stations in order to do so. It is as though the best way they could celebrate God were by participating in the energies of their own Creation, and it is apostrophe that enables those energies to be summoned into the present of the poem.

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[45] Martial, *Les oeuvres poétiques*, 65.

[46] Guillaume Du Bartas, *The Divine Weeks and Works*, trans. Joshua Sylvester, ed. Susan Snyder (Oxford University Press, 2012), 234.

[47] Martial, *Les oeuvres poétiques*, 70, 72, 118.

III. ENGLISH RECREATIONS

Visiting Naples as a guest of Giovanni Manso in late 1638 or early 1639, John Milton could easily have encountered his near-contemporary Fontanella at a meeting of the Accademia degli Oziosi, whose members gathered in his host's villa.[48] And nothing would have better exemplified the poetic fertility he jealously associated with a warm Mediterranean climate than the easy and fluid apostrophes of the *Ode,* whose second edition had just appeared. For Milton, who in the opening of *Paradise Lost* would identify his own creative powers with the impregnation of the vast abyss in Genesis 1, was at the same time deeply uneasy about that identification—expressing, in the invocation to book 9, his anxiety that the cold and wet English climate might "damp his intended wing" if, as he puts it, "all be mine."[49] Of course, the real fear expressed in those lines runs deeper, along the lines of cultural and confessional as well as meteorological difference: Milton worries that, far from expressing or indeed converging with divine worldmaking power, a purely human creativity will at best distort and at worst corrupt the creative work of God. The speaker of Andrew Marvell's "The Coronet" expresses a similar idea when he renounces his attempt to reform erotic verse along devotional lines, discovering that Satan is present even there, "twining in his speckled breast, / About the flowers disguised . . . / With wreaths of fame and interest."[50] The "flowers" here are metaphors for the flowers of rhetoric and poetry, which far from channeling the powers of Flora as in Fontanella, produce for Marvell only testaments to his own sinful self-regard.

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[48] See Estelle Haan, *From Academia to Amicitia: Milton's Latin writings and the Italian Academies* (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1998), 121–22.

[49] Milton, *Paradise Lost,* 9.45–46.

In Protestant England, in other words, those doubts hinted at in the poems of Bussières, and specifically in their consistent movement away from their opening apostrophes, become overwhelming. It is thus unsurprising to find that the poets I have considered above were not frequently translated or alluded to in English seventeenth-century verse, and that the ecstatic, figurative address to Creation is more rarely seen. (Milton's own version of Ps. 148—Adam and Eve's hymn to Creation in bk. 5 of *Paradise Lost*—is more sober stylistically than anything we have considered.) There is, however, one notable exception to this trend: the 1647–48 edition of Thomas Stanley's *Poems and Translations* includes a complete translation of Martial de Brive's paraphrase of Psalm 148. Stanley's other translations are almost all of classical or continental love poets, often focusing on baroque and libertine writers such as Gongora, De Viau, and Saint-Amant. In that context one can see what attracted Stanley to Martial's paraphrases, which with their elaborate conceits and wondrous natural imagery fit relatively well with poets such as Gongora and Saint-Amant. That Stanley, averse to devotional poetry in general, chose to translate these in the first place suggests he saw them as part of a larger poetic mode rather than as religious works, and it might give us a hint as to how poems such as Martial's were seen in midcentury England more broadly. In this sense, however, Stanley's translation of Martial is the exception that proves the rule: poems such as Martial's could be assimilated only in a poetic context that largely stripped them of their devotional function.

A close look at Stanley's translation, however, suggests that he is not completely insensitive to the theological implications of the French original. Much like his paraphrase of "Benedicite," Martial's version of Psalm 148 addresses each element of Creation in highly figurative terms that emphasize their interchangeability and intrinsic multiplicity. Again, God's power is witnessed not in the stability of things but in their contingency, variety, and interchangeability—their subjection to God's power of infinite play:

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[50] Andrew Marvell, "The Coronet," in *The Poems of Andrew Marvell*, ed. Nigel Smith (Harlow: Longman, 2007), 49.

NIX
Celeste & delicaite laine,
Neige dont les flocons liez,
Sont des grands tapis deployez,
Sur la surface de la plaine,
Yvoire traictable & mollet,
Littere de solide laict,
Couche de perle distilées,
Louëz le soin du Createur,
Qui parmy l'horreur des gelées,
Vous fait un si beau corps d'une foible vapeur.

NIX
Wooll, which Celestial art hath made,
And knit into one ornament,
And like rich Tapistry displaid
Upon the smoother plaines extent;
Ivory, whose hardness, unknown skill
Doth render tractable as silk;
A floud, whose solid stremes distill
From melted pearles, or frozen milk.
Praise that diviner power, who of so light
A vapour, hath a body made so bright.

Glacies
Glace belle croutte de l'onde,
Qui formez de vostre beauté,
Joincte à vostre fragilité,
Le miroir des choses du monde,
Estincellant & frescle sceau,
Qui cachetez les plis de l'eau,
Transparent lambris des Fontaines,
Louëz l'artisan souverain,
Qui sçait par des reigles certaines,
Communiquer à l'eau la trempe de l'airain.[51]

Glacies
Thou childe of water, whose brow wears
The image of our vanitie,
And melting back again in tears,
Thy mother is new born of thee:
Thou Chrystall signet that dost seal
The folds which on the waves do ly,
And rivers as away they steal
Dost stop, and with cold fetters ty.
That Chimist praise, who doth all tempers mix,
And can the fluid state of water fix.[52]

In Martial's stanzas, God's creative power is witnessed by his miraculous ability to turn a vapor into a body (snow) and liquid into solid steel (ice). Stanley's version emphasizes even more the paradoxical ambiguity and transmutability of material states that characterizes these entities: he eliminates the metaphors of the bed and the couch, and introduces instead an additional metamorphosis, that of ivory transformed into silk, as well as the metaphor of the "solid stream" in addition to those of "melted pearl" and "frozen milk." Most notably, however, Stanley's translation slips in a completely new "physico-theology" for this figurative vision by replacing Martial's very conventional description of God as a "sovereign artificer" with the much more distinctive idea of God as a divine "Chimist" (this idea, completely absent in Martial, only emerges fully in 1648; in the 1646 manuscript version the line reads "Praise him who by dark rules of Chymick art"). In midcentury England alchemical visions of the Creation, ultimately derived from Paracelsus, were in fact quite fashionable—they can be found, for example, in John French's 1650 translation of Sandivogius's Paracelsan treatise *A New Light of Alchymie*.[53] The vision of God as a divine alchemist is a natural fit—much more so than that of the "divine architect"—for stanzas in which the Creator's power is exemplified not by the fixity or harmonious order of what he makes but, on the contrary, by his capacity to transmute almost any substance into any other. But if metaphor is what provides the raw material for that transmutation, for its initial and final states, apostrophe is what makes that transmutation "happen," providing the surge of poetic power that elevates the figurative transformation to the standing of a poetic event on par with the alchemical Creation itself.

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[51] *Paraphrase du pseaume CXLVIII* [. . .] *Par un Capucin* (Paris, 1653), Bibliothèque nationale de France, département Littérature et art, YE-3824, n.p. This version of Martial's text is closer to the one used by Stanley (who must have seen it in or before 1646) than the version printed in the 1653 *Oeuvres poétiques et saintes.*

[52] For Stanley's text and 1646 manuscript variants, I follow *The Poems and Translations of Thomas Stanley*, ed. Galbraith Miller Crump (Oxford: Clarendon, 1962); the translation here is on 257.

Apostrophe to the natural world is an important device in two poets who, as Nicholas McDowell has argued, had close links with Stanley and his circle in the late 1640s—Robert Herrick and Andrew Marvell.[54] Herrick's 1648 *Hesperides* contains some twenty-six examples of poems governed by the figure of apostrophe and addressed, as their titles indicate, "to" inanimate natural things: twenty poems addressed to plants, trees, and flowers; three addressed to birds; and three addressed to inorganic natural things, including dews, springs and fountains, and the wind:

To Blossoms
To Carnations
To Cedars
To Cherry-Blossomes
To Daffadills
To Daisies, not to shut so soone
To Dewes
To Flowers
To Groves
To the Lark
To Laurels
To Marygolds
To Meddowes
To the Nightingale, and Robin-Red-brest
To Pansies
To Primroses fill'd with morning-dew
To Robin Red-Brest
To the Rose
To Roses in Julia's Bosome
To Springs and Fountains
To Sycamores
To a Bed of Tulips
To Violets
To the Western Wind
To the Willow-tree
To the Yew and Cypress[55]

In many of these poems the apostrophe functions much as Alpers says it does in Waller, reflecting a shared set of realities taken for granted rather than claiming any power to shape reality unto itself. In "To Daffadills," for example, the "daffadills" that "haste away so soon" are emblems of human beings, who "have as short a spring"; the blossoms of "To Blossoms" are "lovely Leaves, where we / May read how soon things have / Their end"; the tulips of "To a bed of tulips" learn that "dye ye must away," as by implication do the readers.[56] These poems are little more than elegant variations on the famous theme of "To the Virgins, to make much of time"; the shift from addressing the virgins to addressing the flowers standing in for them is a relatively slight one.[57] In some of the other poems listed here, however, apostrophe takes on a more active and performative role:

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[53] John Rogers, *The Matter of Revolution: Science, Poetry and Politics in the Age of Milton* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1996), 54–55.

[54] See Nicholas McDowell, *Poetry and Allegiance in the English Civil Wars: Marvell and the Cause of Wit* (Oxford University Press, 2008), 13–52.

[55] Robert Herrick, *Hesperides: or, The Works Both Humane & Divine* [. . .] (London, 1648).

> Sweet singing Lark,
> Be thou the Clark,
> And know thy when
> To say, *Amen.*
> And if I prove
> Blest in my love;
> Then thou shalt be
> High-Priest to me,
> At my returne,
> To Incense burne.[58]
>
> When I departed am, ring thou my knell,
> Thou pittifull, and pretty *Philomel:*
> And when I'm laid out for a Corse; then be
> Thou *Sexton* (*Red-breast*) for to cover me.[59]
>
> I shall be made
> Ere long a fleeting shade;
> Pray come,
> And doe some honour to my Tomb.
>
> Do not deny
> My last request; for I
> Will be
> Thankfull to you, or friends, for me.[60]

All three of these poems address themselves to the natural world not as symbolic of a deeper and implicitly human reality, but instead to collapse the boundary between them altogether, transforming nature into a world governed by quasi-religious ritual and ceremony and thereby grounding human ritual itself in the order of nature. And they do so performatively, anticipating the ritual by enacting it in and as the present of the poem, which uses apostrophe to endow natural beings with the social roles Herrick says they have—"be thou the clark," "be thou sexton." In some ways the capacity of apostrophe to transform the thing it addresses merely by naming it is nowhere made more explicit than it is here. Yet there is no pretense in these poems to sharing in the power that made the universe—the "speech act" performed by these apostrophes is instead that of anointing these small creatures with ceremonial social roles. The use of apostrophe in these brief lyrics is perhaps best understood as an act of play, like "Upon Julia's Voice" as it has been described by John Creaser: "an unprompted act of make-believe, released from the pressures of function and immediacy in a small realm of perfection."[61] For in addressing his directives to small creatures who are manifestly incapable of responding, Herrick is engaging in a poetic equivalent to the games of children who might endow an inanimate object with a "serious" human role in just such a way. But whether we read them as covertly "serious" or not (e.g., as reflecting Laudian ceremonialism), the crucial thing about these apostrophes is that they are acts that purport to decree a new order of things simply through being spoken (much as, after all, a sexton himself is endowed with that role by a ceremonial speech act). Their "play" remains unreal to the extent that it reflects a mere desire: that nature might in some way respond to and harmonize with the body of Christian, pagan, social, and sexual rituals that Herrick seeks to make immanent within it. Such vitalistic inhering of the ritualistic and cultural within the natural is a fiction, the *Hesperides*'s governing conceit rather than a "stable reality" that it takes for granted. But it is one that the apostrophes do not in any way depend on but rather themselves aim to evoke and indeed to create, through or rather as the poetic rituals that they enact—in which Robin becomes the sexton precisely inasmuch as the poems say he does in the present of reading.

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[56] Robert Herrick, "To Daffadills," and "To Blossoms," in *The Complete Poetry of Robert Herrick*, ed. Tom Cain and Ruth Connolly, vol. 1 (Oxford University Press, 2013), 119, 166. All quotations of Herrick's poetry are from this edition.

[57] On the misogynistic "decorum" that renders that figurative equivalence so easy to establish in Herrick, see Katie Kadue, "Flower Girls and Garbage Women: Misogyny and Cliché in Ronsard and Herrick," *Modern Philology* 118, no. 3 (February 2021): 319–39.

[58] Herrick, "To the Lark," 83.

[59] Herrick, "To the Nightingale, and Robin-Red-breast," 106.

[60] Herrick, "To the Yew and Cypress," 106.

The self-consciously fanciful quality of Herrick's apostrophes to the natural world takes on a darker tone in Andrew Marvell's "Mower to the Glow-Worms":

Ye living lamps, by whose dear light
The nightingale does sit so late,
And studying all the summer night,
Her matchless songs does meditate;

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[61] John Creaser, "Herrick at Play," *Essays in Criticism* 56, no. 4 (October 2006): 343.

Ye country comets, that portend
No war nor prince's funeral,
Shining unto no higher end
Than to presage the grass's fall;

Ye glow-worms, whose officious flame
To wand'ring mowers shows the way,
That in the night have lost their aim,
And after foolish fires do stray;

Your courteous lights in vain you waste,
Since Juliana here is come,
For she my mind hath so displac'd
That I shall never find my home.[62]

As in Herrick, the apostrophe here is partly just a reflection of pastoral convention. But the glowworms are addressed with a series of elaborate conceits that are more clearly rooted in continental poetry, which as McDowell suggests Marvell may have read in conjunction with Stanley and his circle, than anything in Herrick.[63] In Stanley's "The Glow-Worm," the speaker draws "Charissa's" attention to "this animated Gem, whose fainter spark / Of fading light, its birth had from the dark."[64] In the 1646 manuscript draft, Stanley himself indicates the source of the "animation" conceit in the poems of Marino; Fontanella had actually written a poem "Alla lucciola," while the animation conceit is pervasive in his *Ode*.[65] Yet if Marvell's poem begins in a continental baroque mode, the mode of a Marinist poet, in the final stanza the preceding apostrophes are revealed as the fervid imaginations of a displaced mind rather than discoveries of created wonder. Not unlike the speaker of Herrick's *Hesperides*, the Mower seeks to establish a kind of community with the natural world through a series of apostrophes, and in particular through a sequence of rather precious epithets addressed to it—"living," "officious," "courteous." Yet as he quickly comes to recognize, that sense of natural community is one from which eros has actually exiled him; he addresses the glowworms only in order to discover that there is no longer any possibility of communication with them. The possibility that the glowworms might respond is itself revealed in the end as something the Mower imagines in his solipsism and errancy rather than a point of genuine contact with the world around him, undermining the very intimacy that the act of address would seek to create. The ending thus exposes the poet's conceits as the products of a malignant

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[62] Marvell, "Mower to the Glow-Worms," in *Poems of Andrew Marvell*, 142–43.
[63] See McDowell, *Poetry and Allegiance*, 13–52.
[64] Stanley, "The Glow-Worm," in *Poems and Translations*, 2.
[65] See ibid., 376n.

furor poeticus, a power of invention wholly and unhealthily grounded in the mind, rather than of poetic intellect converging with the natural or divine, of which the very act of addressing nonhuman things in human terms is the clearest symptom. Even more pointedly than in Herrick, then, the Mower's apostrophe is not dependent on the sequence's fictional frame but rather an essential condition of it: the living, responsive pastoral world that the Mower inhabits is one that he himself brings into being in the act of addressing it, but for that very reason one that cannot offer him any sort of true "home," which would have to be outside him to some extent. Apostrophe's "effects of presence," in other words, here serve to conjure not a sense of presence and reality that is shared—as if we too could see the beings the poet addressed—but rather a reality that has become fully private, the inner presence to itself of human consciousness. The figure of address is profoundly creative here, yet that creativity is a symptom of tragic alienation rather than of participation in cosmic life, the vessel of a fancy now fully enclosed in itself. We discover, to adapt Milton's phrase, that "all is his."

There is no question, then, that the use of apostrophe in Herrick and especially in Marvell is more self-aware, more limited, and more ironized than in Fontanella or Martial. And yet by the very same token, their poems are even less dependent on the realities of the given world than the continental exemplars I have considered. Instead, precisely in the measure that creativity (*inventio*) has explicitly become an aspect of the speaker's consciousness, and is ironically framed as such for us as readers, it is newly cut off from the creative power that shapes and pervades the universe.[66] The pathos of this condition is encapsulated in the use of apostrophe, which in Herrick's *Hesperides* and Marvell's "Mower" poems is addressed to the inadequate and yet inescapable alternative world the speakers have created in their own minds—that they create, indeed, through the powers of apostrophe itself. For apostrophe as they use it conjures a reality into being more potently than in any other poet we have considered, but in melancholy keeping with the etymology of the term, it is a reality achieved only in turning away from the very world they would address.

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[66] For Marvell as a poet of consciousness—and specifically, of consciousness as a power that replaces the ontological grounding of figurative rhetoric in the external, created order—see Gordon Teskey, "The River Overflows: Marvell and Consciousness," in Augustine, Pertile, and Zwicker, *Imagining Andrew Marvell at 400*, 255–73. On the emergence of a concept of consciousness in seventeenth-century English poetry, see Timothy M. Harrison, *Coming To: Consciousness and Natality in Early Modern England* (University of Chicago Press, 2020).