The Skeptical Pilgrims of Spiritual Autobiography

By

Sarah Mangin

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Committee in charge:

Professor James Grantham Turner, Chair
Professor Joanna Picciotto
Professor Michael Mascuch

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Abstract

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In the seventeenth century, Puritans would record detailed accounts of their lives, searching for signs of salvation—or damnation—in their everyday experiences. But given the highest possible stakes, these texts are remarkably inventive, wry, and skeptical about the reliability of autobiography itself. Case-studies of Thomas Browne, Richard Norwood, and Laurence Clarkson show how the autobiographies' speculative fictions and stylized picaresque detachment baffle the expectations of confessional identity. In very different ways, John Milton and John Bunyan demonstrate a knowing skepticism about spiritual autobiography as a forthright transcription of belief and experience. Milton's career-long anxiety about and attraction to autobiography—always inherently an account before God—critiques the genre's propensity for self-justification and continual refashioning. Bunyan's *Grace Abounding* works as a complex and deeply ironical pastoral instrument. By playing with the anti-narrative premise of Calvinism—the fixed status of one's election—Bunyan modulates readerly identification and authorial self-aggrandizement, ensuring that the artistry of his "paradigmatic" spiritual autobiography would be inimitable. Breaking the fundamental rules of their genre every time, all of these writers give us new ways to think about their influence on narrative aesthetics and the complex nature of religious belief in the early modern period.

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Richard, thank you for saving the Plumpjack. I love you.

William Marshall, engraved frontispiece for *Religio Medici*, 1644. Glasgow University, Special Collections.

Introduction

The frontispiece of Thomas Browne's *Religio Medici* rehearses familiar tropes of seventeenth-century Puritan spiritual autobiography. A poor sinner topples headlong from a rocky outcropping. Below him, worse than the roiling ocean, is a cross-hatched shadow, or pit. Out of the sky comes assistance in the form of a grasping hand at the last possible moment; the point is underscored with a caption, "only salvation from the heavens." The engraver, William Marshall, would be best known for his frontispiece to *Eikon Basilike*, with its allegorical rendering of Charles I as a saintly king, soon to be martyred with his crown of thorns. Considered together, the two engravings demonstrate how Marshall could enlist religious iconography to develop certain expectations about the narratives to follow. In the case of *Religio Medici*, Marshall's print primes a reader for a tripartite narrative of redemption, chronicling the subject's pride, his despair at the prospect of damnation, and his ultimate salvation. Each of those phases is embodied in the woodcut by the sinner's limbs: legs in assent, one arm stretched out to the pit mid-fall, and the other arm receiving divine intercession.

By vivisecting that drama, the *Religio Medici* frontispiece places particular emphasis on the feeling of hopeless despair. One recent instantiation of that theme before Browne was Nathaniel Bacon's "The Relation of the Fearefull Estate of Francis Spira after he turned Apostate from the Protestant Church to Popery." Published in England in 1638, this translation presented the account of the Italian Protestant's pitiful demise in 1550. In the wake of recanting under pressure from Catholic authorities, Spira became despondent, and his companions told of his descent into melancholy, then death.[1] His account was wildly popular in England, going through ten editions in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries,[2] and he could be said to emblematize the Puritan confessional experience for the entire period: William Perkins had praised Spira as an example for all Godly people, and, eighty years later, John Bunyan would compare his lot with Spira's "dreadful story" in *Grace Abounding* (45).[3] Marshall's engraving of the falling figure references the potency of that motif, particularly the grim particulars of despair beyond one's control.

Though the original engraving was created without Browne's knowledge for the unauthorized 1642 *Religio Medici*, Browne decided to retain Marshall's frontispiece for the subsequent editions. Reid Barbour has argued that Browne's admiration owes to the thematic and theological harmony between the illustration and select principles set forth in the autobiography: a check on hubris, an implicit trust in divine providence.[4] But assuming this coherence is I think to ignore the profound mismatch between the set of conventional tropes as embodied in Marshall's engraving and Browne's own writing. Such a reading no doubt polishes out the idiosyncrasy of Browne's work. But more crucially, there is a rich irony in the way the frontispiece figure suspended there in the sky actually comports with the aesthetic priorities of

the autobiography. Rebuffing an iconographic reading in which the fall would symbolize despair, the author of *Religio Medici* in fact relishes states of suspension and undecidability.

In *Religio Medici*, imaginative acts recruit imagery, mysteries, and tonal experiments far in excess of a tripartite conversion narrative. Early in the text, Browne discloses that he "love[s] to lose my selfe in a mystery, to pursue my reason to an *o altitudo*" (12).[5] In this explicit adaptation of Paul's awe at God's wisdom, Browne reflects on the majesty of his own mind. Such meditations recast the cautionary Icarus of the frontispiece (as in Barbour's gloss) into a more assured experimentalist. Alternately, Browne would admire the perspectival play suggested by the figure; tumbling over, the man of the frontispiece shares Browne's ability to take "my Globe, and turne it round sometimes for my recreation" (82). Browne seeks the pleasures—rather than the conclusions—of the creative act of speculative autobiography. All of Browne's writing relishes experiment, but he also emphasizes the limitation of experiences and the uncertainty of their meaning. He never arrives at the definitive closure of attained grace. By burnishing his ideas one after the other under the pressure of a skeptical mind, *Religio Medici* explicitly remakes a devotional practice into a recursively imaginative one. As a result, neither Browne's official Anglican affiliation nor his providentialism exerts a normative force over the unwieldy text. Despite the feint of the frontispiece, the text has nothing like a tripartite design, and it dodges around narrative confessions such that his speculative digressions become constitutive instead of marginal. If anything, his text celebrates a fascination with the simultaneity of assurance and doubt, with the status of his salvation being quite beside the point.

The conventions of spiritual autobiography, and the hermeneutic authority of doctrine, have been reified in historicist scholarship; as Steven Justice points out, the religious turn of medieval (and also early modern) studies put such a premium on the ingenuousness of confessional experience precisely in proportion to its historical difference from our secular enlightenment that we remake the "black box" of religious experience: "Treating belief as a historically distinct sort of cognitive experience enforces on medieval subjects the immediacy to faith that the 'age of faith' dreamed of; this scholarly device, far from expelling an exoticized middle ages, swallows it whole."[6] Among other ironies, this kind of deference takes us back to the old historicism all over again. From the perspective of literary historians, rise-of-the-novel scholars have seized on the "naive empiricism"[7] of spiritual autobiography as the genre's signal formal contribution to its literary heirs. The first-person reportage also seems to corroborate an account of modern subjectivity that is inextricable from the negative forces of subjection. And the more historically responsive attempts at discerning "style" within this mode of writing have often amounted to discerning distinct ideological positions. A more inductive approach to style, form, and narrative effects suggests that these textual features can be said to *constitute* the delicate belief commitments of the autobiographies. When we resist doctrinal expectations as an absolute key to the autobiographies' internal workings, it becomes possible to reassess these texts in terms of their aesthetic autonomy.

By invoking aesthetic autonomy, I'm drawing on the dueling senses of the aesthetic that have purchase within the autobiographies. First construed in the eighteenth century as a science

of feeling and experience, aesthetics in Kant's understanding would also come to designate form for form's sake, apart from instrumental necessity.[8] The former is a fairly intuitive theoretical foil for spiritual autobiographers; it's the second of these two understandings, and its relation to the first, that has yet to be fully explored in these texts. Even on their own terms, the two senses of the aesthetic are in dialectic tension, and Friedrich Schiller would articulate this dynamic: because aesthetic experiences don't originate in the realm of interest or sensual evidence, the aesthetic state "produces no particular result whatsoever, neither for the understanding nor for the will." It hovers between activity and passivity, reason and sense, but in that indeterminacy one finds "the freedom to be what he ought to be is completely restored to him."[9] I would suggest that Schiller's formulation names precisely an inherent formal dynamic of spiritual autobiography, including the works' resistance to narrative emplotment (such as a set of trials fitted together to bear out a certain soteriological framework). There is a powerful disconnect between the theoretical, prescriptive "interests" of the genre and the actual textual achievements. It's in these remainders, in excess of the constraints of experimental self-scrutiny and subjection, where the aesthetic ground of the autobiographies is richly suggested.

And yet by attending to the artistry, we also create space to articulate a new kind of instrumental aesthetics, wherein the contours of personal belief and pastoral care attach to precise aesthetic registrations. Literary studies have wildly overextended the notion of "instrumentality" and our suspicions of it, such that the instrumental/aesthetic opposition ends up identifying the latter with utter uselessness and irrelevance to political, social, material, and religious experience. (Kant himself doesn't help matters by stomping out grounds for the aesthetic from the other side: in *The Critique of Judgment*, he reflexively refers to a flower as an instance of a free beauty *as if* he has a multitude of other examples waiting in the wings, but they never seem to arrive.) Attentive reading also exposes the imbrication of doctrine and aesthetics in more precise and forceful terms than the circular "Protestant Poetics" arguments that fix judgements of quality to confessional identity. David Marno calls out the thinness of that term's descriptive power: "Lewalski's final word on the subject is that the more poetic and 'witty' Donne is in his poetry, the more Protestant he becomes. It's a conclusion that makes it hard to see how any (good) poetry could ever escape being an instance of Protestant poetics."[10] Given that most of the texts treated in this dissertation are prose, there is even more of a perceived aesthetic deficit to make up; just to start, the inherited descriptor of Puritan writing in the "plain style" is entirely misleading, as if a style could ever be void of artifice. At the level of narrative structure, the writers discussed in this dissertation, as well as Robinson Crusoe and their other fictional heirs, attest that the tripartite conversion plot of "reprobation, conversion, justification" has *never* adequately described any spiritual autobiography in particular, beginning with Augustine's; there is *always* a more unwieldy iterativeness, whether it takes the form of picaresque antics or more subtle imaginative flexibility and wonderment borne out of a writer's deeply skeptical experience. Milton's restless accounting of his own vocational service, along with his explicit critiques of autobiographies, taken with Bunyan's alienating interpellations of his readers across revised editions, provide explicit proof of a contemporary understanding of the

genre in this iterative way. Indeed, when Bunyan identifies as a "tinkling cymbal" (83), he offers us the perfect emblem of the autobiographer by ostentatiously blurring the distinction between musician and instrument, artist and servant, aesthetic liberation and humility.

For our part, tending to the narrative sophistication of these works more inductively, without working from sectarian or doctrinal expectations, takes part in a new historiographic effort to "take belief seriously" in the early modern period, which for Ethan Shagan "precisely means that faith must be questioned, dissected, and analyzed, not because we decide faith is a problematic category but because our subjects did."[11] Joanna Picciotto reminds us that religious belief only gained its untouchable status in a post-Enlightenment disciplinary context; the "religious turn" of recent scholarship has perhaps done still more to sacralize this field out of critical reach.[12] What I'm suggesting is that one way to re-appraise belief is to extend the full credit of aesthetic exploration and formal technique to writers of religious autobiography. When we allow these texts to surprise us in literary ways, our historical caricatures must change, too.[13]

Chapter 1 examines three disparate case-studies: Thomas Browne, Richard Norwood, and Laurence Clarkson. Despite their dramatic sectarian differences, all of these writers evince aesthetic freedom precisely in moments of uncertainty. Their epistemological quandaries shade into representational ones, without ready doctrinal resolution, and often the authors relish those moments of aesthetic possibility, accomplishment, and experience unto themselves. In Chapters 2 and 3, I turn to the literary giants of Puritan England to document their knowing skepticism about spiritual autobiography as a forthright transcription of belief and experience. Chapter 2 charts Milton's career-long anxiety about and attraction to autobiography—always inherently an account before God—with its liabilities of self-justification and continual refashioning. Having never written a proper spiritual autobiography, he critiques all such efforts within his political and personal writing, including the lyrics that intricately make and unmake themselves as he reflects on his Godly service and literary career. And though he broaches the ideal of an Edenic, collaborative narrativizing self—a counterpoint to the despotic *Eikon Basilike*—autobiography is ultimately a fallen genre, but one with infinite artistic possibility. Chapter 3 explains how Bunyan's *Grace Abounding* works as a complex pastoral instrument. By playing with the anti-narrative premise of Calvinism—the fixed status of one's election—Bunyan modulates readerly identification and authorial self-aggrandizement. The changes to *Grace Abounding* across editions show Bunyan's embrace of that formal openness and recursiveness, along with a strategy for ensuring that the artistry of his "paradigmatic" spiritual autobiography would be inimitable.

Notes to Introduction

[1] Nathaniel Bacon, *A relation of the fearful estate of Francis Spira, in the year 1548 compiled by Natth. Bacon, Esq.,* 1649. ProQuest, https://www.proquest.com/books/relation-fearful-estate-francis-spira-year-1548/docview/2240954731/se-2?accountid=14026, 15 May 2014.

[2] Michael McDonald, "*The Fearefull Estate of Francis Spira*: Narrative, Identity, and Emotion in Early Modern England," *The Journal of British Studies* 31.1(January 1992), 32-61.

[3] All page references to *Grace Abounding* (hereafter abbreviated *GA*) refer to *Grace Abounding with Other Spiritual Autobiographies*, ed. John Stachniewski and Anita Pacheco (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).

[4] See Reid Barbour, *Sir Thomas Browne: A Life* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013): "Whoever conceived the idea for William Marshall's woodcut of a man toppling from a rocky promontory, only to be saved by the hand of providence, it is not surprising that Browne liked it. It resonated with the images of the arrogant tumblers such as Icarus on display in the Leiden anatomy theater; and it embodied effectively the motif of divine assistance that permeates the *Religio* and is suggested by the heading of the Lansdowne manuscript, 'syn theo.' Browne's sympathetic early reader, Henry Bates, found the image evocative in comparing Sir Kenelm Digby's critique of *Religio* to 'the fall of Phaeton" (276).

[5] *Religio Medici*, hereafter abbreviated *RM*. Ed. Stephen Greenblatt and Ramie Targoff (New York: New York Review of Books, 2012).

[6] Steven Justice, "Did the Middle Ages Believe in Their Miracles?" *Representations* 103.1 (Summer 2008), 1-29, 2.

[7] Michael McKeon, *The Origins of the English Novel 1600-1740* (Baltimore, Maryland: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987).

[8] Kant and Schiller would say that this non-purposiveness does a lot of good in the big picture, as aesthetic realization is a pre-condition for political freedom: "In the Aesthetic State everything---even the tool which serves—is a free citizen, having equal rights with the noblest; and the mind, which would force the patient mass beneath the yoke of its purposes, must here first obtain its assent. Here, therefore, in the realm of Aesthetic Semblance, we find that ideal of equality fulfilled which the Enthusiast would fain see realized in substance." Friedrich Schiller, *On the Aesthetic Education of Man in a Series of Letters*, ed. and trans. Elizabeth M. Wilkinson and L.A. Willoughby (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2005), 219.

[9] Schiller, 147.

[10] Marno, *Death Be Not Proud: The Art of Holy Attention* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2016) 31.

[11] Shagan is cited from unpublished materials describing a Collaborative Research Seminar he co-sponsored with Albert Ascoli in the spring of 2013: "Problems of Faith: Belief and Promise in Medieval and Early Modern Europe," Doreen B. Townsend Center for the Humanities.

[12] In her Introduction for the special issue "Devotion and Intellectual Labor," Joanna Picciotto narrates the swings of the religious/secular dialectic characterizing scholarship of the early modern period—swings that replay debates of Reform and then Enlightened secularism that are often our objects of study: "It's a narrative that reiterates the contrasts drawn by reformers themselves between the merely implicit faith required by Rome and the exercise of reason required for a 'waking, working' faith—or, to use the rhetoric of early defenders of the secular sphere, between medieval superstition and modern enlightenment. Contemporary academia's disdain for Whiggery

notwithstanding, this triumphalist narrative continues to provide the template for the stories we tell about 'traditional religion' and its modern transformations. The difference (and it isn't a minor one) is that in recent iterations the triumphalism has been muted or inverted altogether. Now that an all but exhausted tradition of reductionist critique has been officially deauthorized by the 'religious turn,' scholars plume themselves on their commitment to taking belief seriously as an irreducible feature of human experience. But it's worth asking whether the best way to take belief seriously is to treat it as a given: an object beyond, or above, the reach of analysis, or—the historiographical equivalent—as humanity's default state before the Enlightenment." Introduction, *The Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 44.1 (Winter 2014), 1-15, 2.

CHAPTER ONE

Confessional Identity and Aesthetic Autonomy

Though they take drastically different narrative approaches, the three authors discussed in this chapter—Thomas Browne, Richard Norwood, and Laurence Clarkson—all exert aesthetic autonomy that defies critics' expectations of spiritual autobiography as a genre for recording and agonizing over sins. Browne's *Religio Medici* gives an opportunity to consider spiritual autobiography beyond the Puritans: he is, after all, an Anglican writer more immediately associated with skeptical essayists. But, as foretold by the frontispiece, he explicitly engages the conventions of spiritual autobiography, only to flout them: each of Browne's observations, rather than leading to empirical confirmation of some spiritual reality, is celebrated as an inexhaustible engine of skepticism. Following Browne, this chapter turns to a Puritan who is more in the traditional mold of wracked self-scrutiny. Though Richard Norwood's *Confessions* explicitly ruminates on the totalizing power of double-predestination, he is still not completely engulfed by it: he finds ways to produce and give expression to aesthetic experience. Finally, the ranting Laurence Clarkson's *The Lost Sheep Found* suggests how formal autonomy can altogether upstage belief-commitments.[1] Working within picaresque conventions, Clarkson's nonchalant style provokes a rethinking of doctrine itself as a source of discursive flexibility. The juxtaposition of these writers' official confessional identities demonstrates the need for non-confessional analyses—the idea being if we refrain from sorting writers into their confessional groups, we refuse to refight the Civil War and index the formal potential of each text accordingly. Relatedly, these three case-studies also scramble the discursive stability of "religious radical" for aesthetic *and* historical inquiry: Browne as a mainstream Anglican entertains blasphemous hypotheticals; Norwood demonstrates that the narrative pleasures of style and speculation can escape even the most crushing and internalized version of predestination; Clarkson, for all his maximal antinomianism, lacks tonal extravagance, with a nonchalance that shades into melancholy. In this context, it's helpful to remind ourselves, just as "atheist" was an epithet for any different sort of believer in the early modern period, "radical" is also assigned from the outside, and furthermore, its valence alters in the transfer from historical analysis to a post-Romantic literary perspective; we shouldn't wishfully read the modern, the avantgarde, or the subversive *into* so-called radical writers.

"Equivocall Shapes" in Thomas Browne's *Religio Medici*

In *Religio Medici*, Thomas Browne meditates on diverse sources of religious skepticism. Among the causes for his uncertainty are the defects in our mortal sensorium—"the weaknesse of our

apprehension" and eyes "too dim to discover the mystery of [fortune's] effects" (26, 22).[2] This imperfection stands in contrast to angelic understanding; those higher beings "know things by their forms, and define by specificall difference, what we describe by accidents and properties; and therefore probabilities to us may bee demonstrations unto them" (38). Browne also enumerates how the march of history corrupts scripture, lamented in the "fallible discourses of man upon the word of God" (29). Graver still, contamination is entailed in any kind of communication—or community—as he finds "the Rhetoricke wherewith I perswade another cannot perswade my selfe" (61). On the status of his own salvation, Browne demurs, not because he is especially paralyzed with worry, but because it would be a similar "kinde of perjury" to attest to the mere existence of Constantinople without an "infallible warrant from my owne sense to confirme me in the certainty thereof" (63). In one articulation of the kind of loss that evidence inflicts on "a bold and noble faith," he marvels, as George Herbert does in "The Bunch of Grapes," at those "who lived before his coming" (13). One might expect that Browne, conceding that he is deprived of reliable tools of discovery, would wind up with an autobiography closer to the corrective spirit of *Pseudodoxia Epidemica*. But *Religio Medici* has always been recognized for its vibrancy and its dogged engagement with experience. Sharon Cadman Seelig eloquently observes this dialectic of robust empiricism and chiding skepticism in the autobiography, as "Browne articulates a world view that allows for, and flourishes under, the dual enthusiasms of observation of the natural world and a pervasive sense of what we cannot see."[3] From another perspective, Browne's skepticism can be pegged to specific matters of theology that are in tension with another; with regard to these conflicting belief-commitments, Brooke Conti broaches the "possibility that Browne's slippery and protean persona might be a response to real religious uncertainty," particularly concerning his own potential heresies.[4] Those uncertainties could be said to find ecumenical expression in Browne's expansive assemblage of doctrinal "points indifferent."

For these two critics, Browne's skeptical sensibility is most profoundly shaped by his scientific training and the onset of Civil War hostilities. Departing from Conti and Seelig, I would like to argue for the achievements made possible by Browne's skepticism understood as a positive philosophical disposition, a principled refusal to choose or commit.[5] This disposition makes possible representative strategies that go beyond Browne's famously paratactic, additive clauses, the most prominent feature of Browne's flexible "style" cited by both Conti and Seelig. It might first be helpful to take seriously Browne's two explicit mentions of classical skepticism: "The *Scepticks* that affirmed they knew nothing, even in that opinion confuted themselves, and thought they knew more than all the world besides" (60). And then: "though our first studies & *junior* endeavors may stile us Peripateticks, Stoics, or Academicks, yet I perceive the wisest heads prove at last, almost all Scepticks, and stand like *Janus* in the field of knowledge" (78). The revaluation that occurs between these remarks models precisely the mental habit he admires: first Browne checks the hubris of skeptics, and then he pays them an earnest compliment. Entertaining *this* notion of skepticism allows Browne to swivel Janus-faced in his own autobiography, without necessarily issuing full retractions of earlier positions. After all, it's not

just that he changes his mind progressively, but that entire suites of images and paradoxical positions reveal themselves as provisional, to be suspended and reimagined. The text resists its own commitments both by suggesting the possibility of an overwhelming multiplicity of choices and perspectives, and simultaneously rendering decisiveness (of a position, of an image-system) so fraught as to allow paradoxes to stand. And furthermore, since Browne's skepticism-as-suspension works as an inexhaustible figural engine, skepticism emerges not so much opposed to empirical reliability as aligned with aesthetic autonomy.

Browne frequently meditates on the unreliability of his text, but that anxiety has little to do with the possibility of his soul's damnation. By maintaining a steady distinction between the gravity of his salvation and his text's internal credibility, he is liberated to toy with alternate sources of instability. Expectations of our author's pious or partisan seriousness are scaled back immediately. Browne's note "to the reader" of the authorized 1643 edition defends the pirated manuscript as intended for "my private exercise and satisfaction" (3). He also crowds the beginning of the main text with the projected voices of his detractors. But the rhetorical opening orchestrates a fully public context for this text's making, and by extension, that of any confessional autobiography. Indeed, he delays declaring his confessional identity in favor of ventriloquizing the swirl of imagined polemicists:

> For my Religion, though there be severall circumstances that might perswade the world I have none at all, as the general scandal of my profession, the natural course of my studies, the indifferency of my behavior, and discourse in matters of Religion, neither violently defending one, nor with the common ardour of contention opposing another; yet in despite hereof I dare, without usurpation, assume the honorable stile of a Christian. (5)

Browne's limning of identity with a set of socially constructed "circumstances" is a brilliant feint: out of this nest of conflicting accusations, the self must be established afresh according to his own idiosyncratic, inductive method. But the clattering of critics betrays a deep-seated conceptual quandary of Browne's period. The "general scandal" he gleefully references is the medieval commonplace that two out of three physicians were atheists—*Ubi tres medici, duo athei*. That diffuse suspicion becomes even more intractable when we consider that, in the early modern period, "atheist" could just as easily name a heretic, an infidel, a rival sectarian, or really any theological disputant, as well as someone denying the ontological existence of God.[6] A charge of atheism was thus often both absolutely accusatory and also devoid of specific content—an epithet that was also expletive.[7] The scandal of Browne's belief makes reference to this unresolved but pressing cultural riddle,[8] deflecting for the moment the issue of his own ethos. The opening gambit is thereby an aggressively heteroglossic rather than confessional move, multiplying positionalities rather than consolidating them. Browne tucks in the crowding detractions, equivocations, and conditionals, in effect dramatizing how a temperate *via media* will bait his detractors, who, in the escalating violence of 1643, could be equally anyone and everyone. Amid this shuffling survey of positions, to take up the pen of a believer is likewise

construed as a perspectival ruse: "yet in despite hereof I dare, without usurpation, assume the honorable stile of a Christian." But the compounded sarcasm here yields an earnest insight: even for a believer, writing one's faith is cast as a matter of personal ostentation. Browne's penchant for externalizing belief, as if it is a "stile" to temporarily flourish, indicates his humility before the estranging task of representing oneself.[9] Just as in the ethnographic passages of *Urne-Buriall* that refer to Christians as "they," Browne likes to register the relative ease of depicting subjects from the outside. More broadly, from the rhetorical accusations to the implied imposter status of the author, the opening of *Religio Medici* initiates the reader into a text comprised of riotous speculation, rather than the searching out of signs to verify one's spiritual status.

Yet after subjecting us to the author's embattled context, Browne transforms personal speculation into a consolation rather than a liability, no matter how idiosyncratic. In the broadest strokes, this sequence of embattlement followed by consolation tracks with the generic plan of more traditional spiritual autobiographies. But the means of this consolation in *Religio Medici* are wholly unorthodox. Browne's speculative tendency governs his relationship with scripture, which he assures us is a token not of his religious conviction but of his preference. That preference slides toward provocative synonymy with belief:

> As for those wingy mysteries in Divinity and ayery subtilties in Religion, which have unhing'd the braines of better heads, they never stretched the *Pia Mater* of mine; me thinks there be not impossibilities enough in Religion for an active faith; the deepest mysteries ours containes, have not only been illustrated, but maintained by syllogisms, and the rule of reason: I love to lose my selfe in a mystery, to pursue my reason to an *o altitudo*. 'Tis my solitary recreation to pose my apprehension with those involved aenigma's and riddles of the Trinity, with Incarnation and Resurrection. (12)

Abundant reflexivity ("Pia Mater of mine," "me thinks," "I love to lose my selfe") approximates these beliefs as something like subjective taste, extrinsic to any confessional imperative. Soteriological concerns are in the service of his "solitary recreation." They are his "riddles" and playthings, and thus Browne inverts a major premise of the spiritual autobiography genre: instead of curating his experiences to bear out some plot of salvation, Browne enlists the mystery of Christ's satisfaction for his personal aesthetic experience. Browne also repurposes scripture with some audacity: he invokes Saint Paul's awe at God's miraculous wisdom[10] less as a typological confirmation of his own religious humility than as a figure for approximating his own daring intellect. The "*O altitudo*" here indicates that *Browne's* reason is, finally, unknowable and equivalent to a "mystery." As mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, this passage troubles the significance of Marshall's frontispiece illustration affixed to all of Andrew Crooke's prints, which depicts a large celestial arm plucking a figure mid-fall from a rock, saving him from the roiling sea. According to the passage, the mental ascent *o altitudo* to the point of insensibility is in fact a desirable, productive condition rather than a cautionary one. But Browne recognizes that condition is vulnerable to the easy platitudes of salvation and humility—

one of which we find in the scripted caption of the frontispiece, "*a coclo salus*." By recruiting scripture as the plaything of his mind, Browne demonstrates how a scriptural comfort can sometimes serve as a heuristic point of departure, and sometimes as the final word. It's not just that scripture can be internally inconsistent; by marking his difference from but also his (ironic) identity with the "better heads," Browne dramatizes the significance of one's exegetical disposition.

So how does Browne sustain his Janus-faced, *o altitudo* disposition through seventy-five sections, across unauthorized and later authorized editions? For Browne, as for most spiritual autobiographers, representation and apprehension of the divine are dialectically intensifying problems: his "equivocall shapes" form but a "picture of the invisible" (15). Recursiveness is therefore essential to his narrative mode. But Browne's is an extreme form of equivocation. He keeps expanding and elaborating, even to the point of changing positions within a sentence, and without necessarily holding fast to his own premises or metaphoric registers. He forewarns in the prefatory note that his "Tropicall" method will careen about (4). Browne's various reactions to scriptural paradoxes, quoted above, serve as a ready example. In order to represent the cognitive problem raised by scriptural inconsistencies, he first figures the limitations of the mind as a "hing'd" contraption and then as the stretchable membrane of the "Pia Mater." Pointedly, those more mechanical "braines" belong to the "better heads" of *other* people. That false modesty implicitly refigures the basis for authority in his text as emanating precisely from his flexibility. There is no external, stable symbolic order from which to assess the musings here; Browne and his readers must cling to the momentary claim and be prepared to set it aside—which does not mean spurning it entirely.[11]

In fact, images are highly reiterative in *Religio Medici*, the "Pia Mater" being just one instance of Browne's favored trope of the circle. Ladina Bezzola Lambert has compellingly argued how the recurring figure of the circle as "a symbol of divine creation and the realm of the self is instructive inasmuch as it shows that the symbolic value of this figure is part of a shared cultural discourse which, in spite of its currency, has not been reduced to a dead metaphor."[12] In Lambert's reading, Browne uses the circle (and by extension the sphere) to perpetually re-mark the self's relation to an external world, as well as limn autonomous regions within the self. Because the circle-as-figure is symbolically indeterminate it can be put to infinite use.[13] I would intensify her claim by observing that in *Religio Medici* the circle, more than an unresolved metaphor, can serve as a willfully, extravagantly mixed one. We have already seen the how the pia mater dissolves the square of the hinged mind. Such step-wise changes in image systems (without notice) work to sustain simultaneous appeals to both custom and idiosyncrasy—both in the content of his confessional statements and in the means of its representation. For instance, Browne has a curious way of articulating his Anglican orthodoxy. He begins with a rhetorical degradation of his own skeptical tendency in "philosophy" but not "divinity" (a distinction he erodes happily at times) before moving to a series of circle images:

> In Philosophy where truth seems double-faced, there is no man more paradoxicall than my self; but in Divinity I love to keepe the road, and though not in an implicite, yet an humble faith, follow the great wheele of the Church, by which I move, not reserving any proper poles or motion from the epicycle of my owne braine; by this meanes I leave no gap for Heresies, Schismes, or Errors of which, at present, I hope I shall not injure Truth to say, I have no taint or tincture; I must confesse my greener studies have been polluted with two or three. (9-10)

The figures here are wildly knit together. He starts out on a pedestrian plane, following along on a road well scored with the track of a wheel. Such an image suggestive of *guidance* rather than *identity* seems compatible with his denial of implicit faith. But then his locomotion seems to be actually propelled by, and coextensive with, the wheel "by which I move." Only in his qualification ("not reserving any proper poles or motion from the epicycle of my owne braine") are the images fully sublimed into astronomical orbit. But the orthodoxy suggested by this geometric exactitude gives way when it comes to his own speculations, however humble. An epicycle is a smaller circle whose center intersects with the circumference of a greater circle, and from a certain perspective, this more personal orbit affords abundant freedom, and certainly "gap" enough for straying beliefs. We can only warily accept this assurance, given the morphing metaphors, but we have no choice: even by his own standard, Browne uses remarkably compressed verbiage to keep the images streaming. He only registers a modal pause when he "must confesse" the possibilities of waywardness in his "greener studies"—and then he mumbles as to whether there were "two or three." He has also left behind the astral imagery by this point, so we have no way of assessing how those earlier "tinctures" would have corrupted his present devotion, or his recollection of their influence. Instead, Browne leaves these quirks unresolved, and heads to new meditations.

No matter its application, the circle still operates on the basis of metaphor; Browne derives more radical flexibility from the figure of microcosms. More than a conceit, the microcosm is presented as an ontological reality. Since Browne uses the microcosm to describe alternately spatial inclusion and temporal collapse (but sometimes both at once), the microcosm allows for jarring metaphysical claims.[14] In effect, Browne's imbricated microcosms afford endless alternatives to "that terrible terme, *Predestination*" (14). In this context, his distaste for Predestination stems not from its theological harshness or its bearing on his personal salvation, but its status as a heuristic block. And in that diminished sense, Browne subtly defangs the doctrine by making it out to be merely a "terme." He opts instead for a notion of God's Providence that is beyond our apprehension but still irrefutable. *That* parsing of divine foreknowledge gives Browne license to figure away as a strategy of accommodating divinity to us, without impinging on God's authority. According to Browne, the end of time will initiate an eternal all-in-all. He thus figures the condition of apocalyptic microcosm as life-giving: "for man subsisting [at that moment], who is, and will then truly appeare a Microcosme, the world cannot be said to be destroyed" (57). Even before the final judgment, though, microcosms make

possible continual aggrandizement: "wee carry with us the wonders, wee seeke without us: There is all *Africa*, and her prodigies in us" (19). Still, Browne never seems obligated to anchor his conception of time or ideal forms, opting instead for a model of cycling embodiment:

> [O]pinions doe finde after certaine revolutions, men and minds like those that first begat them. To see our selves againe wee neede not looke for *Platoes* yeare, every man is not onely himself; there have beene many *Diogenes*, and as many *Tymons*, though but few of that name; men are lived over againe; the world is now as it was in ages past; there was none then, but there hath been some one since that parallels him, and is, as it were, his revived self. (10)

Such a confounding metaphysics trivializes what it means to be a unique agent, capable of unique experience in time. One thinks of Fielding's typological satire of the coach passengers in *Joseph Andrews*, whose pugnacious lawyer "is not only alive, but hath been so these four thousand years."[15] The joke is withering of course because every observed particular can only reinscribe the paradigm, such that inductive procedure is jammed—*any* lawyer is already a type of lawyer. That kind of nonsensical paradox, a signature of *Religio Medici*, destabilizes the explanatory power of both the paradigm and the unique instantiation.

But Browne does not use this bafflement to re-inscribe the authority of ideology, myth, and inherited forms. That is not his end game. On the contrary, precisely *because* of their explanatory instability, typological conflations afford a rich imaginative stimulus. In this regard, Browne's ethics are distinctly informed by microcosms *as* literary experience and imaginative sympathy. Legendary exemplars actually open up heroic potential for all and work to negate the crushing reputation of history:

> I have often thought those Noble paires and examples of friendship not so truly Histories of what had beene, as fictions of what should be; but I now perceive nothing therein, but possibilities, nor any thing in the Heroick examples of Nisus and Euryalus, Damon and Pythias, Achilles and Patroclus, which mee thinks upon some grounds I could not performe within the narrow compasse of my selfe. (73)

The litotes of this sentence works in two directions: he is able to resist rote genuflection before his exemplary models, but he's also dramatizing the audacity of imitating heroes. That combination entails the paradox of humility joined with bravura, and his ethical formula follows suit: Browne advocates for a Senecan sympathy so potent that its enactment dissolves time and persons, because no specific case could be extrinsic to oneself. Browne, though heralded by Woolf as the "first of the autobiographers,"[16] is happy to confound a coherent, hermetic notion of Browne-as-subject. Hence the irony of Johnson's annoyance when he reads Browne as a mere solipsist who could "conclude his life is some sort a miracle, and imagine himself distinguished from all the rest of his species by many discriminations of nature or of fortune."[17] Johnson's

verdict must be reversed: Browne's deliberate intermingling of self and world, of self and history, enflames his imagination.

Counterfactuals arise in more explicitly imaginative contexts in *Religio Medici*; these special fruits of his "leisurable houres" confirm Browne's aesthetic autonomy because they blatantly eschew the pretensions of orthodoxy while luxuriating in form for form's sake (3). Answering Montaigne's erotic mortification in "On Some Lines in Virgil," Browne says he "could be content that we might procreate like trees, without conjunction."[18] That wish ramifies into his appreciation of "all that is beautiful" in visual art, in harmonies, and in poetry.[19] More drastically, he speculates about reversing historical events and fully dropping the "stile" of his own religious identity. Often these thought-experiments concern the personal curating of sacred texts: "were I a Pagan I should not refraine the Lecture of [Scriptures]; and cannot but commend the judgement of Ptolomy, that could not think his Library compleate without it" (29). Soon after he remarks that he could "with patience behold the urne and ashes of the Vatican, could I with a few others recover the perished leaves of Solomon, the sayings of the Seers, and the Chronicles of the Kings of Judas." In fashioning his ideal sacred library, Browne aspires to a kind of literary bricolage.[20] But this variety is a consistent strain of Browne's thought: he is the would-be savior of textual relics lost forever, and an intellect who takes Peter1:24 ("all flesh is grass") as an occasion to meditate on the marvels of literal decomposition. In Browne's inverting imagination, a counterfactual can serve to plumb the existential stakes of life-as-it-is in order to represent the ordinary as a redoubled miracle: "It is the common wonder of all men, how among so many millions of faces, there should be none alike: Now contrary, I wonder as much how there should be any" (68). The relation of those sentences is alarming. He takes part in the first bit of wonderment, derived from aggregate experience, and then by means of casual deixis, "Now contrary," throws us into utter disorientation. The two modes of wonder are abruptly, intimately apposed; everyday empirical observation leads to baffling sublimity, and Browne wants them both at hand.[21] But we ought to consider his extravagant time-traveling bibliophilia *together* with his grasp of the ordinary-as-miraculous to discern a coherent aesthetic principle: Browne's autobiography seems intent on compounding rather than delimiting the modes of representation at his disposal.[22]

Johnson would grumble that Browne represented himself "with such generality and conciseness as affords very little light to his biographer."[23] That paradox, it seems, also names the provocative indecisions of the microcosm-as-figure. *Religio Medici* is emphatically *not* about decisive conversion or political maneuvering—events that would help place Browne in some kind of narrative history, even if a personal one.[24] By the end of *Religio Medici* one notes the conspicuous shortage of recollections amid the essayistic digressions, reversals of opinion, and spliced symbolic paradigms. In fact he explicitly postpones the task of autobiographical narrative to a section near the end of the Second Part, only to hang fire again: "Now for my life, it is a miracle of thirty yeares, which to relate, were not a History, but a peece of Poetry, and would sound to common eares like a fable" (82). That very incompleteness leads him to rue our mortal faculties once more, before pivoting to admire the heightened sensibility of those about to die:

"Thus it is observed that men sometimes upon the houre of their departure, doe speake and reason above themselves. For then the soule beginning to bee freed from the ligaments of the body, begins to reason like her selfe, and to discourse in a straine above mortality" (84). In this rendering, the feminized "soule" is bestowed with a "selfe" of her own, akin to the way one's essential personality is only visible in good health—a curiously somatic register in this context. That embodiment and feminine separateness at the moment of death stages the process of assumption as yet another *altitudo* moment. To Browne, sleep provides a decent approximation of this transcendence. It's not totally surprising, then, that the most forensic "exhibit" of Browne's devotional practice in all of *Religio Medici* concerns his ritual prayer before bed: he inserts the "dormitive" he recites to God in its entirety. A few lines will suffice here:

> The night is come like to the day,
> Departe not thou great God away.
> Let not my sinnes, blacke as the night,
> Eclipse the lustre of thy light. (84)

Compared to the surrounding prose, his verse is drily instrumental—practically a soporific for the text itself, and subordinated to a mere "peece of Poetry," to recall his phrase stowed away in the previous passage. It seems here that Browne is staging an implicit juxtaposition of his prose reflections and the transcribed evening prayer that *should* stand as robust evidence of his spiritual engagement. But rather than a window into some interior confessional content, revealing Browne's direct line to God, the poem is opaquely conventional. The effect is a reversal of what he explicitly avers: Browne's speculative prose abets transport of a very mortal, writerly kind. His autobiography records the blinkered reality of spiritual sentience, and registers the authorial thrall to that experience.

Diving into the Wreck: Richard Norwood's *Confessions*

Richard Norwood wrote his *Confessions* in 1639 at the age of 49, at the midpoint of his life, after having moved to Bermuda from England. Despite being a genuine polymath (he worked variously as a mathematician, sailor, surveyor, olive oil exporter, and aspiring pearl diver), Norwood's memoir stands as a locus classicus of Puritan self-doubt. Unlike many Puritan testimonies, and far from the self-advertisement of Browne's *Religio Medici*, the manuscript was never circulated, nor intended as entry papers for a congregation in Norwood's lifetime. Norwood's own changes to the private manuscript dramatize a process of internal de-authorization. In several places, Norwood crosses out explicit language about desire, substituting more abstract moralizing.[25] Scenes referencing masturbation are inked out, and the words "polluted myself" are swapped for "master sin" (78, 81).[26] We could explain these reflexive emendations as the standard ritual of the examined holy life: Norwood at first includes every

recalled detail and only later sorts that raw material into something like spiritual categorization. Still, such a process amplifies the embarrassments of experimental faith. The emendations in *Confessions* have a way of compounding the author's personal exposure to judgment—the original sin, followed by the author's prurient re-presentation of it. Instead of editorial revision as retrospective mastery, Norwood renders his faults as having the power to conjure that judgment in perpetuity, well after the moment of personal conversion. Seen as a cumulative palimpsest, Norwood's transcript enacts the complex burdens of what Matthew Brown calls "soul fashioning," the standard move of the Puritan diary.[27] Brown's term is an ironic counterpoint to the exquisite artifice of Greenblatt's early modern selves; we are meant to understand Puritan autobiographers as so thoroughly subjected to the ideological code of their given confessional identity that they are incapable of exploring their own impulses, creative or otherwise.

The theological argument against aesthetic autonomy in Norwood's *Confessions* is perhaps even plainer than the one of textual history. We know that Norwood converted to a form of Predestinarian evangelism at some point in his twenties. While we're short on other details about his exact confessional affiliation—and its evolution—Kathleen Lynch has persuasively argued that Norwood's journal "contested an alternative, ascendant devotional practice" in the Puritan community of Bermuda under the leadership of Nathaniel White.[28] In any case, Norwood writes clearly enough that he believed in the totalizing authority of Predestination. Even on the last pages of his *Confessions*, in the midst of a somewhat valedictory passage, Norwood entertains the possibility that he is not enacting the stage of spiritual justification, as one concluding such a memoir would hope: "But it may be, yea it is most likely that these losses have been a gain to me, and have prevented far greater losses and dangers that might have befallen me some other ways" (107). That wavering might suggest that, for Norwood, the whole journal is an act of falsification, and that his supposed conversion and sanctification have constituted fraudulent self-deceit. According to the most stringent Calvinist doctrine to which Norwood subjects himself, such self-doubt is beside the point. The explanatory force of such an extreme ideology has usually meant, in Keith Thomas's formulation, that "there was no way in which the theory once accepted could be faulted."[29]

In other words, it's a tall order to recuperate Puritan autobiographies like *Confessions* as aesthetic enterprises unto themselves, and also to recognize the author's interest in representing his own aesthetic experience. While these tasks are distinct, they involve the two vast claims of Kantian aesthetics—as a science of feeling, and as a privileging of form as distinct from interest. The perfectly closed system of ideological assumptions about the piety of an autobiographer such as Norwood has traditionally afforded scant options for theorizing the aesthetic in both of its senses. There is an all-or-nothing corollary in critical responses to journals like Norwood's. If we go in for the strict confessional indexicality of such a text, we are complicit in denying its aesthetic autonomy, the effects and features it achieves, as well as the capacity for the writer to inhabit aesthetic experience. Confessional literature has typically enjoyed a special epistemological prestige for just this reason. Lynch puts the critical quandary this way:

> As a consequence of this direct appeal to God, spiritual journals have been granted default status as truthful texts. If they are not truthful, the altered terms of reading are measured in a taxonomical shift. The work is deemed fiction, rather than autobiography. Soon enough, the lure of plot and character development would carry the conventions of seventeenth-century spiritual autobiography into fiction through the new genre of the novel.[30]

These critical binaries, as Lynch would agree, are untenable—not the least because the bulwarks of "truth" and "fiction" have long been conceptualized in richly dialectical terms, in the seventeenth century as well as in current scholarship, and with particular intensity in recent theories of the autobiographical construct.[31] Lynch also identifies the problem of the perceived ingenuousness of religious belief—and the problem of perpetuating that inviolability in criticism. But while Lynch's answer is to turn to the textual history and rhetorical functions of autobiography in their "outward reaches," presumably for their enhanced offer of verifiable reality, my contention is to dive again inward: if "the inward aspects of these narratives are well recognized,"[32] but they only serve to give us characters within plots in novels, then we cannot be done accounting for the internal dynamics of form within the autobiographies. Norwood's *Confessions* contains speculative experiments that are not readily assimilable: he explores the disjunction between experience and its import, the tautologies of a critical narrative consciousness, and the remainders of affect that exceed the mandates of "spiritual autobiography." One convention of the genre that Norwood continually remakes is his relationship to his livelihood. Rather than neatly index his grace to the evidence of his vocational prospects (as the student, the actor, the traveling sailor, the diver), his figural materials tend to break off from the spiritual reality they ought to signify, according to the more emblematic expectations of the genre. In this inversion of spiritual autobiographical practices, the autobiography enlists specific vocational content, but that content then satisfies its own imagistic (and authorial) ends.

Let us now take an episode in *Confessions* that troubles the text's putative resignation in God's providence. Early in the text, Norwood recalls an episode from his schooldays when he realizes that his tuition could no longer be afforded because of his father's financial slide. Worse still, another of his schoolmates has assumed his scholarship instead. The description is quite complicated, not the least because Norwood compresses the fallout into a single sentence:

> Surely God made me sensible of the misery ensuing when I came from Barkamsted, for my School-master there being as I conceived something sharper to me then to my fellows[,] when I knew I must shortly go from him I thought I would then be even with him, for I purposed then to carry my self very cheerfully without any sign of grief at departure, that so he might see I did not love him. (125-126)

Critic John Stachniewski has read encounters like this one to be the psychological product of social and theological conspiracy, arguing that Norwood's "feelings would not have formed as they did if the personality of the puritan father-God had not been at the back of them."[33] Assuming the interpellated Norwood to conform experience to Providential authority, Stachniewski cites Norwood's "gawkily insistent integrity" and "refusal to be crisply overdecisive" as evidence that Norwood allows that paternal wisdom to stand. Norwood's first clause ("Surely God made me sensible of the misery ensuing") fits such a description, in that he fashions the beginning of a stratagem that we expect will be borne out by what follows. But this is a singularly strange, running sentence, with nested clauses that don't easily map back into his opening claim. Instead of confirming his insistence, the "surely" is compensatory, given that the remainder of the sentence is freighted with weighing possibilities—and then out of these contortions, the sentence projects a fictional younger self who would have behaved more courageously in the schoolroom. But the dissimulating Norwood is all the more exposed: he feels unfairly slighted by his teacher, but also frankly inferior to his peers who will continue their studies in comfort. The absolute providential category of "misery" thus ramifies into a more volatile contradiction of vulnerability and pride—and the tension of that social experience remains actively baffling in Norwood's retrospective account. The gripping dramas of this sentence, played out over multiple temporalities and grammatical moods, undermine his ostensible point, that the cause of the "misery" is settled fact. And in light of that doubt, the more estranged his perspective, the more Norwood can consume his own story *as* a story.

More importantly, in this episode, Norwood projects a complex understanding of affective and performative experiences. His tough act in the schoolroom is certainly not explained as explicit evidence of election or damnation. That dissimulation escapes notice from the ledger of personal sin: the mischief of his deception goes unaccounted for. One of the most compelling cases for a kind of aesthetic autonomy that can't be construed meaningful evidence emerges from Norwood's fascination with estranging performance. Literal stagecraft figures as a recurring temptation for Norwood pre-conversion. He slips in a particularly piquant detail about his theatrical ambitions as a teenager: "I was near 15 years of age being drawn in by other yong men of the town, I acted a womans part in a stage play; I was so much affected with that practice, that had not the Lord prevented it, I should have chosen it before any other course of life" (126). Because the theatre is dismissed out of hand, the detail about playing a woman doesn't offend particularly, even though for the Puritan polemicists, cross-dressing was a particularly galling feature of the public stage.[34] But that decadence is allowed to fly under Norwood's retrospective censure, perhaps because he is saying something more daring: in a genre so characterized by vocational anxiety—a concern that choosing the one right path should reflect his moral priorities and grace—Norwood was attracted to an artistic career that would open up an infinite number of alternatives. Notably, this meditation skirts the plain fact that Norwood actually *did* pursue so many careers his "course of life." It's almost as though when the category of unsavory possibilities is left so ample and the fit path neither ready nor easy, he cannot help but elaborate one of those possibilities—but the acting career he unconvincingly laments stands in for infinite,

unwieldy possibilities. In that context, the detail about playing a woman's role takes part in his radical compounding. Norwood has totally shaken off the singular choice discussed by Puritan "youth guides," which counseled that one should make the decision out of filial loyalty and a sense of what God had prepared him for.[35] Even the prodigal Robinson Crusoe was merely deciding between going to sea or following his parents' wishes in Hull. But the teleology of God's plan for Norwood never figures as a constraint for his representations; his choices provide free ground for speculative material that he can regard at a leisurely remove. Norwood's thought experiment about becoming an actor is nominally less blasphemous than Browne's "if I were a Pagan" fantasy. But both writers generate insight by imagining the self as another, over and over again. They suggest that autobiography is a true *speculum*, as it both looks outward and reflects like a mirror. And perhaps Norwood's counterfactual still more radical in that he doesn't enlist any historical distance or particularity that would constrain his alter-ego.

While Norwood chides himself for dabbling in the "fayned things" of theatre and literature, his autobiography doesn't give a gloss as to *why* those pursuits had such a hold on his imagination through adolescence and beyond, but it doesn't seem to be on account of their sinfulness per se (138). Norwood grumbles about his Berkhamsted peers taunting him for his poetry: "I had an aptness and readiness in versifying above the rest of my schoolfellows, for which they called me 'Ovid,' and sometimes in scorn and derision, 'Naso': the first I was proud of, the other I could not endure" (126). But his artistic pride remains remarkably intact. The real quandary emerges for Norwood not in the vanity of invention, but in the ready parallel between the creative arts and impersonation. For the itinerant Norwood, personhood is a series of experiments. Crucially, he uses the vocabulary of "feigning" Catholicism for ease during his travels through Italy:

> all which prevailed little or nothing with me, save only that I did dissemble, and would seem to be perswaded for the end afore mentioned. Thus after some weeks spent there [Rome] I very desperately dissembled seeming to be convinced, and to embrace that religion, confessed to a priest, and received their sacrament, and then had a letter commendatory from one of the chief of them to the Pope. (132)

If, in the crudest terms, the Reformation inverted the faithful life from external practices to internal belief, Norwood explores the over-determination of that sequence by running it backwards: playing a Catholic is merely a superficial kind of desperation until the role becomes oddly habitable—as plausible an identity as his own, and only ever construed as a set of practices. The typical Puritan critique of a popery comprised of empty surfaces turns out to apply to Norwood, too. But even that critique can't be chalked up to self-interested "one-downsmanship,"[36] as a technique of exultation by abnegation. Norwood elaborates his Roman progress into finer degrees of intentionality before rounding them off with an appeal to outside pressure: "when I came to Rome, I did voluntarily (for I remember not that it was necessarily imposed) make confession to a priest and receive their sacrament, which I had done at Louvain

dissemblingly, but here almost in earnest yet not seriously but upon a very doubtful and uncertain opinion, chiefly because others did so" (24-25). This sentence becomes less a document of recalled experience than a fecund corridor of qualifications that undo previous claims. That last detail about peer pressure, rather than giving us decisive context, itself helps to dramatize the ambiguity between memory and inference. By grinding down the distinction between performance and internal realization, Norwood can intimate untold psychological depths and remake them into artful surfaces again.

The habit Norwood describes—"seeming to be convinced"—is of course a perennial paradox of Puritan thought, the engine of assurance and its opposite. For Norwood, though, the suspicion of performativity gives way to unease about the authenticity of *any* feeling. In this context, Norwood hedges about the currency of his own affective experience—and, key for the present argument, that skeptical tendency actually affords him some release as an aesthetic experience. In the following passage he recalls the throes of conversion while in Bermuda:

> I apprehended my race to be almost finished and to be as it were within the hearing of the screechings and yellings of tormented souls, not by any sensible noise but as it were an impression of the species of it, as audible as a sensible noise. Yet I was not stricken with any vehement fear (though I feared much) but rather with a kind of admiration or wonder to think what should become of me, apprehending that either I should speedily plunge into hell or else some other very strange thing would betide me very shortly. (78)

Sensations of "apprehension" are murkily construed for our writer; they intimate a concurrently active and passive event, a result of seizing and being seized, and pertaining to both his cognitive and affective faculties. Indeed, Norwood refuses the rhetorical force of "narratively implying that one is not the agent of one's own action" that Peter Carlton cites as a source of Bunyan's authority in *Grace Abounding*. Carlton contends that "when Bunyan says 'the Scripture fell on me,' he is using a disclaiming locution to narrate something that he did as though it had happened to him."[37] By contrast, Norwood meticulously hedges about every attribution in this descriptive chain. What's more, this inconclusive retrospective account shares in the suspense, extending the tension into its very writing, precisely because the authoritative interpretation of those feelings was never his in the first place. The skeptic in Norwood fully registers the radical uncertainty of his fate (options on the table include an immediate "plunge into hell" or "else some other very strange thing," death or uninterrupted life) and the unreliability of his senses (is he hearing a noise, or not?), even as he tries to record the acoustic complexity. But all of this epistemic ambivalence is ultimately in service of a kind of aesthetic admiration—"a kind of admiration or wonder"—that withstands even the question of his damnation. For Norwood as for Browne, while the tasks of apprehension and representation are mutually dependent activities, "representation" sometimes strikes out on its own.

Another way of theorizing what Norwood achieves here could be supplied by later critiques of sentiment and sentimentality. Beyond his fascination with dissimulation and

affective unreliability, Norwood knows well that authenticity or spontaneous feeling can be of little help as hermeneutic markers: "I knew no salve," he recalls of a subsequent bout of despondency, "that I might apply but sought to the Lord with instant prayers and tears, yet found no redress" (86). An immediate physiological response is no transparent sign for experimental belief nor a fit petition. Norwood figures himself simultaneously a man of feeling and of failing—and he's exposed to the hermeneutic circle that results. But such a double-bind can actually be liberating. In describing how "doubt survives the agency of emotion," Steven Goldsmith develops a model of the critical reader that I believe serves as well for Norwood as a spiritual autobiographer who reads his own experience and is always already compromised. Goldsmith invokes the moment in the sentimental novel *The Man of Feeling* when the hero Harley must decide whether to keep his promise to check in on a prostitute in distress, even though he is very likely being duped:

> Mackenzie has created a perfect scene to dramatize the critical reader's dilemma. The reader can exercise agency only by relying on the emotions he is systematically led to distrust, which is why *The Man of Feeling* is at one and the same time, at every moment of its swinging pendulum, a text of sensibility and irony. Should the reader go with or against the emotions? The novel's only answer is 'yes.'[38]

Norwood similarly ensures that irony and sensibility compete within the same stretches of his prose; doubt and certainty code for one another such that the text nurtures its own complicity in the hermeneutic circle without editorializing that it's a sinful trap. His utter affective ambivalence lets that narrative dissonance stand, without bending to a theological resolution.

In suggesting how Norwood's *Confessions* can help us re-conceptualize even the most ascetic Puritan spiritual autobiography as an aesthetic enterprise, each episode thus far has found that potential within a more or less traumatic context—scenes of adolescent humiliation, exile, and wary conversion. We might finally pause over a rare moment when Norwood's relative affective equanimity helps to resist theological mapping. Reflecting on his time as a sailor, Norwood describes how he fashioned a crude diving-bell out of a hogshead barrel in order to retrieve some cargo that had fallen from a docked ship. He recalls how he "put a rope cross the bottom of [the hogshead] to stand upon" so as to go under water. While his shipmates are concerned for his sake, Norwood is serene:

> I seeing no inconvenience called to them to let it down to the bottom, and so they did, where I walked to and fro a certain time till at last I found that single piece, which was almost buried in the ooze… I am so much the rather to acknowledge the divine providence and goodness of this particular… But I seemed to have a kind of alacrity and assurance of the certainty of it and met with no danger nor inconvenience in doing it, only it was cold. (49)

This Norwood, striding about on the ocean floor, is as gratified as we see him the entire text: he allows himself to revel in the pleasure of his competence, of a thing well made, returning to emphasize his talent even after offering gratefulness to "divine providence" for making his dive successful. Like so many Puritan autobiographers, elsewhere in the text Norwood analyzes his vocational fortunes precisely in terms of his salvation, but here he takes care to partition the two. This decoupling is especially pointed because we learn later in *Confessions* that the whole pearl-harvesting enterprise will fail in Bermuda—a lack of pearls combined with more urgent problems like starvation meant the diving bell could not be put to use. But in this initial underwater plunge, captaining his improvised vessel, Norwood took pleasure in wandering "to and fro" in spite of the frigid water—but he also allows himself the "to and fro" of that very narrative digression. That combined freedom of form and imagistic content suggests the genre's accommodation of aesthetic autonomy, and the writerly satisfaction of textual experimentation that doesn't readily answer to the affective logic of predestinarian theology. Norwood writes within the dictates of "Puritan spiritual autobiography" except when he doesn't—in those moments of calling to depths where bafflement returns back again as wonder.

Radical Picaresque: Laurence Clarkson's *The Lost Sheep Found*

Antinomian writers are more intuitively affiliated with aesthetic autonomy and self-authorizing pleasure (of all kinds) than an autobiographer of Norwood's kind of piety. But the analytic trap of ideological identification over formal exploration has proven to be at least as intractable in the scholarship on religious radicals. Clement Hawes and Nigel Smith provide two critical examples. In their work on prophetic texts, they demonstrate how "enthusiastic" prose and poetry map onto marginalized confessional communities. In *Mania and Literary Style: The Rhetoric of Enthusiasm from the Ranters to Christopher Smart*, Hawes proposes a theory of "manic" style that allows him to account for surprising combinations of textual features and to extend his theory to nonconformist poets in the eighteenth century.[39] Ultimately, though, Hawes leverages his stylistic analysis in order to revise our ideas about sanity and madness in the period rather than our ideas about religion or the literary. But the central argument put forth by Smith in *Perfection Proclaimed: Language and Literature in English Radical Religion 1640-1660* is one of robust identity: radical style is predictably found to be characteristic of radical doctrine.[40] Here is Smith on the radicals' use of language in the 1640s and 1650s: "Undoubtedly the language of radical religion was founded upon irrationality in theory and in practice as the difference between the internal and the external, the literal and the figurative, disappeared. Self, church, and Godhead become one."[41] "Startling" stylistic effects, such as a muddling of pronouns and the conflation of a writer and his environment, are construed by Smith as an "attempt to capture the authenticity of God's working within each soul and within the nation."[42] To see how this kind of symptomatic reading can lead to a fairly complacent rule of thumb, we need only notice how, at the conclusion of an interpretive argument, the critical voice merges

with the explicit ideology it takes as its subject.

That tendency seems to be a particular temptation for literary historians in the case of Laurence Clarkson because of his monistic doctrine (I'll return to discuss the form that belief takes later in the chapter). In fact, in his discussion of Clarkson's works, Smith marshals those passages that take monism both as their central subject and figurative system. Reading Clarkson's pamphlet *A Single Eye All light, no Darkness* (1650), Smith finds that "Clarkson does not admit the distinction between physical and spiritual light, which is an important example of the way in which the Ranter imagination reduces all definitions and distinctions into a positive, transcendent essence, the monistic impulse."[43] By tending to the radical imagination at play in Clarkson, Smith goes a long way to illustrate the "rational irrationality" operating in Clarkson's work: what better way to demonstrate the exceptional status of the enthusiast (or, in Clarkson's specific case, to make his bid for Muggletonian succession) than to overwhelm the critical faculties of a reader? In this regard Smith impresses something crucial about the Ranters' paradoxical relationship to rhetoric, how they position themselves as wholly resistant to its mechanisms while proving to be adept practitioners. More intriguing, Smith is showing the complements of imaginative and rhetorical work in radical polemic, and in doing so, he recuperates the texts as worthy of formal investigation. No one could, say after Smith's work[44] that Ranter writings were mere sophistry, or artifacts of libertine justification so brazen that some historians of the 1970s found themselves speculating whether these "radicals" were just the imagined bogeymen of the Puritan mainstream.

Still, when *Perfection Proclaimed* turns to *The Lost Sheep Found*, Clarkson's autobiography of 1660, Smith is drawn to the bits that retread that privileged trope of monism. Here is a portion of Smith's most salient quotation from the autobiography: "even as a stream from the Ocean was distinct in it self while it was a stream, but when returned to the Ocean, was therein swallowed and become one with the Ocean; so the spirit of man while in the body was distinct from God, but when death came it returned to God."[45] But this passage should give us pause precisely because it serves Smith as philosophical stenography, uncontextualized within the autobiographical surround. Sure enough, this passage is emphatically unrepresentative of *The Lost Sheep Found* as a whole. By filleting out this passage for its explicit philosophical content, Smith doesn't explain the full strangeness of Clarkson's narrative. Elsewhere in his discussion Smith briefly notes a peculiar tic of *Lost Sheep Found*, that of Clarkson's occasional narrative nonchalance. He points specifically to Clarkson's offhand allusion to a phrase from Isaiah 66.3 ("as if he cut off a dog's neck"), and Clarkson's lack of embellishment or intensification of the threat. But Smith's notice is brief; he glosses this apparent understatement as an ironic reinforcement of the absolute command of Biblical language within Clarkson's community.[46] For Smith, the nonchalance is canceled out because this flourish only underscores Clarkson's internalization of Scriptural power. And yet when one recognizes the pervasiveness of Clarkson's nonchalance and his self-reflexive irony, one finds ample invitation to read against or outside of Clarkson's "zealotry." The larger framework of the autobiography helps to authorize that aesthetic exploration, too: Clarkson took care to partition the narrative of the autobiography

from the Socratic exchange that comprises the second, non-narrative portion of *Lost Sheep Found*; it's in this addendum where Clarkson provides "answers" to rhetorical questions about his idiosyncratic creed, such as "What had become of me if I had died before I heard of this spiritual last Commission?" (34)[47]

We need a more supple account of Clarkson's nonchalance, precisely because that mood utterly contradicts the expectation of a radical, ecstatic style presumed to be the fundamental signature of doctrinally-radical writers. My reading will demonstrate how Clarkson's narrative forays in *The Lost Sheep Found* baffle generic expectations of the spiritual autobiography and its place in literary history. Clarkson's autobiography has a way of dramatizing epistemological flux that disturbs any assumptions about "belief" as a steady structure of experience. Contra Smith, I will argue that doctrine is far from synonymous with the content (let alone the style) of the autobiography; conferring a more inductive attention to the text's formal features suggests a much more skeptical, and speculative, narrative disposition. And as we more fully explore the stylistic and thematic tendency of nonchalance, we can better recognize how Clarkson's memoir shares pronounced affinities with the skeptical novels of the mid-eighteenth century and with the picaresque tradition more generally, including a minor note of alienated melancholy and ethical dread that always lingers beneath the comic outrages of itinerant unaccountability.

The Lost Sheep Found evinces picaresque detachment at multiple levels, in prose style as well as thematic content. Moving from literal place to place, from sect to sect, Clarkson affiliates with seven different sets of believers—Episcopalians, Presbyterians, Independents, Antinomians, Baptists, Seekers, and Ranters—with pit stops in atheism and astrology. Accordingly, Clarkson's text is always ready to abandon his own philosophical premises. For the roguish Clarkson, geographic, theological, and semantic consistencies are just assumptions to be undermined at his pleasure. And pleasure it seems to be. He will casually denigrate devotion under the heel of wordplay, accentuating his hypocrisy through the doubleness of language: "so coming to Canterbury there was some fix of this way, amongst whom was a maid of pretty knowledge, who with my Doctrine was affected, and I affected to lye with her" (22). Every object of knowledge has its carnal counterpart, such that religious experimentalism is remade into cathexis.[48] In a related bit of hucksterism, Clarkson sows aural confusion in a dizzying sermon style: during "travels through Seekers in Hartfordshire," he preached that "it was not sufficient to be a professor, but a possessor of Christ, the possession of which would cause a profession of him, with many such high flown notions, which at that time I knew no better, nay, and in truth I speak it, there was few of the Clergy able to reach me in Doctrine or Prayer" (23). He's also fond of the long-form joke. After his arrest for "dipping," he's brought before the "committee at St. Edmonds Bury" (14). Clarkson then devotes a full page to a question-and-answer sequence with his interrogators about his rampant baptisms before burnishing the punch-line: "Nay further, it is reported, that which of them you like best, you lay with her in the water? Surely your experience teacheth you the contrary, that nature hath small desire to copulation in water, at which they laughed" (15). This episode bears out what Smith would elsewhere call Clarkson's pragmatics, his "gift of gab."[49] More than expediency, though, Clarkson's blitheness is truly the poetics of a

world turned upside down: not only do pretension and debasement vouch for each other (as in the figure of a punning preacher), but the larger irony is the writer's indifference to that incoherence. In its utter disregard for semantic or juridical authority, *The Lost Sheep Found* is deeply indebted to the plebian revolution of the midcentury. But it would be a mistake to align his humor fully with enthusiastic commitment or republican principles.

Clarkson resists such an alignment in part because he takes care to model *how* his disregard develops, at the dramatic level of the sentence.[50] His libertinism is abetted by textual itinerancy, rolling clauses that defer accountability:

> But now to return to my progress, I came for London again, to visit my old society; which then Mary Midleton of Chelsford, and Mrs Star was deeply in love with me, so having parted with Mrs. Midleton, Mrs. Star and I went up and down the countries as man and wife, spending our time in feasting and drinking, so that Tavernes I called the house of God; and the Drawers, Messengers; and Sack, Divinity. (188)

The prophetic authority of those final appellations are turned right around to corroborate his jaunt as it happens; it's admittedly a reactive justification, but one with all the showy confidence of rhetorical parallelism and elision. That is to say, his "progress" morphs into a sermon in the span of a sentence. Clarkson manipulates that elistism to get by. An orgy at the Ranters' "Head-quarters" in London gives form to his social and rhetorical distinction:

> onely my body was given to other women: so our Company encreasing, I wanted for nothing that heart could desire, but at last it became a trade so common that all the froth and scum broke forth into the height of this wickedness, yea began to be a publick reproach, that I broke up my Quarters. (26)[51]

Curiously, the passage doesn't bother with the context that would justify Clarkson's abrupt denunciation. We can only infer that romance transmutes into mean commerce, as the generous "Company" becomes a lowly "common." But one gets the sense that the judgment of changed circumstances is motivated by Clarkson's arbitrary register shift, in which he manufactures—then flaunts—his disdain. Style doesn't just reinforce but conjures into being the persona of antic privilege.

But that reflexive, abrupt turning out of or away from society also marks more subtended narrative features. Leopold Damrosch has put forward a key insight about the alienating effects of Puritan autobiography that's relevant here: "The Puritans were—and wanted to be—a foreign body within the British nation; yet their extreme individualism made it likely in addition that a Puritan would feel himself to be a foreign body within the Puritan group."[52] But Clarkson's argument is not solely about exclusivity as a rejection of society—we've already seen that Clarkson enjoys new "Company," and plays to an audience. What Clarkson expresses is not

simply an intensification of that persecuted individualism—rather, he dramatizes the swings of identification with and repulsion of those around him.

In this spirit, he's attracted to perspectival experiment and decentering. Clarkson goes out of his way to indulge his vanity, but it's the disorientation of others that most amuses him. He makes a point to dissolve his subjective perspective in sequences like this one:

> when I came into the entering of the town the inhabitants had beset both sides of the streets to see my person, supposing an Anabaptist had bin a strange creature, but when they beheld me, with my wife, they said one to another, He is like one of us, yea, they are a very pretty couple, it is pity I should suffer. (13)

In such passages, Clarkson is toying with the notion that demystification can spawn its own bafflements—for outside observers, that is. One result is that the confessing narrator at the very heart of the narrative becomes a mechanism of that bafflement rather than its subject. Clarkson duly records the thrall of others—again enhanced because of his detached delivery: "Now I being as they said Captain of the Rant…" (26). As in the "sermon passage" cited earlier, this claim works backwards, bestowing him with authority he passively accepts. In fashioning his autobiography as a product of social embeddedness, Clarkson shares a fundamental parallel with the chaste Richard Norwood and more conservative Thomas Browne: rather than follow a solipsistic regress to spiritual truth, these three writers expose themselves to the indeterminacy of outward signs and interlocutors. Clarkson amplifies this uncertainty, though, by extending his imaginative sympathies fully outward to those who ensure his "progress" is a spectacle.

Superficiality proves to be a favorite technique of disorientation. Everywhere *The Lost Sheep Found* foregrounds the profound contingency of our writer's movements. We know that the text was "Printed for the Author" in London, 1660, and the book's running page-headers insist on the conceit of mapping belief and geography together, when in fact there's no satisfying necessity for Clarkson's "conversions" to happen where they do. A striking example: facing pages six and seven present us with the headings "L.C. travels through Episcopacy in Lancashire" and "L.C. travels through Presbytery in London." These headings accentuate the hastening done in the underlying blocks of text, by compressing our protagonist (the familiar and jaunty "L.C.") in name, space, time, and confessional claim; the phrase "travels through" bears, we would have to say, too much for understanding. This compression belies a kind of disqueiting narrative monism—achieved, again, not through burning language but rather the flattening of affect. We can see a similar flattening strategy in Clarkson's weary logistics of sexual escapade. Multiple contingencies influence his "travels through the Seekers in Kent," including a persistent admirer: "by subtilty of reason I perswaded her to have patience, while I went into Suffolk…and full glad was I that I was from her delivered… and having got some six pounds, returned to my wife….and then I heard the maid had been in those parts to seek me" (22). Far from predicating this motion on spiritual realization, Clarkson contends that his pilgrimage amounts to keeping

one step ahead of a jealous mistress—one whose pursuit burlesques what it means to "seek" in the farcical terrain of the autobiography.[53]

Such dogged serialization and insistence on contingency also strains the authority of Biblical typologies. Instead of leaning on the Bible for a structuring pattern, *The Lost Sheep Found* mocks the very hermeneutic strategy of pattern-making. It's not just that Clarkson finds scriptural paradoxes to confound meaning; rather than worry about the problem, he actively contributes to the havoc. On the last page of the narrative portion of the autobiography Clarkson explicitly denounces Biblical sense: "for when I have perused the Scriptures I have found so much contradiction as then I conceived, that I had no faith in it at all, no more then a history" (32). Despite that admission, the whole autobiography remains a tissue of scriptural references that apparently suit any purpose. The Exodus story accompanies many of his conversions, and we read several variations on the following passage: "So finding I was but still in Egypt burning Brick, I was minded to travel into the Wilderness; so seeing the vanity of the Baptists, I renounced them and had my freedom" (19). Even within the terms of the allusion, there's a touch of chatty deflation ("I was minded"). With every realization that he is still left slaving under the veil of ignorance, the same language serves, and he moves on. This cycle of scriptural insistence and abandonment is also found in the ramble of Clarkson's full title, which fully inverts its scriptural emphases: "*The Lost Sheep Found*" initially implies Clarkson's humility, as one of many graciously reunited to his flock; by the end of the title, Clarkson names himself "*the onely true converted Messenger of Christ Jesus*."[54] That kind of inversion reinforces other local ironies. In one such turn, Clarkson begins by boasting how he could lure apostates by preaching a doctrine of "free Grace" (11). So full of "envy" were the Ministers that they called Clarkson "Sheep-stealer for robbing them of their flock." Clarkson is glad to adopt this agency, but without fully internalizing it: we can detect him rerouting the insult into an object of his own amusement. Intoning his critics and imbedding their criticisms, Clarkson works in something very close to free indirect discourse. We might even say that this perspectival dissolve produces an alternate profanity: instead of offering prophecies with inspired enthusiasm, the amorphous Clarkson deranges the sanctity of the individual confessor. And predictably, this notion of *The Lost Sheep Found* as an assembly of subject positions throws doctrinal pieties into disarray. On this point, we should revive the image of the monistic God-as-ocean cited by Smith ("even as a stream from the Ocean was distinct in it self while it was a stream, but when returned to the Ocean, was therein swallowed and become one with the Ocean…"). We can now appreciate how the fuller aesthetic of *The Lost Sheep Found* derides such unalloyed assurance. If anything, the context of Clarkson's narrative encases the ostensibly totalizing ocean as just one more philosophical venture, as is his way of shrinking maximal claims into minimal ones. When Clarkson writes in this keyed-*down* style, he is most baffling to those detractors (and scholars) who would expect his pitch to match his doctrine—whichever one that happens to be at the moment.

So far I've been trying to scrutinize moments of nonchalance and itinerancy in *The Lost Sheep Found*. These moments, I have argued, suggest how the text's formal features serve a

skeptical inclination rather than enthusiastic commitment. With the formal particulars of *The Lost Sheep Found* more problematized, we have grounds for an alternate generic mapping that answers to this new epistemological characterization of the text. I want to suggest that the affinities between the picaresque genre and a text like *The Lost Sheep Found* might be one such alternative. The relationship between spiritual autobiography and the picaresque has been largely neglected in the critical tradition; within the special category of Ranter writers, an emphasis on the radical qua radical has led John Carey to posit "notable affinities with Romanticism" as the signal literary achievement of Ranter writing.[55] And if the most enduring definitions of the picaresque have their dissonances, I want to show how *The Lost Sheep Found* uncannily harmonizes them. To be clear, I do not want to go so far as to argue that Clarkson was primarily imitating picaresque novels in either the English or Spanish tradition. But paying attention to the resemblances will help us to finally re-historicize the formal dynamics of Clarkson's autobiography. By recognizing that the picaresque tradition is responsive to specific social and philosophical pressures in specific formal ways, we don't need to recruit Romanticism to valorize what was going on in Radical autobiography. What we get in return is a more robust analog between religious autobiography and the novel—a connection that demonstrates that spiritual autobiography could deal in the more "sophisticated" epistemological representations associated with later eighteenth-century novels, with their interest in the flux of subjective experience, their extra-Providential frameworks, and, of course, their savvy conceit of realistic fiction to package it all. In this alternate genealogy, we don't need to posit a naive Robinson Crusoe, and certainly not an honest Pamela Andrews, to see the through-line from religious autobiography to Fielding, Sterne, and Smollett, those authors who realize the formal implications of Michael McKeon's "extreme skepticism." Beyond the interest of literary history, drawing the comparison helps to elaborate the intractable philosophical problems within an age of "serious" religiosity, and our scholarly responses to them.

A quick survey of the picaresque genre finds resemblances with *The Lost Sheep Found*, in narrative occasion and manner. Considered reciprocally, though, Clarkson's text helps to refine the historical specificity linking the two. In *The Myth of the Picaro: Continuity and Transformation of the Picaresque Novel 1554-1954,* Alexander Blackburn described general conditions for the "picaresque galaxy": "Let the hero be an orphan, let him relate his adventures in a more or less sardonic manner, let him wander into delinquency, and so forth."[56] Blackburn draws up some dramatic, if vague, historical conditions for the picaresque novel, "a seriocomic form that tends to appear at time when the literary imagination is unusually threatened by catastrophe: that is, at times when the very idea of existence commingles with the world of illusion."[57] He also marks the utter semantic confusion (and banality) of the picaresque narrator and his situation. Closer to the spirit of *The Lost Sheep Found*, Blackburn argues that the bawdiness of the narrative is telling of epistemological flux,[58] leading him to the whimper/bang conclusion that "There is no grandeur in the picaro's life, but it is life of a kind, lived at the diminishing point where life and death, truth and falsehood, good and evil, have arrived as tragically convertible."[59] That convertibility obtains in Clarkson's abrupt changes of emphasis

and commitment. To bring fresh examples into this comparison, we can cite Clarkson's undermotivated transitions: slipping out of captivity once more, still "Ranting," Clarkson begins a new paragraph to relate "Now in the interim I attempted the art of Astrology and Physic, which in short time I gained and herewith travelled up and down Cambridgeshire and Essex" (32). The amateur quickly gets "clients," becoming an expert evangelist of his trade. Clarkson's attraction to paradox also concentrates the existential mood suggested by Blackburn; he prefigures a weary Rochester, announcing a "God that was an infinite nothing" (17).

Américo Castro figured picaresque existentialism in more sociological terms. In his introduction to *The Life of Lazarallio de Tormes and of His Fortunes and Adversities* (1594) Castro identifies the "reality-destroying style" of the picaresque.[60] He anticipates Claudio Guillén's notion of the picaro as a "half-outsider" of his society, for whom "social role-playing is as ludicrous as it is indispensable. This is where the solution of roguish behavior is preferred."[61] Both Blackburn and Castro are rather vague about the conditions for picaresque literature—is not every age one "when the very idea of existence commingles with the world of illusion"? But if ever, their historical requirements exquisitely inscribe a Ranter autobiographer, on the move, publishing in 1660, with the world upside down and turning again.

Perhaps nearer still to the heart of *The Lost Sheep Found* is the picaresque's libertine materialism. Maximillian E. Novak, in his essay "Liberty, Libertinism and Randomness: Form and Content in Picaresque Fiction," sees a Lucretian swirl animating picaresque literature that involves "an examination of freedom or randomness."[62] Novak hedges the argument about sexual liberation by saying "the [libertine] hero is not incompatible with the picaresque," but Clarkson could help make the more emphatic affirmative case.[63] Sexual liberation is not incidental to, but a priority of antinomian narration in *The Lost Sheep Found*. In Clarkson's hands, rampant infidelity becomes serial monogamy. So serial that magistrates can't even keep up: they rebuke Clarkson for "dipping" his wife but other charges slip off. This libertine ethos also keeps with Clarkson's buoyant presentism, again abetted by a posture of nonchalance. Eschewing both an impassioned, writing-to-the-moment style and a solidly retrospective, moralizing perspective, Clarkson is able to sustain the more subtle illusion of "the active hero of past time" in the narrative present.[64]

I want to suggest finally that these affinities between *The Lost Sheep Found* and the picaresque genre help us stake out the religiosity at the heart of the picaresque form, and conversely, the picaresque potential of early modern religious belief more broadly. After all, the mature English picaresque novel has usually been taken as a concomitant of secularizing forces, in a framework where religious skepticism is understood as the opposite of implicit faith. For scholars like Leopold Damrosch, the picaresque is properly the enterprise of "fallen" eighteenth-century fiction: "Once Adam and Eve are ejected from Eden... man is condemned to search for God and meaning in signs and ambiguous tracks. The development of literary fiction mirrors that search and embodies its frustrations"; in the eighteenth-century novel, "society at large is a series of environments to be passed through or (as in Clarissa) rejected, not a structure of relationships and obligations to be accepted."[65] And yet Clarkson's autobiography, written from the height of

millennial urgency, captures the turbulence of belief—construed as a plot of confessional affiliations, as a porous and performative consciousness, as a series of commitments that can be sloughed off. Without pressing the point too much, it bears mentioning that the picaresque novel has often been taken to be the narrator's *confession*. This is of course a term that, motivated by coercion, duplicity, or artifice, can mean its opposite. Claudio Guillén points to this compounded confusion when he describes the picaresque as "the fictional confession of a liar."[66] So at a basic narrative level, the picaresque relies on the kind of playful (or polemical) deflation of the status of "confession" before and during the revolutionary period—we recall Thomas Browne's rhetorical atheist, who is a nobody but is also a real threat. Without making this deeper argument about the nature of belief in the early modern period, Blackburn emphasizes the significance of the Inquisition in the Spanish picaresque tradition by way of the "converso" figure. He cites the biography of Fernando de Rojas, author of *La Cestina* (1499), who was born into a Jewish family but converted to Christianity; his father and other relatives were condemned. The context of such flux and precarity fostered a specific literary response, Blackburn argues, because "the *converso* situation held the possibility of a counterculture or community of those experienced or conditioned enough to relish the hidden import of the ironist's language."[67] Clarkson's irony might not fully be a matter of survival (though other radicals were condemned for less). But certainly his irony shows belief on the move, inciting chaos such that one can be a stray sheep and sheep-stealer at the same time. And perhaps to state the obvious last, the iterations of "conversion" experiences in *The Lost Sheep Found* are utterly confounding. Rather than figuring an internal sola fide, or even conceding the importance of good works along the lines of the Arminians, *The Lost Sheep Found* represents belief as that which can be plotted extrinsically, through "Religious Countreys." Clarkson stages England as his "inscape," to borrow Harry Berger's term for Spenser's psychosomatic terrain in *The Faerie Queene*—but Clarkson does it such that the external overrides the sense of a genuine internal phenomenon.[68]

Of course, Clarkson is daring us to say that *The Lost Sheep Found* denigrates belief by making it so external, literal, overreaching, and parodic. To take his bait is to say more about our critical pieties than his own. Indeed, he even smuggles in a hint of melancholic reflection in the form of baffled astonishment at the frictionless transactions, at every level of his prodigal narrative: spiritual, diegetic, material. Taking over a Norfolk parish for half a year, Clarkson "was settled for twenty shillings a week, and very gallantly was provided for, so that I thought I was in Heaven upon earth," until he's accused of being a "Sheep-stealer…so I slighting them as they could me, we parted" (11). That alienated melancholy, of course, is a minor note that always attends picaresque exuberance. Clarkson, it seems, challenges us to reconcile spiritual autobiography with jocoserious forms. In the case of *The Lost Sheep Found*, this entails the challenge of taking Clarkson's nonchalance seriously, not as an imprint but as an imagining of radical belief.

Notes to Chapter One

[1] This Ranter autobiographer is an especially pointed example of formal autonomy because of the tradition of uncertainty about the Ranters' very existence. This suspicion has implicitly conceptualized Ranting groups and individuals as merely formal epiphenomena: an absurd straw-man invention of more mainstream (and historically legible) Puritans. As I will demonstrate, Clarkson's text makes a sophisticated play on those hysterical degradations, by developing a nonchalantly absurd, but not provocatively radical, style. His writerly command is thus all the more plausible for its richness, even if the theological coherence of his doctrines is not. For an overview of the mythologizing historiography, and a case for a core Ranter identity, see J.C. Davis, *Fear, Myth, and History: The Ranters and the Historians* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1986).

[2] *Religio Medici*, hereafter abbreviated *RM*. Ed. Stephen Greenblatt and Ramie Targoff (New York: New York Review of Books, 2012).

[3] Seelig, *Generating Texts: The Progeny of Seventeenth-Century Prose* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1996), 34.

[4] Conti, *Confessions of Faith in Early Modern England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2014), 150.

[5] The pragmatic critique always lurks on the other side of principle. For an important study of chameleonic accommodation in the seventeenth century, see John Wallace, *Destiny His Choice: The Loyalism of Andrew Marvell* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1968).

[6] In *Pseudodoxia Epidemica*, Browne himself is subject to the murky conceptual drift of atheism, which owes to the "endeavors of Satan": Satan's chief "delusion" is "that the natural truth of God is an artificiall erection of man, and the Creator himselfe but a subtile invention of the creature." But "Where [Satan] succeeds not thus high, he labours to introduce a secondary and deductive Atheisme, that although men concede there is a God, yet should they deny his providence" (27). Ethan Shagan has tracked these porous analytic categories in diverse Reformation writers. In George Gifford's 1582 *The Country Divinitie*, the vituperative Zelotes doesn't just hate Catholics; he "know[s] there be many which care not for the pope, but yet believe much of his doctrine. They be those which we call atheists, of no religion, but look whatsoever any prince doth set forth, that they will profess" (fo.24v). According to Shagan, the terms heretic, infidel, and atheist very tentatively developed their modern distinctions, as in the Arminian position ventured by Thomas Jackson in 1625 in *A Treatise Concerning the Original of Unbeliefe, Misbeliefe, or Misperswasions, Concerning the Veritie, Unitie, and Attributes of the Deitie*. See Shagan's *The Birth of Modern Belief: Faith and Judgment from the Middle Ages to the Enlightenment* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2019).

[7] Most critics read the revised, authorized *Religio Medici* of 1643 as an overall relaxing of Browne's positions in the original draft, albeit in very subtle emendations and additions. This is hardly a surprise given the intense difference in political realities between 1643 and "seven years past." I am not concerned with offering a new analysis of Browne's revisions here, but certainly those changes have bearing on the status of aesthetic autonomy and his

speculative method. Jonathan F. S. Post makes the connection between political strategy and imagery explicit: "Browne's strategy in the revisions is one of retreats and advances. If he softens the rhetoric of religious warfare, he sharpens his stance against extremists. If he excises needless signs of militancy, like the martial glitter associated with Achilles, he also takes a long look at heresies, relics, and excommunications. If he increases the amount of whimsy and play in the 1643 text, the contexts in which he does so help to blur the distinction between escape and commitment, between play as an alternative to politics and play as a response to the political moment" (162-163). "Browne's Revisions of *Religio Medici,*" *SEL, 1500-1900* 25.1 (Winter 1985), 145-163.

[8] It seems appropriate to think of the commonplace simultaneously as a riddle; indeed, its practical wisdom emanates from its undecidability. One is reminded of a story told by Filomena on the first day in the *Decameron*: a father disperses three identical rings, only one of them genuine, among three heirs (meant to represent Jews, Christians, and Muslims), without any basis for discerning the real from the counterfeits. The skeptical tradition of Boccaccio and Montaigne finds another tolerationist in Browne.

[9] For a cluster of meanings that suggest the impermanence or externality of belief in this phrase, see *OED* definitions for "style," especially 1d: Phrase. *to turn one's style*: to change *to* another subject; also, to speak on the other side; 3: A pointed instrument used for marking; 13a: The manner of expression characteristic of a particular writer; 19c. ? Outward demeanour.

[10] "How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out" (Romans 11:33).

[11] My sense of Browne's process here closely resembles Stanley Fish's take on Browne as aesthete in *Self-Consuming Artifacts* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1972). But whereas I want to emphasize the robust value in the cycling images, Fish diagnoses Browne as the "bad physician" when stacked against the other figures of his book (Bacon, Herbert, Bunyan, and Milton). His description of Browne's virtuosity is compelling but carries an odd charge of narcissism; I disagree with Fish's assumption that virtuosity cancels out spiritual cognizance altogether: "These, then, are the characteristics of what I have called the aesthetic of the good physician (actually an anti-aesthetic), and on every point Browne stands on the opposite side. He draws attention not *away* from, but *to*, himself; his words are not seeds, spending their live in self-consuming effects, but objects, frozen into rhetorical patterns which reflect on the virtuosity of their author; the experience of his prose has its climaxes not in moments of insight and self-knowledge, but in moments of wonder and admiration for the art that has produced it; rather than provoking us to a distrust of its procedures and conclusions, the *Religio Medici*, solicits and wins our confidence. It is therefore not self-consuming, but self-indulgent, and in two directions: for the confidence it wins is reflected in the confidence it leaves us, a *self*-confidence, which is the result of never having been really pained or challenged; Browne does not say to us, 'awake, remember, change' but 'take it easy, don't let it bother you, let it be'" (372).

[12] Lambert, "Moving in Circles: The Dialectic of Selfhood in *Religio Medici,*" *Renaissance Studies*, 19.3 (2005), 364-369, 366.

[13] For a particularly stirring, if somewhat partial, case for the "theological prestige" of the circle imagery as it harmonizes with Browne's relationship with knowledge, see Laurence A. Breiner's "The Generation of Metaphor in Thomas Browne": "For a Christian, however, the desire for knowledge, like the desire for immortality, can take both acceptable and unacceptable forms. There are severe tensions here, and a great deal depends on the nature of the surrounding unknown. Sometimes it seems to be creation, which exists traditionally for man's edification and pleasure; sometimes God, in which case the temptation to explore must be restrained considerably; and sometimes a quite pagan oblivion, against which a man is bound to do battle. We know from Pascal how exhausting it can be to sort out these possibilities. But for Browne the ambivalence of his 'master figure' seems to absorb this stress, by subsuming the possibilities under a single form…. [B]y the device of an ambience without circumference, it maintains a delicate balance between the surrounding sphere's two relations to the center—as enclosing pressure and

as subservient field. It is on that balance that Browne's vision of human accomplishment depends." *Modern Language Quarterly* 38.3 (September 1977), 226-275, 275.

[14] Coleridge remarked that an outraged Sir Kenelm Digby "ought to have considered the Religio Medici in a *dramatic* & not in a metaphysical View—as a sweet Exhibition of character & passion & not as an Expression or Investigation of positive Truth." *Coleridge on the Seventeenth Century*, ed. Roberta Florence Brinkley (Durham: Duke University Press, 1955) 438. Very well, but amplifying a microcosm into must dramatize *something*. What that move seems to dramatize in *Religio Medici*, in no merely "sweet" way, is the radical aestheticizing of ethical and theological concepts. To take an additional example of how this might work, Balachandra Rajan reads Browne's comment that "Eve miscarried of mee before she conceiv'd of Cain" as "one of the most powerful literary statements of the aesthetics of predestination." The very transformation of "that terrible term, Predestination" into an aesthetics seems to me to be more startling than any offer of "Positive Truths" in the images entailed in that transformation. Rajan, "Browne and Milton: The Divided and the Distinguished" *Approaches to Sir Thomas Browne: The Ann Arbor Tercentenary Lectures and Essays*, ed. C.A. Patrides (Columbia, Missouri and London: University of Missouri Press, 1982) 1-11.

[15] Henry Fielding, *Joseph Andrews and Shamela*, ed. Thomas Keymer (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008) 164.

[16] Virginia Woolf, "The Elizabethan Lumber Room," *Collected Essays* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, & World, 1964).

[17] From Samuel Johnson, "Life of Thomas Browne," *Biographical Writings*, ed. O.M. Brack and Robert Demaria, Jr. (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2016) 313.

[18] *RM*, 78. Browne's dream of arboreal consummation meets Montaigne's rhetorical challenge in a delightfully literal way: "In everything else you can keep some decorum; all other operations come under the rules of decency. This one cannot even be imagined other than vicious or ridiculous. Just to see this, try to find a wise and discreet way of doing it." *The Complete Essays of Montaigne*, trans. Donald M. Frame (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1976) 669.

[19] *RM*, 78-79.

[20] Texts maintained their precious status throughout Browne's career: after inventorying the library that enabled Browne's work, Robin Robbins emphasizes that "*Pseudodoxia* is a work of book-learning rather than of experimental science; as a consequence its author was admired as 'the learned Dr Browne.'" Introduction, *Sir Thomas Browne's Pseudodoxia Epidemica,* ed. Robin Robbins (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982) xxxvii.

[21] Jonathan F.S. Post argues how such vacillation across editions is also tactical. For instance, Browne "treat[s] the issue of relics with Chaucerian humor," and then finally retreats "away from the subject of relics altogether until the whole issue of fraudulent miracles disappears from sight in the face of the original mystery of God" (159). "Browne's Revisions of *Religio Medici*" *SEL, 1500-1900* 25.1 (Winter 1985), 145-163.

[22] Browne makes a more defensive, exegetical argument for literature in *Pseudodoxia Epidemica*: "The third [cause of fallacies] is a non causa pro causa, when that is pretended for a cause which is not, or not in that sense which is inferred. Upon this consequence the law of Mahomet forbids the use of wine, and his successors abolished Universities: by this also many Christians have condemned literature, misunderstanding the counsell of Saint Paul, who adviseth no further then to beware of Philosophy." *Sir Thomas Browne's Pseudodoxia Epidemica,* ed. Robin Robbins (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982) 26.

[23] Johnson, 312.

[24] See Ronald Huebert, "The Private Opinions of Sir Thomas Browne": "Browne is guilty of refusing to act in accordance with a public agenda that has been declared good in advance: for Aberdeen Ross, 'the annihilation of idolatry'; for Stanley Fish, 'the painful repentance of a sinful life', and for Michael Wilding 'the abolition of the monarchy and the creation of a revolutionary commonwealth.'" *SEL* 45.1 (2005), 117-134, 132.

[25] The manuscript is located in the Bermuda Archives. My commentary on the emendations is based on the notes of the editors of the modern spelling version, W.F. Craven and W.B. Hayward. For example, they indicate that the bracketed material is scratched out: "whilst I was at London by the fishmonger, the corruption of my heart showed itself abundantly [in lust, as touching the maid at my Aunt Edwards, the maid at Billing… wantonness with my master's daughter…. Also in the … sin, in appareling, etc., also] in vanity of mind and self conceitedness." *The Journal of Richard Norwood: Surveyor of Bermuda* (Ann Arbor: Scholars Facsimiles and Reprints, 1945) 16-17.

[26] *Confessions*, in *Grace Abounding with Other Spiritual Autobiographies*, ed. John Stachniewski (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2008) 78, 81.

[27] Matthew Brown, *The Pilgrim and the Bee: Reading Rituals and Book Culture in Early New England* (Philadelphia: University of Philadelphia, 2007).

[28] *Protestant Autobiography in the Seventeenth-Century Anglophone World* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2012) 11.

[29] Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic: Studies in Popular Beliefs in Sixteenth and Seventeenth Century England* (Oxford University Press, 1997) 82.

[30] Lynch, 12.

[31] For an exhaustive discussion, see J. Paul Hunter, *Before Novels: The Cultural Contexts of Eighteenth-Century Fiction (*London: Norton, 1990): "Awe and wonder are central to the novel just as surely as subjectivity and social realism, and for reason that grow out of the same sponsoring culture….[I]f the new science made the defeat of magic and superstition ultimately inevitable, it also heightened the taste for wonder and made people cherish whatever record they could find that confirmed uncertainty and mystery" (208-209). Hunter offers a potent piece of evidence for *contemporary* self-consciousness about this dialectic in the form of a satirical London broadside (*News from the Coffe-House*, 1667): "You that delight in Wit and Mirth / And long to hear such News / As comes from all Parts of the Earth/…/ Go hear it at a *Coffe House* / *It cannot but be true"* (174). The seminal collection *The Culture of Autobiography: Constructions of Self-Representation* (ed. Robert Folkenflik, Stanford University Press, 1993) amply details the contingency of autobiographical works.

[32] Lynch, 4.

[33] Stachniewski's note, *Confessions*, 125.

[34] For the Puritan polemicists, cross-dressing was a particularly galling feature of the public stage. See Philip Stubbes, *The Anatomy of Abuses* (1583), and Stephen Gosson, *Playes Confuted in Five Actions* (1582): "The Law of God very straitly forbids men to put on women's garments, garments are set down for signs distinctive between sex and sex…." Quoted in Laura Levine, *Men in Women's Clothing: Anti-theatricality and Effeminization, 1579-1642*

(Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994) 20. Puritan pamphlets denouncing cross-dressing in the theatre continued straight through Norwood's adulthood; the tracts *Hic Mulier* and *Haec Vir* were published in 1620.

[35] See J. Paul Hunter's discussion of "calling" in *Reluctant Pilgrim: Defoe's Emblematic Method and Quest for Form in Robinson Crusoe* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1966).

[36] The term for such Puritan reverse-snobbery is borrowed from John Stachniewski, *The Persecutory Imagination: English Puritanism and the Literature of Religious Despair* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991) 41.

[37] Peter J. Carlton, "Bunyan: Language, Convention, Authority," *ELH, 1500-1900* 51.1 (Spring 1984), 17-32, 19.

[38] Steven Goldsmith, *Blake's Agitations: Criticism and the Emotions* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2013) 277.

[39] Clement Hawes, *Mania and Literary Style: The Rhetoric of Enthusiasm from the Ranters to Christopher Smart* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996). Hawes's account seems more trenchant than Smith's precisely because of its attention to seeming dissonances and variety in his subjects' style: "Seen…as rhetorically constituted by the process of plebian struggle at different historical moments, the manic mode can nevertheless be anatomized as consistently exhibiting the following features: (1) a preoccupation with themes of socio-economic resentment; (2) a 'levelling' use of lists and catalogues; (3) an excessive, often blasphemous wordplay; (4) a tendency to blend and thus level incongruous genres; (5) a justification of symbolic transgression, especially in the context of lay preaching, as prophetic behavior; and (7) imagery of self-fortification against persecution and martyrdom" (9). However, whereas Hawes uses this rhetorical analysis to tell us something about the nature of sanity and madness in the period, my argument remains concerned with the skeptical side of religious belief, and the kinds of representational and aesthetic forms such belief can take.

[40] Nigel Smith, *Perfection Proclaimed: Language and Literature in English Radical Religion 1640-1660* (Oxford: Clarendon Press,1989).

[41] Smith, 18.

[42] Smith, 19.

[43] Smith, 250.

[44] Along with that of Christopher Hill and James Grantham Turner, among others.

[45] Qtd. in Smith, 182.

[46] Here is the fuller explanation from Smith: "Curiously enough another type of 'holy violence' is registered in more extreme religious radicals which is not employed in such an overtly affective way. Simply to evoke a piece of violent language from the Bible is sufficient for it to have a condemnatory effect, within the controlling framework of ecstatic spiritual rhetoric. Both Richard Coppin and Laurence Clarkson use the phrase from Isa. 66:3, 'as if he cut off a dog's neck', without any attempt to enhance its appeal. They appear to rely on the reader's knowledge of the Bible: the context is God's denunciation of idolatry. The phrase is successful because it is so vivid, and the delivery becomes almost nonchalant…" (322).

[47] All page references to *The Lost Sheep Found*, hereafter abbreviated *LSF*, are taken from a reproduction of the original held in the British Library. *The Lost Sheep Found: or, the Prodigal returned to this Fathers house, after many a sad and weary Journey through many Religious Countreys, where now, notwithstanding all his former*

Transgressions, and break of his fathers Commands, he is received in an eternal Favor, and all the righteous and wicked Sons that he hath left behind, reserved for eternal misery; As all along every Church or Dispensation may read in his Travels, their Portion after this Life. Written by Laur. Claxton, the onely true converted Messenger of Christ Jesus, Creator of Heaven and Earth, 1660. ProQuest, https://www.proquest.com/books/lost-sheep-found-prodigal-returned-his-fathers/docview/2240961359/se-2. Accessed 4 February 2023.

[48] For more on the learned and the "ludic" in radical writing, see Nicholas McDowell, *The English Radical Imagination: Culture, Religion, and Revolution, 1630-1660* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2003) 27.

[49] Introduction, *A Collection of Ranter Writings from the Seventeenth Century: Spiritual Liberty and Sexual Freedom in the English Revolution,* ed. Nigel Smith (London: Junction Books, 1983).

[50] This moment in particular beckons to Schiller's notion of form trumping subject matter: "In a truly successful work of art the contents should effect nothing, the form everything; for only through the form is the whole man affected, through the subject-matter, by contrast, only one or other of his functions…Herein , then, resides the real secret of the master in any art: that he can make his form consume his material" (155-157). *On the Aesthetic Education of Man in a Series of Letters*, ed. and trans. Elizabeth M. Wilkinson and L.A. Willoughby (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2005).

[51] See James Grantham Turner on the strategic inversion of the "savage noble" during the Restoration: "These gestures of cultivated anti-civility were intended precisely to *distinguish* the Wits from the lower orders they simulate…The migration of lower-stratum disorder describes not a random zig-zag but a dialectic of emulation and expropriation: the mad 'tricks' and drinking rituals of whore and rogue circulate through an economy of representation from plebian disorder (simulating rakish excess) to aristocratic condescension (simulating the abject with a lofty contempt for common humanity)" (224-225). *Libertines and Radicals in Early Modern London* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

[52] Leopold Damrosch, *God's Plot and Man's Stories: Studies in the Fictional Imagination from Milton to Fielding* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985), 17.

[53] Stachniewski explains the earnest usage of the term: "Active from the early seventeenth century, the Seekers denied the legitimacy of all existing churches and believed God would eventually appoint new apostles or prophets to establish a new church. They took a quietistic view of this process: the believer must wait passively for the revelation of God's will." Appendix, *Grace Abounding with Other Spiritual Autobiographies*, ed. John Stachniewski and Anita Pacheco (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 228.

[54] Clarkson's title in full: *The Lost Sheep Found: or, the Prodigal returned to this Fathers house, after many a sad and weary Journey through many Religious Countreys, where now, notwithstanding all his former Transgressions, and break of his fathers Commands, he is received in an eternal Favor, and all the righteous and wicked Sons that he hath left behind, reserved for eternal misery; As all along every Church or Dispensation may read in his Travels, their Portion after this Life. Written by Laur. Claxton, the onely true converted Messenger of Christ Jesus, Creator of Heaven and Earth.*

[55] John Carey, Foreword, *A Collection of Ranter Writings from the Seventeenth Century*, ed. Nigel Smith (London: Junction Books, 1983) 3.

[56] Alexander Blackburn*, The Myth of the Picaro: Continuity and Transformation of the Picaresque Novel 1554-1954* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1979) 7.

[57] Blackburn, 14.

[58] In this sense, Blackburn, like McKeon, figures the novel-as-genre along axes of value and epistemology.

[59] Blackburn, 16.

[60] Introduction, *La vida de Lazarillo de Tormes y de sus fortunas y adversidades* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1948), xii.

[61] Claudio Guillén, *Literature as System: Essays toward the Theory of Literary History (*Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1971) 80.

[62] *Studies in the Novel* 4.1 (1972), 75-85, 80.

[63] The intersection of picaresque and religious autobiography is all but sutured together by James Grantham Turner. To demonstrate the picaresque strain in mid-seventeenth-century pornographic discourse, he analyzes the heteroglossic errancy of the "Wandring Whore" motif: "The *Wandring Whore* dialogues mingle discursive levels and jumble together the comical, the serious, and the pornographic much as they were juxtaposed in the streets of London or in a typical entry of Pepys's diary" (133). This observation serves Turner's broader argument about inversionary practices across the 1660 divide, and the case for the appropriation of religious radicals' libertinage during the Restoration. *Libertines and Radicals in Early Modern London: Sexuality, Politics and Literary Culture, 1630-1685* (Cambridge; New York: University Press, 2002).

[64] Novak, 84.

[65] Damrosch, 12.

[66] From "On the Use of Literary Genre," in *Literature as System: Essays toward the Theory of Literary History* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1971) 120.

[67] Blackburn, 9.

[68] To objections that the connection to the Spanish picaresque tradition remains too tenuous to bear on Clarkson, I should sketch in some further context. In determining the range of Iberian influence, we can say more than that England imitated or participated in similar traditions in isolation: the Spanish picaresque, along with cross-Channel political dynamics, posed an insistent challenge to, or at the very least a decentering experience for, a Reformed English readership. Paul Salzman details this ambivalence within English reactions to these works through the 1620s, beginning with translations of Aléman by James Mabbe, along with native picaresques by Thomas Nashe and Mary Wroth. See Paul Salzman, "Travelling or Staying In: Spain and the Picaresque in the Early 1620s," *The Yearbook of English Studies* 41.1 (2011), 141-155: "An even more radical reading of the novel, by Paul Smith, sees a kind of deconstructive indeterminacy created by the uncertain narrative position, which wavers between the didactic and the amoral because, in Smith's view, Alemán's technique reflects uncertainty about the exact nature of his readership. I think that the question of Alemán's readers may also be placed in the context of Mabbe's translation, which certainly posits an English readership that wants to possess a famous Spanish text, but which is left hovering between interpreting it as a satire that might fit into anti-Spanish and anti-Catholic sentiment, or as an exemplary narrative of moral reform. This uncertainty can also be seen in relation to the ambivalence about travel in a Europe that, at the time of the translation's publication, is especially divisive and overwhelmed by religious conflict. In Alemán's narrative Rome is benign while other Italian cities come to seem more menacing …This moral ambiguity would be familiar to English readers of cony-catching pamphlets, which hovered between portraying dire warnings for readers' good, and purveying the enjoyment of the rogue's activities—an ambiguity carried through at

greater length in a native story like Nashe's *Unfortunate Traveller*" (154-155). *Don Quixote*, already ironizing the picaresque form, was wildly popular in England immediately after its translation in 1612. Apart from this ferment of forms and reception, one could invoke Milton's conceptualization of an English Protestantism that depended on the broader context of cosmopolitan reform (or lack thereof) on the continent. For Milton, the danger of "schisme" scales up and down, as a problem for Christendom broadly and for England in particular. See Milton's *Of Reformation in England* (1641): "The pleasing pursuit of these thoughts hath oft-times led mee into a serious question and debatement with my selfe, how it should come to passe that England (having had this grace and honour from GOD to be the first that should set up a Standard for the recovery of lost Truth, and blow the first Evangelick Trumpet to the Nations, holding up, as from a Hill, the new Lamps of saving-light to all Christendom should now be last, and most unsettl'd in the enjoyment of that Peace, whereof she taught the way to others' although indeed our wickless preaching, at which all the succeeding Reformers more effectually lighted their Tapers, was to his Countrey-men but a short blaze soone dampt and stifl'd by the Pope and Prelates for sixe or seven Kings Reignes; yet me thinks the Precedencie with GOD gave this Island, to be the first Restorer of buried Truth, should have been followed with more happy successe, and sooner attain'd perfection, in which, as yet we are amongst the last: for albeit in purity of Doctrine we agree with our Brethren; yet in discipline which is the execution and applying of Doctrine home, and laying the salve to the very Orifice of the wound; yea, tenting and searching to the Core, without which Pulpit Preaching is but shooting at Rovers; in this we are no better than a Schisme…" *CPW* I.616-17. Finally, to recall an episode treated earlier in this chapter, there is Richard Norwood's journey through Italy and other Catholic countries, and the anxiety that this jaunt presents for his faith. This simultaneous attraction to and repulsion from the picaro figure (along with the question of English exceptionalism) foretell the indeterminacy that could be intensified by a writer like Clarkson at home.

CHAPTER 2

"Something suspicious of myself": Milton and Vocational Autobiography

For all of his prodigious output, John Milton never wrote a proper spiritual autobiography in the vein of many of his Puritan contemporaries, no *Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners* that would detail his reprobation, conversion, and sanctification. In part because of this omission, some critics have wanted to decouple Milton from the Puritan narrative tradition altogether, especially since (according to that argument) he did not seem to admit feelings of guilt that would precede a dramatic conversion experience.[1] This critical tack confirms the familiar notion of Milton as a self-righteous Abdiel—leading Stephen Fallon, for example, to argue that Milton's self-representations are calculated to develop ethical proofs of his own infallibility.[2] At the same time, we also recognize that Milton is compulsively drawn to autobiographical expression. Milton talks about himself all the time, across all the genres of his career—in the letters and lyrics, the political prose, the speeches of his epic characters. Coleridge went so far as to observe of *Paradise Lost*, "it is Milton himself whom you see; his Satan, his Adam, his Raphael, almost his Eve—all are John Milton."[3] But just because Milton seems always ready to discuss himself, it is a mistake to assume that Milton casts these autobiographical expressions as more authoritative than other kinds of discourses, as some stable center of his thought, as some recent readers have argued.[4] Instead, these embedded dramas render the knife's-edge experience of doubt about his soul and Godly service. Milton, after all, has internalized Luther's notion of particular vocation—the obligation to fulfill one's responsibilities in earthly service, apart from the general calling of faith.[5] By exploring the prismatic versions of self this totalizing vision of service actually entails, Milton baffles the categories of conventional spiritual autobiography, ethical proof, artistic credo, and vocational meditation.

I want to argue that Milton is drawing our attention to the "madeness" of vocational autobiography of all kinds, to their basis in artifact and susceptibility to rhetorical manipulation. That term, "madeness," picks up on Gordon Teskey's call, in *Delirious Milton*, to attend to the writer in his creative, rather than ideological, process. Teskey's objection is largely to a kind of positivist historicism that would insist on first determining whether Milton was this or that sort of Puritan in order to understand his poetry.[6] A new formalist[7] approach to the madeness of Milton's autobiographical moments, I will argue, reveals the author's dialectical orientation toward this mode of expression: Milton demonstrates how this mode can just as easily reveal or obscure one's inner self, just as easily confess or stage one's spiritual reality. Wary of devotional autobiography without wholly discrediting it, Milton attests to the resources of its formal artifice while still insisting on readerly *and* writerly skepticism about its privileged access to truth claims. As I tend to this formal ambivalence, I nevertheless want to try to avoid pathologizing conclusions, which is a particularly persistent temptation in Milton scholarship. Formal ambivalence should be read less as evidence of psychic disrepair than as the inescapable conditions of making one's account; diagnoses of "anxiety" presuppose an impossible standard of stability for belief that scholarship imputes to its Puritan subjects.[8] Rather, Milton gives us new ways of illuminating the epistemological nuances of Puritan "experimentalism" that has defined the tradition of spiritual autobiography; instead of McKeon's naïve empiricism, Milton models a generative grappling with uncertainty and shaping of facts. Milton, I argue, knowingly

compresses that dialectic in his key idea of one's life "account," which purports to be an objective inventory but is always also a narrative fiction.

Surveying Milton's awareness of those possibilities, this chapter divides into three major sections. The first discusses a young, relatively private Milton in the 1633 "Letter to a Friend" and the two sonnets, "How soon hath time" and "When I consider how my light is spent." Already, I suggest, Milton confronts the high stakes of "accounting" for your vocational achievements, relying on artistic ambiguities to both confront and redirect some of that pressure.[9] Next, I read the innovative autobiographical passage that begins the second book of *The Reason of Church Government* in which, I argue, Milton demonstrates the heuristic and aesthetic resources of speculative autobiography. If *The Reason of Church Government* serves as a speculative autobiography for plumbing the depths of oneself, regardless of uncertainties, the following section analyzes *Eikonoklastes* to show Milton critiquing autobiography's liability to be flattened into iconographic surfaces. He diagnoses the problem of individually authored accounts and the tenuous solution of collective, readerly inspection. Finally, the chapter closes with a brief discussion of the ambivalences of autobiography and self-justification in *Paradise Lost* and *Samson Agonistes*: Adam and Eve model complementary life accounts whereas Samson's confusion of divine inspiration and solipsism occasions the ultimate vocational crisis.

Talents and Timeliness

From his earliest identification as an artist, Milton shows defensiveness about his vocational calling. He is always contending with the conflicting pressures of talent and timeliness, which are in inverse relation: the more capable Milton becomes in his poetic maturity, the later his accomplishments will enter the world in service. In the "Letter to a Friend," a twenty-four-year-old Milton is almost certainly writing to his former tutor Thomas Young, as he says, to "give [him] account" of his failure to begin a career in the church.[10] To explain himself, Milton roves among three potential causes for his tardiness, his "vertue, vice, or nature." Those enumerated causes belie the letter's rather bewildering rhetorical structure. That the letter is also one of the rare documents that Milton didn't publish in his lifetime enhances the sense both of its candor and unsettledness. Looking at the Trinity Manuscript, we can see a writer meticulously burnishing his remarks across two drafts. On a moment-by-moment basis, the drafts show a poet at work in prose, polishing his meter where possible (the phrase "of my tardie moving" evens out, in the revision, to the more iambic "of this my tardie moving"). In a key passage found in both drafts, he explains his truancy by fashioning himself after the pining figure of Endymion: indeed, he inhabits the role as if he's presently caught in a scene of dreamy seduction. In the first draft, he is more fully entranced by the mythological counterpart (who is in turn entranced by the moon): he writes to Young, "you thinke, as you said, that too much love of learning is in fault, & that I have given up my selfe to dream away my yeares in the armes of studious retirement, like Endymion wth the Moone on Latmus hill…." Milton's concluding simile imagines himself into the scene on Mount Latmus, But while in the second draft Milton again identifies with Endymion, now he sources his mythological materials more abruptly, erecting a small barrier to embodiment: "you think, as you said, that too much learning is in fault, & that I have given up my selfe to dream away my yeares in the armes of studious retirement like Endymion with the Moon as the tale of Latmus of goes...." In this version he's registering the artifice of the Endymion "tale," such that he more firmly attributes the mythological analogy to the excessive suspicions of his teacher. It's possible, of course, that his former teacher might have introduced

the Endymion allusion in the first place, and that Milton is referencing that particular rebuke from the first draft. Especially in that case, the second draft reassures his reader of their solidarity in the condemnation of Endymion—the pagan motif thereby enhances the ideal of a Cambridge intimacy between student and tutor, who can shuttle between gentle provocation and chastisement.[11] But the effect is still a more guarded handling of classical material on Milton's part, or, at least, a stronger inclination to ventriloquize critiques of such material. That would be consistent with the general impression of self-disciplining across the revision process: in another instance of that pattern within the marked-up second draft, "the love of learning" becomes "the *mere* love of learning." Still, the Endymion invocation, particularly the intimate eroticism of being in "the armes of studious retirement," is made to feel irresistible to the scene, and well worth the price of paganism.[12] A more contemporary variation of the Endymion myth reinforces the dynamic between tutor and student: John Lyly's 1588 play *Endymion, the Man in the Moone* of 1588 introduced the character of Eumenides, who plays the loyal scold to the eponymous romantic hero. In light of Lyly's innovation, Milton's allusion becomes more inclusive, drawing Young into an ethically and dramatically coherent role. Finally, the Endymion myth persuasively combines two of the three putative causes of Milton's truancy: Milton's persona merges "naturally" with Endymion because they share the "virtue" of steadfastness, except that Milton's fidelity belongs to the ornamentation of classical metaphor itself. That consistency is especially telling when considered against the manuscript's concessive changes and its pervasive awareness of his teacher's censure.

In another part of the letter more obviously reflective of Puritan piety, Milton elaborates on the problem of "tardinesse" through scriptural allusion. But he takes counterintuitive liberties with Biblical sources in the second draft by splicing the parable of the talents (particularly the chiding of the reluctant son who hid his one talent in the ground rather making "use" of it) to the parable of the vineyard (in which the worker who began late is compensated the same as the workers who began earlier).[13] By implying the two stories' compatibility, he's essentially claiming that he'll be recognized in spite of being late, or maybe precisely because he's late, to God's service. The contradiction certainly heightens the intensity of his vocational dilemma—more problematic because the two parables from Matthew do not compound, but rather undo each other. In that move, Milton refashions a conventional modesty topos about being late into a more audacious drama of hermeneutic bluster, wherein the scriptural contradiction is actually rendered as comforting.[14] In doing so, he breaks his promise in the letter that he "will (not) streine for any set apologie." His claim in fact replicates the process of the conflicting scriptural citations: with the late insertion of "not," put in above the line, he cancels out his initial statement but nonetheless preserves the textual trace of the former position. Even without psychologizing the briefly-misplaced "not," Milton's guarantee comes undone from both ends: Milton is straining in the sense that he's performing a scriptural contortion, but it's clearly easy for him to surpass any "set apologie."

The clearest evidence of the letter staving off the complacency of conventionality lies in the passage that is wholly new to the revised version, in which Milton compares himself to the tidal motions of the Nile delta: "here I am come to a streame head copious enough to disburden it selfe like Nilus at seven mouthes into an ocean, but then I should also run into a reciprocall contradiction of ebbing & flowing at once & doe that wch I excuse myself for not doing[,] preach and not preach….". This is a scene of "contradiction" that is a decidedly un-miraculous, not quite classical nor Biblical, and yet somehow redolent of both traditions. Caught between pastiche and invention, the Nile imagery demonstrates how the explanatory categories of virtue,

vice, and nature can be muddled. Its sudden inclusion suggests a Milton still in pursuit of a satisfactorily original figure for his ambivalence, between drafts and across traditions; that pursuit, the letter drafts suggest, is the ongoing, dramatic condition of accounting for oneself.[15] But he still works to make this imagery cohere with Biblical wisdom. In the second draft, Milton favors effluvial imagery of a more abstract and already thoroughly metaphorical register (terms like "diversion" and "flowing"), which anticipates the more finely sketched Nile scene.[16] Likewise, the principle of scriptural "long knowledge" in the first draft is emended to the provocative paradox of "solid good flowing" in the second, a phrase which also converts the unsettling contradiction of scriptural wisdom (exemplified in the parables of the talents and the vineyard) to a resource of evocative poetics.

But the part of the letter that remains wholly unchanged is the sonnet "How soon hath Time, the suttle theefe of youth." Milton relates that he had mentioned the "Petrarchan stanza" to his friend when they bumped into each other in town earlier, so he includes it here (in the second draft he simply draws an arrow to show where the poem will be inserted in a final copy):

> How soon hath Time, the subtle thief of youth,
> Stol'n on his wing my three-and-twentieth year!
> My hasting days fly on with full career,
> But my late spring no bud or blossom shew'th.
> Perhaps my semblance might deceive the truth
> That I to manhood am arriv'd so near;
> And inward ripeness doth much less appear,
> That some more timely-happy spirits endu'th.
> Yet be it less or more, or soon or slow,
> It shall be still in strictest measure ev'n
> To that same lot, however mean or high,
> Toward which Time leads me, and the will of Heav'n:
> All is, if I have grace to use it so
> As ever in my great Task-Master's eye.

Following the topoi of the Letter, the sonnet works to weaken the firm distinction between bloom and barrenness, truancy and precociousness. The sonnet supports readings of both reassurance and radical uncertainty about whether the speaker indeed makes use of his full potential in the service of God. Such tenuousness is uniquely possible in sonnet form, compressing even further the contradiction that the Nile metaphor in the letter is at discursive pains to explain.[17] Milton takes full advantage of the sonnet as a genre that plays on paradox and the breakdown of seeming contraries. For instance, whatever broad power Time-as-thief exerts, the real urgency of the speaker's situation is intensified by "my three & twentith yeere" (2) and "hasting days" (3), quantities that render the speaker's situation both more naive and more acute. Instead of excusing these smaller increments of truancy, for all of their bucolic associations with "blossom" (4) and "ripeness" (7), each amount helps to fix a judgment of his effort that is both worryingly fatal and contingent within the consolation of the sestet, wherein even the main referent "it" is left vague: "be it lesse or more, or soone or slow / it shall be still in strictest measure even / to that same lot however mean or high / toward wch Tyme leads me" (9-12). If the sestet ostensibly renders the task of accounting for oneself as a thing indifferent, it still doesn't evacuate the anxiety raised in the octet about timely service—they are simply separate processes. But by

driving a wedge between conduct and justification, the speaker seems to have forfeited the luxury of their reliable correspondence. In this context, the almost-aphorism of the final couplet rings especially hollow, and its major conditional emerges as a very open question: "All is, if I have grace to use it so / As ever in my great Task-Maister's eye."

Milton fully exploits the sonnet form to create self-canceling paradoxes in "How soon hath Time," but the poem can also help us better appreciate the letter's own revealing recursiveness. Indeed, the letter seems to absorb the poem's technique of attributing the smaller units of time to the experience of the incipient poet-preacher. Within the Endymion passage of the first draft, Milton changes "dreame away my tyme" to "dreame away my yeares," as if to emphasize the naïve and yet specific experience of young dread. And in a surely more brazen attempt to assimilate the prose letter into a part of the "patterne" of the poem, Milton coyly introduces the sonnet, in both drafts, as "a Petrarchan stanza." By implication, it purports to be one poetic unit among many, sublimating the prose letter to the status of its larger cycle (and one without definitive end). At the same time, the "Petrarchan stanza" also functions as a modesty topos—a mere stanza characterized by its partial nature (and almost never used as a synonym for a completed sonnet). That term also teases the possibility of its excerption from a whole cycle of lyrical expression, of which we are given one excerpt here—placed in, finished, and already referenced in previous conversation between student and teacher.[18] But then again, the poem is introduced as Milton's "nightward thoughts" in both drafts, and he begins each letter by praising his teacher as the "good watch man to admonish that the howres of the night pass on."[19] Milton thereby nocturnally synchs the scene of his teacher's initial admonishment and its answer, the occasional (and scriptural) prompting of the letter and Milton's poetic response. The letter thereby resurges as the immediate context of the sonnet's production. These two discursive realms put in contact provide us with a sense of inadequacy and fitness of each, as well as their interdependence, in generating autobiographical insight.

Another major sonnet confirms Milton's awareness of the inextricability of autobiographical practice and imaginative artistry. A brief reading of "When I consider how my light is spent" demonstrates how Milton can use the sonnet form to unsettle the fundamental premises of vocational accounting, developing the concerns of "How soon hath time" and the letter in order to scrutinize the questions of when, whether, and how to compose such a testament. These questions, I argue, constitute the theme of sonnet and come to eclipse the issue of the speaker's conduct. In "When I consider how my light is spent," the speaker again locates himself within the parable of the talents to explain his anxiety about his stalled productivity; the conventional reading construes the poem as a meditation on Milton's literal blindness. A reading hinging on Milton's blindness has the convenience of dating the poem relatively late in his lyrical career—Milton's "light" was fully out by 1652[20]—and thereby intensifies the speaker's feeling of belatedness. Following the conventional reading, at the poem's end, the figure of Patience (possibly) puts him at ease by telling him "They also serve who only stand and wait." Stanley Fish has argued that we can't be sure whether that final line is in fact supposed to assuage the poem's initial uneasiness, given all the adjustments we make as we correct the impression that God is responsible for reported speech.[21] Still, even Fish's demonstration of ambiguity construes the sonnet as an insoluble meditation on the relative merits of active and passive service to God—which rightly goes beyond the matter of Milton's eyesight. While acknowledging the importance of the final lines, I want to locate a more subtended interpretive crux, concerning not Milton's blindness but the status of accounting, which is referenced in the first part of the poem but reverberates throughout:

When I consider how my light is spent,
Ere half my days in this dark world and wide,
And that one talent which is death to hide
Lodged with me useless, though my soul more bent
To serve therewith my Maker, and present
My true account, lest he returning chide;
"Doth God exact day-labor, light denied?"
I fondly ask. But Patience, to prevent
That murmur, soon replies, God doth not need
Either Man's work or His own gifts. Who best
Bear His mild yoke, they serve Him best. His state
Is kingly: thousands at His bidding speed,
And post o'er land and ocean without rest;
They also serve who only stand and wait.

What seldom is discussed is how much importance is being ascribed to that initial scene of accounting within the drama of the poem. According to the logic of the parable, one's proper account should show a balance between the talent given the son and his dutiful production. That kind of ledger-work of the soul would resonate in experimental devotional practices of the seventeenth century. But that term "account" in Milton's sonnet also accrues significance as a *narrative* account, prone to casuistry, embellishment, and style—all of which are ably met by the specific features of a sonnet. The allegedly tidy work of soul-accounting is thrown off by the poem's enjambment—the break between lines five and six momentarily detaches the speaker's subjective act of "present[ing]" from the presumed objectivity of "My true account." Even this feint of insecurity about "presentation" still entails a claim to knowledge of what the speaker's true account ought to be. In an even more skeptical reading, the Maker's chiding could be the primary impetus for the speaker's rush to give an account (as we've seen in the "Letter to a Friend" and as we will see again in the discussion of *The Reason of Church Government*, this dynamic is persistently fruitful for Milton). Furthermore, it's very possible to read the activity of presenting his account as a speculative fiction enabled by the initial act of "considering", wherein the almost the whole sonnet, including the exchange with Patience, is an imaginary exercise. In light of these possibilities, what would seem to be the straightforward activity of presenting one's true account warrants one's utmost scrutiny; instead of a faithful recital of one's vocational, Godly performance, the accounting is revealed to always be a creative act. It entails diachronic shaping, rather than the discovery of some salvific quantity, some "strictest measure ev'n" settled out of time.

There are still dimmer possibilities brought out by the rest of the poem. As with the sonnet "How soon hath time," the aphoristic certainty of the final line comes undone: "They also serve who only stand and waite." We might read this as a dig at the "thousands" who rush to justify themselves in active service. But such a gloss would also backfire on the speaker—for how could rushing to settle his account be construed as waiting? Perhaps in the broadest terms the poem checks the hubris of the middle-aged (or the young, or for that matter anyone living) for accounting for themselves too soon, "e're half [their] days," and testifying to their sanctification. In that context, over-eagerness is as much of a problem as belatedness. If we entertain this suspicion, a significant turn of the sonnet appears to come in the middle of line 8:

the personified "Patience" enters to comfort the speaker: "Patience to prevent / That murmur soon replies." But Patience itself is cast as a sort of a false friend of the ostensible project here. Patience is in fact hasty: violating the decorum of sonnet form, it refuses to wait for the volta to enter the scene. And of course, "prevent" can mean "to hasten" as well as "to stave off," in which case Patience ironically prompts the murmuring and the rush to solipsistic comfort. This reading of the sonnet confirms Milton's notion that presenting one's "true account" is thus inseparable not only from craft but also from motivation. Accounting emerges as a temptation to be exorcised, since it is contrary to true patience.

More broadly put, "When I consider" takes for granted the ethical conduct/justification split achieved by "How soon hath time," and proceeds to develop the multiple, messy valences of its pivotal term of accounting, such that its speaker's worry about self-justification itself emerges as the primary conflict of the poem. Ultimately though, by dramatizing that insecurity, the sonnet as a whole becomes a deft counter-account—its evident artistry helps us appreciate "accounting's" mediation through form and internally persuasive manipulations. As such, the sonnet can redeem itself as an even more responsive, and thus commanding, artifact of devotional autobiography. It is precisely the sonnet's dialectical balancing of an insistence on accounting and its foreswearing that makes it a worthwhile testament.

The preface of the second book of *The Reason of Church Government* offers a different heuristic innovation under the auspices of self-justification: its gaze into the future generates another way of partitioning vocational accomplishment from the imaginative generativity of autobiographical disclosure.[22] As opposed to the sonnets discussed above, this passage is less concerned with the legitimacy of confessional material than in offering an anatomy of how that material comes into being. That project of the passage makes greater interpretive demands than would an ethical proof meant to anchor the antiprelatical arguments around it. Milton's technique forces us, again and again, to displace the solid ground of a confessing self; autobiography, Milton insists, is much more than a context for one's arguments, but the persistent affordance of creative life. Even within the explicit context of vocational timing and worry, this portion of *The Reason of Church Government* models the heuristic opportunities of autobiography more broadly. Milton evokes the figural dilemmas of the "Letter to a Friend," including the teasing identification with Endymion that situated the young student as both scold and penitent. But Milton also expands that ambivalence, as *The Reason of Church Government* passage constantly shifts the standing of our autobiographical narrator, prose writer and poet, prophet and pretender, a self who is affirmed by external reality and an imaginative virtuoso unbound by it. These narrative modulations can be profitably understood as a function of deliberate technique rather than anxiety or repression. Whatever concern Milton harbors about the fate of the church and his service to it is deeply felt, but this doesn't mean that his command of autobiographical dramatization degrades according to that affective uncertainty.

Milton begins by meditating on the quite generalized burden of "knowledge", described without restriction in the opening passage:

> How happy were it for this frail, and as it may truly be call'd mortall life of man, since all earthly things which have the name of good and convenient in our daily use, are withal so cumbersome and full of trouble if knowledge yet which is the best and lightsomest possession of the mind, were as the common saying is, no burden, and that what it wanted of being a load to any part of the body, it did not with a heavie advantage overlay upon the spirit. (I.801)[23]

This beginning sets up a feint of impersonality within the milieu of a "common saying," as if the wish for relief from knowledge (of any kind) were also the most pressing concern of his addressees. Milton will also not speak in the first person for several more pages, when he releases a torrent of reflexive remarks that will be discussed below. Here as throughout *The Reason of Church Government*, Milton's generalization extends quite a bit of credit to his readers—or at least, he strategically evokes a community of worthy readers at the expense of the rabble, a technique that I'll discuss more thoroughly in the *Eikonoklastes* section of this chapter.[24] But from after his pseudo-impersonal meditation on the burden that narrows almost imperceptibly to the burden of prophetic clairvoyance in particular, Milton insists on the subjective processing of even inspired knowledge:

> although divine inspiration must certainly have been sweet to those ancient profets, yet the irksomnesse of that truth which they brought was so unpleasant to them that every where they call it a burden. Yea that mysterious book of Revelation which the great Evangelist was bid to eat, as it had ben some eye-brightning electuary of knowledge, and foresight, though it were sweet in his mouth, and in the learning, it was bitter in his belly; bitter in the denouncing. (I.802-803)[25]

Without impinging on the orthodoxy of divine and plenary inspiration,[26] Milton still finds occasion to elaborate the affective experience of prophetic obligation. He creates this opportunity by slowing down the chronology of inspiration and prophetic transmission, and enduing it with a synesthesic overload that's lacking in the original passage from Revelation 10:9-10, which concerns only taste, and not vision: "And I went unto the angel, and said unto him, Give me the little book. And he said unto me, Take *it*, and eat it up; and it shall make thy belly bitter, but it shall be in thy mouth sweet as honey. And I took the little book out of the angel's hand, and ate it up; and it was in my mouth sweet as honey: and as soon as I had eaten it, my belly was bitter."[27] The metaphorical tenor that Milton innovates in his discussion—foresight—becomes overwhelmed by the vehicle of taste. But that bitterness is acutely sensed by the speaker almost *as a result of* the reference to "eye-brightning electuary of knowledge, and foresight"; the anaphoric expression of disgust that follows—"bitter in his belly; bitter in the denouncing"— is also new to Milton's adaptation. In his sequence, the figuration of subjective, affective experience steers the representation of prophetic vocation, which sits uneasily with the idea of prophet as a medium for the divine. At a basic level, this passage performs some exculpatory work for Milton: we are made to understand that both the giving *and* the holding back of caustic ecclesiastical critique are unpleasant. In the subsequent passage, we will learn that the immediate foresight concerns his own affective and ethical response to the dilemma of timely service, but this opening anticipates the same idea. The conventional meditation on the prophetic burden is shown to be always already a subjective one even before Milton explicitly comes around to plead his own case.

When he does adopt a more explicitly subjective perspective, he already posits near and distant futures (which he will dramatize more radically in the famous proleptic passage of the tract): "For me I have determin'd to lay up as the best treasure, and solace of a good old age, if God vouchsafe it me, the honest liberty of free speech from my youth, where I shall think it available in so dear a concernment as the Churches good" (I.804). What reads as a confident statement of self-possession is actually unclear: whether he "shall think" his service "available" in this immediate future of the active Puritan cause or in distant retirement is ambiguous,

depending on whether the thinking here is construed as reflective or speculative. His hedging can easily be read as blustering, ironically working to amplify his self-esteem.[28] But, most importantly, this position is unsettled by a radical change of tone, with a peculiarly rhetorical question closer in kind to Thomas Browne's "o altitudo" musings: "if I be either by disposition, or what other cause too inquisitive, or suspitious of my self and mine own doings, who can help it? but this I foresee, that should the church be brought under heavy oppression…." (I.804). The irony is that the present unreliability (issuing from his inquisitiveness or suspicions) abruptly gives way to a more certain foresight about situations to come. In this arrangement, he intimates that his knowledge of his present nature is unclear compared to his predicted reaction to exigencies once played out—and in the process, he re-designates the habits of inquisitiveness or suspicion as imaginative labors that produce firmer understanding. He also, of course, returns to the self-characterization familiar from the "Letter to a Friend," where he muses, "I am something suspicious of myself." In both cases, and again reminiscent of Browne, self-suspicion is for Milton framed as a personal eccentricity or habit of mind distinct from a bludgeon of Puritan anxiety; within a doctrinal polemic, he nevertheless retains a remark that is formally and affectively parenthetical to the moral case. We are gearing up for the dramatic proleptic scene of Milton castigating himself, but the multiplying of subjective positions is already underway. To be transparently introspective about his status as a servant is to be *generative* of scenarios (and then accounts) for his past, present, and future conduct, all of which are in turn subject to contingencies and ironies.

The famous crux of the preface features the projected future Milton addressing himself, with an imaginative and dramatic exuberance that manages to both heighten and attenuate the prophetic ethos he has established. As we have seen, Milton has been carefully working up to this scene all along by intimating dramatic flux in the context of putatively settled knowledge. And considered in the arc of his autobiographical career, Milton's proleptic passage suggests he has internalized the dialectic posed in the letter of 1633 between Thomas Young and himself, merging the chiding teacher and the student, Eumenides and Endymion into one. At the passage's beginning, he doesn't just imagine his disappointment should his cause be defeated; he also predicts his shame if the reformation then recovered without his help:

> should she [the Church] by blessing from above on the industry and courage of faithfull men change this her distracted estate into better daies without the lest furtherance or contribution of those talents which God at that present had lent me, I foresee what stories I should heare within my selfe, all my life after, of discourage and reproach. Timorous and ingratefull, the Church of God is now again at the foot of her insulting enemies: and thou bewailst, what matters it for thee or thy bewailing? when time was, thou couldst not find a syllable of all that thou hadst read, or studied, to utter in her behalf. Yet ease and leasure was given thee for thy retired thoughts out of the sweat of other men. Thou hadst the diligence, the parts, the language of a man, if a vain subject were to be adorn'd or beautifi'd, but when the cause of God and his Church was to be pleaded, for which purpose that tongue was given thee which thou hast, God listen'd if he could heare thy voice among his zealous servants, but thou wert domb as a beast; from hence forward be that which thine own brutish silence hath made thee. (I.804-805)

Even though Milton intones an emotional urgency in the passage, he still draws our attention to his virtuoso handling of these "stories"—an oddly artifactual term—at some remove. This very scene of "reproach" is "adorn'd or beautif'd," just as Milton embellished the "vain" secular

poems of his youth. As ever, scriptural language pervades the passage, but it also inflects some redemption amid the criticism: far from silent, he might identify with the prophetic ass of Numbers 22:21-55, whose mouth the Lord enters to rebuke the false prophesies of Balaam. That more submerged reference reinforces the wisdom of the more explicitly-stated dilemma of the talents.[29]

But Milton goes further to display the tonal subtlety at his command in his treatment of his virtual future selves. We should pause to identify the three figures in play: there is the present narrating Milton, the castigating future Milton,[30] and the ingrate future Milton. The thundering epithet "Timorous and ingrateful," we understand later from the subsequent "thous," issues from the castigating future Milton—but we are unsure at this point that we have moved to reported speech. For a moment, the insult plausibly resonates as the circumspect disgust of the present narrating Milton. Engaging this narrative ambiguity further, "timorous and ingrateful" can slide from presumably modifying the future Milton-as-ingrate to modifying the new apposite term, "the Church of God" that "is now again at the foot of her insulting enemies." As a result, the personal invective of cowardice and personal ungratefulness transforms to a phrase of pity for a church "now" (that is, hereafter) threatened and underserved, with no reason to be thankful to Milton. With brilliant economy, temporal modulations and grammatical ambiguity bring into alignment the afflictions of the church and Milton, and therefore the stakes of their reputations. Even more audacious, though, is this inversion between the subject and object of the critical speech: "and thou bewailst, what matters it for thee or thy bewailing? when time was, thou couldst not find a syllable of all that thou hadst read, or studied, to utter in her behalf." The bewailing could be taken as the reported whine of the ingrate future Milton, or that of the castigating one, who also engages in futile bewailing of a different kind. A similar ethical entrapment is staged in his rueful praise ("Thou hadst the diligence, the parts, the language of a man, if a vain subject were to be adorn'd or beautifi'd"), whereby the future castigating Milton takes his former self as his own vain subject of encomium. Even though those "parts" are catalogued straightforwardly, the warrant for self-esteem surely is meant to feel ironized. These different Miltons, it could be said, allegorize the phenomenon he expressed in the "Letter to a Friend," that "reciprocall contradiction of ebbing & flowing at once" as they "do that which I would excuse myself for not doing preache & not preache." Even in a fantastical autobiographical allegory, Milton ensures that the personae proliferate their prejudices, vanity, and suspicions, thereby conferring an insight about the impossibility of absolutely reliable reflection, of disinterested ethical assessment even given the power of retrospection.

Subsequently Milton returns to the alternate scenario of guilt where he began, should the Church recover without him. The initial "Or else" of this passage misleadingly suggests that this is a fresh alternative he's considering, but we've already seen that this fear of his comparative truancy induced the speculative assessments of his service in the first place:

> Or else I should have heard on the other eare, slothfull, and ever to be set light by, the Church hath now overcom her late distresses after the unwearied labours of many her true servants that stood up in her defence; thou also wouldst take upon thee to share amongst them of their joy: but wherefore thou?... Dare not now to say, or doe any thing better then thy former sloth and infancy, or if thou darst, thou dost impudently to make a thrifty purchase of boldnesse to thy selfe out of the painfull merits of other men: what before was thy sin, is now thy duty to be, abject, and worthlesse. These and such like lessons as these, I know would have been my Matins duly, and my Even-song. But now by this little diligence, mark what a privilege I have gain'd…. (I.804-805)

That first "or" is both less and more than the "Miltonic or" that Peter C. Herman discusses as a source of readerly aporia in the epics.[31] In one respect, it marks a fairly straightforward casuistic maneuver, calling up a new scenario for scrutiny. But in another respect, it's also more panicked and reactive, befitting of a speaker seemingly haunted by spectral possibilities and yet untold "stories" of shame. This "or" can ultimately work as a consolidating move too, by emphasizing that this is the same ingrate future Milton, listening to a different critique in light of different events, just with the other ear. By accruing all of the insights afforded by that "or," the future ingrate Milton emerges ironically as the seat of omniscience. At the same time, the castigating Milton persona is in something of a holding pattern, repeating the *contrapasso* theory ("what before was thy sin, is now thy duty to be, abject, and worthlesse") that he issued just before ("from hence forward be that which thine own brutish silence hath made thee"). That fairly straightforward notion of sin fixing identity is quickly overturned when the present narrating Milton trades that "lesson" for a newly-earned "privilege" which is his alone. With the final "now" the narration resets, from here on out most substantially identified with the present narrating Milton, the servant at the threshold of political engagement. And so the present narrating Milton persona finally outflanks his scold, already out-singing the rote matins and even-songs he dreads. Indeed, the "diligence" plausibly refers to this very speculative autobiographical exercise, rather than simply to his service as a critic of church policy at large. That prolific narrative-making, by way of autobiographical split, constitutes a wholly new form of justification within the passage. The embattled personae of Milton are fictional constructs, subject to authorial manipulation of every kind, and yet they serve equally as de-legitimatizing and legitimatizing agents of introspective experience.

It is in this context of a writer conjuring his "other eare" of a future self, and his inclination toward prolificacy, that we might frame the discussion of his "left hand," and the merits of political prose weighed against poetic ambition. Just as Milton stages an allegory of the divided listening subject in the proleptic passage, he gives us the polemicist and the poet writing with different abilities. He takes pains to construe generic difference in the terms of bodily comprehension and difference-within-unity (one ear/the other ear, right hand/left hand); in this light we can appreciate how Milton stages the contest of genres as one of inextricable complementarity.[32] Both discourses bear their liabilities, but each can be used as a vantage for reflecting on the other, within, Milton emphasizes, the very same writing subject. That generic dialectic also explicitly concerns an autobiographical practice that must reconcile both modes from some imagined critical vantage point:

> if I were wise only to mine own ends, I would certainly take such a subject as of it self might catch applause, whereas this hath all the disadvantages on the contrary, and such a subject as the publishing whereof might be delayd at pleasure, and time enough to pencill it over with all the curious touches of art, even to the perfection of a faultlesse picture, whenas in this argument the not deferring is of great moment to the good speeding, that if solidity have leisure to doe her office, art cannot have much. Lastly, I should not chuse this manner of writing wherin knowing my self inferior to my self, led by the genial power of nature to another task, I have the use, as I may account it, but of my left hand… For although a Poet soaring in the high region of his fancies with his garland and singing robes about him might without apology speak more of himself then I mean to do, yet for me sitting here below in the cool element of prose, a mortall thing among many readers

> of no Empyreall conceit, to venture and divulge unusual things of my selfe, I shall petition to the gentler sort, it may not be envy to me. (I.807-808)

Some critics have construed inconsistencies here and elsewhere as ingenuous flaws in composition, an "uncertain back-and-forth motion."[33] For example, Milton eschews digression ("the not deferring is of great moment to the good speeding") in the midst of elaborately adorned digression (for instance, breathlessly adding "even to the perfection of a faultlesse picture"). But I think it more likely that Milton is giving us sure evidence of metacritical engagement by reneging on his own prescriptive policy—like Pope's "wounded snake" of an alexandrine in the *Essay on Criticism*.[34] For every statement issued as a circumspect critic, Milton uses an *occupatio* flourish to position himself as a still-enthusiastic practitioner—yet another return to the "reciprocal contradiction" of the tidal Nile. That is in keeping with the spirit of the entire passage, which models how to permit oneself to discuss one's own prowess and insecurity. Even the description of prose-inferiority ("As I may account it, but of my left hand") draws attention to itself as a matter of tentative, subjective effort and concerted accommodation. Milton's fraught self-objectification is emphatically contingent: he relegates the poet to "Empyreall conceit" but nevertheless predicates himself in relation to that world, "sitting here below in the cool element of prose." But lest we think prose is the simplifying medium of empirical reality, he prefaces the discussion of prose against poetry by conceding to "knowing myself inferior to myself." This is gnomically compressed, to the point of eliding the intricate psychomachia entailed in such realizations and account-making, to say nothing of the historical specificities which spur them, which Milton meticulously described earlier in the proleptic passage. Compared with the baroque allegorical strategy of hurling invective at a future version of himself, this new "plain" formulation carries its own reflexive bafflements.[35]

Curiously, the prose/poetry entanglement of this passage is often discussed without noting that Milton talks about these forms in terms of their *autobiographical* suitability. The substantial qualification of the poet is that of one who "might without apology speak more of himself then I mean to do." That is, an autobiographer in the "Empryeall" realm of poetry would cancel the need for any apology, and might yield more, potentially unmediated, truths about the poet's nature. But if that "I" resides here in the cool element, the apologetic prose writer might reveal still more: a seeming lack of fit between form and content may be a source of expressive freedom, with which he aims "to venture and divulge unusual things of my selfe." The tactic of refraining from committing to one privileged vantage of oneself in the proleptic passage is replicated here in the staged allegiance to the different insights afforded by each genre—in part by considering each from the outside, as the practitioner–critic of another. Just when Milton's sympathies tilt in favor of prose writing in practical service (wherein artful poetry is degraded to "formerly catching applause") he finds himself moved by the "genial power of nature to another task." If the practice of imagining "the other eare" is ultimately exalted as a heuristic "diligence," this autobiographical practice of switching hands comes under the aegis of creative diligence, too. A more complete autobiographical representation must issue from this "two-handed engine."

When Milton segues into an ostensibly more "certain account" of his creative ambition, he takes his leave with one last meditation on the enterprise of introspection. The delineation of generic types represents a deflating departure after the sublime scene of creative conception he has conjured for us:

> Time servs not now, and perhaps I might seem too profuse to give any certain account of what the mind at home in the spacious circuits of her musing hath liberty to propose to her self, though of highest hope and hardest attempting, whether that Epick form whereof the two poems of Homer, and those other two of Virgil and Tasso are a diffuse, and the book of Job a brief model: or whether the rules of Aristotle herein are strictly to be kept, or nature to be follow'd which in them that know art, and use judgement is not transgression, but an inriching of art. (I.812-813)

Here, sublimity properly belongs to the "spacious circuits of [the mind's] musing," not the normative aesthetics of classification, or even the literary creations themselves. The mind that "propose[s] to her self" is "a wholly self-activating figure."[36] Once again a "certain account" of himself is deemed a practical impossibility, though it's one he willingly sacrifices in exchange for the awe at the expansive "liberty" his mind enjoys in its own autonomous fashion. The august chaos of this creation scene is nevertheless the comforting "home" of thought. It follows that this project of autobiographical introspection is both elusively sublime and prosaically familiar, entailed in generativity of all kinds.

The Reason of Church-Government was the first of the antiprelatical tracts to which Milton signed his name. Rather than taking this attribution as a sign of the stability of his project of self-promotion or ethical proof, we might infer a claim to a more supple command of autobiographical possibility. As he dramatizes a self that is quite skeptical of autobiographical declaration, he can enhance the virtuosity of its "hardest attempting" which withstands that skepticism; at every turn, Milton's prose reminds us that it all might have been written differently.

Refuting Autobiography: *Eikonoklastes*

We can elaborate Milton's attitude toward autobiography by looking at his most hostile polemic, *Eikonoklastes*; it is, after all, hundreds of pages set on eviscerating Charles II's *Eikon Basilike*, that hybrid of personal captivity narrative, political justification, and prayer-book that sentimentalized the king after his execution and dealt a blow to the incipient republican government. For Milton to discredit *Eikon Basilike* was a matter of urgent necessity for the regicides, but it has had a reverberating effect on Milton scholarship: imputing iconoclastic energies to Milton's entire corpus has been a tendency in Milton studies for at least a generation. Daniel Shore surveys the proliferation of the motif in his article "Why Milton Was Not an Iconoclast," explaining how critics such as David Loewenstein, John Guillory, and Lana Cable deploy the metaphor of righteous smashing in more and less literal ways.[37] To make his contrarian argument, Shore takes on the most extreme case of *Eikonoklastes* to show that, even here, Milton is rather engaging in literary criticism, of a very intimate, implicative, and curatorial kind: "Far from destroying idols, Milton seeks to capture and preserve them under judgment, investing them with poetic care even as he hollows them out from the inside, thereby refashioning them as the instruments of their own disenchantment."[38] Milton's meticulous interaction with Charles' *Eikon Basilike* then surely goes beyond the immediate goals of *refutio* to reflect on and theorize its object. But Shore partitions this enterprise from the tract's opening that, by contrast, "emphasiz[es] violent breaking….Milton is not an iconoclast; he just plays one in his preface."[39] It's in this concession that I think Shore doesn't take his intervention far

enough: the preface indeed engages with its task with full critical self-consciousness, intricately "theoriz[ing] its object." And in this regard an insight from Shore's opponents becomes illuminating for thinking of *Eikonoklastes* as criticism: as Barbara Lewalski observes, Milton "insisted that anything could be made into an idol."[40] Precisely the expansive metaphorics of iconoclasm bring all manner of rhetorical objects under Milton's scrutiny. Considered together, Lewalski's *maximal* and Shore's *minimal* theories of Milton's iconoclasm augur a more complex model of what Milton's polemic tells us about the fallibility of autobiography itself. In fact, Milton construes the autobiographical mode as just such an idol that requires curatorial care to illuminate its manipulations and, possibly, the grounds for its worthiness.

Reading *Eikonoklastes*, I want to argue that Milton demonstrates how the genre is constituted by its problems. Besides confuting Charles on political grounds, *Eikonoklastes* demonstrates how Charles' text, as any autobiography, hangs on an interrelated set of conflicting imperatives: the privileging of deeds that are always betrayed by the text of their transmission; the unreliability of first-person accounts compared to collective inspection, even though collective perspectives are also prone to the corruptions of over-identification; and the authenticating force of original expression that can only be proven by an internalized command of conventions. If Milton accuses *Eikon Basilike* of confusing these categories, they are liabilities of the genre that are in no way reserved for his political enemies.

We've already seen Milton's concern about the inevitable interference between deeds and words, actions and their representations, in his own autobiographical writing. In *Eikonoklastes*, Milton doesn't just apply that suspicion from the outside, but demonstrates how *Eikon Basilke* generates such epistemological interference internally; from the outset, Milton must treat Charles' text as the rhetorically dynamic work it is. In this respect, Milton's refusal to engage *Eikon Basilike* as a stable, inert icon supports Shore's contention that Milton is not a typical iconoclast: Milton confers a *certain* credibility to the work's pretensions as a sacred icon, and this concession allows him to then apply unrelenting pressure on the correlation between Charles' deeds and his narrative account, exposing the discrepancies that result from this always-already dynamic, contingent relationship. This tactic of *delayed* critical destabilization manifests in the typographical design of *Eikonoklastes*, which removes the italics of Charles' prayers that distinguished them from his narrative expositions. *Eikonoklastes* thereby renders the prayers fair game for painstaking *refutio*, but it also effectively flattens out the facile distinction between the dramatic utterance of prayer—supposedly enacted in the time and place of captivity—and the narrative disquisition that surrounds it. In Milton's hands, the two modes are figured as sharing the same epistemological pretensions, and are therefore both vulnerable to polemical critique. (Italics will be important in *Eikonoklastes* for Milton's near-quotations of Charles' writing; I will return to this impersonation technique soon). The *Eikon Basilike* of Milton's curation is staged as "all action" *and* "all text" within the same discursive field—such that Milton is in fact content to confer the status and styling of icon to *Eikon Basilike*—at least preliminarily. The naïve hermeneutic assumption that the text is an objective narrative complement of action, such that there is a faithful correspondence between deeds and their representation, cannot *also* survive *Eikon Basilike*'s simultaneous insistence on its own complete iconographic consolidation.

And yet, by entertaining this baffling configuration of Charles' autobiography (all text and all action), it's easier for Milton to insist on an even starker dichotomy of actions and their autobiographical textual rendering, such that the king's political actions are in fact posed as wholly extrinsic to what we find in *Eikon Basilike*. Those deeds that Milton wants to scrutinize are made to feel perilously unrecoverable. This configuration concurs with the proto-new-critical

theory of text Milton advances in the preface to *Eikonoklastes*, when he claims that its writer's identity is irrelevant to the text's independent afterlife. The writing of the first edition of *Eikonoklastes* precedes the John Gauden discovery, though Milton clearly harbored his suspicions. But rather than making a scandal of the possibility of a ghostwriter, he dramatically waves it off as an object of too-mean attention: "But as to the Author of these Soliloquies, whether it were the late King, as is vulgarly beleev'd, or any secret *Coadjutor*, and some stick not to name him, it can add nothing, nor shall take from the weight, if any be, of reason which he brings" (III.346). Milton naturally scores points in his pseudo-restraint: a "coadjutor" can mean one "appointed as an assistant and successor to an old and infirm bishop,"[41] so Milton still emphasizes Charles' personal ineptitude, and his desperate reliance on a cypher. The later insertion of "Undoubtedly" before "the late King" in the second edition sarcastically dismisses the notion of authorship as the key to the book's value or meaning, while still insulting anyone's "vulgar" belief that the king wrote the book in the first place. But then Milton develops a more cutting argument by suggesting that *Eikon Basilike* is not even worthy of *refutio*, because its contradictions are of the first-order. Indeed, Milton tells us they comprise the vital tissue of Charles' tract:

> allegations, not reasons are the main contents of this Book; and need no more then other contrary allegations to lay the question before all men in an eev'n balance; though it were suppos'd that the testimony of one man in his own cause affirming, could be of any moment to bring in doubt the autority of a Parlament denying. But if these his fair spok'n words shall be heer fairly confronted and laid parallel to his own farr differing deeds, manifest and visible to the whole Nation, then surely we may look on them who notwithstanding shall persist to give to bare words more credit then to op'n deeds, as men whose judgement was not rational evinc'd and perswaded, but fatally stupifi'd and bewitch'd into such a blinde and obstinate beleef. (III.346)

Milton first simply demotes the king's "reasons" to mere "allegations," and then holds the king accountable for the self-serving, unreliable implications of the latter term. In this new context, Milton can subordinate the King's more abstract, ephemeral "allegations" to more respectably concrete "reasons," which properly serve a "testimony" of "deeds." Only after Milton's strategic concessions—the flattening of the text-as-icon, the negligibility of personal authorship, and the windiness of further allegations set against allegations—can he assert a more robust epistemological hierarchy between the king's "bare words" and his "op'n deeds." This hierarchy of evidence is explicitly mapped onto the politics of revolution: the monarchical, oratorical words of "one man" are degraded in comparison to the parliamentary, national witness of despotic overreaching. But Milton notes the entrapment of even that distinction, as any engagement with the King's "Soliloquies" of refutation entails a temporary blindness to the evidence of his actions.

Having introduced the unreliability of Charles' confession, Milton now bears down on *Eikon Basilike*'s compositionality to show how removed the text is from the political reality it purports to represent. To demonstrate this skepticism, he again indulges a conceit at the core of *Eikon Basilike*—that of the text's materiality as an iconic artifact—in order to ponder the unfitness of its construction:

> That which the King layes down heer as his first foundation and as it were the head stone of his whole Structure, that *He call'd this last Parlament not more by others advice and*

> *the necessity of his affaires, then by his own chois and inclination*, is to all knowing men so apparently not true, that a more unlucky and inauspicious sentence, and more betok'ning the downfall of his whole Fabric, hardly could have come into his minde. (III.350)

Milton reiterates the fundamental reliability of deeds over words: just because Charles says he called back Parliament on his own accord doesn't mean that's how it happened. More importantly, though, this remarkable single-sentence discussion of the recalling of Parliament is representative of Milton's method of occupying and then estranging the king's case. Milton's critique begins with the concrete imagery of "foundation" and "head stone"—playing to the pretense of *Eikon Basilike*'s substantiality. But then he changes his etiological register by identifying a starkly immaterial, textual "sentence" as the basis of Charles' argument; Milton makes that switch even more jarring by appealing midway to a critical judgment about the textual enterprise—the readerly rejection of Charles' claim by "all knowing men." So when Milton abruptly reprises the architectural imagery (the "downfall of his whole Fabric") the bathos of Milton's prose redounds upon Charles own opportunistic appeal. Milton shows that Charles' compositional process bungles his purpose of self-justification—a particularly pathetic failure because the integrity of *Eikon Basilike* has to blame only the inconsistency of Charles' own tyrannical "*chois and inclination*." By insisting on *Eikon Basilike*'s diachronic compositionality, Milton emphasizes the fact of the text's contingency, along with the possibility that it might have been written differently. At the same time, the motif of masontry—wherein intellection is likened to the construction of a head-stone, no matter how inspired or aesthetically pleasing—implicitly helps to remove the text from iconographic synonymy with Charles. Calling attention to Charles' hand in this subterfuge, Milton denies not only the icon but also the heresy of iconographic valuation more generally.[42] The king's autobiographical production—including the King-as-icon trope that Milton entertains temporarily for convenience—is now figured as a postdated *set* of artifacts, primed for excavation.

Milton joins the contingent, processural creation account of *Eikon Basilike* to its contingent, processural reception. In doing so, he checks readers' implicit faith in the truth of narrative testimonies, along with the temptation to make an idol of the humility of textual claims; again, he challenges readers into meeting his high interpretive expectations:

> To say therefore that hee call'd this Parlament of his own chois and inclination, arguest how little truth wee can expect from the sequel of this Book, which ventures in the very first period to affront more then one Nation with an untruth so remarkable; and presumes a more implicit Faith in the people of England, then the Pope ever commanded form the Romish Laitie.; or els a natural sottishness fit to be abus'd and ridd'n. (III.355)

Milton taunts Charles by way of an unfavorable comparison to Popish idolatry, which Milton's persuadable readers would have already firmly rejected *as* idolatrous. Anticipating his readers' offended sensibilities, Milton can flatter, and then marshal, their critical circumspection—thus affirming that reception is a dynamic, integral component of autobiographical production. That critical reception, as Milton's exhortations attest, is still underway. Milton then puts an even more direct onus on readers who join him in critical discernment:

> But to prove his inclination to Parlaments, he affirms heer *To have always thought the right way of them, most safe for his Crown, and best pleasing to his People.* What hee thought we know not; but that hee ever took the contrary way wee saw; and from his own

> actions we felt long agoe what he thought of Parlaments or of pleasing his People: a surer evidence then what we hear now too late in words. (III.356)

Once again, Milton underscores the inadmissibility of the King's thoughts and words, especially when weighed against readers' more trusted empirical experience.[43] Charles' thought is unknowable and is anyway beside the point because deeds stand as a practical indication of his thinking. Milton here posits a triangulation of truth that engaged reading makes possible: the fact of deeds is rerouted through readerly scrutiny so as to bypass a testimony made of words.

This readerly triangulation of the last passage happens to illustrate one of Milton's most scathing innovations in *refutio*: the selective channeling of Charles' own words in italics, but, crucially, translated to third-person address. Daniel Shore proposes a unifying theory of this technique as it relates to Milton's preservative iconoclasm: "only insofar as Charles's words remain present, preserved in italics, can they serve as the objects of irony, vituperation, and zeal... The passages quoted above display a rhetorical form that is central to Milton's polemics—the preservation of an idol under discrediting judgment—which I will refer to as *epicrisis*."[44] But the rhetorical explanation of *epicrisis* might be enhanced by entertaining a literary explanation: I want to suggest that Milton is deploying something very much like free indirect discourse, the narrative technique that most precisely describes many of the effects Milton achieves here in polemic. Free indirect discourse, after all, simultaneously establishes a perfect intimacy with and alienation of the inhabited consciousness. Whereas Milton's text dissolves the italics that had distinguished prayer and the discursive text in *Eikon Basilike*, he strategically uses italics in these cases to expose the shallowness of introspection on offer by Charles, language that is easily liquidated into Milton's own mocking accusations. His impersonation is withering:

> *He was sorry to hear with what popular heat Elections were carry'd in many places.* Sorry rather that Court Letters and intimations prevail'd no more, to divert or deterr the people from thir free Election of those men, whom they thought best affected to Religion and thir Countries Libertie, both at that time in danger to be lost. (III.356-357)

Milton retains the respectability of precisely representing his opponent. But in his apposite commentary, Milton uses repetition to expose Charles' euphemisms and claims of passive innocence in the face of "popular heat." Throwing his voice without abandoning it, Milton reveals Charles' political gas-lighting to be what Ann Banfield would call "a fact of the fiction."[45] By starting Charles' sentence over from its beginning ("Sorry rather"), Milton designates new grammatical and political subjects for both elections and their obstruction. After all, Milton again gives credit to a collective, discerning public as an epistemological and political good—the amorphous "popular heat" converts into a noble, conscientious ideal and effectuality, with definitive actors. We've seen this ennobling technique already in Milton's implicit exhortations to his readers, such as when he rebukes "a more implicit Faith in the people of England, then the Pope ever commanded," and when he shares the obvious absurdity that "the testimony of one man in his own cause affirming, could be of any moment to bring in doubt the authority of a Parlament denying" (III.355, 356). Charles' self-declarations deserve scrutiny, which Milton enables by preserving his language: "If his own crimes have made all men his enemies, who els can judge him?"[46] By channeling Charles so intimately, Milton reconfigures Charles' words to comport with overwhelmingly authoritative, collective, and third-person optics, which can begin to correct for the inherent liabilities of the confessing self.

In this understanding of *Eikon Basilike*, *every* personal attribution to Charles is an inherent rhetorical liability. Milton would exploit this weakness in both his translation and discussion of *Eikon Basilike'*s concluding motto. Milton renders Charles' Latin slogan as self-exculpatory rhetoric: "by those Latin words after the end, *Vota dabunt quae Bella negarunt*; intimating, That what hee could not compass by Warr, he should achieve by his Meditations" (III.342). So begins another free-indirect presentation of Charles' words, now distorted strangely through the narrating voice of third person critic-reader. Milton thus achieves a devastating alienation effect, driving a wedge between the motives of a corrupt king and the righteous conclusions of his subjects. The editors of the *Broadview* edition of *Eikon Basilike* translate Charles' motto differently: "What we could not get by our treaties, we may gain by our prayers."[47] In their translation of the motto in *Eikon Basilike*, there is at least a sympathetic universalism; Milton's version as translated in *Eikonoklastes* shrinks the potential common cause of the motto into the solipsistic ego-drive of Charles. Milton also ascribes a probabilistic desperation to the motto ("should achieve," "may gain") in his translation. Finally, Milton desacralizes "prayers" into "meditations," and so figures them as the compromised, last-ditch effort of personal political defeat. Milton's dilution of the sacred at this moment indicates his awareness of how compelling the rhetoric of personal devotion would remain for Charles' cause. Even at this moment of rhetorical dismemberment in the motto, Milton refrains from ridiculing the consolation Charles could find in prayer.

In one crucial respect, though, Milton feels confident enough to confront the religiosity of Charles head-on: his claims of martyrdom. Milton's contempt for Charles' self-representation, at various diegetic levels, pragmatically narrows the grounds for acceptable personal testimony to what Stephen Fallon would characterize as "a null set," a seeming impossibility.[48] As we've seen, this suspicion of autobiographical credibility comports with the political-epistemological stature of collective observation for Milton. At the same time, Milton remains protective of the relatively reliable vantage of a prosecuted minority. This paradox characterizes Milton's conception of martyrdom and witnessing as yet *another* epistemological problem of autobiographical discourse, and one which situates perhaps the most pervasive critique in *Eikonoklastes* given the centrality of the appeals to martyrdom in *Eikon Basilike*. In chapter twenty-seven, which addresses the section "Intitl'd to the Prince of Wales," Milton circles back to the perceptual unease that troubles the whole premise of those appeals:

> But Martyrs bear witness to the truth, not to themselves. If I bear witness of my self, saith *Christ*, my witness is not true. He who writes himself *Martyr* by his own inscription, is like an ill Painter, who, by writing on the shapeless Picture which he hath drawn, is fain to tell passengers what shape it is; which else no man could imagine: no more than how a Martyrdom can belong to him, who therefore dies for his Religion because it is *established*. (III.575)

Here Milton affirms the noble status of prosecuted minority—and it follows that the king has no business claiming the martyr's mantle. For Milton, the fact of religious affiliation, along with the relative political strength of that position, elaborates the objective criteria that the reader-spectator not only can, but *must* take into account when assessing the reflexive claims of a would-be martyr. But there is a crucial aesthetic contention in his analogy, too: in the passage above, Milton insists on the paramount bearing of the artist's talent on the portrait's formal merit (its plausibility, its verisimilitude, the skill of its execution), no matter the artist's intentions or

motives. Once again, discerning critics are of constitutive importance to the work, as are the onlookers of the martyr's spectacle.

The grounds for the martyrdom critique issue from the direct assurances and appeals issued to loyal readers in *Eikon Basilike* itself. Milton gleefully dissects the way this interpolation works on a willing reading public. But in doing so, he identifies a key problem of witnessing: it involves the wholesale transfer of agency from martyr to spectator, from Charles to his forgiving subjects. And in Milton's grave estimation, of course, that public has remade "he who was once thir Ahab" into "thir Josiah" (III.365). He deplores the public's eagerness to participate in the documentation that becomes confused for personal, experiential verification. In Milton's telling, gullible readers see and feel themselves in the idolatrous frontispiece of *Eikon Basilike*: they "hold out both thir eares with such delight and ravishment to be stigmatiz'd and board through in witness of thir own voluntary and beloved baseness" (III.601). Here Milton identifies the propensity of witnessing to work as a feedback loop, such that the king's sympathizers suffer from a kind of aspirational impersonation, a dangerous profusion of text into experience instead of the reverse. These acts of profligate regarding and re-witnessing are uncontainable, escaping critique as they become collectivized and dispersed beyond accountable texts. In this special context, Milton insists, the collective perspective is the idolatrous one, nearly impossible to check.[49]

The sheer *inclusiveness* of the *imitatio Christi* tradition—either through false personal witnessing or the compounding dispersal of the martyr's subjectivity—raises Milton's suspicions of two dominant strains of spiritual autobiographical discourse: typology and exemplarity.[50] If spiritual autobiographies take these narrative principles for granted, there may be no proper recovery of truth within the texts, nor any possibility for critical judgment of those texts. This corrosive line of critique could be traced all the way to the paradigmatic confessional moment in Western culture: when Augustine hears the words "Tolle lege," he opens to Paul but recollects the story of Antony, who himself hears a reading of the gospel and then converts.[51] Augustine's conversion, in other words, is comparative from the start. In that garden scene of reading, confessional texts beget and recall other confessional texts through witnessing; they are reproductive, almost as a matter of their generic nature. And Milton is fully implicated in this chain: the prolific autobiographer who generates ever-more speculative content to hang on a single occasion (as in *Reason of Church Government*, the Letter to a Friend, and the circumspect sonnets) must realize how habitually he re-witnesses himself.

To review the antinomies Milton has so far posed for us in *Eikonoklastes*: first, autobiographical words may pretend to be subservient echoes of actions, but the artifice of narrative accounting inevitably entails authorial agency. Second, the self-interest of first-person accounts requires collective scrutiny, but the collective perspective can also be corrupted in its own prideful witnessing, especially in the dramatic specifics of martyrdom. Perhaps the third dilemma can be understood as a synthesis of the first two, but more expressly in the terms of artistic enterprise, aesthetic judgment, and generic decorum: Milton condemns both the originality and conventionality of *Eikon Basilike*, alternating calls for one and then the other. (The paradoxical begetting and transfer of one's "original" confessional experience will be elaborated in the next chapter on John Bunyan.) For Milton, autobiographical originality could be a possible guarantor of experiential truth, but it might also well be a naïve, futile denial of the conventions that inevitably hem in all discourse—and only a knowing artist and reflexive soul would register that influence to begin with.

Milton develops a thorough commodity critique of *Eikon Basilike*, particularly its savvy reliance on both conventionality and novelty for its broad appeal, "otherwise containing little els but the common grounds of tyranny and popery, drest up, the better to deceive, in a new Protestant guise, and trimly garnish'd over" (III.339). Here Milton charges Charles with impersonating those with the right to such self-witnessing: actual sufferers, Protestant divines. In that context, the innovative "garnish" ironically refers to motifs of Protestant asceticism, abasement, and persecution that Charles trots out at will for his own case. As Milton emphasizes the hollowness of *Eikon Basilike*'s content, he likewise hedges about own his engagement with the text—his *refutio* amounts to a superficial commission that doesn't require deep, searching thought, the only appropriate approach toward "any ord'nary and salable peece of English Divinity, that the Shops value."[52] We saw how the writer of " Letter to a Friend" was determined to stave off the complacency of inherited tropes, even in his private drafts; no wonder "the lip-work of every Prelatical Liturgist, clapt together" offends not just Milton's reformed religious belief, but his stylistic sensibility as well (III.360).

The rejoinder to such predictably bankable work is extemporaneous devotional expression, which Milton famously prizes over the "sett forms" of the common prayer book. But in *Eikonoklastes*, Milton appeals to common humanity more than to doctrine. He references Charles' point in *Eikon Basilike* as he defends the prayer book and more ritual forms of worship: "when we desire the same things, what hinders we may not use the same words? Our appetite and digestion too may be good when we use, as we pray for, *our daily bread*."[53] Responding in *Eikonoklastes*, Milton swaps Charles' image of bread for manna, as an even more divinely inspired gift whose despoiling is all the more regrettable:

> while God every morning raines down new expressions into our hearts, in stead of being fit to use, they will be found like reserv'd *Manna*, rather to *breed wormes and stink. We have the same duties upon us and feele the same wants;* yet not alwayes the same, nor at all times alike, but with variety of Circumstances, which ask varieties of words. Wherof God hath giv'n us plenty; not to use so copiously upon all other occasions, and so niggardly to him alone in our devotions. (III.505)

Defending extemporaneous devotional speech, Milton emphasizes the miracle of refreshing "new expressions" that pour into one's heart rather than those that emit from it—such that inspiration still owes to a common source rather than individualized one. He also makes a case for the narrative power of individuating circumstances, as opposed to generic exemplars and rote typologies—even as he adapts the common resource of Exodus by referring to the wandering Israelites desperate for sustenance. That allusive impulse suggests that this tension between originality and conventionality persists even for Milton, and his criticism lacks internal consistency: Milton swaps Charles' New Testament image of bread with one from the Old Testament manna, gathering up for himself the authority of precedent, but then he argues that the *once* innovative genre of common prayer has ossified, too, into a false pride: "And how unknowingly, how weakly is the using of sett forms attributed here to *constancy*, as if it were constancie in the Cuckoo to be alwaies in the same liturgy" (III.507).

Given this dialectic between originality and "sett forms," Milton's eager critique of the insertion of "Pamela's prayer" compounds the problem of the translatability—and appeal—of unoriginal paradigms. But it also offers an insight into what Milton sees as a truly porous boundary between creative literature and devotional self-representation. *Eikon Basilike*'s wholesale lifting of "A Prayer in time of Captivity" from Sidney's *Arcadia* proves to be more

irresistible bait for Milton than the likelihood of Charles' ghostwriter. Pamela's prayer first appeared in the twenty-second edition of *Eikon Basilike*—copies printed after mid-March 1649—and it was placed at the beginning of the collection of prayers attributed to Charles, even though it was, quite dramatically, supposed to be the prayer "deliver'd to Dr. Juxton immediately before his death."[54] However, Milton's impatient discussion of the prayer appears in the very first section of *Eikonoklastes*, "Upon the Kings calling this last Parlament," thereby scrambling the *refutio*'s orderliness. Though the second edition of *Eikonoklastes* was ten pages shorter than the first, even with additions (largely due to eliminating space between chapters), Milton's renewed discussion of *Arcadia* earns more than a new page's worth of "digression," which deals most extensively with the charges that Milton himself inserted the prayer—a scheme which, had it been true, would have backfired explosively, given the force of Pamela's prayer in garnering the public's sympathy for Charles.[55]

Milton gleefully spites the dead king anyway, "whose bankrupt devotion came not honestly by his very prayers; but having sharkd them from the mouth of a Heathen worshipper" (III.367). Milton contends there are two scandals of impersonation involved, and which account for his mixed annoyance—first, that Sidney's fictional, heathen prayer passes itself off in this Christian context, and second, that the prayer is attributed *to Charles* who could only steal something so lovely. So Milton finds himself acknowledging the undeniable artistry of Sidney's creation: "And if in likelihood he have borrowd much more out of Prayer-books then out of Pastorals, then are these painted Feathers, that set him so gay among the people, to be thought few or none of them his own" (III.365). That Charles, as putative author, is both unaware *and* untroubled by his theft, but also, in the case of a ghostwriter, likely not even responsible for the wholesale plagiarism of a work that Milton concedes is "full of worth and witt," is an untenable set of frauds (III.362). To emphasize his disgust, Milton cites other examples of more competent borrowing, along with more competent reading, including the cases of other corrupt kings:

> *Andronicus Comenus the Byzantine* Emperor, though a most cruel Tyrant, is reported by *Nicetas* to have bin a constant reader of Saint *Pauls* Epistles; and by continual study had so incorporated the phrase & stile of that transcendent Apostle into all his familiar Letters, that the imitation seem'd to vie with the Original. Yet this availd not to deceave the people of that empire….(III.361)

A literary career has taught the polemicist Milton—but not naïve readers, self-serving tyrants, or their proxies—to nurture skepticism of such texts. *Eikonoklastes* urges readers see the liabilities of impersonation as well as the inescapability of conventions as a drag on the original genius he nevertheless aspires to honor in devotional self-expression.

"Authors to themselves": *Paradise Lost* and *Samson Agonistes*

In the late epic poems, Milton's ideas about vocational autobiography remain remarkably consistent, though still complicated, when seen through the prism of his major characters. Reflecting on *Paradise Lost*, C.S. Lewis suggested the most damning aspects of Satan can be recapitulated in epistemological and, finally, *formal* terms: "To admire Satan, then, is to give one's vote not only for a world of misery, but also for a world of lies and propaganda, of wishful thinking, of incessant autobiography."[56] In Satan's apostrophe to the sun, just before trespassing into Eden, he innovates a suspect genre of shape-shifting and casuistry:

> Me miserable! Which way shall I flie
> Infinite wrauth, and infinite despaire?
> Which way I flie is Hell; my self am Hell;
> And in the lowest deep a lower deep
> Still threatening to devour me opens wide,
> To which the Hell I suffer seems a Heav'n. (4.73-79)

Here the questions, the self-searching are a pure rhetorical performance that forecloses ethical engagement. Deeds and their representation, inner and outer signs are fully, literally confused, a mockery of Puritan experimentalism. Satan insists on an immediate external correspondence with his spiritual affliction, and from there, a pretension to nihilistic forethought. Self-scrutiny thus slides into cosmic omnipotence. What's clever is that the narration goes some way to lend credibility this self-representation, imbuing Satan with an ironic transparency:

> Thus while he spake, each passion dimm'd his face
> Thrice chang'd with pael, ire, envie and despair,
> Which marrd his borrow'd visage, and betraid
> Him counterfeit, if any eye beheld.
> For heav'nly mindes from such distempers foule
> Are ever cleer. (4.114-117)

Still, the editorial condemnation of this passage is uneasy. On the one hand the narration points to the tautological "counterfeit" of autobiographical disclaiming: Satan in this scene upholds the paradigm of ontological identity—the deceiver obviously deceives—such that his affective physical reaction tips off a scrutinizing Uriel in spite of his disguise. The two passages are thereby offered as counterpoints: in Satan's attributed speech, we hear of his suffering in the form of wrath, misery, suffering, while in the subsequent diegetic commentary, we hear those terms transposed the ethical register of culpability, his "ire, envie and despair," even as he blanches. On the other hand, the quality of "despair" is given a double confirmation in both passages, such that Satan's speech is not so easily dismissed as self-dramatizing. In this more deeply skeptical reading, the diegetic passage indulges in, and ultimately apes, the whole routine of experimental Puritan scrutiny—of substantiating election and reassurance through signs—as much as Satan's self-serving speech does. If "heav'nly minds" are free "from such distempers foule," the possibility of substantive self-scrutiny for the righteous becomes vanishingly elusive. Satan's despair here exemplifies the problematic citation of Titus1.15 in *Areopagitica*, "To the pure all things are pure" (II.512). As in that prose work, the elegance of such ontological identification creates a critical impossibility, as stable fact thwarts interpretive activity. We also have for comparison the *contrapasso* reference from the proleptic passage of *Reason of Church Government*. In that case, Milton could instantly break the interpretive foreclosure of the doctrine ("from hence forward be that which thine own brutish silence hath made thee") (I.804-805) by choosing to serve, in the form of writing that very same tract. For Satan, c*ontrapasso* is complacency passed off as self-criticism.

As he does with an array of discourses, Milton recuperates the genre of autobiography in paradise[57]—and he does so in harmony with the major key of *Areopagitica*'s optimism, with an emphasis on trial-and-error and collective accounting. Adam and Eve's habits of self-reflexivity,

of multiple passes of self-witnessing and remembering before their fall, are also redolent of Milton's own attempts: the two drafts of the letter to a friend, the two beginnings in *The Second Defence*, the two future Miltons of *Reason of Church Government*. Adam and Eve betray an innocent, aesthetic pleasure of working out oneself in spite of its impossibility.[58] Milton could have easily impugned Eve's recollection of admiring herself in a pool for solipsism; instead, she tells Adam,

> That day I oft remember, when from sleep
> I first awak't, and found my self repos'd
> Under a shade of flours, much wondering where
> And what I was, whence thither brought, and how. (4.449-452)

The philosophical difficulty of remembering is answered with "sympathie and love," even in the passage of Eve regarding herself in a stream:

> but pleas'd I soon returnd,
> Pleas'd it returnd as soon with answering looks
> Of symapthie and love; there I had fixt
> Mine eyes till now, and pin'd with vain desire,
> Had not a voice thus warnd me, What thou seest,
> What there thou seest fair Creature is thy self,
> With thee it came and goes: but follow me,
> And I will bring thee where no shadow staies
> Thy coming, and thy soft imbraces, hee
> Whose image thou art, him thou shall enjoy
> Inseparablie thine, to him shalt beare
> Multitudes like thy self, and thence be call'd
> Mother of human Race. (4.463-474)

The warning, particularly disembodied voice is Milton's invention, not found in scripture; "sympathie and love" convert to "vain desire" without much internal motivation; narrative suspicion extrinsically intrudes into a timeless pastoral tableau. That Adam would have a different version of events in his account to Raphael in Book 8[59] introduces a delightful interpretive lacuna: their two mismatched accounts, taken collectively, endear us to them more, not less, and accord with the *Areopagitica* model of aggregating perspectives into truth.

Adam candidly admits his own difficulties to Raphael, and retraces Eve's reflexive patterns with a difference:

> For Man to tell how human Life began
> Is hard; for who himself beginning knew?
> Desire with thee still longer to converse
> Induc'd me. As new wak't from soundest sleep (8.250-253)

Adam broaches the same impossibilities of timing in narrative accounting—particularly the hazard of prematurity we see in "When I Consider"—though for our first parents, the central mystery is their narrative beginning rather than their vocational fulfillment:

> My self I then perus'd, and Limb by Limb
> Survey'd, and sometimes went, and sometimes ran
> With supple joints, and lively vigour led:
> But who I was, or where, or from what cause,
> Knew not; to speak I tri'd, and forthright spake,
> My Tongue obey'd and readily could name
> What e're I saw. (8.267-273)

In Genesis 2 as here, Adam is most assured about external knowledge, especially given the comportment between language and what it represents. Still, even in this prelapsarian epistemological harmony, and its perfect intellectual and physical fit between self to one's environment, key uncertainties persist. We are made to feel the contradiction between his external epistemological ease and the bafflement of the self. By telling Raphael about Eve's creation from his rib, Adam also revises a settled point from Book 4, which allowed for a more simultaneous, coupled creation:

> needs must the power
> That made us, and for us this ample World
> Be infinitely good, and of his god
> As liberal and free as infinite,
> That rais'd us from the dust and plac't us here
> In all this happiness (8.469, 4.412-417)

Like the redactors of the two creation accounts of Genesis 1 and Genesis 2, Milton has Adam rely on, and require from his readers, sophisticated hermeneutic deliberation and synthesis.

Adam's fundamental etiological question revolves around "who I was," Eve's "what I was" (4.452); the difference conveniently corroborates hierarchies of subjectivity, gender, and genre long attributed to *Paradise Lost*. In those accounts, Eve is, alternately, stuck in elemental Ovidian romance, a proto-domestic novel, or a stunted moral exemplum which Adam "brings to higher perfection" in a "long spiritual autobiography."[60] But why should Adam's question warrant more respect than Eve's? Does her question not admit more first-order uncertainties and willing exploration? Once again, the couple's questions are crucial complements, *what* suggesting that which *who* elides, and vice versa. Adam and Eve thereby compose collaborative autobiography, each startlingly incomplete, and imperfect, in isolation. And yet it's a positive model of begetting and collective identification that Milton can idealize over the faulty "self-witnessing" of martyrdom that Milton decries in *Eikonoklastes*. Indeed, he redeems its civic quality in *Paradise Lost*, too. God's most robust statement of his creatures' radical freedom is inflected with autobiographical vocation:

> So without least impulse or shadow of Fate,
> Or aught by me immutablie foreseen,
> They trespass, Authors to themselves in all
> Both what they judge and what they choose (3.120-123)

That curious prepositional phrasing—"Authors to themselves" rather than "Authors of themselves"—makes all the difference, underscoring the importance of self-reflexive engagement and critique that attends *identifying as* an author, beyond the externally-oriented ethics of producing the content of one's life. That reflexivity is *constitutive* of the vocation God assigns them, and takes on a republican valence of "strenuous liberty"[61] and self-determination in all spheres of experience.

Though they show autobiography to be fraught, the main figures of *Paradise Lost* still schematize the complexity of the autobiographical mode, through the idealized prelapsarian heroes as well as the problems of Satan's willful manipulation. *Samson Agonistes* elaborates those attitudes further, but in a distinctly postlapsarian context. Now the singular figure of Samson labors under all of the exigencies and problems of the genre—and his author. While Coleridge recognized Milton in "his Satan, his Adam, his Raphael, almost his Eve," and others such as Stephen Fallon have come to see an even stronger resemblance in the righteously dissenting angel Abdiel, the deep historical and biographical similarities between Samson and Milton take on more explanatory power in this final poem: the blindness, the unfortunate marriage, the preoccupation with squandered potential, the explicit political defeat and isolation that would see the age of Judges devolve into desperation for an Israelite monarchy, the cultural prestige that would attach to Samson's legacy despite his demise. Steven Goldsmith observes that the stanza reporting Samson's action in the temple are described in lines 1649 through 1659, marking off the years of the Interregnum.[62] This more robust identification between epic hero and the poet himself does little to assuage the poem's skepticism of the autobiographical representation; rather, the figure of Samson is a concentrated repository of Milton's career-long concerns about the confessing self. But this valedictory work allows him to weigh in on devotional autobiography's discursive adjuncts, deserving of their own scrutiny: disclaiming; antinomian justification; lamentation; enthusiasm; and memorialization. These compromised—but seemingly unavoidable—modes inflect Samson's speeches by turn, and in that respect, they constitute another catalogue of liabilities of the ur-genre, which Milton has been assembling all along. But by isolating and exposing their foibles so methodically, *Samson Agonistes* allows Milton to point to the potential of autobiographical disclosure; it can acknowledge the contingency of its production while still producing insights about one's sanctification.

When we first encounter Samson, not only does he explicitly search his conscience and the output of his life, he engages what Peter Carlton identifies as a uniquely punitive, Dissenting model of "disclaiming locution"[63]:

> From restless thoughts, that like a deadly swarm
> Of Hornets arm'd, no sooner found alone,
> But rush upon me thronging, and present
> Times past, what once I was, and what am now.
> O wherefore was my birth from Heaven foretold
> Twice by an Angel, who at last in sight
> Of both my Parents all in flames ascended… (19-25)

Buffeted by his own figured, externalized thoughts, Samson here sounds more like Bunyan than any other character in the Milton corpus. Not merely charged with the animalistic compulsions of "Hornets," these thoughts also actively craft and "present" the scenes of retrospective examination. Samson's hornet-thoughts, in other words, are some hybrid of the interpellating

forces acting on a passive Bunyan and the crafting hand of the "When I consider…" speaker who "present[s] / my true account." Of course, Samson's intruding swarm ironically emphasizes his isolation. Samson seems to regain some authorial command mid-speech: "Times past, what once I was, and what am now." But this line cultivates only a tenuous certitude, as it cobbles direct objects from their equivocal verb "present" across the line break. This line also confirms a telling flourish of compressing the temporalities of autobiographical activity, one that we can trace throughout representations of autobiographical endeavors in Milton's work: besides the line from "When I consider…" , Samson's line recalls the introduction to Satan's apostrophe ("Now conscience wakes despair / That slumberd, wakes the bitter memorie / Of what he was, what is, and what must be / Worse"), Eve ("much wondering where / And what I was, whence thither brought, and how"), Adam ("But who I was, or where, or from what cause, / Knew not"), and Milton in *The Second Defence* ("Who I am, then, and whence I come, I shall now disclose").[64] While each of these examples seems to insinuate some kind of ineluctable conversion, that isn't actually the alchemy the lines perform. Rather, in all four of those cases, as well as for Samson, the Latinate syntax or poetic line break enacts a separation between the *content* and the *activity* of recollection; we are made to feel the torque of retrieval, the uncertainty or impossibility of grasping that content again and converting it to autobiographical narrative.

From this passage's suggestion of the alienation of memory, Samson laments the double affirmation of his Nazarite status to his parents; the fact that he enjoyed the affirmation of *two* annunciation scenes to both his father, Manoa, and his unnamed mother, and *still* feels so lost, is an even more painful disconnect. The notion that his life's narrative is out of joint with those external signs of divine blessing raises more and less radical critiques of experimental religion and self-searching. Samson emphasizes that the angelic prophecy merely announced his birth without steering Samson to fulfillment, and in this arrangement, a more Arminian ethics of volition are accepted as trumping that vision. But under that arrangement, the annunciations are also things indifferent, their redundancy perhaps even suggesting their mutual nullification; in a cruel inversion of Samson's plight, Satan's double-confirmation of inner and outer wretchedness had the rhetorical effect of calling into question the efficacy of *any* external cursing. So the culpability ultimately falls on Samson for failing his own potential:

> Yet stay, let me not rashly call in doubt
> Divine Prediction; what if all foretold
> Had been fulfilld but through mine own default,
> Whom have I to complain of but my self?
> Who this high gift of strength committed to me,
> In what part lodg'd, how easily bereft me,
> Under the Seal of silence could not keep… (43-49)

If by defaulting on divine investment, Samson threw off divine plans, such an understanding nevertheless demurs on the question of whether providence trumps individual will. But Samson's hedging smuggles in a possible excuse: what if Samson's divulgence of his secret to his Philistine bride was *all* divine providence, if "but through mine own default" is meant as *only* through? So it is that Milton's long favored entrée into vocational autobiography—one's meditation on fulfilling potential service to God, and the anxiety attending "talents with me lodged useless"—makes the ambiguous tragedy of Samson a perfect conduit, particularly as he is situated within the broader sweep of Biblical narrative: for a Nazarite with a tragic and

humiliating end, who heralds the failure of Judges as a model of Israelite self-rule without a monarch, Samson's literary story earns lavish care and preservation. Like Milton, Samson accrues prestige in spite of historical disgrace.

But that kind of explanation—fulfillment through failure—is the kind of disturbing, antinomian, reverse snobbery that can destabilize all principles, and Samson goes on to pursue a logic that Milton loathes:

> Suffices that to me strength is my bane,
> And proves the sourse of all my miseries;
> So many, and so huge, that each apart
> Would ask a life to wail, but chiefe of all,
> O loss of sight, of thee I most complain! (63-67)

If one can forever court paradoxes, construe contradictions in oneself, the Dissenting privileging of despair is also a nonstop solipsism machine, wherein "each apart / Would ask a life to wail." This is the greater liability of the heuristic of life-accounting: regrets—and worse, explanations—can narratively overwhelm the life that is their putative source. And so I think we are here to check our sympathies with Samson, and distance his otherwise strong identification with Milton—especially because Samson laments his "loss of sight" instead of celebrating some inner vision. When the Chorus diagnoses him—"Thou art become (O worst imprisonment!) / The Dungeon of thy self" (155-156)—we should recall Satan's case in *Paradise Lost* discussed earlier, wherein the illusion of "inscape"[65] he imposes is an emphatically wrong-headed model.

At first Manoa, who specifically intervenes to save his son from debilitating despair, does so by leading him right into self-justificatory reflection:

> Deject not then so overmuch thy self,
> Who hast of sorrow thy full load besides;
> Yet truth to say, I oft have heard men wonder
> Why thou shouldst wed Philistian women… (213-216)

Samson can easily redirect from such a mild critique—Manoa only broaches an anonymous rumor—and he turns on his parents for failing to grasp his privileged knowledge:

> they knew not
> That what I motion'd was of God; I knew
> From intimate impulse, and therefore urg'd
> The Marriage on… (220-224)

Samson's language anticipates the more crucial "rouzing motions" that prompt the work's tragic ending. But in this instance divine favor is either wholly misleading or a ploy of self-excuse—and the potency and wisdom of his "intimate impulse" are called into still further question when Samson accounts for his second Philistinian marriage to Dalila by appealing to mere precedent, a match which only seemed "lawful from my former act" (231). In this episode, what Joanna Picciotto discerns as a case of Samson's faulty empiricism redounds on his inspired knowledge, too.[66] The chorus takes care to emphasize Samson's meddling intellectualization:

> Yet more there be who doubt his ways not just,
> As to his own edicts, found contradicting,
> Then give the rains to wandring thought,
> Regardless of his glories diminution;
> Till by thir own perplexities involv'd
> They ravel more, still less resolv'd,
> But never find self-satisfying solution. (299-306)

In this context, Manoa's determination to rescue Samson indicates an admirable rejection of the impulse to "ravel more."[67]

If Manoa rather meekly steers the conversation away from the subject of his son's poor marriage by indulging Samson—"but thou didst plead /Divine impulsion" (421-2)—he does so to help Samson recognize the ethical urgency of his current situation:

> Be penitent and for thy fault contrite,
> But act not in thy own affliction, Son,
> Repent the sin, but if the punishment
> Thou canst avoid, self-preservation bids… (502-505)

Besides wanting to partition Samson's unethical "act" and his self-reflective "fault," Manoa criticizes precisely the admixture of that retrospective reflection with ongoing interference of the imagination, which can be easily mistaken for accurate, even vivid, accounting:

> Believe not these suggestions which proceed
> From anguish of the mind and humours black,
> That mingle with thy fancy. I however
> Must not omit a Fathers timely care… (599-602)

But in pleading for expediency, Manoa's appeal to "humours" does dilute his credibility on the spiritual delicacy of the situation; though Milton invokes humours in his representation of cathartic tragedy in the introduction to *Samson Agonistes*, the context is strictly that of "Nature" and "Physic" (799). By referencing his own palliative duty in this speech, Manoa also rather dubiously transfers the ethical imperative to himself, as being of more immediate consequence. Still, Manoa is ultimately a sympathetic portrait of paternal love and perspective. While the constraint of timeliness pertains to both father and son, Manoa provides an example of a nonparalyzing awareness of urgency. Whereas Samson, the speaker of "When I Consider," the Milton of *Reason of Church Government*, and the refuting Milton of *The Second Defence* reconfigure temporality as fungible narrative matter, Manoa thinks of time in simple, direct ethical terms. If self-reflection can spur one to timely ethical service, all the better, though there is always a lag, time lost. Manoa's own tardiness, after all, is made to feel heartbreaking at the end; if only he'd secured the ransom "to work his liberty" sooner (1454). If Manoa supplies a temptation of means[68] to Samson along the lines of Satan's offer to the Son in *Paradise Regain'd*, it is certainly made to feel preferable to the alternative of an endless circuit of suggestibility running between anguish and its imaginative interpretation. Samuel Johnson's observation that *Samson Agonistes* "want[s] a middle" has some bearing here: Samson can continually produce content without narrative.[69]

Samson's over-active imaginative and self-reflective proclivities, I want to argue finally, suggest an especially skeptical judgment of the violence in the Philistine theater. Readers have long debated the work's attitude toward Samson's massacre-suicide, and arguments on all sides often entail an account of the "rouzing motions" that presumably impel Samson to his scheme. We have already discussed one quibble with the reliability and efficacy of divine intrusion in Samson's inconsistent explanation for marrying Philistinian women, along with his squandered Nazarite blessing. In the final sequence of the drama, a specific motif pertaining to Harapha suggests that Samson mistakes his own narrative figuration for divine inspiration, as well as the capaciousness of metaphor for specific, literal application; indeed, in these respects Samson recalls the aesthetic mistakes of martyrdom in *Eikon Basilike*. The chain of imagery progresses like this: the Chorus first characterizes the giant Harapha in architectural terms; Samson then conscripts very similar terms to describe Harapha; and finally we have the catastrophic demolishment of the theater. Taken as a commentary on Samson's suggestibility, quite possibly in the absence of divine intervention, this sequence calls into question the reliability of all of Samson's self-declamations, the hierarchy between his thoughts and deeds, and the unstable correspondence between prior actions and their secondary representation.

The Chorus introduces Harapha, "his look / Haughty as is his pile high-buildt and proud" (1068-69). At one level, the Chorus here presents a straightforward comparison between the arrogance of his appearance and his house. But there is a strange redundancy within the second term, as the structure itself is already personified as "proud." In that slightly awkward, wobbling tautology, there is a partial collapse of vehicle and tenor, along with a subtle deflation of the analogy's explanatory power. The figure's inadequacy is perfectly apt, of course: Harapha is a giant, of surreal size and therefore beyond explanation. But the construction of the metaphor over-involves the two terms, intermixing them prematurely. The metaphor grows even more promiscuous, as the motif then jumps the bounds of the line, from the Chorus' coinage to Samson's defiant challenge:

> Go baffl'd coward, lest I run upon thee,
> Though in these chains, bulk without spirit vast,
> And with one buffet lay thy structure low,
> Or swing thee in the Air, then dash thee down
> To the hazard of thy brains and shatter'd sides (1237-1241)

Samson's vivid threat compounds the architectural images: "bulk," "lay thy structure low," "shatter'd sides," all more naturally describe the demolition of a building than a person, Harapha's "pile" more so than his "look."

So it is that when Samson intimates his idea of destroying the Philistine theatre, the abrupt intervention of the rousing motions seems less plausible as an explanation than does the "inspiration" of his own metaphoric language, which was in turn prompted by the Chorus' first analogy for Harapha. Here is Samson's famously convoluted resolution:

> Be of good courage, I begin to feel
> Some rouzing motions in me which dispose
> To something extraordinary my thoughts.
> I with this Messenger will go along,
> Nothing to do, be sure, that may dishonor

> Our Law, or stain my vow of *Nazarite*.
> If there be aught of presage in the mind,
> This day will be remarkable in my life
> By some great act, or of my days the last (1381-1388)

We already have grounds for questioning the motives and contamination of these disclaiming attributions, given the first scene of Samson's despair in the prison, when his own thoughts are figured as external agents of action, "like a deadly swarm /Of Hornets arm'd" (19-20). When Samson defends his marriage, the agency of "rouzing" takes on a completely different orientation: "That what I motion'd was of God" is a convoluted formulation, but it nevertheless assigns Samson agency *and* allows for some distinct divine confirmation. Many readers have convoluted logical sequence in this speech: what does it mean to report to "begin to feel" a novel sensation of "rouzing motions" that already "dispose" one's thoughts to an idea?[70] How can the motions operate both as a stimulus to and validation of "some great act"? Samson equates that whole circuit of activity with a portent in the mind that is itself a "presage." Milton's treatment of convoluted "inspiration" in this scene is an illuminating analog of autobiographical discourse; Samson here simultaneously engages in two modes of autobiography about which Milton has contradictory feelings: the productively speculative autobiography (as in *Reason of Church Government*) and the audaciously premature accounting (as in "When I consider…"). The ambivalence about the legitimacy of Samson's valedictory speech is compressed into the ethical ambivalence of the word "remarkable," along with the truly "Miltonic or" in the final line that sustains three distinct interpretive possibilities: there will *either* be a great act *or* death; there will be both; *if* the great act doesn't prevail, *then* death is the ready, contingent alternative.[71]

Steven Goldsmith reminds us how Milton sets this trap of interpretive impossibility, for all of the enthusiast's pretensions of—or yearning for—affective, bodily verification: "Whether the enthusiast's desire for total transparency, for a body fully illuminated, is realized by the 'inward' illumination attributed to Samson at the play's climax remains unanswerable, not least because that fantasy lies beyond the achievement of any reader who must grapple with the opacities of a textual medium that does not (cannot) fully reveal the meaning of the actions it represents."[72] As a "textual medium," surely *Samson Agonistes* is an extreme case-study, given its status of a drama that lacks directions or scenic divisions for the stage, "to which this work never was intended."[73] Milton makes us feel the lack of interpretive assistance here as profoundly as possible—and the crux of that difficulty resides in the putatively transparent speech of self-explanation.

We might consider Manoa's tribute to his son as a revealing foil to Samson's muddied autobiographical project: "Samson hath quit himself / Like Samson, and heroicly hath finish'd / A life Heroic" (1709-11). Poignant as his speech may be, Manoa offers only the pseudo-profundity of tautology—a pair of them, at that. The deed/word collapse or confusion endemic to first-person narratives and commemorations, so troubling to Milton in *Eikonoklastes*, here grows still more opaque in third-person retrospective, an iconography that reifies itself before our eyes. Though the liabilities of the confessing self are legion, out of that anxiety emerges a flawed, embellished, and conscientious narrative that's both art and criticism. Accounting for oneself cannot produce a mere tautology; the enterprise alters as it goes, in turn altering that self along the way.

Notes to Chapter Two

[1] Catherine Gimelli Martin has strongly resisted Milton's Puritan affiliation on doctrinal and then literary grounds: "Milton never considered a godly ministry or a Puritan bride, never recorded a conversion experience, and never conformed to any other aspect of the godly brethren's *modus vivendi*" (8). She concludes "there is little if any common ground between Miltonic and Puritan aesthetics" (173). *Milton among the Puritans: The Case for Historical Revisionism* (Farnham, England; Burlington, Vermont: Ashgate, 2010).

[2] Stephen Fallon, *Milton's Peculiar Grace: Self Representation and Authority* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 2007).

[3] *Specimens of the Table Talk of the Late Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, ed. Henry Nelson Coleridge (London, 1835) II:240-241.

[4] While Brooke Conti emphasizes the anxiety and ad hoc nature of Milton's autobiographical practice, she nevertheless claims that in his work before *Pro Se Defensio*, "Milton has always appeared to value autobiography because he believes that it gives a reader access to the 'real' inner self of a writer" (51). "'that really Too Anxious Protestation': Crisis and Autobiography in Milton's Prose," *Milton Studies* 45 (2006),149-186.

[5] See Gustaf Wingren, *Luther on Vocation*, trans. Carl C. Rasmussen (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1957).

[6] Though this dissertation wants to avoid ideological profiling which blunts either the curiosities of writers' beliefs or their works, I nevertheless want to demonstrate creative latitude within ideological paradigms.

[7] Richard Strier, defining "New Formalism," helps explain my approach here to the interchange between broader ideological pressures and the minute, often surprising textual qualities of religious autobiography and its critiques. After close reading a stanza from Herbert's "Longing", Strier asks "why would one *want* to do 'cultural history' in this way, from a (not so) simple lyric? Why begin at the micro-level? If there is a 'continuity between depth and surface,' why not skip the surface? Why not go to the grand issues directly? The answer to these questions has to do with the belief that one has to know the texture as well as the content of ideas to do intellectual or cultural history with true sensitivity, and with a corollary belief that this texture is most fully experienced at the level of verbal and stylistic detail, where tensions are manifested in texts in very subtle and unpredictable ways. The level of style and syntax is the true level of 'lived' experience" (212). "How Formalism Became a Dirty Word, and Why We Can't Do Without It," in *Renaissance Literature and Its Formal Engagements*, ed. Mark Daniel Rasmussen (New York: Palgrave, 2002).

[8] For an example of this critical pathologizing, see Brooke Conti: "The very inconsistency of Milton's autobiography betrays the anxiety behind it, which I believe has its roots not simply in his feelings of unpreparedness or reluctance to take the public stage, but rather in a deeper uncertainty about God's plans for Milton's life—and whether or not Milton's own ambitions coincide with the divine design" (155). "'that really Too Anxious Protestation': Crisis and Autobiography in Milton's Prose," *Milton Studies* 45 (2006),149-86.

[9] See Guillory's tracing of bourgeois vocational anxiety in Calvinism through Milton to Weber and Freud: "Clearly the homeostatic psychic economy of Calvinism permitted the achievements of the working life, in a fatal slippage from 'works' to 'work,' to be entered as credits in the ledger of the soul" (206). "'The father's house': *Samson Agonistes* in its historical moment," *Re-membering Milton: Essays on the Texts and Traditions*, ed. Mary Nyquist and Margaret W. Ferguson (New York: Methuen, 1988).

[10] All citations of the "Letter to an Unknown Friend" refer to the facsimile of the Trinity Manuscript, the "first draft" on page six and the "second draft" on page seven.

[11] James Grantham Turner points out a similar dynamic in the Latin epistle to Young, which evokes Socrates and Alcibiades.

[12] Joanna Picciotto has critiqued scholars' anachronistic suspicion of classical reference in Milton's work.

[13] Matthew 25:14-30 and Matthew 20:1-16.

[14] Dayton Haskin brilliantly describes the affective byproduct of an experimental Biblical reading practice that generates more questions than it answers: "But what if a reader should feel that a biblical 'ensample' identifies his or her 'case' with a storie' that ends in 'utter darkness'?" Milton's scriptural contortion dramatizes one response to that situation" (ix). *Milton's Burden of Interpretation* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1994).

[15] Haskin explains the Puritan psycho-theological condition for such a new narrative quandary: English divines "had driven a wedge between faith, which they still regarded as a free gift of God, and assurance, which was thought to be a necessary component of 'saving' faith to be achieved by legitimate human effort. Some proposed that assurance was a rare blessing and not necessary for salvation. What they required (and Milton concurred with them when he treated the subject in Book I, Chapter XXV of De Doctrina Christiana) was that the believer *seek* assurance, which was increasingly thought to be the reward of godly conduct" (10). Milton's letter deftly conflates spiritual and figural seeking.

[16] From the Trinity Manuscript: "it would ~~*still*~~ sooner follow the more excellent & supreme good knowne & presented and so be quickly ~~*turnd*~~ diverted from the emptie & fantastick chase of shadows and notions to the solid good flowing from due & tymely obedience to that command ~~*from*~~ in the gospel set out by the terrible seasing of him that hid the talent."

[17] Haskin contrasts the effect Milton achieves here with the boasts of Shakespeare's "when I consider" sonnet: "As [Milton] offers a model for dealing with the dreadful suspicion that it is too late, he accepts an intermediate position in a world of process. He is precariously, exhilaratingly, balanced between a deadening resignation to his cruel fate and a triumphant defiance of the ill effects which Time has wrought 'E're half [his] days' have been lived out" (117).

[18] Of course, this is how we encounter the sonnet in the 1645 *Poems.*

[19] See the Book 7 invocation in *Paradise Lost* for a similar scene of nocturnal creativity and protection, when Milton gives thanks to Urania: "In darkness and with dangers compast round, / And solitude; yet not alone, while thou Visit'st my slumbers Nightly, or when Morn Purples the East" (28-30).

[20] Barbara Lewalski dates Milton's "total blindness" to February or March, 1652. *The Life of John Milton: A Critical Biography* (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2008) 278.

[21] Stanley E. Fish, "Interpreting the 'Variorum,'" *Critical Inquiry* 2.3 (Spring 1976), 465-485.

[22] For the clearest instance of this mode, we have Milton's description of his morning routine in *An Apology against a Pamphlet*, from April 1642. For all the disclosure, it is closest to an ethical proof, and also the most un-Miltonic in style: "Those morning haunts are where they should be, at home, not sleeping, or concocting the surfets of an irregular feast, but up, and stirring, in winter often ere the sound of any bell awake men to labour, or to devotion; in Summer as oft with the Bird that first rouses, or not much tardier, to reade good Authors, or cause them to be read, till the attention bee weary, or memory have his full fraught. Then with usefull and generous labours preserving the bodies health, and hardinesse; to render lightsome, cleare, and not lumpish obedience to the minde, to the cause of religion, and our Countries liberty, when it shall require firm hearts in sound bodies to stand and cover their stations." *Complete Prose Works of John Milton*, ed. Don M. Wolfe (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1953-82), hereafter abbreviated *CPW,* I.885-86.

[23] All remaining Milton prose quotations from *CPW*.

[24] Milton himself uses the metaphor later on to compliment a patient public: "Neither do I think it shame to covenant with any knowing reader, that I for some few yeers yet I may go on trust with him toward the payment of what I am not indebted, as being a work not to be rays'd from the heat of youth…" (*CPW* I.924). As Picciotto argues, "Through this covenant, Milton made clear that the reading public was the only godly community he cared about" (412). *Labors of Innocence in Early Modern England* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2010).

[25] Other scholars have cast the "eye-brightning electuary" as a provocative reference to Milton's own blindness, even though the composition of *The Reason of Church Government*, January of 1642, would confute the assertion in Milton's 1654 letter to Leonard Pilaras that his eye problems began "ten years since."

[26] See footnote 14 of *CPW* I.802, wherein Ralph A. Huig surmises that Milton believes in plenary inspiration, which holds that the statements of not only the Scriptural writers, but the subjects they treat, are infallibly true.

[27] *King James Bible*

[28] Milton first uses the term "self-esteem" in 1642's *Apology Against a Pamphlet*.

[29] Ralph A. Haug, in his preface to *The Reason of Church-Government* in *CPW*, confirms the experience of most readers in saying "it is difficult to say where the Bible leaves off and Milton begins." In addition to direct quotation and biblical diction Haug identifies how "memory citations" can occur "slightly changed, telescoped, or interpolated" (I.740).

[30] Without many complications, the figure I'm calling the "castigating future Milton" could rhetorically take the form of an introjected friend, presiding over Milton's future, as Thomas Young does in the Letter.

[31] Peter C. Herman, "'Paradise Lost', the Miltonic 'Or,' and the Poetics of Incertitude," *SEL, 1500-1900* 43.1 (Winter 2003), 181-211.

[32] See James Grantham Turner on the "superficial prose/verse dichotomy" in "The Poetics of Engagement" in *Politics, Poetics, and Hermeneutics in Milton's Prose*, ed. David Loewenstein and James Grantham Turner (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990) 257.

[33] Brooke Conti, *Confessions of Faith in Early Modern England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2014) 85.

[34] "A needless Alexandrine ends the song / That, like a wounded snake drags its slow length along." (356-357)

[35] Milton's unflowery flourish, it might be said, deftly gives lie to the persistent "myth of the plain style." See Joanna Picciotto, *Labors of Innocence in Early Modern England* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2010) 17.

[36] Turner, "The Poetics of Engagement," 272.

[37] Daniel Shore, "Why Milton Is Not an Iconoclast," *PMLA* 127.1 (January 2012), 22-37.

[38] Shore, 23

[39] Shore, 26

[40] Lewalski, "Milton and Idolatry," *SEL, 1500-1900* 43.1 (Winter 2003), 213–32, 214.

[41] *OED* 2.

[42]Scott Cohen has likened Milton's double-critique to the fallacy of intrinsic value in currency, arguing that Milton "appropriat[es] the rhetoric of coinage and more specifically the language and logic of the counterfeit to portray the figure of Charles as a counterfeit and a counterfeiter, effectively rewriting how authority and value will be constituted" (149). Tugging at that fallacy has a way of questioning "true" coins as well as fake ones. "Counterfeiting and the Economics of Kingship in Milton's *Eikonoklastes,*" *SEL 1500 - 1900* 50.1 (Winter 2010), 147-168.

[43] See Joanna Picciotto discussion in *Labors of Innocence* of Milton's belief in experiential pedagogy that informs *Of Education:* "To keep students indoors, studying words rather than the things they represent, is a 'sullennesse against nature' that only trains them to produce 'babblements'; this coinage suggests the entrapment of England's youth in fallen language, as they are condemned forever to rehearse its paradigmatic scene" (167).

[44] Shore, 26-27.

[45] *Unspeakable Sentences: Narration and Representation in the Language of Fiction* (New York: Routledge, 1982) 217.

[46] See D.A. Miller on the canny inhabitation, then alienation, made possible by conjoining free indirect style and direct repetition. Here is Miller discussing the exact repetition of the sentence "Emma could not forgive her" across a chapter break: "what had been the indirect and impersonal performance of Emma's consciousness has become the mere matter-of-fact *notation* of that thought." On its first occurrence, 'Emma could not forgive her' mimics Emma's conscious if unreflective mood. By the time of the second, without a word being altered, the sentence has been distilled into what Ann Banfield calls a 'fact of the fiction....The significance of free indirect style for Austen Style is not that it attenuates the stark opposition between character and narration, much less abandons it, but that if performs this opposition *at ostentatiously close quarters*….free indirect style gives a virtuoso performance, against all odds, of the narration's persistence in detachment from character, no matter how intimate one becomes with the other." *Jane Austen, or the Secret of Style* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2003) 64-65.

[47] *Eikon Basilike*, ed. Jim Daems and Holly Faith Nelson (New York: Broadview, 2006).

[48] Fallon discusses this elite loneliness: "Milton, I will argue, at times implicitly treats himself as a member of what must be for him a null set, the set of the unfallen. Ultimately, the strain of standing on this lonely and godlike pinnacle leaves its mark on Milton's self-representations in displaced, implicit, and apparently unintentional self-representations, which register the frailty and common humanity studiously avoided in the explicit self-representations. In the uneasy balance between the two sets of self-representations one can look for the creative energy and the perspective informing Milton's greatest works" (xii).

[49] For comparison, see George Fox's *Journal*. Narrating the Lichfield episode in which he witnesses the flowing blood of centuries-dead martyrs, Fox recognizes he has a credibility "problem" and stylizes it: he arranges tiers of understanding and identification, accentuating how different his subjective experience is from that of his colleagues standing nearby; that of the oblivious townspeople; and certainly that of readers relying on his rendering after the fact (and after the initial edition of *The Journal*—the nine pages comprising the Lichfield episode were interleaved into subsequent editions).

[50] Exemplarity construed in its normative, "representative" sense rather than prescriptive or idealizing sense.

[51] *Confessions*, trans. Henry Chadwich (Oxford: Oxford World's Classics, 1998) 152-153.

[52] *CPW* III.360. Milton's critique of the insidious dialectic between novelty and convention in Charles' bestseller would be quite at home in Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer's essay on "the culture industry's" capitalistic collusion: "Not only do hit songs, stars, and soap operas conform to types recurring cyclically as rigid invariants, but the specific content of productions, the seemingly variable element, is itself derived from those types. The details become interchangeable. The brief interval sequence which has proved catchy in a hit song, the hero's temporary disgrace which he accepts as a 'good sport,' the wholesome slaps the heroine receives from the strong hand of the male star, his plain-speaking abruptness toward the pampered heiress, are, like all the details, ready-made clichés, to be used here and there as desired and always completely defined by the purpose they serve within the schema" (98). And, just as Milton does, Adorno and Horkheimer diagnose the critical complacency this conventional novelty engenders: "The withering of imagination and spontaneity in the consumer culture of today need not be traced back to psychological mechanisms. The products themselves, especially the most characteristic, the sound film, cripple those faculties through their objective makeup. They are so constructed that their adequate comprehension requires a quick, observant, knowledgeable cast of mind but positively debars the spectator from thinking, if he is not to miss the fleeting facts…The required qualities of attention have become so familiar from other films and other culture products already know to him or her that they appear automatically." *Dialectic of Enlightenment: Philosophical Fragments*, ed. Gunzelin Schmid Noerr, trans. Edmund Jephcott (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2002) 100.

[53] *Eikon Basilike*, 132

[54] N.H. Keeble, headnote to *Eikonoklastes* in *The Complete Works of John Milton, v. VI: Vernacular Regicide and Republican* Writings ed. N.H. Keeble and Nicholas McDowell (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013) 267.

[55] Keeble, 292.

[56] C.S. Lewis. *A Preface to* Paradise Lost (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1961) 102.

[57] On the delicacy of such recoveries in the context of a fallen readership, see Stanley Fish, *Surprised by Sin: The Reader in* Paradise Lost (Boston, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1998).

[58] Picciotto notes that this creative introspection is a twist on Philippians 2:12: "Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling."

[59] She heard me thus, and though divinely brought,
Yet Innocence and Virgin Modestie,
Her virtue and the conscience of her worth,
That would be woo'd, and not unsought be won,
Not obvious, not obstrusive, but retir'd,
The more desirable, or to say all,
Nature her self, though pure of sinful thought,
Wrought in her so that seeing me, she turn'd;
I follow'd her, she what was Honour knew,
And with obsequious Majestie approv'd
My pleaded reason. To the Nuptial Bowre
I led her blushing like the Morn (8.500-511)

[60] Lewalski, Barbara. "Milton and Idolatry," *SEL, 1500-1900* 43.1 (Winter 2003), 211.

[61] *Samson Agonistes*, line 271

[62] *Blake's Agitations: Criticism and the Emotions* (Baltimore, Maryland: Johns Hopkins University Press) 115-16.

[63] Peter J. Carlton, "Bunyan: Language, Convention, Authority," *ELH* 51.1 (Spring 1984).

[64] *PL* 4.24-27, *PL* 4.451-2, *PL* 8.280-1, and *CPW* IV.612

[65] I'm referencing Harry Berger's coinage for describing how, in Spenser's *Faerie Queen,* characters' interior psychology determining their surroundings: "Spenser's world and its places…emerge out of the problems and actions of his characters. Spenserian landscape for the most part evolves from the projection of inscape" (5). "The Spenserian Dynamics," *SEL, 1500-1900* 8.1 (Winter 1968), 1-18.

[66] See Joanna Picciotto, *Labors of Innocence in Early Modern England*, 751, n.319.

[67] Surely Milton disapproves along with the Chorus; this passage recalls the pitiful devils playing at philosophy in *Paradise Lost*:

> Others apart sat on a Hill retir'd,
> In thoughts more elevate, and reason'd high
> Of Providence, Foreknowledge, Will and Fate,
> Fixt Fate, free will, foreknowledge absolute,
> And found no end, in wandring mazes lost. (2.557-561)

[68] Stanley Fish, *How Milton Works* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2001).

[69] *Rambler*, No. 139. *Political Writings*, ed. W.J. Bate and Albrecht B. Strauss (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1969) 376.

[70] Goldsmith explains how Samson's passivity is reworked into a rather unaccountable authority: "The vagueness of Samson's language ('some rousing motions,' 'something extraordinary,' 'some great act') signifies the antinomian potential of the moment and thus the potential authenticity of Samson's revolutionary enthusiasm. Whether he misinterprets his inner persuasion or not, Samson speaks as if he were suddenly an agent emptied of clear intention, acting without specific aim because he responds to an influence unconfined by his own volition, beyond his capacity to conceive or articulate. His passivity—really a receptivity—becomes an aperture, opening history to the influence of an apocalyptic agency that the exercise of his own natural will would preclude" (116).

[71] See Peter C. Herman, "'Paradise Lost', the Miltonic 'Or,' and the Poetics of Incertitude," *SEL, 1500-1900* 43.1 (Winter 2003),181-211.

[72] Goldsmith, 115.

[73] From Milton's headnote to *Samson Agonistes*, in *The Riverside Milton*, ed. Roy Flannagan (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1998) 800.

CHAPTER 3

Grace Abounding as Pastoral Instrument

John Bunyan's *Grace Abounding* is taken to be the paradigmatic example of the spiritual autobiography genre, but it doesn't fit the standard model that literary historians, and sometimes Bunyan himself, proclaim it to be: the discrete, emplotted phases of sanctification; the rigorous commitment, as he claims in the Preface, to portraying signs of experience "as it was" (5)[1]; the groveling insecurity and Calvinist paranoia. By exploring how the doctrinal assumption of a sinner's anguish enmeshes with the text's narrative subtleties—and the involving demands of his readers that result from them—we can reevaluate how *Grace Abounding* works as a pastoral instrument at the level of style.[2] After all, unlike the writers discussed in previous chapters, Bunyan's autobiography reaches outward to his reader with the explicit goal of ministering to his flock, bolstering their community and belief. Bunyan's text perturbs *and* consoles, one through the other, by modulating his reader's sense of belonging in the autobiography. Even still, Bunyan has a complex understanding of his instrumentality in that project—in part theorized by a notion of himself as preacher who is both a meager "tinkling cymbal" and a skilled musician—which redeems his unique aesthetic prestige. Because *Grace Abounding* reflects the exquisite pressures of doctrine and the cognitive delicacy of belief within community, its aesthetic registrations require the utmost precision.

Traditional summaries of *Grace* Abounding that emphasize an arc of "transformation from a self-doubting sinner into an eloquent and fearless Baptist preacher" have a way of misrepresenting the text, even at the level of narrative plot.[3] Recent scholars who readily acknowledge the literary granularity of *Grace Abounding* still scrutinize the text's inward journey into Bunyan's mentality, scanning for psychological and religious proofs, and even more often, signs of unintentional bungles. Michael Davies certainly appreciates the artistry of the text unto itself, warning that we cannot "assume that the way in which *Grace Abounding* has been written grants us access in any straightforward sense to Bunyan's allegedly disturbed mind."[4] But in attempting to show how "Bunyan's mode of conversion has a powerful impact upon the style," Davies limits himself to an analysis of motifs to show the rooted religious allegory.[5] Elsewhere Davies reads the "Sell Christ" episode as indicative of *"a total interpretive collapse.*"[6] Brooke Conti similarly construes the text as suffering from inexplicable lapses in formal coherence, pathologizing and looking for ruptures of insight beyond Bunyan's ken: "the self-assured tone of *Grace Abounding*'s preface does not survive even a third of the way into the work proper,"[7] as if such discrepancies are a key to truth-finding. She also conflates confidence in *tone* with confidence in *belief*. In these kinds of accounts, there is often a confusion of narrative content and diegetic commentary that practically imputes a method of automatic writing that would supernaturally keep in time with Bunyan's life events as they happen. In terms of a ministerial tool, Conti finds that "Bunyan's own autobiographical desires and impulses appear to align only imperfectly with the political goals of *Grace Abounding.*"[8] There's little room for a supple account of Bunyan's technique in this closed circuit of authorial conscience and transcribed text, wherein the book's status as communal mediation is construed as a failure.

Michael Mascuch and Kathleen Lynch take a less claustrophobic approach. Mascuch argues that works like Bunyan's "do not constitute a retreat into the interior recesses of the mind, but instead an advance from those recesses into the realm of publicity, and (modest) self

promotion."[9] Lynch situates Bunyan's autobiography within its complex social milieu, its congregational networks under Clarendon Code scrutiny. As for the text itself, "caught as it is between assurance and despair, *Grace Abounding* is a memorial to the shared investments of an individual and a community of like-minded believers in the lasting revelation of a divinely sanctioned identity."[10] The psychological extremes are still figured here as "caught" in unwitting inconsistency, such that if *Grace Abounding* does succeed as a sound investment of pastoral work, it is in spite of that cancelling contradiction.

But the cohesion that Lynch discerns in congregational communities, under duress, with their virtualized networks and textual co-mingling, still points to a conscious effort to cultivate a shared identity of sensibility as a prerequisite to religious belonging. Indeed, as Esther Yu has shown, that cultivation had underwritten both sectarian complaint and authority in the first half of the seventeenth century. Yu has recently offered an account of rise and fall of the Puritan "tender conscience" in revolutionary England, wherein paradoxically the "fragility of the tender conscience was both a regulative public ideal and the very condition of political voice."[11] But the prestige of this "morally valuable sensitivity" had been mostly exhausted, politically and religiously, by the time of Charles' execution; in Yu's reading of Eve's tears in *Paradise Lost*, she shows how Milton laments a Restoration public grown weary of cultivating sensitivities, as "through decades of conflict, conscience had proven, it seems, overly successful in its faultfinding missions."[12]

I would like to argue that, even after 1660, *Grace Abounding* enjoins readers to actively participate in the cultivation of conscience in ever-more finely modulated ways that still redound to Bunyan's aesthetic authority. Bunyan asks readers to do more than to identify with emplotted signs of sin and redemption, and their corresponding psychologies. He also works with more subterfuge than William Perkins or other writers of despair and martyrdom, in part because he flexes authorial pride as he goes—and sometimes precisely when he's describing a memory of visceral uncertainty. In doing so, Bunyan's formal innovations work to show both the instability and vital contingency of congregational cohesion through narrative identification. Rather than a meager substitute for forbidden sermons, one that "simply" posits a virtual communion of the Godly, his rhetoric allows him to ply his readers' sensitivities and skepticism as they ingest his text. He plays with the alienation effects of exemplarity, often associated with the experimentation of early novels. Bunyan flaunts the gap between experience and recollection, and further, seems often to compound temporal slices of self to remind his readers of the malleability of even this transcription. I also focus on the retroactive addenda of later editions as evidence of a deliberate strategy of authorial aggrandizement and complex readerly initiation; while Bunyan did not expect his readers to track these unmarked (and often miniscule) adjustments across editions, they provide a unique insight into his aesthetic concerns. By modeling his own exquisitely sensitive and *creative* readings of other Christian lives, Bunyan puts a challenge to readers of his own autobiography.

Identification and the Hazards of Sympathetic Process

For all the critical emphasis on the pilgrim's progress of spiritual conversion and sanctification in *Grace Abounding*, Bunyan's muse is really the anti-narrative premise of Calvinist belief. Predestination's impersonal, categorical ontology sits uncomfortably with spiritual autobiography construed as a trajectory of experimental religion emplotted in time. It makes sense, then, that his autobiography reflects a lifetime of concern about de facto identification; if

he represents early insecurity about belonging to a community of believers with childlike simplicity, that choice also properly conveys the existential and doctrinal starkness of Calvinism. Throughout *Grace Abounding*, and especially in the early sections, Bunyan initially comes to spiritual questions by way of seeing himself included or excluded from a community—at first understood quite literally and then understood as a community comprised of discourse itself. That identificatory challenge, as we'll see, comes to inform the aesthetic investments throughout the autobiography.

Belonging is the topic of Bunyan's earliest internalized theological curiosity as a young man—one juxtaposed against his having outwardly participated in the "Religion of the times" and attending "Church twice a day" (9). He remembers wrestling with the question "Whether we were of the *Israelites* or no: for finding in the Scriptures that they were once the peculiar People of God; thought I, if I were one of this race, my Soul must needs be happy … at last, I asked my father of it, who told me, *No, we were not*: wherefore then I fell in my spirit, as to the hopes of that, and so remained" (9-10). Unable to find historical continuity as evidence of belonging, young Bunyan grasps for even more naïve counterfactuals, transposing himself into the fabric of apostolic life: "I could seldom read of any that Christ did call, but I presently wished, Would I had been in their cloaths, would I had been born *Peter,* would I had been born *John*, or would I had been by, and head heard him when he called them, how would I have cryed, O Lord, call me also! but oh I feared he would not call me" (23-24). This poignant literalism simultaneously relates a miscomprehension and also a perfect understanding of the impasse: his brief speculative fiction shows the ineffectuality of *any* other exemplars to have bearing on his own plight, and he demonstrates the status of the elect as an impenetrable tautology.

Bunyan gives many other instances of reprobation figured as lonesome exclusion, but the most pointed episodes concern the vested power of language. Consider the fluctuating registers of Bunyan's physical interpellation and the metaphorics of squeezing through the wall at Bedford to reach the sun-drenched believers in his failed conversion experience: "now thorow this wall, my Soul did greatly desire to pass, concluding that if I could, I would goe even into the very midst of them, and there also comfort myself with the heat of their Sun" (18-19). Like the last example, this passage also shows a woefully naïve rendition of spiritual rebirth as any external transformation—even as Bunyan equips his younger self with at least the spiritual maturity to appreciate the figural warmth of true believers in Christ. Still, that very metaphoric language dramatizes a stalled-out attempt at transforming the materials of everyday life into the worthiness of fellowship. And it's important to note that his attraction to the poor women of Bedford comes from his admiration of their way of talking, their own metaphoric evocation of "New Birth"; in Bunyan's intrusive decoding of the scene, he says "the wall I thought was the Word that did make separation between Christians and the world" (19). In other words, he is getting closer to realizing he yearns for the discursive belonging and empowerment that accompanies the properly religious one. (This longing for the right kind of language is achingly anticipated by his habit of cursing as a young man: "I knew not how to speak unless I put an Oath before, and another behind, to make my words have authority" [12].) The Bedford narrative episode seems figurally more sophisticated and attentive to the need for a community of rhetoric, closer to the task of spiritual belonging than wishing oneself into apostolic history and being "born Peter." But we are still made to feel the inadequacy of this improved, clunkily metaphoric effort, and indeed, this first attempt is insufficient for Bunyan. Process is itself a sign of failure. He shows, therefore, the trap of even an ingenuous desire for belonging and the tools of figuration at hand that might falsify its assurance in any case.

In relating his halting spiritual "progress," Bunyan also confronts the capacious seventeenth-century notion of Christ as a "publick person" to underscore the compounded devastation of being left out when the offer of belonging is so generously available: "Now I saw Christ Jesus was looked on of God, and should also be looked upon by us as that common or publick person, in who all the whole Body of his Elect are always to be considered and reckoned… when he died we died, and so of his Resurrection" (67). The reward of election goes beyond apostolic identification (here derided anew as woefully mediated, and impossible to inhabit after all). Now the withheld reward is joining a collective embodiment of Christ himself, who ought to be thought, Bunyan tells us, as democratically shared by the elect. This perfect identification dispenses with a dynamic metaphor of tunneling-through only to seize upon the most audaciously generous one of all: a recapitulation theory of atonement, equating Christ with Adam. Working in the present tense, Bunyan also imbues this model with a history-flattening soteriological permanence; doing away with process, it is both imminently available and out of reach. In this context, he acknowledges that discursive, incremental attempts—or ministerial interventions, or narratives of others' redemption—will always shortchange the revelation of *this* kind of totalized belonging.

In such a framework where spiritual identification is absolute and zero-sum, where process seemingly has no place, Bunyan should understandably be skeptical of representation, narrative transmission, pastoral intervention—and the matter of verbal artistry would seem to be completely beside the point. This is the kind of radical doubt or anguished wavering that creates suspense throughout the account of his life, even after sanctification. When he tells of his mental state while preaching, we are privy to the concentric confines of his consciousness—and if we are not given access to the innermost core, we see this center is locked away from even Bunyan himself, to say nothing of the congregants listening to his sermon:

> I have also at some times, even when I have begun to speak the Word with much clearness, evidence, and liberty of speech, yet been before the ending of that Opportunity so blinded, and so estranged from the things I have been speaking, and have also bin so straitned in my speech, as to utterance before the people, that I have been as if I had not known or remembred what I have been about; or as if my head had been in a bag all the time of the *exercise*. (82)

This passage goes beyond critiquing the outward "exercise" of oral evangelism to concede the unreliability of memory and cognition in general. He distinctly recognizes the alienation between thought and credulous speech as the interference of his own consciousness rather than that of the devil. Moreover, the endearing humility of this perfect analogy—a preacher preaching with a bag over his head—is doing at least three imbricated kinds of figurative work at the same time: it renders his alienation more relatable to other poor sinners; it intensifies his hypocrisy as especially egregious; and it also hollows out the reliability of any such report in the first place. And yet Bunyan's autobiography survives that radical skepticism—the risk of believing in a salvation that is always vulnerable to total falsification—in order to pursue a distinct pastoral purpose precisely *through* the style and figuration of doubt. He recommits to this conjoined religious and aesthetic project in subsequent editions throughout his lifetime, even as he grows more distant from most of the earlier source material of lived experience. Above, I focused on Bunyan's unease about his own election and belonging. As I hope to show in the readings below,

he exposes his readers to a complex identificatory turbulence as they relate to *his* story through his text, tempering their own sympathetic prowess.

Playful Talent and Godly Instrumentality

The most compressed, robust sequence of this identificatory modulation—sympathetic connection at turns extended to and then withheld from readers—is found in Bunyan's Preface. This section is a textual creation story and its own appraisal. But its immediate interpellation of the reader tells of its ambition to ministry, as an adjunct to scripture itself. He takes on this metacritical ambition despite writing from prison to a marginalized congregation persecuted under the Clarendon Code. Still, as in his selection of the title *Grace Abounding*, Bunyan begins deferentially enough by channeling Paul's Letter to the Philippians, also written from prison:

> *Children, Grace be with you, Amen I being taken from you in presence, and so tied up, that I cannot perform that duty that from God doth lie upon me, to you-ward, for your further edifying and building up in Faith and Holiness,* &c. *Yet that you may see my Soul hath fatherly care and desire after your spiritual and everlasting welfare; I now once again, as from the top of* Shenir *and* Hermon, *so from the* Lions Dens, and from the Mountains of the Leopards, (*Song* 4.8) *do look yet after you all, greatly longing to see your safe arrival into* THE *desired Haven.* (3)

John Stachniewski remarks on Bunyan's use of "edifying" as a key term for Puritans, as their congregations were sustained out of preaching, virtual networks, and memory when physical churches were forbidden to them. This figure also hints at how Bunyan exceeds the figural, textual expectations of his source: Paul's Letter does not imagine such a robust, pervasive virtualization of collected believers conjured by his text; rather, Paul maintains the reality of his estrangement, celebrating the more mundane transmission of information "that what has happened to me has actually helped to spread the gospel, so that it has become known throughout the whole imperial guard and to everyone else that my imprisonment is for Christ."[13] Paul nurtures hope for an eventual *physical* reunion with the Philippian church, without an expectation of virtual fulfillment before then. He admonishes from a decisive distance: the question is between death "to depart and be with Christ" or "to remain in the flesh": "I know I will remain and continue with all of you for your progress and joy in faith, so that I may share abundantly in your boasting in Christ Jesus when I come to you again."[14] Bunyan, in contrast, gathers up his auditors presently, without such constraints: even from his "Lions den" vantage in prison, he "now once again… do[es] look yet after you all." Invoking the vast geography from the *Song* verse, Bunyan's tour of Palestine swells a bit like Milton's tour of an expansive, virtually-unified Christendom in the *Second Defence*. It's an aggrandizing effect for both Bunyan and the readers inscribed in his address that surpasses Paul's model.

The mutuality of Bunyan's project, shared between congregant and preacher in a virtual discursive community, helps to make it initially inclusive, and Bunyan exhorts his reader to participate. The bar of entry for participation is decidedly *not* spiritual assurance or an expertise in the reading of experiential signs, but only the activity of remembering—such that anyone may feel he has materials to contribute. The tissue of "remembrance" helps Bunyan collapse time and distance, individual and collective experience; "remembrance" or "remembering" occurs twelve times in the Preface. And the first instance attributes pastoral care to the congregants: Bunyan

"thank[s] God upon every Remembrance of you" for "Your hungrings and thirstings also after further acquaintance with the Father in his Son; your tenderness of Heart, your trembling at sin, your sober and holy deportment also, before both God and men, is great refreshment to me" (3). Bunyan is dealing out positive reinforcement by converting past diligence into future credit. But he's also weaving together the powers of sympathetic, sociable identification—a metonymic "tenderness of Heart"—that he first routes through his congregation, and then to himself, through their amiable or sociable "acquaintance". Those sensitive enough can actually take on others' impressions. The community he posits is so spiritually interconnected that one's experience can work its way to the remembrance of another person; they are collaboratively re-membering and re-collecting the dissipated church by pooling sensory, textual, and sympathetic resources. In this paradigm, the readerly identification is completely porous, since Bunyan presumes their sympathy to be constitutive of communal belief itself.

But then Bunyan's calls for remembrance become gradually more pointed and less generalized, and Bunyan's personal case becomes the particularized subject. He still reinscribes his readers into Deuteronomy, with Bunyan channeling Moses: "Thou shalt remember all the way which the Lord thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness" (4). But even though the imperatives have a way of conferring confidence in his readers within this pattern, Bunyan immediately pivots to his own personal case, and even more specifically than that, he then characterizes the wandering the wilderness as an authorial ambition of *Grace Abounding* in particular: "*Wherefore this I have endeavored to do; and not only so, but to publish it also; that, if God will, others may be put in remembrance of what he hath done for their Souls, by reading his work upon me.*" Yes, the optimistic invitation to other souls is there at the end, but over the course of this passage, readers are retroactively expelled from the Deuteronomic plot that Bunyan had previously cast them in; instead, they are now rendered as dependent on first reading and applying Bunyan's autobiography before their own substantive participation. In effect, he holds out a temptation of premature spiritual assurance and emplotment; the sympathetic and discursive suggestibility that strengthens the virtual congregation through text can also form too hastily; the collective investment can lose its prominence when held against the central drama of Bunyan's own soul.

Just then, Bunyan strikes a note of consolation and reaches out to his doubtful readers by offering the totalizing logic of inverted experience, wherein psychological torment indicates one's path to deliverance and the "chief of sinners" can receive abundant grace: "I can remember my fears, and doubts, and sad moneths, with comfort; they are as the head of Goliah in my hand: there was nothing to David like Goliahs sword, even that sword that should have been sheathed in his bowels; for the very sight and remembrance of that, did preach forth God's Deliverance to him." Right after the gory Goliath imagery, though, the consolation of painful remembrance again becomes less collective, less automatically conferred. Rather, the contingent machinery of suggestion, of sympathetic identification, is put to the test of his readers. Bunyan pivots abruptly to urgent, "fresh" concerns about his personal case: "*Oh the remembrance of my great sins, of my great temptations, and of my great fears of perishing for ever! They bring fresh into my mind, the remembrance of my great help, my great support from Heaven, and the great grace that God extended to such a wretch as I*" (4-5). He is now relaying visceral, real-time alarm—this passage contains the first exclamation point of the "Preface"—suggested by the image of David's gruesome disembowelment, that Bunyan himself elaborated as a kind of counter-factual scriptural event, so transfixed as he is by scriptural presence.[15] Earlier in the Preface, Bunyan's own "deportment" had been "sober" throughout the "remembrance" of his auditors' acute

distress—so already-mediated that it is appreciated as a "refreshment" to their spiritual father rather than cause of concern (3). This new imaginative detour comes after several paragraphs of more measured, strictly allusive preaching; now he is expounding the grave, terrifying isolation he faces on his own, and the searching introspection is even more ominous without the objective, external, inciting threat (and scriptural locus) of David's Goliath. The counterfactual incident is in fact a steep *test* of his readers' capacity for identification rather than an assertion of it: *can* they follow their preacher's example of finding consolation out of acute—and extrapolated—terror if they haven't put themselves in the righteous danger he has? At another diegetic level, *could* they imaginatively elaborate themselves into David's brave encounter, confront an alternate ending, and imagine their own loss? Such questions in turn destabilize "remembrance" as a reliable, collective enterprise.

Within this competitive dynamic of sensibilities, it's worth underscoring how unhelpful the Christian rhetoric of inversion—chief-among-sinners, first-will-be-last, the "kudos of despair" (in Stachniewski's phrase)—is for practical Calvinist belief. Yes, it promulgates the charity of Christian teaching, and would be particularly resonant within the devastating political circumstances of Bunyan's community. It also entails simultaneously both wishful and probabilistic transposition of status, as it redounds to the reflexively modest group with a common identity, rather than an exceptional wretch. Still, achieving or professing "kudos of despair" is ultimately one more qualification for proper identification of which Bunyan is all too conscious, as we've seen; it becomes a marker of sensibility and of tenderness (to use Yu's framework), and a challenge apart from the fact of election but always pointing to it. Even if you can take part in the virtual, prolific textual community, what about on your own? Can you assemble the materials, the narrative required? Or will you fall to some false consolation?

This more skeptical appreciation of that rhetoric of inversion, I think, reveals a more tense and inconclusive dimension of the famous "close" passage of the "Preface," which has been conventionally read as encouraging readerly identification for the sake of community. The mundane, the exemplary subject matter and style—in the democratic, capacious, normative, middling-sort sense—can elevate anyone to feel he is, happily, *the* exemplum, chief among sinners. But Bunyan makes his reader feel the strain of identification, or varying degrees of that strain, even while putatively enabling it. It is one thing for your preacher to meld remembered experience across homogenous history, "the former days, the years of ancient times"; it is another to catch you feeling outside, or nudge you out, of that homogeneity while asserting that it is there, and promising it is there if only you "commune with your own heart," making you feel the conditionality:

> *Yea, look diligently, and leave no corner therein unsearched, for there is treasure hid, even the treasure of your first and second experience of the grace of* God *toward you. Remember, I say, the Word that first laid hold upon you; remember also your tears and prayers to* God; *yea, how you sighed under every hedge for mercy. Have you never a Hill Mizar to remember? Have you forgot the Close, the Milk-house, the Stable, the Barn, and the like, where* God *did visit your Soul? Remember also the Word, the Word, I say, upon which the Lord hath caused you to hope: If you have sinned against light, if you are tempted to blaspheme, if you are down in despair, if you think* God *fights against you, or if heaven is hid from your eyes; remember 'twas thus with your Father*, but out of them all the Lord delivered me. (5)

Bunyan leads the witness with questioning that slides from *searching* to *production*, alternating "remember" and "have you never" and "have you forgot?" This is the reverse of Milton's autobiographical movement in the *Second Defence*, which shades the revelatory into the explanatory work of memory. The act of remembering, already taken to be integral to forming a virtual congregation of believers, here penetrates to transform individual histories: rather than a neutral process of transmission, remembering summons and transforms. At the same time, the more remote or repressed memories also come to be more authoritative in the narrative-making—hence Bunyan's emphasis on excavating "the treasure of the first and second experience of the grace of God toward you." Identifying these plot points correctly imbeds another test, with the risk of not looking diligently enough. Bunyan also urges the reader's "memory" of Hill Mizar into a helpful pattern one might fashion on his own, just as he interposes the high Biblical reference between quotidian locations: "every hedge" and "the Close, the Milk-house, the Stable, the Barn, and the like."

That appositive string of intimately English locations points to Bunyan's work to make the reader belong. Demonstrating a tinker's familiarity with lived reality of the poor, these terms show a strategy of general inhabitability by way of particular description: perhaps one of these terms hits closer to home for a reader more than the others. His bucolic tableau doesn't require an exactness of experience, instead offering a suite of options. Taken together, these humble structures form and imagine new, virtual, and cohesive institutional edifices. But there is also an undercurrent of insistent *ex*clusivity, an anti-metonymic strategy at work. By hewing so close to this one category of images, in his interpellation of the reader, he is also implicitly excluding other kinds of experiences. That there is a type of auditor and experience of faith he has in mind—beginning with socioeconomic status—makes a reader's failure to identify with just one of these "like" options a source of anxiety. The path is not as capacious as he has made it out to be. Still, when he moves on to address the worry of sin, he offers a paternal consolation that readers may regenerate for themselves: "*remember 'twas thus with your Father*, but out of them all the Lord delivered me." Switching from detached third-person appellation to the first-person confession of 2 Timothy 3.11, Bunyan models the scriptural transference that his readers, too, can imitate. Bunyan thus ends his pastoral work in this passage by conferring optimism and belonging: an exemplary plan both exists for his readers and can be brought into being by them, and the obvious tension of those two simultaneous realities needn't be worried over.

This dramatic oscillation from inclusivity, to seeded doubt, back to the consolation of belonging is then, to me, shockingly upset by the Preface's final paragraph. Bunyan pivots away from explicitly pastoral work to a decidedly aesthetic treatise—but with complex pastoral implications. The final paragraph elaborates on the exceptionalism of the Timothy verse not for pastoral community-building but for an assertion of his exclusive achievement in writing *Grace Abounding*:

> I could have enlarged much in this my discourse of my temptations and troubles for sin, as also of the merciful kindness and working of God with my Soul: I could also have stept into a stile much higher then this in which I have here discoursed, and could have adorned all things more than here I have seemed to do: but I dare not: God did not play in convincing of me; the Devil did not play in tempting of me; neither did I play when I sunk as into a bottomless pit, when the pangs of hell caught hold upon me: wherefore I may not play in my relating of them, but be plain and simple, and lay down the thing as it

> was: He that liketh it, let him receive it; and he that does not, let him produce a better. Farewel. (5)

He subordinates spiritual matters to their representation, with the key verbs all pertaining to craft: enlarged, stept into a stile, discoursed, adorned, relating. Yes, he seems to take his plain "stile" from the dictates of the seriousness of God, the devil, and despair, but those dictates are appended after telling us he might have written it differently if he had so chosen.[16] In this authorial speculation of future achievements, Bunyan's voice rings independent of all scriptural referents. His emphasis that he could have embellished both the "temptations" on the one hand and the "merciful kindness" on the other, seems to create a kind of wash in terms of its bearing on his election; the ledger could have been effectively the same, emphasizing the difference *only* in "stile." He then underscores for good measure that he "could have adorned all things more than here I have seemed to do." There is, in other words, a sham humility paired with an assertion of utter mastery and intentionality: he tells the reader that they are experiencing a narrative effect of plainness that is an *achievement* of what "I have seemed to do"; the readerly experience of plainness is itself a rhetorical adornment. When he demurs saying he "dare[s] not," he pleads the necessity of realism, to "lay down the thing as it was"—again, not a recourse to moral standing or outsized pride but a commitment to representational method. He concurs with Thomas Sprat's idea of empirical writing within the Royal Society, that plain style conveys believable, verifiable experience. Claiming that God "did not play in convincing me" in a way assumes a familiarity with God's own instructive, narrative technique, which Bunyan is implicitly imitating in an "unadorned" style.[17] Even God, Bunyan suggests, wouldn't want him to throw out of harmony the marvelous and mundane.[18]

In contrast to the opening of the Preface, with his final words Bunyan drives a wedge between reader and author, now on wholly aesthetic grounds: "He that liketh it, let him receive it; and he that does not, let him produce a better. Farewel." He neatly opposes author and reader, decoupling their subjective experiences and withdrawing an assumption of similar sensibilities. While in one respect he is inviting his reader to "produce a better" which implies working in the same tradition—confessional texts begetting texts in an Augustinian chain of influence—this is not the congregational inclusiveness that asked about the close and the milk-house, and finding common cause by way of Scriptural antecedents. Instead, he is, at the last moment, distinguishing between the activity of remembering—the collaborative, transhistorical, virtual, collective project of gathering up material urged throughout the Preface—and the creative, ingenious production of *Grace Abounding* in compositional time. The normative humility, the logic of exemplarity and identification, the "kudos of despair" are absent here. Rather, Bunyan anticipates an eighteenth-century revolution of aesthetics, with an emphasis on unique genius and refined judgment of a worthy audience. He even hews to the language of taste—"liking" and "better" are especially at a remove from the urgency of addressing his oppressed congregants; indeed it more closely resembles the flourish of fictional prefaces.[19]

Besides the Preface, and very much working in concert with it, Bunyan most explicitly articulates his idea about aesthetic achievement and gifts in "A brief Account of the Authors Call to the Work of the Ministery", placed towards the end of his autobiography. The thrust of the passage is Puritan humility and the clear priority of salvific grace, resolving that "great grace and small gifts are better then great gifts and no grace" (84). The gifts are only valuable when put to "the Edification of others." However, Bunyan makes a small allowance for the status of talent as practically outside of God's salvific economy altogether, in a kind of intermediary excess: "It

doth not say, the Lord gives gfts and glory, but the Lord gives grace and glory!" In this subtraction, "gifts" takes on a somewhat liberating irrelevance.

But Bunyan presses the case in more positive terms, even while abiding by the modesty topos, by entertaining the ambiguity between instrument and musician. Much of the section dwells on Bunyan's humble identification with the inert instruments that "hath not life" of 1 Cor. 12.1, 2, when Paul frets that "I am become as sounding-brass and a tinkling cymbal," stripping Bunyan and like preachers of independent agency altogether (83). Bunyan describes this passage as a "sharp and piercing sentence"; the pejorative phrase "tinkling cymbal" would be especially cutting for Bunyan, who like his father was an itinerant tinker by trade, surrounded by the sounds of clanging pots and utensils. But in his elaboration, Bunyan transforms the metaphor by interposing the figure of the talented mortal artist; he elevates the lowly tinker-sort to the newly-anointed King David of Chronicles, who plays joyous music while overseeing the transfer of the ark to Jerusalem:

> they are in the hand of Christ, as the Cymbal in the hand of *David*, and as *David* could with the Cymbal make that mirth in the service of God, as to elevate the hearts of the Worshippers; so Christ can use these gifted men, as with them to affect the Souls of his People in his Church, yet when he hath done all hang them by, as lifeless, though sounding Cymbals. (83)

In the Chronicles passage, we are meant to see David's pious decision to correct the mistakes of his forebears and attend to proper worship, securing the ark but also surrounding it with a perfected, joyous liturgical procession. David-as-musician opens up ground between divine inspiration and instrument; his is the effectual "art of him that playes" (83). That move is anticipated with Bunyan's emphasis, just before, on the "skillful player" who "can make such melodious and heart-inflaming Musick, that all who hear him play, can scarcely hold from dancing." Our esteem, then, for just a moment redirects to the embodied, regal player. That artist also works by some subterfuge; refraining from straightforward didacticism, he can ply the auditor's unconscious pleasure. The achievement is ironic and displaced—the image of compulsive but *sanctified* dancing sits uneasily with Bunyan's youthful transgression of dancing on the Sabbath. What's more, that the "skillful player" could wield the same hypnotic influence as the sinful music concedes the infernal liabilities of aesthetic power. And of course, talent ultimately redounds to God's instrumental hand. But in concrete terms, this passage insists, talent must reside and deploy from the artist's agency, with all the radical contingencies that entails. There is even an allowance for the talented minister's legacy continuing beyond the effectual scene of reaching "the Souls of his People in his Church", as such preachers are figured as "lifeless, though sounding Cymbals." This final description can be taken equivocally, as an enabling contradiction (rather than as a compounding dismissal). That cymbals might ring out *in spite of* their lifelessness thus doubles as a vindication of the complex work that Bunyan is undertaking through discursive writing, as opposed to verbal preaching, with his autobiography living beyond him, straddling life and death. After all, the "tinkling cymbal" commentary comes right after Bunyan confesses that preaching sometimes feels "as if my head had been in a bag all the time of the *exercise*" (82). The legacy of authorship, on the other hand, can work in perpetuity and in perfection, beyond the fleeting vainglory afforded by a proximate, adoring audience in discrete time.

Devilish Details

We tend to focus on Bunyan's exhortation in the Preface for his readers to write their own, "better" autobiographies, and with that has come scholarly attention to the through-lines of confessional imitation. It's worth considering how Bunyan answers his own challenge to "produce a better" across the five published editions of *Grace Abounding* printed in his lifetime. What does recursive autobiographical refinement look like, and what does it imply for readers as initiates? For Milton, rewriting your life is prone to falsification, if aesthetically rewarding; Bunyan, by contrast, revels in the accrued authority, only sometimes inviting his readers to join him.

The third edition of *Grace Abounding* is undated, though likely from 1674, and the fifth was published in 1680; these both include small changes to the original, but for the most part they add passages. Bunyan elaborates in ways to alternately extend and then obstruct readerly identification (as we've already seen in the Preface): he establishes sympathetic immediacy through particularity, but also through narrative othering and affiliation. If details authenticate that immediacy for Bunyan, they can also potentially nudge away readerly identification. These choices are aesthetic and narrative; they do not falsify the content or necessarily indicate psychological trauma beyond the life stories being relayed. He also adds accounts of his experience of others' religious autobiographies, in turn burnishing his sensibilities as a reader and writer while putting yet another test of identification to his audience. Most crucially, the revisions do not tend all in one general direction as one would expect considering the rigid doctrinal, ideological, and psychological imperatives critics have attributed to Bunyan and Puritan writers in general. Stachniewski, for instance, was especially attentive to Bunyan's revisions and appreciative of Bunyan's complexity and playfulness. But he still forecloses possibilities of aesthetic autonomy and assumes Bunyan's priorities lie in enhancing his pious subjection as he goes.[20]

This is why the scholarly assumptions of not just doctrinal but empirical pieties mischaracterize Bunyan's representational achievement and their pastoral implications: he is in fact working in a representational dialectic, wherein he plays with both individuation and encompassing details, toying with the sympathetic work of exemplarity. A survey of the addenda is one way of gaining insight into his artistic intentions, over time—and it's significant that the changes are virtually all additions, which in itself contradicts a theory of Bunyan scrubbing away misfit pieces, or seeing himself as refining an inert, pure record of the past. Over the years he "enlarge[s] much," precisely what he says he doesn't do in the Preface.[21] According to Brooke Conti's theory of detail, if generalization were Bunyan's narrative intention, most of his edits should go towards winnowing out details rather than adding more, but in fact we see him doing both**.**

Two minute, hyperlocal examples of additions in the third edition illustrate these contradictory effects, as tools of individuation and collective identification. Describing his childhood torment in the third edition, Bunyan adds a clarifying phrase: "These [dreadful visions], I say, when I was but a childe, **about nine or ten years old** did so distress my Soul, that when in the midst of my many sports and childish vanities, amidst my vain companions, I was often much cast down and afflicted in my mind therewith," emphasis my own (7). By elaborating a particular age range, he places himself within a narrative of discrete time; that also goes some way to dispel the allegorical, parabolic valence of "but a child" as a generic characterization of spiritual immaturity. The anxiety is more palpably understood in the acute context of late

childhood, of rapidly growing self-awareness. But Bunyan doesn't just add a specific, individuating detail, but one that is itself imprecise—"nine or ten years old"—conveying the understandable fogginess of recollection, not to mention a convincingly, charismatically colloquial flourish. This is also a case where the inexactitude paradoxically enhances the particular pathos rather than the general. He is offering a way for a reader to *envision* a character's point of view without making capacious room for *inhabitation* that would go with the more parabolic, generalized description. And perhaps more importantly of all, Bunyan's revision, by particularizing while still foregrounding inexactitude, conveys the dodginess of this (or any) retrospective account. Part of the perfection he works toward involves communicating the unreliable, nonlinear experience of time.

Shortly after, Bunyan narrates the shared poverty after he marries his wife, and as a couple "not having so much houshold stuff as a Dish or Spoon betwixt us both" (9). (Adding the phrase "houshold stuff" in the third edition superfluously adds a category to contain the details that follow; it offers a way for readers to identify with a more generalized deprivation. Ironically, though, the category also shakes off the proverbial, sing-songy rhythm of the sentence that might have implied his household lacked for all manner of goods, and in doing so, it also heightens the literal, particular claim of lacking both dishes and spoons. In that sense, in the revision Bunyan intensifies the personal, subjective pathos of his dire situation. At the same time, he is likely nudging his reader into a remove: this particular kind of material deprivation was his, and he is activating the possibility of a lack of identification on the reader's part, for the signs of narrative experience to not match up. Put another way, he is revoking the invitation to identify that was more available in the first edition, suggesting that perhaps his readers do not belong quite to the extreme example or exclusive class of the "meanest, most despised." For all the hyperbolic claims, the logic of inversion that gets so much attention in *Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners*, Bunyan's manipulation of particulars prompts readers to reflect on their status on a continuum of fittingness, which shouldn't matter to the anti-narrative, binary logic of the elect: saved or unsaved, belonging to a set or being excluded from it. He can initiate the flicker of identification—which doubles as salvific assurance—within the same detail. That is the preoccupation of *Grace Abounding* as a pastoral instrument, and Bunyan doesn't want to make it an easy consolation but rather another initiation in itself. If scholars point to Bunyan's aim of helping readers discern their "scriptural place" within their lived experiences, these touches are extra-Biblical examples of Bunyan toying with ways of readers finding their place in his own text.

Despite the commitment Bunyan professes in the Preface to pare down extravagances into a plain style, this habit of catching readers out with exemplary details is precisely devilish *and* playful. Indeed, he tells us that details are themselves infernal temptations; the devil tricks Bunyan with examples all the time. Catalogues of particulars are figured literally as idols: "the Tempter labored to distract me and confound me, and to turn away my mind, by presenting to my heart and fancy the form of a Bush, a Bull, a Besom, or the like, as if I should pray to those; to these also he would at some times (especially) so hold my mind, that it was as if I could think of nothing else, or pray to nothing else but to these, or such as they" (32). The three specific instances of idolatry that Bunyan lists here, with their beguiling alliteration point to a category that doesn't exist; they "confound" the attempt of a willing "heart and fancy" to reconcile them following the cues of "and the like" and "or such as they" to discern some formal coherence. Still, the bush, bull, and besom, seem gathered up to emphasize their differences—plant, animal, and household object—which can capture a range of analogous readerly experiences and

scriptural coordinates so that they might feel reassurance. (The catalogue of these infernal, idolatrous examples is a foil to the famous catalogue from the Preface—"the Close, the Milk-house, the Stable, the Barn, and the like, where God did visit your soul?" (5)—and has a way of darkening that earlier bucolic set of examples as well.) But ultimately, Bunyan suggests, the devil is effective not because each option is individually irresistible, but rather because of the limitless inundation of them, the devilish alternatives running amok so that one can "think of nothing else." So is a reader to take this alliterative selection of examples as Bunyan's mediated list or the devil's? Furthermore, what temporal slice of Bunyan adds the mitigating "or the like" and "or such as they"? Or, to use the Puritan terminology that Bunyan deploys throughout, also found in Norwood's text and *Pilgrim's Progress*, what "frame of heart" are these filler-phrases issuing from? Puritans were quite comfortable positing a dynamic narrating self; as Stachniewski defines it, "this distinctively puritan use of 'frame' …designated a spiritual state as it was experienced from the inside, colouring all perceptions."[22] Bunyan could be writing from a sanctified frame of heart, adding these details to neuter the particular power of the idolatrous example, by knitting them into a more general figure; in that case, he's flaunting an assurance that comes with narrative retrospect, one that could await a reader, too. Even so, that model implies that the reassurance for an interpellated reader is deferred, perhaps indefinitely, rather than a simultaneous validation that keeps step with one's experience of the autobiographical narrative itself. The idolatrous valence of examples is thus contained for the removed reader but never *entirely*, a source of simultaneous consolation and perturbation.

Experimenting with examples in different registers produces this layered consciousness, creates multiple entry-points for readerly identification, and also enables play with ironic effects. One of the most densely eventful passages of *Grace Abounding* supplies examples of early "mercies" from Bunyan's early life, pre-conversion. And while the chronicling mode suggests a naïve simplicity, given the passage's later insertion in the third edition, we must construe it as deliberate *simulation* of spiritual immaturity, in a plain style that is (of course) another artificial intervention:

> But God did not utterly leave me, but followed me still, not now with convictions, but Judgements, yet such as were mixt with mercy. For once I fell into a crick of the Sea, and hardly escaped drowning: another time I fell out of a Boat into Bedford River, but mercy yet preserved me alive: Besides, another time being in the field, with one of my companions, it chanced that an Adder passed over the High way, so I having a stick in mine hand, struck her over the back, and having stounded her, I forced open her mouth with the stick, and plucked her sting out with my fingers, by which act had not God been mercifull to me, I might by my desperateness have brought my self to mine end. (8)

Bunyan creates irony out of his prior ignorance, leaving the cryptic flatness of these external episodes unprocessed at the time. In his own retrospect, however, and to a scripturally literate person, they strike one as straightforwardly parabolic. It's almost a warm-up exercise in applying scriptural signs in one's lived experience. Furthermore, the overarching category he provides—the identification of "Judgments […] mixt with mercy"—has a way of comprising almost any kind of negative (but survivable) pre-conversion event; as a strategy for communing with his congregants, this encompassing move is an open invitation for identification. More subtly, however, Bunyan works along what we might recognize as the two axes of fictional identification within the same material, the miraculous overlaying the mundane. The odd

specifics of the episodes—insisted upon by an awkward *two* mentions of drowning—convey the bewildering improbability of his experience. His near-redundant examples of drowning both shave off the "miraculous" and compound it. In other words, Bunyan here stages a minor resistance to a reader's symbolic assimilation by way of his examples' *excess* of symbolic potential. One might identify with the plausibility of his examples easily enough but still balk at their overdetermination, thereby feeling left out as a skeptic of a believer's revelation, and feeling more in tune with the blithe younger Bunyan—who nearly drowns but also quite capably dispatches the snake—than with the wise preacher who organizes these experiences into signs of humility.

The text is filled with idiosyncratic digressions that make Bunyan's story largely unassimilable. In the fifth edition, his sniping contestation of accusations of sexual misconduct with Agnes Beaumont doesn't readily map onto a generalized spiritual education (85). But the details can even blunt the explicit didacticism of Bunyan's case, throwing the supposedly disciplined reading of signs into an act of bewildered wonderment. In the third edition, Bunyan includes an episode about succumbing to the idolatrous pleasures of bell-ringing at Elstow Abbey:

> I had taken much delight in ringing, but my Conscience beginning to be tender: I thought that such a practice was but vain, and therefore forced my self to leave it, yet my mind hanckered, wherefore I should go to the steeple house and look on. But I thought this did not become Religion neither, yet I forced my self and would look on still; but quickly after, I began to think how if one of the Bells should fall; then I chose to stand under a main Beam that lay over thwart the Steeple from side to side, thinking there I might stand sure: but then I should think again, should the Bell fall with a swing, it might first hit the Wall, and then rebounding upon me, might kill me for all this Beam; this made me stand in the Steeple door, and now thought I, I am safe enough, for if a Bell should then fall, I can slip out behind these thick Walls, and so be preserved notwithstanding… (13)

While Bunyan notes that watching the bells from a distance "did not become Religion neither," that perfunctory lesson is left well behind by the subsequent account, which is lengthened even further in the fifth edition:

> So after this, I would yet go to see them ring, but would not go further than the Steeple door, but then it came into my head, how if the Steeple it self should fall, and this thought, (it may fall for ought I know) would, when I stood and looked on, continually so shake my mind, that I durst not stand at the Steeple door any longer, but was forced to fly for fear it should fall upon my head. (13-14)

Instead of attributing the bell's threatening motion to a buffeting, intervening devil, Bunyan becomes a speculative physicist. Indeed, the architectural particulars help explain what's happening in his imagination, and why the episode would be a poor general warning against bell-ringing: Elstow Abbey hung its bell in a converted watch-tower that stood structurally apart from the main church by several feet, which is how Bunyan could observe the bells from the entrance to the "steeple."[23] The meticulously idiosyncratic dread also undermines any straightforward point about desacralized houses of worship; the pejorative Puritan term "steeple-house" loses

some of its critical valence here, with the steeple becoming a would-be shelter from the wayward bell. Simultaneously grounded in physical reality and carried away by his subjective transformation of it, Bunyan's narration leaves his reader with some interpretive leeway—and confusion. Unlike the other experiences recorded nearby in the autobiography (almost being drowned or killed in the Civil War [8]; feeling chastisement during a game of cat [18]), it's unclear how judgment and mercy map onto this wholly hypothetical ordeal. One struggles to follow the mental vicissitudes here, with nine instances of "but" and "yet" in this passage. However, these modulations taken together show Bunyan to be in a kind of awestruck reverie. Leaning into the vivid details, Bunyan lets the speculative fiction stand on its own. The *truly* tender conscience, he suggests, is also a prolifically creative one, mentally exerting into reality as much as recording signs of experience.

"Twineing" into "some ancient Godly man's Experience"

To argue for Bunyan's sense of authorial intention, rather than evidence of panicked recursion, we can point to the pride of his Preface and the explicitly added details. But to credit him with these complex subtleties of technique, the tension he creates for identification, it is helpful to examine how Bunyan elaborates his complex expectations of readers and their part in the enterprise, and how that also redounds to his own stature as an author. Indeed, two of the longest added passages in the third and fifth editions reflect on his own careful reading of Christian lives: Martin Luther and Francis Spira. These passages also frame the relation of the year-long temptation to "*sell Christ for this, or sell Christ for that,*" which is often considered to be the centerpiece of *Grace Abounding* (39). Because of these biographies' attenuated status as holy texts—they are not scripture itself—Bunyan is liberated to perform more critical *and* creative exegetical work. He can center his own agency and assume a vital sensibility that goes beyond applying the stories of David or Paul to his own story. He also admires the exegetical work that Luther and Spira themselves perform. What begins to take shape in Bunyan's account of these accounts is an audacious model of readerly identification that entails a radical sympathy, paramount to an act of faith, that necessarily extends beyond the textual materials provided. At the same time, these texts are not themselves autobiographical. By inscribing his own autobiographical responses to these reading experiences, Bunyan has room to formally perfect those texts, to render his own present effort as more probing than his predecessors'.

In the third edition, Bunyan adds his appreciation of Luther's commentary on Paul's Letter to the Galatians, about the casting off of Mosaic law. This work was translated into English in 1575, going through nine editions before 1640. Bunyan emphasizes his longing for prior examples of Godly conduct and finds some satisfaction in exploring Luther's text. But more audaciously than that, Bunyan seems to reprise and even inductively co-construct the whole history of the Reformation in his search:

> But before I had got thus far out of these my temptations, I did greatly long to see some ancient Godly man's Experience, who had writ some hundred of years before I was born; for, for those who had writ in our days, I thought (but I desire them now to pardon me) that they had Writ only that which others felt, or else had, thorow the strength of their Wits and Parts, studied to answer such Objections as they perceived others were perplexed with, without going down themselves into the deep. Well, after many longings

> in my mind, the God in whose hand are all our days, did cast into my hand (one day) a book of *Martin Luther*, his Comment on the *Galatians*, so old that it was ready to fall piece from piece, if I did but turn it over. Now I was pleased much that such an old Book had fallen into my hand; the which, when I had but a little way perused, I found my condition in his experience, so largely and profoundly handled, as if his Book had been written out of my heart; this made me marvel: for thus thought I, this man could not know any thing of the state of Christians now, but must needs write and speak the Experience of former days. … But of Particulars here, I intend nothing, only this methinks I must let fall before all men, I do prefer this Book of Mr. *Luther* upon the *Galatians*, (excepting the Holy Bible) before all the Books that ever I have seen, as most fit for a wounded Conscience. (37-38)

While Bunyan here claims to admire Luther and other ancients for grappling with emotional vulnerability—unlike his contemporaries who are servants to the exigencies of refutation based on "strength of their Wits" and who do not "go[] down themselves into the deep"—the Letter to Galatians is itself more a piece of rhetorical analysis than of revelation. Bunyan is moved by the quality of Luther's explication, not his first-hand visceral experience or his first-order articles of belief. Still, Bunyan describes this transmission of textual and rhetorical sympathy in miraculous terms. The book arrives to him through subtle, moving repetitions of divine and human communion: from God "in whose hand are all our days," "cast" into Bunyan's, then "fallen into my hand" and then Luther's experience "so largely and profoundly handled." This is an example of Bunyan's carefully elaborated distinction between religious revelation and autonomous creation. Something similar is operating with the word "fall", referring to the physical artifact of the fragile book that "I must let fall before all men" but also a passive indication of Bunyan's refined sensibility masquerading as pastoral obligation. The "marvel" Bunyan expresses has to do with ability, and skill as distinct from (even though paralleling) divine intercession. In other words, Bunyan is reaching for not just a "kudos of despair" or subjection, but rather a communion in distinctly positive terms: of admiration, of taste, of accomplishment, of sympathetic representation. In fact, an exquisite enough conscience can summon the historical Reformation, even the whole arc of Christianity, within himself. Bunyan seems to admire how readerly identification across texts is itself a miracle, worked by his company of fellow authors.[24]

In addition to his uncanny summoning of the historical Luther, it's somewhat odd that Bunyan would describe Luther's "Comment" as primarily representing "some ancient Godly Man's experience" through which he sees "my condition." Luther's verse-by-verse commentary is a thoroughly *rhetorical* analysis of Paul's own autobiographical epistle, a lecture tending to Paul's convincingness and techniques. The force of Luther's argument is about Paul's style, his details, his credibility. When Luther does describe affliction, in Chapter 5, verse 3, it is most vividly rendered through his view of *others'* struggles.[25] Still, Bunyan says he feels "as if [Luther's] Book had been written out of my heart," thereby adducing a confessional valence to a text that isn't primarily autobiographical. Despite the layers of textual mediation of this transmission—Paul to Galatians to Luther to Bunyan—it eventually takes on autobiographical potency once it's recorded in the third edition of *Grace Abounding*, an alchemical compounding of immediacy and affect the further it travels from the source material. Implicitly, Bunyan's ingenuous soul searching claims something more real than his predecessors; the textual forebear oddly authenticates his own present enterprise of heartwork. The characterization of Luther's *Commentary* becomes ironic, for even Luther could be dismissed according to Bunyan's own

criteria, having "Writ only that which others felt, or else had, thorow the strength of their Wits and Parts, studied to answer such Objections as they perceived others were perplexed with, without going down themselves into the deep." Bunyan is staking out a legitimacy for a kind of innovative narrative confession *about reading itself* while piously claiming to be a derivative pupil. He praises the autobiographical pathos of a text that doesn't have it, redirecting stature to his own radical sympathy, and in turn building his credit as an ingenuous, perhaps even overly sympathetic reader that redounds to his power as a pastoral writer who might conjure that response to his own account—*if* congregants share the same vital sensibility. Bunyan's urge to radical readerly sympathy contrasts with Milton's indictment of readers' gullible emotional involvement in *Eikon Basilike*: both are trying to reform readers, but in wholly different ways. Bunyan offers the implicit challenge to a reader, with real-time stakes: do you feel the same toward my text as I did towards Luther's? Do you feel yourself in this chain of sympathetic identification?

In the fifth edition of *Grace Abounding*, after the "Sell him!" episode, Bunyan adds another example of reading Christian lives that demonstrates his generative sympathy and imaginative extrapolation. Bunyan reflects on his encounter with Nathaniel Bacon's 1649 "Relation of the Fearful Estate of Francis Spira, after he turned apostate from the Protestant Church to popery." Like Luther's text, it is crucially not itself an autobiography, but Bunyan projects intimate immediacy into it, practically eliding the "relation" component of the narrative. Still, Bunyan seems more in control—intentionally adding in the drama of his reading experience, and converting the third-hand account to imaginative resources for his own pain, and of course, differing from Spira in his survival of despair. As much as he suggests a reflexive identification with Spira's desolation, Bunyan relays how he is concertedly *working* his way into Spira's perspective and then elaborating it himself:

> About this time I did light on that dreadful story of that miserable mortal *Francis Spira*; A Book that was to my troubled Spirit, as Salt when rubbed into a fresh wound; every Sentence in that book, every groan of that man, with all the rest of his actions in his dolors, as his tears, his prayers, his gnashing of teeth, his wringing of hands, his twineing and twisting, and languishing, and pineing away under that mighty hand of God that was upon him, was as Knives and Daggers in my Soul. (45-46)

In this compressed passage—a single grammatical sentence—Bunyan symmetrically frames the viscera of Spira's agony within his analogous experience of reading it; his injuries bracket Spira's own here. Yet even with the relation of Spira's pain—in a desperate rhythm suggesting present traumatic to Bunyan in his act of recollection—Bunyan takes liberty to innovate: "twineing" is Bunyan's coinage, in the intransitive sense meaning "to contort the body; to writhe, wriggle squirm."[26] But we also know that Bunyan's own initial use of the verb appears in the first edition of *Grace Abounding*, just two paragraphs after where he would insert the Spira passage, regarding his own wretchedness under "the mark that the Lord did set on *Cain*": "Thus did I wind, and twine, and shrink under the burden that was upon me" (46). In effect, this verbal self-dealing is evidence of his own solipsistic suggestibility, language producing experience, just as in the fifth edition, Bunyan retroactively transfers his own internal, personal experience to an objective, external case of Spira's biography.[27] As in the Luther passage, Bunyan takes a primarily third-hand account and amplifies his own pathos through it, exceeding that of his source materials. *So* tender is his conscience that he confers immediacy of original

autobiographical identification—seeing and feeling his own "twineing and twisting" *into* the biography he's already read—and therefore imaginatively and devotionally perfecting the vividness of his exemplars.

As the digression on Spira continues, Bunyan affirms the power of extrascriptural texts to produce the declaiming effects that he so famously attributes to the Bible. Bunyan writes of Spira, "especially that sentence of his was frightful to me, *Man knows the beginning of sin, but who bounds the issues thereof*? Then would the former sentence as the conclusion of all, fall like a hot thunder-bolt again upon my Conscience; *for you know that afterwards when he would have inherited the blessing, he was rejected, for he found no place of Repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears*" (45-46). The afflicting sentence here, however, is the commentary of Nathaniel Bacon's, not Spira's reported speech.[28] Bunyan feels that the first-hand is more stirring when attributed to the suffering Spira himself, rendering the biography into autobiography; after this sleight of genres, he then reverses it by interpellating his own reader through Esau's story in Hebrews 12:17—autobiography becoming biography again.

As a technique for contextualizing the preceding *Sell Him* episode, Bunyan coaxes readers to feel the same way about his agony in selling Christ that he felt for Spira, using Esau's birthright as the key scriptural coordinate for both. By embedding the Epistle to Hebrews in his gloss on Spira, Bunyan imposes narrative resolution on Spira's misery, as if both dictated by scripture.[29] One might argue that these reinforcing scriptural references reflect reconciliation of divergent fates into religious coherence, a singular confessional collective. But the liberties Bunyan takes with allusion and the transformative experience of reading itself suggest Bunyan *knowingly concedes* the malleability of autobiographical material, and the countless temporal reconfigurations and play among author, text, and reader. That fashioning of uncertainty within and through autobiography *is* the pastoral tool. If Milton concedes the infinite regress and linguistic self-dealing of fashioning one's true account, Bunyan serializes the opportunity.

Notes to Chapter Three

[1] All page references to *Grace Abounding* (hereafter abbreviated *GA*) refer to *Grace Abounding with Other Spiritual Autobiographies*, ed. John Stachniewski and Anita Pacheco (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).

[2] Richard Strier, defining "New Formalism," helps explain my approach here to the interchange between broader ideological pressures and the minute, often surprising textual qualities of a religious autobiography like Bunyan's. After close reading a stanza from Herbert's "Longing", Strier asks "why would one *want* to do 'cultural history' in this way, from a (not so) simple lyric? Why begin at the micro-level? If there is a 'continuity between depth and surface,' why not skip the surface? Why not go to the grand issues directly? The answer to these questions has to do with the belief that one has to know the texture as well as the content of ideas to do intellectual or cultural history with true sensitivity, and with a corollary belief that this texture is most fully experienced at the level of verbal and stylistic detail, where tensions are manifested in texts in very subtle and unpredictable ways. The level of style and syntax is the true level of 'lived' experience." "How Formalism Became a Dirty Word, and Why We Can't Do Without It," *Renaissance Literature and Its Formal Engagements*, ed. Mark Daniel Rasmussen (New York: Palgrave, 2002) 212.

[3] *The Norton Anthology of English Literature: The Restoration and Eighteenth Century*, ed. Lawrence Lipking and James Noggle (New York: Norton, 2006) 2142.

[4] *Graceful Reading: Theology and Narrative in the Works of John Bunyan* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002) 12.

[5] And even within that narrow idea of "style," Davies falls into conflating Bunyan's remembered experience with his frame of mind at the moment of compositional transcription, positing that Bunyan "is continually 'ready to sink' or indeed 'always sinking, whatever I did think or do', at times into 'a miry bog' and at others in 'a very great storm', or he is 'racked upon the wheel', or even like a child fallen into a 'mill-pit', who could 'scrable and scraul', able to 'find neither hold for hand nor foot.'" *Graceful Reading: Theology and Narrative in the Works of John Bunyan* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002) 11.

[6] Davies, 132.

[7] Conti, 151.

[8] Conti, 162.

[9] *Origins of the Individualist Self: Autobiography and Self-Identity in England, 1591-1791* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1996) 92.

[10] Lynch, *Protestant Autobiography in the Seventeenth-Century Anglophone World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012) 232.

[11] Yu, "Tears in Paradise: The Revolution of Tender Conscience," *Representations* 142 (Spring 2018), 1-32, 2.

[12] Yu, 2, 24.

[13] Philippians 1.12-13

[14] Philippians 1.23, 1.25-26.

[15] This is the liability of Milton's Sampson, whose architectural image of the bulky Harafa possibly inspires the idea of destroying the temple.

[16] Both Browne and Milton, especially in the *Second Defence*, share this energetic preparedness to fashion future, alternative versions of encomium. Just because Bunyan has accounted for his life does not mean he cannot embellish, elaborate, and shape it again.

[17] Even Bunyan, though, is ravished by the ornate luxuriance of Song 4:8, giving it foremost prominence in the Preface.

[18] James Grantham Turner, discussing the work of Lafayette, distills this "quintessential and most productive contradiction of the novel, its need to fuse the probable and the marvelous into a single 'extraordinary' figure […] completely understandable in terms of psychology, yet utterly 'singular' and 'without example'" (88). "Cross-Sections (3): 1666-1670," *The Oxford History of the Novel in English*, I, *Prose Fiction in English from the Origins of Print to 1750*, ed. Thomas Keymer (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017) 73-88.

[19] See Margaret Cavendish, "To the Reader": "I have made a world of my own: for which no body, I hope, will blame me, since it is in every one's power to do the like" (124). *The Description of a New World, Called the Blazing World,* ed. Kate Lilley (London: Penguin, 2004).

[20] For instance, Stachniewski identifies an added pronoun in the fifth edition that clarifies that Bunyan is wondering about honoring *God's* will, not the devil's, which would be too profane a possibility. For Stachniewski, such a revision is evidence of Bunyan's "nervous sanitation … This makes clear the direction in which revision of experience moves in the process of narration. It is a verbally tiny but nevertheless important instance of the ways in which the later editions are less reliable (if, that is, one wants to get as close as possible to what Bunyan claims to be giving us: '*the thing as it was')*." According to Stachniewski, any choice to reconfigure the original therefore "falsifies the thought process in dramatizing it" (fn 57).

[21] Brooke Conti has argued that subsequent editions winnow out details that would compromise the generalizations Bunyan wants his readers to take part in. Conti considers only the first edition, claiming "those changes, unlike Browne's revisions to *Religio Medici*, do not notably alter the original work" (162). Conti sees a theoretical compatibility between Bunyan's handling of details and his creedal project, across all of his autobiographical works, including the autobiographical glosses in *The Doctrine of Law and Grace Unfolded* as well as *Grace Abounding*: the balance is in "tethering the particular religious experience of an individual to a larger, shared faith" (146). But it breaks down, Conti says, in ways wholly out of Bunyan's control and intention: *"*Once again, the text seems caught between competing impulses: to provide a more general, exemplary version of Bunyan's autobiography, and to tell a more personal and detailed one" (147). *Confessions of Faith in Early Modern England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2014). I don't think that the drives to generalize and to particularize are incompatible; it's more accurate to say that details *themselves* harness these two impulses at the same time.

[22] See Stachniewski's footnote in *GA*, 233.

[23] For the architectural description, see Stachniewski's note in *GA,* 234.

[24] That textual fellowship is juxtaposed, at the same time in Bunyan's life, with the disappointment of conferring with an unnamed godly man in his own community: "About this time I took an opportunity to break my Mind to an Antient Christian; and told him all my case. I told him also, that I was afraid that I had sinned the sine against the Holy Ghost; and he told me, *he thought so too*. Here therefore I had but cold comfort but talking a little more with him, I found him, though a good man, a stranger to much Combate with the Devil" (51). Bunyan also has little to recommend or recall specifically about his conversations with John Gifford, the first pastor of the Bedford Independent congregation, though he appears several times in *Grace Abounding.*

[25] Luther on Chapter 5, verse 3: "And this which I say by occasion of Pauls words ['they themselves which are circumcised keep not the law'], I have learned both in my selfe and others. I have seene many which have painfully travelled, and upon mere conscience have done as much as was possible for them to doe, is fasting, in prayer, in wearing of haire, in punishing and tormenting their bodies is sundry exercises (whereby a length they must needs have utterly consumed them, yea although they had been made of yron) and all to this end that they might obtaine

quietnesse and peace of conscience: notwithstanding, the more they travelled, the more they were stricken downe with feare, and specially when the houre of death approached they were so fearefull, that I have seen many murtherers and other malefactors condemned to death, dying more courageously then they did, which notwithstanding had lived very holily." *A commentarie of Master Doctor Martin Luther upon the epistle of S. Paul to the Galathians [sic] first collected and gathered word by word out of his preaching and now out of Latine faithfully translated into English for the unlearned : wherein is set forth most excellently the glorious riches of Gods grace and the power of the Gospell ..* , 1644. ProQuest, https://www.proquest.com/books/commentarie-master-doctor-martin-luther-upon/docview/2241003867/se-2?accountid=14026.

[26] *OED* v, II.8

[27] In the original Spira narrative by Nathaniel Bacon, Spira is described as "pineing" but there's no use of "twineing" in the whole text.

[28] Here is the passage from Bacon's translation: "The *Legate* perceiving *Spira* to faint, he pursues him to the utmost; he causeth a recitation of all his Errors to be drawn in writing, together with the Confession annexed to it, and commands *Spira* to subscribe his name there, which accordingly he did; then the *Legate* commands him to return to his own Towne; and there to declare this Confession of his, and to acknowledg the whole Doctrine of the Church of *Rome* to be holy, and true, and to abjure the Opinions of *Luther,* and other such Teachers, as false, and heretical: *Man knowes the beginning of sinne, but who bounds the issues thereof? Spira* having once lost footing, goes down a maine, he cannot stay, nor gain-say the *Legate*" (14). *A relation of the fearful estate of Francis Spira, in the year 1548 compiled by Natth. Bacon, Esq.,* 1649. ProQuest, https://www.proquest.com/books/relation-fearful-estate-francis-spira-year-1548/docview/2240954731/se-2?accountid=14026.

[29] He contextualizes the *Sell him* episode in terms of Esau's birthright (41), Job 29.2 (42), Judas (44).