THE DEAD POET SOCIETY:

ELEGIES FOR SIR PHILIP SIDNEY, WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE, AND BEN JONSON

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ABSTRACT

English

After 1586, a unique print tradition began in Renaissance England: the dead-poet elegy. This thesis examines elegies written for Sir Philip Sidney, William Shakespeare, and Ben Jonson to demonstrate how poets developed the funeral elegy into a pertinent medium to create and sustain poetic communities. Edmund Spenser's *Astrophel* collection transformed Sidney's death into an opportunity to continuously interact with the writer and his works, initiating the collaborative practices of the tradition by constructing a community of poets and texts around the dead author. Almost thirty years later, Shakespeare's elegists expanded the scope of Spenser's collaborative model to include not only poets, but readers. The elegy became a vehicle for debate among members of literary communities, a forum to conduct conversations through which deceased poets were granted continuation into the future. Jonson and his elegists elaborated the strategies of their precedents, transforming the elegy into a space for commentary and criticism. By incorporating Jonsonian values into their poetic practices, Jonson's elegists revealed that critical thinking was, and still is, necessary for the preservation of poets. Together, they exhibit the elegy as an opportunity to create and assimilate living critical thinkers, readers, and writers into their dead-poet society.

French

Après 1586, une tradition unique d'impression fit son apparition dans l'Angleterre de la Renaissance : l'élégie écrite en mémoire à des poètes disparus. Ce mémoire examine les élégies écrites pour Sir Philip Sidney, pour William Shakespeare et pour Ben Jonson afin de démontrer de quelles manières les poètes développent l'élégie funéraire en un moyen pertinent qui a pour but de créer et de maintenir des communautés poétiques. Le recueil de poèmes *Astrophel* par Edmund Spenser transforma la mort de Sidney en une opportunité pour interagir de façon continuelle avec le poète et ses travaux, introduisant les pratiques collaboratives de cette tradition par le biais de la construction d'une communauté de poètes et de textes autour de l'auteur défunt. Au siècle suivant, les auteurs d'élégies en mémoire à Shakespeare étendent la portée du modèle collaboratif de Spenser en y incluant non seulement des poètes, mais aussi des lecteurs. L'élégie devient alors un véhicule de débats parmi les membres des communautés littéraires, un forum où mener des conversations à travers lesquelles les poètes disparus accèdent à une continuité dans le futur. Jonson et ses poètes élégiaques élaborent et développent les stratégies de leurs précédents, transformant l'élégie en un espace de commentaires et de critiques. En incorporant les valeurs Jonsoniennes à leurs pratiques poétiques, les poètes élégiaques de Jonson révèlent que la pensée critique est nécessaire à la préservation des poètes. Ensemble, ils exposent l'élégie comme une opportunité à la création et à l'assimilation des penseurs, des lecteurs et des écrivains critiques vivants dans leur cercle de poètes disparus.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

In many ways, the word "opportunity" governs this thesis. I have used it extensively – shamelessly – in an attempt to elaborate the possibilities created by the Renaissance dead-poet elegy. Yet, for all the opportunities offered and fulfilled in the fifty-three-year period that this project covers, none outshine that which was given to me. Thank you, Professor Maggie Kilgour, for your overflowing well of knowledge, your boundless patience, and your unrelenting support from the first moment I arrived at your doorstep. You have given me this opportunity, which I hope to one day repay in the coin that you have minted.

Alas, today dead poets abound. In times of Coronavirus, there are unfortunately more than usual. Perhaps the death of Sir Philip Sidney begun the printed elegy for deceased authors, but for me it was the death of one poet in particular. Thank you, dad, for the love of words you fostered within me and for every single conversation we had about them. You lead me to the doors that I was too scared to approach, and your music was the tincture of bravery that waltzed me through each one. I hear you still, in all of the ways and all of the stars that we made and are ever forever regenerating anew. I am not much of a poet, but this is my dead-poet elegy for you. I miss you very much.

Mom, your love and delight of those breathers that populate the world continues to astound me. I will forever be grateful for the meliorism you have maintained in the face of despondency. Thank you for teaching me how to remember, and how to wait, enthusiastically, for the future.

Gall, I asked for you as my 7th birthday present. Since, your existence has bettered me in every single way. I don't know who I would be without you. Probably the tallest person in our family.

"By Mourning Tongues": Introducing the Dead-Poet Elegy

By mourning tongues

The death of the poet was kept from his poems.

(W. H. Auden "In Memory of W. B. Yeats" 10-11)

Often considered one of the most persistent art forms in Western culture, the funeral elegy[1] spans centuries of development from the pre-classical biblical period to this day. This fact is unsurprising, as death has been an unavoidable reality since the first moment of human existence. In the English literary canon, the roots of this tradition are identifiable in the Old Testament[2] and the classical period (Weisman 1; Falco 63; Smith ii, 16, 33). Throughout the Medieval period, many English funeral poems were primarily exercises that questioned and explored the efficacy of religious consolation (Kay 2; Fumo 121, 126). Indeed, as Jamie C. Fumo notes, "the word 'elegy' is not recorded in English until 1514" (120). Following the Reformation, however, "[t]he focus of funeral observances shifted radically towards the secular" (Kay 3). Concurrently, the focus of funeral verse shifted towards the individual. Elegists from the 16th century onwards began realizing the necessity for "uniqueness both for the subject and for the elegy" (Kay 4).

In Renaissance England, the personal, vernacular elegy became "an ideal of personal expression" and an opportunity to overthrow the "grief-stricken impasse" of earlier mourning verse (Pigman 3; Fumo 121; Alexander 59). Some critics suggest that the elegy developed out of the rejection of Medieval English poetic traditions. Others have attributed the rise of the popular elegy to the Elizabethans' attempts to appropriate continental literature (Falco 4).

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[1] I use the term "funeral elegy" to distinguish between two separate traditions of elegiac literature: elegies of lament and love elegies. This thesis focuses exclusively on elegies of lament. For more information on love elegies in the Latin tradition, see Paul Allen Miller's "'What's Love got to do with it?': The Peculiar Story of Elegy in Rome" and Gordon Braden's "Classical Love Elegy in the Renaissance (and after)."

[2] For a meticulous discussion of the Biblical elegy of lament, see Edward L. Greenstein's "Lamentation and Lament in the Hebrew Bible."

However, England's rising awareness of the significance of art in society also contributed to the development of the elegy. Since antiquity, the elegy was an opportunity for poets to explore the ability of texts to influence the world. In Renaissance England, the tradition of the elegy allowed authors to question the place and purpose of poetry within a culture of rising literary awareness. As Daniel Kay claims, for 16th-century England, a genre that may be

> approached in terms of tradition, influence, authority, the large questions raised by the individual poet's relation both to his predecessors and to death itself…appears to have constituted a species of poetic activity that was especially receptive to the generic variety that has come to be recognized as central to Renaissance principles of composition.
>
> (7)

The humanist education of early modern England aligned well with the generic demands of the elegy. Humanists endorsed forms of engagement with historic traditions that encouraged innovation from interaction with literary precedents. Moreover, the elegy's tendency to encourage literary introspection resonated with Renaissance principles of literature. Karen Weisman notes the poetic meditation associated with the genre, claiming that "[w]here elegy marks a passage from the inchoate gasp to the formalized utterance, from the chaos of the mind to the ordered presentation of a publicly available expression, an implicit self-reflexivity is inevitable" (1). For a national community in the process of forming a literary "genealogical past" (Falco 63), the funeral elegy of the late 16th century was an appropriate genre for discovering the intricacies of poetic craft and for examining the place of authors within and apart from literary genealogies. Naturally, the elegy was also the suitable form to represent death and question strategies of consolation.[3] For elegists, the genre was "the quintessential

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[3] Death was a contentious subject in Elizabethan England, in part due to the religious turmoil of the early 16th century. For more information on the religious underpinnings of the vernacular elegy in England, see Lorna Clymer's "The Funeral Elegy in Early Modern Britain: A Brief History."

Renaissance kind" (Kay 6), an opportunity to explore the role of the poet in early modern English society.

The death of one poet in particular is largely considered the reason for the proliferation of elegies in late Elizabethan England: Sir Philip Sidney. As Raphael Falco notes, "[t]here is virtually no vernacular tradition of funeral elegy, contractual or otherwise, before 1587" (63), the year following Sidney's death. Falco claims that Sidney was considered the first notable poet to argue for the need for vernacular poetry in the English language and was therefore the most appropriate subject for the vernacular elegy (53). Others have suggested that, as Sidney was the ideal courtier of Elizabethan England, his death evoked many commemorative poems (Duncan-Jones *passim*; Falco 64). In general, however, critics have noted that printed verse obsequies were practically nonexistent before Sidney's funeral (Colaianne and Godshalk ix–xi; Pigman 53; Falco 63; Kay 53). After Sidney's death, the genre became instantly popular. The year of Sidney's funeral saw the publication of three elegy collections, while many verse compilations and individual elegies were circulated in the following years. Indeed, as Gavin Alexander writes, "[m]ost of the writers of the 1590s and 1600s had something to say about Sidney" (66). However, the "Sidney mourned in 1587 was not the Sidney of the 1590s" (Alexander 57). Far from it. Sidney of the late 1580s was primarily remembered as a courtier, patron, and military man. Following the posthumous publications of his *The New Arcadia* and *Astrophel and Stella*, poets began transforming Sidney from a soldier and military man to the national poet of the English language. By the publication of Edmund Spenser's *Astrophel* (1595), England's recollections of Sidney were practically unreconcilable with representations of him from the 1580s. Spenser sought to and succeeded in claiming Sidney as a poet of English letters and by the late 1590s Sidney was primarily recalled as an author rather than a soldier.

Sidney's death was not only the "most important event in [his] literary career" (Alexander xix), but the catalyst that engendered a Renaissance tradition: the dead-poet elegy. These are early modern elegies written for other deceased poets. My thesis seeks to contribute to contemporary scholarship on funeral verse by considering these topical elegies as a single corpus with identifiable properties. In many ways, these elegies closely follow the vernacular funeral elegy. Both are occasional verse practices and employ similar literary strategies in their explorations and representations of subject-matter or in their querying of death itself. However, these traditions are not identical, nor is their overlap complete. Funeral elegies often incorporate the deceased's individual achievements, familial connections, and social status as subject matter for commemoration (Kay 1-6). Dead-poet elegies often depart from the individual's life. Frequently, they elegize the dead through engagement with the deceased's works. The deceased's oeuvre offered elegists opportunities for commentary, revision, and literary evaluation. Moreover, while other elegies of the period conventionally figured the deceased within national narratives or communal and familial circles, dead-poet elegies attempted to establish primarily *literary* communities – societies composed of readers, writers, and even critics. These elegies' unique quality is their primary focus on texts. Whereas other elegiac poetry commemorates individual lives and attempts to console mourners, these elegies often position poems as the subjects of memorialization. Their consolation lies in their ability to engage with and so keep alive those works to which they allude. By offering authors continuity through the conversations of literary communities, "[t]he death of the poet[s] [are] kept from [their] poems ("In Memory of W. B. Yeats" 10-11). They are granted a form of immortality. The elegists discussed in this thesis explicitly and constantly interact with dead poets' works as primary source material for their elegies; they draw on, imitate, revise, debate, and argue about the deceased's poems. Moreover, the elegy is often an opportunity for criticism, whether of representations and imagery, poetic form, or artistic ideology. These

poems offered elegists occasions to engage with one another as well. Often, elegists enter into poetic conversations with other elegies written for the same poet. It is through this intertextual model of engagement that the elegists attempt to establish ties that bind their literary communities together. They arguably succeeded.[4]

My thesis begins with the *fin de siècle* of the 16th century. I trace the development of printed dead-poet elegies from Edmund Spenser's *Astrophel* collection, to the elegies that preface William Shakespeare's works, and I conclude with the collection of elegiac verse written in 1638 for Ben Jonson following his death. I argue that poets in this fifty-year span employ the elegy as a means of forming, consolidating, and exploring literary communities by engaging with the deceased's works and through elegists' interaction with one another's poetry.

I begin with Spenser's *Astrophel*, a collection of elegies for Sir Philip Sidney (1595). I demonstrate the thematic and formal strategies Spenser and his fellow elegists used to lay the foundations for the communal practices seen in elegies in the following century. By comparing Spenser's "Astrophel" (the first poem in the *Astrophel* collection) with elegies written for Sidney in the late 1580s, I show how Spenser transforms Sidney from soldier to poet. Spenser uses the pastoral genre both as an opportunity to criticize Sidney's military behavior and as an opportunity to claim Sidney as an author. Spenser argues for collaborative forms of authorship

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[4] Literary communities of early modern England were both highly gendered and racialized. There is virtually no tradition of the Renaissance elegy outside of white author communities, and there are despairingly few published women elegists. Lauren Shohet notes that "[e]legy was considered one of the more appropriate genres for female writers" (433). Yet, as she claims, the difference in opportunities between female and male writers in early modern England was profound. Many "coteries…inherently exclude[d] women" and women's opportunities for print publication were minimal (434). The gendered inequality of the period affected the dissemination of women's works. The female elegists who participate in the tradition are noteworthy and Mary Sidney should be dedicated particular attention. Mary Sidney contributed "The Doleful Lay of Clorinda" to Spenser's "Astrophel" and wrote another elegy to her deceased sibling, "To the Angel Spirit of the Most Excellent Sir Philip Sidney," which prefaces the psalms translations which Philip Sidney had begun, and that Mary Sidney had completed (Shohet 435). Anne Bradstreet, a 17th-century English-American poet also wrote elegies for Sidney. While outside the scope of this thesis, women elegists indeed demand further research.

and he signals his project by appending *Astrophel* to *Colin Clouts Come Home Againe*. The juxtaposition of his works suggests a communal model of creativity that poets may practice without losing their distinctive individuality. Poetry, for Spenser, is both collective and individual. This dynamic reveals how poets worked together to continuously engage with one another, even after death. Spenser initiates and argues for the intertextual strategies that offer elegists and deceased poets the opportunity to create literary communities.

Nearly thirty years later, William Shakespeare's *Mr. William Shakespeares Comedies, Histories & Tragedies* was published, today commonly known as the First Folio. The Folio, like the Second Folio published in the following decade, was prefaced by elegies written by Ben Jonson and other contemporaries. I argue that Shakespeare's elegists develop Spenser's intertextual engagements to interrogate the efficacy of literature to immortalize poets for posterity. Shakespeare's elegists reveal that readers are necessary to sustain poetic communities. They engage with and revise Shakespeare's *Sonnets* and his use of the monument *topos* in order to invite readers into the project of immortalizing Shakespeare. These poems anticipate the elegies of the following decade by demonstrating how poetry also allows for criticism. The prefatorial poets further develop dialogues between elegists. Several of the elegists explicitly respond to one another, revising each other's representations of Shakespeare and debating artistic craft. John Milton's elegy for Shakespeare, which prefaces the Second Folio, explores and ultimately reworks Shakespeare's use of the classical monument *topos*. By revising Shakespeare's aesthetics, Milton not only acknowledges the importance of readers, he identifies them as the conferrers of immortality. Shakespeare's elegists further develop the communities created by the dead-poet elegy. Sidney's elegists create literary communities consolidated around deceased poets, but Shakespeare's elegists develop the practices that allow poets to sustain those communities for posterity.

In many ways, Ben Jonson embodies the development of the dead-poet elegy. Like Shakespeare's other elegists and Spenser before them, Jonson recognizes the need for poetic communities. Jonson is often hailed as the leading literary critic of the period and the importance of criticism informs his works. Throughout his life, Jonson develops the form of critical engagement anticipated by Milton's elegy for Shakespeare by deliberately using thematic and formal strategies to explore others' poetry. Jonson also strove to instill these forms of engagement into members of his literary circles. I argue that Jonsonian criticism is incorporated into his peers' poetry both before and after his death. As Spenser anticipated in his *Astrophel*, reconciliation between individual and communal bodies is paramount for literary societies. Although Jonson argued for the need for literary circles throughout his life, his aspirations for poetic fame and immortality were often perceived as egotistic. Jonson's individualism occasionally clashed with his societies and the communal practices they endorsed. Jonson's "Ode Upon Himself" ("Ode"), prompted by the failure of Jonson's *The New Inne* (1629), expresses the tension between a poet's dependence on communal collaboration and the egotistic desire for fame. His peers' responses use Jonsonian strategies to critically comment on Jonson's "Ode," revising Jonson's representations and formal strategies to reconcile Jonson with his public. These poems anticipate *Jonsonus Virbius*, a collection of elegies for Jonson published following his death. Throughout, Jonson's elegists use similar strategies to the "Ode" responders. They draw on his works to memorialize Jonson on his terms. Jonson's elegists demonstrate the importance of criticism through their critical exploration and revision of his poetry; they sustain their poetic community by collectively negotiating the relationship of a poet with the public and with posterity. Ultimately, they expose how Jonson's critical language enables the discussion that enshrines him. If Sidney's and Shakespeare's elegists created and explored communities, Jonson's elegists use his language to populate literary societies. They offer others ways to become writers, readers, and critics,

bringing them together and developing the conversations through which those communities are maintained.

In less than fifty years, the Renaissance dead-poet elegy evolved to provide artists with opportunities to form and join poetic communities. I argue that the elegy develops from the collaborative practices of Spenser's *Astrophel* to the active and sustainable intertextual engagement manifest in Jonson's and his peers' poetry. I also suggest that elegies of the English Renaissance contribute to our modern understanding of poetic subjectivity, as they remind us that the individual poetic subject is always imbricated within the literary collective. As is so often the case with early modern writers, all these poets were highly concerned with the ways poetry can affect change. Dead-poet elegies were but one fruit of their endeavors, but they attempted to, and succeeded in, initiating and organizing the debates around poets and poetry that keep them alive to this day.

"Hearken, Ye Gentle Shepheards, to my Song":
Community Building in Spenser's *Astrophel*

> But if (fie of such a but) you be born so near the dull-making cataract of Nilus that you cannot hear the planet-like music of poetry…thus much curse I must send you in the behalf of all poets—that while you live, you live in love, and never get favor for lacking skill of a sonnet; and when you die, your memory die for want of an epigraph.

(Sidney *Defense of Poetry* 126)

When Sir Philip Sidney died on October 17th, 1586, England mourned for him in verse. [5] The year of Sidney's funeral saw the publication of three separate university commissioned elegy collections, practically unheard of before Sidney's death (Colaianne and Godshalk ix–xi; Pigman 53). A staggering amount of poetry compilations and individual elegies were published in the following years (Alexander 57-58). Yet the Sidney mourned in late 1586 and 1587 was entirely distinct from the Sidney who prevails in cultural thought today, a Sidney that was constructed in the early 1590s up to the early 1600s. Sidney of the late 1580s was primarily remembered as a patron and soldier and the cultural memory of Sidney as a military figure is explicit in the early elegies written for him (Alexander 59; Falco 95-96). In fact, early elegists often fail to even acknowledge Sidney's literary aspirations because few knew about them (Kay 53; Alexander 57). Richard Helgerson places Sidney in the category of the amateur poet, a poet who "allowed none of his literary productions to be printed and referred to the *Arcadia*, the most ambitious of his undertakings as his 'toyful book' to be read by his sister and her friends 'at your idle times'" (*Self-Crowned Laureates* 38). In his *Defense of Poetry*, too, Sidney belittles his literary achievements, calling them "ink-wasting toy[s]" (124-25). Sidney's seriousness toward his own works is still debated today; however, at the time of his death and the immediate period following, the perfect courtier of Elizabethan

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[5] John Buxton discusses the extent to which Sidney was mourned in his "The Mourning for Sidney." See esp. 47-50.

England was mourned as a hero of battle. His relationship with the written arts was remembered as one of encouragement and often monetary appreciation rather than active participation.

An anonymous writer claimed that, around "2 o'clock," Sir Philip Sidney "departed in wonderful perfect memory even to the last grasp" from his wounds (qtd. in Duncan-Jones 303). The "perfect memor[ies]" of Sidney were primarily militaristic portrayals. Early elegies and descriptions of Sidney often foreground his cultural status as a soldier and mythologize him as such. In a poem attributed to G.W., titled "Of the life, death, and Noble vertues of the most Aduenturous Knight Sir Phillip Sydney, &c," Sidney is compared to various military figures. As G.W. recounts the battle that led to Sidney's death, he claims that, apart from Sidney, "Caesar alone, on the fierce Neruji ran, / Alexander leap, from the selfsame Cicerie[?]" (pp. 333 or B4).[6] Later, G.W. explicitly represents Sidney as the Roman god of war. He notes that

Sydney, much like to Mars in views,

With furious charge, did breake upon the foe,

A Musket shot, his stately horse then flew.

(pp. 335 or C4)

The comparisons emphasize Sidney's status as a soldier. He is like Caesar, Alexander, and even Mars. G.W. notes Sidney's strength as well, claiming that "no mans power, could ever yet appale [Sidney]" (pp. 335 or C4). Sidney's actions are physical, heroic, and violent: "leap," "power," "furious," and "breake" (pp. 333-35 or B4-C4). His isolation, too, indicates his military prowess. He is "alone" and is bested by "no mans power" (pp. 333 or B4).[7]

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[6] The only edition of *Elegies for Sir Philip Sidney (1587)*, a facsimile collection of elegies for Sidney from 1587, has no table of contents, pagination, or line numbers. A manual count of the pages beginning after the introduction identifies this passage on pp. 333-35, or from the B4 recto page to the C4 recto page of the poem with this title (towards the end of the book). I have standardized the text. Question marks in brackets indicate corrupt print.

[7] Although published much later, *Sir Fulke Greville's Life of Sir Philip Sidney etc.*, too, describes Sidney in the terminology of an epic hero. Sidney, "meeting the Marshall of the Camp lightly armed…by the secret influence

Gradually throughout the 1590s, however, Sidney became acknowledged more and more as a poet. His popularity as a courtier made him a prime target for appropriation, and as Sidney's cultural status became contested, poets acted on the opportunity to claim the deceased as one of their own. This shift was presumably initiated by the publication of *The New Arcadia* (1590) and *Astrophil and Stella* (1591) (Alexander 64). By 1593, with the publication of *The Phoenix Nest*, Sidney is concurrently recalled as both soldier and poet. While many poems still ignored Sidney's status as a writer completely (suggesting ignorance of the fact), others fondly recalled him as a poet. "An Elegie, or Friends passion, for his Astrophill"[8] calls attention to Sidney's poetry by using the name of Sidney's poetic persona, "Astrophel," in the poem's title. Later, too, Sidney is referred to as "Astrophil" (94). "Phillis philbert" was a common way of referring to Sidney and was also the title of another collection of elegies for him (*The Phoenix Nest* xviii). The writer of "An Elegie, or Friends passion, for his Astrophill" claims that "the Muses met" "Phillis philbert," whom they "taught…to sing, to write, and say" (104, 23, 105). His mind, the Muses claim, was "[a] Poet's brain" (22). Selections of this poem, and two others from *The Phoenix Nest*, make it into Edmund Spenser's collection, *Astrophel*, which was appended to his *Colin Clouts Come Home Againe* (*Colin Clout*, published 1595). By the time of the publication of *Colin Clout*, there is an explicit paradigm shift in the way Sidney's elegists chose to represent Sidney. Many poets begin to exclusively refer to Sidney and his beloved through Sidney's poetic terminology (Astrophil, Stella). Simultaneously, his military endeavors are significantly deemphasized, and his poetic achievements are highlighted.

This shift is not unprecedented as Sidney himself had set the groundwork for his transformation. In his *Defense of Poetry*, Sidney begins with an image of himself as a soldier:

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of destiny, to disarm that part, where God (it seems) had resolved to strike him" (128). I have modernized the spelling. For more information on Greville's fictionalization of Sidney, see Alan Hager "The Exemplary Mirage: Fabrication of Sir Philip Sidney's Biographical Image and the Sidney Reader," especially 9.

[8] All citations from "An Elegie, or Friends passion, for his Astrophill" are taken from the facsimile of *The Phoenix Nest, 1593*, edited by Hyder Edward Rollins.

"When the right virtuous Edward Wotton and I were at the Emperor's Court together, we gave ourselves to learn horsemanship…He [John Pietro Pugliano] said soldiers were the noblest estate of mankind, and horsemen the noblest of soldiers…I think he would have persuaded me to have wished myself a horse" (56). However, Sidney uses this example as a theoretical springboard to justify his preoccupation with poetry, saying that "I know not by what mischance in these my not old years and idlest times," he has "slipped into the title of a poet" (57). He had created the opportunity for poets to rethink his status as a military man. By 1595, the English poets producing the proliferation of elegies for their celebrated courtier transform Sidney from soldier and patron into an exemplary model of the poet, drawing on Sidney's own works as justification.

While Spenser's "Astrophel" is not the first poem to treat Sidney in primarily literary terms, the *Astrophel* collection of elegies is arguably the first explicit attempt to consolidate a literary community rallying around the dead poet. Spenser transforms Sidney into a poet by blurring the distinction between him and his works. He deliberately participates in a form of engagement with Sidney that is textual and initiates a model of poetic reciprocity that will continue to thrive in the next century. Rather than praise his military successes, Spenser foregrounds Sidney the poet and engages with him through Sidney's own poetic works.

One way in which Spenser affects Sidney's transformation is through the generic choice of the pastoral, which reformulates Sidney into the shepherd-poet. Gavin Alexander claims that the uniqueness of the *Astrophel* collection lies in "[the elegists'] agreement that a pastoral setting is appropriate to the job of mourning Sidney… Because Sidney was a pastoral poet, and because Spenser's great pastoral work had been dedicated to him, the pastoral world seemed…a place where writers who had never met him could go to claim fellowship with him" (71). This is a generic development. As Sukanta Chaudhuri claims, Spenser "virtually inaugurates [introduces] English Renaissance pastoral" (5). The pastoral also allowed Spenser

to confront the military Sidney through generic terms. The pastoral paradise of the shepherds would not accommodate militaristic representations. The genre offered Spenser the opportunity to transform Sidney into a conventionally accepted part of the genre: a poet.[9] Spenser uses the pastoral genre and the conventions of the vernacular funeral elegy to transform Sidney from soldier to poet. This innovation is key; Spenser and the other poets of the *Astrophel* collection are unique in their use of such literary strategies to facilitate the shift in Sidney's cultural representation.

Many have rightly claimed that Spenser's *Astrophel* incorporates the pastoral in order to assimilate Sidney into a poetic community (Alexander 69; Cheney 249). I argue that Spenser and the poets go further by modeling their engagement with Sidney on the poem to which the collection is appended: *Colin Clouts Come Home Againe*. Spenser's title poem demonstrates a model of interaction that encourages poets to engage with Sidney's own poetic works. Critics such as Raphael Falco suggest that Spenser assimilates Sidney into the history of an emerging national English literature. However, Spenser also allows the poets to engage with the deceased Sidney as a peer within a *living* poetic community, established by the *Astrophel* elegies. The elegists of the collection define members both in terms of the poet and their works, which allow elegists to engage with Sidney's own works even though the poet can no longer respond. The genre of the elegy is traditionally intertextual. Yet, by 17th-century England funeral verse became explicitly "self-referential;" poets had begun to consciously meditate on and call attention to other poets and poems writing in the elegy genre (Clymer 175). By transforming Sidney into a poet, Spenser anticipates and develops this tradition. *Astrophel* demonstrates that

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[9] The pastoral genre is often considered one of the hardest to define due to the pastoral's tendency to merge with other literary forms. The pastoral often calls attention to the generic tensions that surface from interacting with other genres and other modes of representation. Stuart Curran notes that "so protean a form as the pastoral…the fluidity with which pastoral migrates into other forms, the enduring feature of pastoral is its double vision" (88). For an in-depth discussion of the Pastoral Elegy genre, see Ellen Zetzel Lambert's *Placing Sorrow: A Study of the Pastoral Elegy Convention from Theocritus to Milton*.

the dead-poet elegy is an opportunity for poets to consolidate a community through intertextual strategies. The authors quote, paraphrase, allude to, and rewrite Sidney's work in their elegies. As Dennis Kay writes, "pastoral poems are made of other pastoral poems" (29). Moreover, the elegists use similar devices to engage with one another. The elegists reference and acknowledge the other *Astrophel* poets in their poems. With the possible exception of Spenser's own "Astrophel," the poems of the collection were composed earlier than 1595. Yet, the selection process of the compiler, whether Spenser or another, is indicative of strategies of the collection as a whole. Many of the poems were apparently chosen for their appropriate thematization of the subject matter, or because of their illuminating juxtaposition with one another. The collection constructs a community comprised of individual poets and poems, initiated, consolidated, and maintained by the dead-poet elegy.

From the opening lines of "Astrophel," Spenser begins to transform Sidney from soldier to poet. Rather than recount the events of Sidney's death, Spenser represents Sidney's life in terms of the pastoral community. Spenser draws on conventional pastoral cues such as the figure of the shepherd, the reeds on which they play, and even their audience: the "countrey lasses" (4).[10] Indeed, Spenser identifies the setting of the elegy as the very specific pastoral world of Sidney's works: "A Gentle shepheard borne in Arcady / … / …and Astrophel he hight" (19, 24). As Chaudhuri writes, "'Arcady' relates on the one hand to Sidney's *Arcadia*, on the other to the standard pastoral landscape" (184). The specificity of the pastoral setting allows Spenser to fictionalize Sidney in terms of his own literary works, and to justify the poetic Sidney and his works as a cultural alternative to Sidney the soldier. Many of Spenser's representations find precedent in Sidney's *Astrophil and Stella*. As Falco notes, Stella's death

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[10] All citations to Spenser's *Colin Clouts Come Home Againe* and the *Astrophel* collection are taken from the online version of *The Complete Poetical Works*, edited by R. E. Neil Dodge, available on *Bartleby*. The Henry E. Huntington Library and Art Gallery's digitized manuscript version, available on *Early English Books Online*, was also consulted.

next to Astrophel is fictional (108). More shocking for contemporary readers was Astrophel's

and Stella's implied marriage. Widely accepted to be Penelope Devereux (later Penelope Rich),

Stella was always a "lost" "chance" for Sidney (Duncan-Jones 199). These and other elisions

facilitate Sidney's transformation from a mythologized soldier to a pastoral poet.

In order to present Sidney as a poet, Spenser needs to invoke and ultimately reject the

militaristic portrayal of Sidney common in the late 1580s.[11] He sets up a dual representation of

Sidney as both a shepherd within a community and an individual military hero whose self-

isolation plays a part in his demise. From the outset of the poem, the speaker addresses a

community, one which he considers himself a part of: "Hearken, ye gentle shepheards, to my

song, / And place my dolefull plaint your plaints emong" (5-6). Sidney too, belonged to this

community: "For he could pipe, and daunce, and caroll sweet, / Emongst the shepheards in

their shearing feast" (49-50). However, as Spenser's speaker recounts Astrophel's militaristic

actions, he begins to separate Sidney from that community. As Spenser's speaker's suggestive

aside, "[b]oth wise and hardie (too hardie, alas!)," foreshadows (90), Spenser moves from

Astrophel's 'pastoral' qualities to critiquing his physical attributes. Patrick Cheney writes that

"Spenser presents Sidney as unusual because he jumps the gap of conceptual

oppositions…Astrophel combines physical and moral beauty…. Astrophel moves along the

Virgilian career track: from the pastoral world of 'Shepheard[s]' (1) to the world of epic

hunting, the fatal battle at Zutphen…. Spenser presents Sidney as a poet-soldier who gave his

life on 'forreine soyle'" (249). Yet, Cheney ignores the implicit reproof of Sidney during this

transformation. For Spenser, Astrophel's military characteristics are the cause of his downfall.

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[11] Falco contends that Spenser's decision to depict Sidney as a soldier is necessitated by earlier representations of Sidney. The popularity of Sidney's militaristic portrayals would have forced Spenser to acknowledge them. Falco claims that "[t]he preoccupation of Sidney's earlier elegists with their subject's martial exploits would have made it difficult for Spenser, without losing his credibility, to disparage Astrophel's military side to favor his poetic side" (99).

They stand in opposition to conventional pastoral values (Kay 111–12; O'Connell 29–30). As Spenser recounts Astrophel's development into a soldier, he states that Astrophel was

> In wrestling nimble, and in renning swift,
>
> In shooting steddie, and in swimming strong:
>
> Well made to strike, to throw, to leape, to lift,
>
> And all the sports that shepheards are among:
>
> In every one he vanquisht every one,
>
> He vanquisht all, and vanquisht was of none.
>
> (91-96)

 No longer located "[e]mongst the shepheards" (50), Astrophel is represented in the vocabulary of the 1580s elegies for Sidney. Spenser's depiction of Sidney's attributes resonates with G.W.'s earlier poem, "Of the life, death…." Astrophel's activities all suggest battle rather than "sports that shepheards are emong" (94). He is "wrestling," "shooting," and "strik[ing]" (91, 92, 93). Spenser ignores the communal activities associated with shepherds earlier in the poem, such as singing or shearing. For Spenser, Astrophel's actions signal his isolation. Spenser calls attention to Astrophel's lack of communal involvement by repeating the word "one" twice and the conquering "vanquisht" three times in two lines (95-96). Spenser's emphasis suggests that Astrophel's militaristic behavior isolates him from the pastoral community.

Astrophel's separation is further emphasized in the final battle that results in his death. Sidney's martial exploits have resulted in his isolation. Now, Astrophel's

> care was all how he them all might kill,
>
> That none might scape (so partiall unto none):
>
> Ill mynd, so much to mynd anothers ill,

As to become unmyndfull of his owne.

<div align="right">(127-30)</div>

Spenser presents Astrophel as an undiscriminating aggressor, killing all his enemies: "how he them all might kill, / That none might scape (so partiall unto none)" (127). Spenser's disapproval of Astrophel's behavior is made explicit. Astrophel's "[i]ll mynd" has lead him to reject his fellow shepherds and he has "become unmyndfull of his owne" (130). Treating poetry as trifling and military endeavors worthy, Spenser implies, is a tragic error. This is a revealing shift from the earlier elegies. Spenser frames the conventional 1580s depiction of Sidney as cause for alarm rather than celebration. No longer singing in merriment, the narrative of "Astrophel" makes no mention of the poetic achievements Astrophel formerly had, nor of the poetic community of which he was a part, up until his death (168).

Astrophel's transformation from a communal subject to an individual soldier complicates the traditional militaristic image of Sidney. Spenser suggests that going outside the poetic community has deadly consequences. Had Sidney remained with his fellow shepherds, his death would have been prevented. Spenser calls attention to Astrophel's lack of communal involvement in the fifty-five lines leading up to his death by questioning the shepherds (90-145):

> Ah! where were ye this while, his shepheard peares,
>
> To whom alive was nought so deare as hee?
>
> And ye, faire mayds, the matches of his years,
>
> Which in his grace did boast you most to bee?
>
> Ah! where were ye, when he of you had need,
>
> To stop his wound, that wonderously did bleed?

<div align="right">(145-150)</div>

Spenser's speaker questions the failure of the shepherds to help Astrophel. He answers those questions through his use of pronouns, which signal that Astrophel is no longer part of the collective. Spenser emphasizes the second-person plural address "ye" (145, 147, 149) and "you" (149). He foregrounds Astrophel's isolation by juxtaposing the second-person plural addresses with the third-person singular pronouns that point to Astrophel: "his" (145, 147, 148, 150), "hee" (146) and "he" (149). Spenser traces Astrophel's death by combat to his self-expulsion from the community.

While Spenser's speaker is critical of Astrophel's military involvement, Astrophel's death is also an opportunity for the shepherds to reclaim Sidney as a poet. Spenser identifies the pastoral world as Sidney's own Arcadia, and Sidney's death is fictionalized by a community of poets drawing on the same narrative for their elegiac song.[12] The *Astrophel* collection offers poets an opportunity, not only for writing about Sidney, but to write *with* and *through* Sidney. Like the shift from Sidney the soldier to Sidney the poet, the precedent for this strategy lies in Sidney himself. As Alexander writes: "Because Sidney fictionalized himself— as Astrophil and Philisides—it was possible to approach him in fiction, to merge the space of his writing with that of later writing. All of the pastoral elegies exploit the ability of pastoral to bring the dead and the living together, by making them part of one community" (Alexander 74-75). Drawing on these conventions, Spenser's speaker revives Sidney into the community by using Sidney's own words.

Spenser also engages with Sidney's works through formal strategies which suggest the rebirth of Sidney's poetry. Both Kay and Michael O'Connell note that Spenser's use of

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[12] As critics have noted, Spenser frames Sidney's death as the classical myth of Venus and Adonis by drawing on Ovid, Bion, and Ronsard (Kay 54), as well as Theocritus and Virgil (Cheney 247). While the reception of the myth in the English Renaissance is outside the scope of this chapter, it is suggestive that Spenser engages with a highly intertextual genealogy to represent Sidney's death. In Spenser's configuration of the myth, Venus in absent. She is replaced by the shepherds who mourn for Sidney and who enable his eventual metamorphosis into a flower. By replacing Venus with the literary collective, Spenser further suggests how poetry and poetic traditions offer opportunities to create communities.

feminine rhymes, particularly in representations of Stella, is immediately recognizable as a Sidneyan influence (Kay 53 n58; O'Connell 34). Unlike Sidney's early elegists, who portray his death as "a grief-stricken impasse that has no obvious way out" (Alexander 59), Spenser represents Sidney as vitally alive. Astrophel is granted a new life within the poem, as both an organic and a textual entity. He is metaphorically revived by metamorphosing into a flower. He is also granted textual rebirth by Spenser, who places Sidney's own poetry inside "Astrophel." Astrophel's world is one in which poets may engage with Astrophel and Stella. Spenser's speaker signals the opportunity for engagement through his warning to the other shepherds. Speaking of the flower, he calls for them to "pluck it softly for that shepheards sake" (216). But the flower is ambiguously both Astrophel and Stella. The gods,

> pittying this paire of lovers trew,
>
> Transformed them, there lying on the field,
>
> Into one flowre that is both red and blew:
>
> It first growes red, and then to blew doth fade,
>
> Like Astrophel, which thereinto was made.
>
> (200-04)

Astrophel and his beloved are reconciled with the pastoral world by being both "[t]ransformed…/ Into one flowre" (201-02). Astrophel and Stella are also reunited by becoming one entity that encompasses the pastoral world. Spenser literalizes their names; Astrophel becomes the aspiration and Stella becomes the star. They are both the "hearbe" that reaches toward the heavens and the "Starlight" toward which the flower grows (211). The coupling of Astrophel and Stella fulfils the expected rebirth of the pastoral. Spenser suggests that the rebirth is of Astrophel and Stella, but also of *Astrophil and Stella*, the poetry of Sidney. Intertextuality brings Sidney back to life.

Yet the terms of engagement that Spenser calls for draw on more than Sidney's works, but the text to which the *Astrophel* collection is appended: *Colin Clouts Come Home Againe*. In *Colin Clout*, Spenser demonstrates how intertextuality is a poetic conversation. Like "Astrophel," *Colin Clout* recounts a fictionalized story, that of Spenser's and Sir Walter Raleigh's expedition to England in 1589. Publishing *Astrophel* with *Colin Clout* is significant, as critics have noted, because the number of lines in the *Astrophel* collection equals the number of lines in *Colin Clout*, both amounting to the equal total of 955. The correlation not only suggests that the two are meant to complement one another, but also calls attention to the conscious and deliberate work of the *Astrophel* editor. Throughout *Colin Clout*, Spenser offers anticipatory explorations of the themes of "Astrophel." He fictionalizes contemporaneous events and uses the pastoral genre both as a means of discussing poetry and as the appropriate arena for such conversations. Most importantly, Spenser offers a model for communal poetry that is based on the reciprocal exchange of poetic material. This model is then incorporated throughout *Astrophel*, both thematically and formally, to transform the separate elegies for Sidney into the binding force of the poetic community.

Like Spenser's "Astrophel," *Colin Clout* commences by addressing a group of shepherds. Colin, the shepherd-poet persona of Spenser, both establishes and participates in the community described. Spenser's speaker begins, claiming that "[t]he shepheards boy… / … / Sate (as his custome was) upon a day, / Charming his oaten pipe unto his peres" (1, 4-5). Spenser's speaker positions the shepherds in the same communal gathering that appears in "Astrophel" and the community of poets is fundamental to the poem. Throughout, Colin is called on to sing his story, and the other shepherds respond, repeatedly questioning and encouraging Colin.[13] The sheer number of interspersed comments, encouragements and

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[13] See 16-35, 82-87, 96-99, 157-62, 173-77, 200, 290-91, 304-07, 328-29, 353-57, 368-75, 456-63, 480-84, 585-89, 616-19, 652-59, 676-79, 731-48, 771-74, 823-34.

questions is significant. The poem includes many different voices and points of view, and the narrative is developed through the vocal interaction of the shepherds. The communal construction frames the poem as a dialogue. By the concluding lines, Spenser's speaker reveals that the interaction between poets is not exclusively reserved for Colin and another commentator. The poem encourages other shepherds to converse with one another as well (896-926). Spenser suggests that poetry, writ large, is a communal medium.

Colin's tale represents a model for poetic engagement. Sir Walter Raleigh, to whom the poem is dedicated, figures in Colin's story as "The Shepheard of the Ocean" (66). Like Raleigh, the Ocean Shepherd is a poet. Together, Colin and the Ocean Shepherd demonstrate the communal and intertextual poetic of the poem. Colin recounts how:

> He [The Shepheard of the Ocean], sitting me beside in that same shade,
>
> Provoked me to plaie some pleasant fit,
>
> And when he heard the musicke which I made,
>
> He found himselfe full greatly pleasd at it:
>
> Yet æmuling my pipe, he tooke in hond
>
> My pipe, before that æmuled of many,
>
> And plaid theron; (for well that skill he cond)
>
> Himselfe as skilfull in that art as any.
>
> He pip'd, I sung, and when he sung, I piped,
>
> By chaunge of turnes, each making other mery,
>
> Neither envying other, nor envied,
>
> So piped we, untill we both were weary.
>
> (68-79)

As the Ocean Shepherd encourages Colin to play, the Ocean Shepherd joins in. Their mutually constructed song is the result of their combined efforts: "He pip'd, I sung, and when he sung, I piped" (76). The now obsolete "chaunge" (70), "[t]he action or an act of giving and receiving reciprocally" (n. 1.a *OED*), suggests the emergence of a communal poetics. A shepherd praises Colin's individuality earlier in the poem. He suggests Colin's leadership by calling out "Colin, my liefe, my life, how great a losse / Had all the shepheards nation by thy lacke!" (16-17). However, Colin discloses to his peers that "æmuling" one another and exchanging verse provides a much more desirable model of creation (72), where "each making other mery, / Neither envying other, nor envied" (78-79). Colin's fellow shepherds also demonstrate this practice by exchanging verse with Colin as well as with one another.

Spenser's model of poetry is also suggested by the form of his poem. Spenser's *Colin Clout* follows a flexible rhyme scheme that structures the entire poem (Cheney 242). While most of the poem is comprised of quatrains of interlocking couplets (ABABCDCDEFEF), the rhyming pattern sporadically expands to assimilate new participants. The expansion of the rhyme scheme is signaled by the B rhyme, which weaves into the next quatrain (ABABCBCD). Describing the eleven opening lines of the poem, which follow the ABABCBCDEDE rhyme scheme, D. R. Shore claims that the "pattern might be variously described as a tercet preceding two quatrains, or as two quatrains and an intervening tercet" (qtd. in Cheney 242). The opening rhyme scheme is a poetic invitation of sorts. If seen as two quatrains with an intervening tercet, the quatrain's interlocking couplets create a sense of forward movement (ABAB). Rather than concluding, however, the pattern interlaces the B rhyme into the following tercet (CBC), refusing the closure of the quatrain unit and only afterwards initiating a new quatrain. The extended B rhyme stiches the quatrains together, which suggests both expansion and unification. When Colin and the Ocean Shepherd play together (72-79), the B rhyme extends to accommodate both participants (ABABCBCB). By weaving the two quatrains together with

the B rhyme, Spenser also suggests their unification. As Colin and the Ocean Shepherd create poetry together, the B rhyme formally brings the participants together as well. The flexibility of Spenser's rhyme scheme allows for the sporadic involvement of the shepherd community. On the one hand, it offers a structured pattern that propels the narrative of the poem (ABABCDCD). On the other hand, the sporadic extension of the B rhyme is suggestively inclusive, allowing the rhyme scheme to assimilate willing participants.

The rhyme scheme also unifies the participating poets as one community. While there are multiple participants in the multi-layered narrative tale, each one of Spenser's poets, whether audience, subject, or speaker, uses the same flexible rhyming pattern. Even as they retain their individual voices, the shepherds are understood as members of the same community through their collective identification with the formal scheme of the poem. Nowhere is this clearer than in Spenser's catalog of poets that spans around eighty lines and includes many different poets (376-455). Spenser anticipates his *Astrophel*, too, as the catalog only concludes when Astrophel, newly deceased, becomes the subject of mourning (449-55). Throughout the catalog, the B rhyme is also extended (ABABCBCB; 396-403). The expansion of the rhyme scheme during Colin's acknowledgement of various poets further implies the rhyme scheme's inclusivity. The momentum of the rhyming pattern, too, is recognized by Spenser, who can only halt the narrative by rhyming a word with itself. The efficacy of his rhyme scheme is demonstrated as Spenser extends the final B rhyme to the last line of the poem by repeating the same suggestive word: "conquest," "rest," "rest" (951, 953, 955). *Colin Clout* consolidates the members of Spenser's pastoral world by inviting and unifying participants into the structure of the poem.

The communal framework established by *Colin Clout* is demonstrated throughout "Astrophel," as well as the other individual poems of the *Astrophel* collection. Spenser and his fellow elegists use similar strategies to create a community of poets through the exchange of

poetry. "Astrophel" and the other elegies often represent, or take the form of, poetic dialogues. Elegists depict poets conversing in their poems, but they also converse with one another by responding and alluding to other elegies in the collection. The conventional staged dialogues of the pastoral genre are transformed by the *Astrophel* collection into a conversation between poets. Like the shepherds of *Colin Clout*, the poets of "Astrophel" construct the poem together. After Astrophel's death, the speaker sings:

> Hereof when tydings far abroad did passe,
>
> The shepheards all which loved him full deare,
>
> And sure full deare of all he loved was,
>
> Did thether flock to see what they did heare.
>
> …
>
> And every one did make exceeding mone,
>
> With inward anguish and great griefe opprest:
>
> And every one did weep and waile and mone,
>
> And meanes deviz'd to shew his sorrow best.
>
> (217-220, 223-226)

Like "[t]he shepheard swaines that did about [Colin] play" (*Colin Clout* 6), the shepherds of "Astrophel" gather for a collaborative act of poetic expression. Together, they mourn Astrophel: "every one did weep and waile and mone" (225). Yet, their mourning for Astrophel is not chaotic wailing. Their song is structured, organized by "meanes deviz'd" for showing sorrow (226). The suggestion is that, like the *Astrophel* poets, the mourners express their grief through poetry, and an entire community mourns for Astrophel.

The poet who stands out in the mourning company is Clorinda. Following the gathering of the shepherds, Clorinda begins her elegy for "Astrophel," also known as "The Dolefull Lay of Clorinda" ("The Lay"), presumably written by Mary Sidney, the Countess of Pembroke.[14] Throughout "The Lay," Clorinda also demonstrates the communal poetics of *Colin Clout*. Spenser complicates the distinction between "Astrophel" and "The Lay," suggesting that Clorinda is simultaneously an individual voice and a member of the shepherd's community. The poem is distinct in speaker, tone, content, and strategy from Spenser's "Astrophel." "The Lay" is meditative rather than narrative, and, as expected of an elegy, also moves from mourning to consolation. Yet, the poem is entirely contained within "Astrophel." Spenser's speaker introduces Clorinda as part of the poetic world of "Astrophel," and returns after her conclusion to introduce the next elegist to mourn Astrophel. Unlike the other *Astrophel* poems, there is no editorial indication that the poem is distinct from "Astrophel." The rhyme scheme, too, is consistent throughout both "Astrophel" and "The Lay," following the ABABCC stanza form. Spenser integrates Clorinda as a distinct speaker within a mutually shared poetic project: a conversation within a larger literary community.

"The Lay" suggests its communal poetic through narrative strategy, rhetoric, and imagery. Clorinda follows the story of Astrophel's death, moving from a highly solitary voice to communal acceptance. At first, Clorinda mirrors Sidney's individualistic behavior. She is an isolated individual in her lament and is inconsolable by her audience. Clorinda cries: "to whom shall I my case complaine" (235). After suggesting potential addressees for her lament (241, 247), Clorinda concludes: "to my selfe will I my sorrow mourne" (253). As Sidney is alone in his military behavior, Clorinda, too, is an isolated subject who rejects the community surrounding her. Like Spenser, she uses pronouns and specific words to signal her seclusion,

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[14] Many critics have debated the authorship of "The Dolefull Lay of Clorinda." For the purposes of this chapter, the ambiguity is irrelevant. I concur with Daniella Clark and Cheney, who opt for a flexible model of authorship that can accommodate more than the individual poet (Cheney 250).

emphasized through repetition: "my" (253, 253, 255, 258), "I" (253), and "selfe" (253, 255). Initially, Clorinda even refuses engagement with Sidney's poetry. She wishes to avoid Sidneyan songs, to "[n]e ever sing the love-layer which he made" (277). She also contests Spenser's transformation of Astrophel into a flower. Rather, Clorinda wishes others to "[b]reake]" their "gyrlonds" (271), because Astrophel's "stalke" was "cropt" (266).

For Clorinda, however, Astrophel's death eventually encourages her to reject solitary forms of engagement. As Clorinda moves from mourning to consolation, she questions: "can so divine a thing be dead?" (300). Throughout the rest of the poem, Clorinda changes her representations of Astrophel. Rather than the previous "cropt['d]" "stalke[s]" of flowers (266), Astrophel now lies "[i]n bed of lilies" with "roses sweet" "[a]nd daintie violets" (304, 305, 306). Clorinda places him among a "thousand birds" moving towards heaven (307). Clorinda also recalls *Colin Clout*'s model of poetic reciprocity. Like Colin and the Ocean Shepheard, who are "[n]either envying other, nor envied" (78), Astrophel "may enjoy from jealous rancor free" (318). Now, Clorinda abandons isolation to take part in the group of mourners:

> And give *us* leave thee here thus to lament:
>
> Not thee that doest thy heavens joy inherit,
>
> But *our* owne *selves* that here in dole are drent.
>
> Thus do *we* weep and waile, and wear *our* eies,
>
> Mourning in *others our* own miseries.
>
> (326-30; my emphasis)

She rejects her former statement: "to my selfe will I my sorrow mourne, / … / And to my selfe my plaints shall back retourne" (253, 255). Rather, her earlier declarations are contrasted with her communal "[m]ourning in others our own miseries" (330). The shift in Astrophel's representation is advanced by Clorinda's use of pronouns. By opting for the words "us" (326),

"we" (329), and "our" (328, 329, 330), Clorinda calls attention to the transition from an individuated mode of poetic practice to a communal one.

Clorinda, like Spenser, engages with Sidney's works. If Spenser draws parallels between *Colin Clout* and *Astrophel* by using the same number of lines for each, Clorinda uses similar devices to interact with Sidney's poetry. "The Lay's" 108 lines recall the 108 sonnets of *Astrophil and Stella* (Cheney 238), and Sidney himself had used similar parallels.[15] The formal parallelism contradicts Clorinda's earlier statement, when she rejected interaction with Sidney's works: none should "sing the love-layes which he made" nor "ever read the riddles which he sayd" (277, 279). By alluding to Sidney's sonnet sequence and locating him within the flowers of his own pastoral world, Clorinda incorporates the living Sidney into the Spenserian model of communal poetry. As Kay writes: "As with all great elegies, the act of imitation becomes itself a primary strategy of consolation. Astrophel does not merely announce Sidney's literary immortality: it seeks to prove it" (59).[16] Both Spenser and Clorinda "prove" that Sidney's immortality relies on the community consolidated following his death (Kay 59). By incorporating Sidney into the poetic collective of which both Spenser and Clorinda are a part, "Astrophel" demonstrates how dead-poet elegies can create bonds between elegist and elegiac subject, and inform the collaborative poetic of the elegies.

Many of the other poems of the *Astrophel* collection are conventional. Yet, the relationship between Spenser and Clorinda represents the ties between the elegists of the *Astrophel* collection. When Spenser introduces Clorinda, the speaker declares: "In sort as she it sung I will *rehearse*" (234; my emphasis). After Clorinda finishes "The Lay," Spenser's speaker concludes "Astrophel" and introduces the next elegist to mourn Sidney:

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[15] As Katherine Duncan-Jones notes, Sidney made use of these strategies. For example, the word "love" appears 108 times throughout *Astrophil and Stella*, exactly the number of sonnets that comprise the collection (231-32).
[16] For an analysis of Spenser's engagement with Sidney as a form of imitation, see S.K. Heninger Jr.'s "A Model for the Art of Imitation."

> And after him [Thestylis] full many other moe,
>
> As everie one in order lov'd him best,
>
> Can dight themselves t'expresse their inward woe,
>
> With dolefull layers unto the time addrest.
>
> The which I here in order will *rehearse*,
>
> As fittest floweres to deck his mournfull hearse.
>
> (337-42; my emphasis)

Spenser shows that the community he created in "Astrophel" is possible at the level of the collection. By drawing on the same word he had used to introduce Clorinda, "rehearse" (234, 241), Spenser compares the *Astrophel* elegists to the shepherd community of "Astrophel." The flower imagery reinforces the comparison. The "fittest floweres" here symbolize Astrophel's poetry, which becomes a bouquet comprised of Spenser and the other poets as well (342). Together, they will "deck his mournfull hearse" (342). Spenser concludes "Astrophel" by encouraging his fellow poets to continue to mourn Sidney in the succeeding poems. Spenser's comparison further blurs the distinction between the individual poet and the literary community, suggesting that the collection is to be read, like "Astrophel," as a unified whole with distinctive participants. Each of the *Astrophel* poems alludes to the rest. Connected by formal and thematic devices, the elegists not only animate Sidney's poetic vocabulary, they also engage with the other elegists of the collection. *Astrophel* literally binds the dead poet and his elegists together in the volume itself.

"Thestylis" ("Astrophel" 335), introduced in the penultimate stanza of "Astrophel," is the next to take up the mantle in one of two of Lodwick Bryskett's elegies.[17] Like "Astrophel,"

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[17] For more information on the attribution of these elegies to Bryskett, see Fredric B. Tromly's "Lodowick Bryskett's Elegies on Sidney in Spenser's Astrophel Volume."

"Astrophel: The Mourning Muse of Thestylis" represents Astrophel as a communal subject through the speaker's use of pronouns and imagery, and engages with Sidney through Sidney's works. Thestylis begins with a conventional call to the "Nymphes" to join the lament for Astrophel (1). From the first few lines, Thestylis implies the importance of the collective rather than the individual subject by asking them to "[j]oyne *us* to mourne" (6; emphasis mine), and the speaker continuously uses the plural "us" as an active reminder of this community (81). Bryskett also represents Sidney through Sidneyan terminology. "Philips" (10), the name for Sidney, is also called "Astrophel" (as represented in his title) and his beloved is known as "Stella" (93). Bryskett, too, figures Sidney as the "noblest plant" (9), a "flowere" that later symbolizes his legacy: "flower of Sydneyes race" (12, 191). Bryskett includes allusions that indicate his textual relationship with Spenser as well. Bryskett's "[a]long her yvorie brest, the treasure of delights" (142) is suggestively similar to Spenser's "[a]nd her faire brest, the threasury of joy" ("Astrophel" 179). Moreover, Bryskett's "dolefull" notes calls readers' attention to the multiple times the adjective is used throughout "Astrophel" (Bryskett 3; Spenser 6, 166, 167, 232, 340). While Bryskett's poem was probably composed much earlier than Spenser's "Astrophel" (Tromly 385), the similarities suggest one reason why the poem was chosen for the collection. Bryskett is one individual elegist within a literary collective contributing to the same poetic project.

Bryskett's second elegy, "Astrophel: A Pastorall Aeglogue upon the Death of Sir Phillip Sidney, Knight, &c" explicitly engages with "Astrophel" and endorses the intertextual communal poetics established by Spenser. The pastoral setting expands to encompass Bryskett's speaker, Spenser's persona, and, by implication, the other poets of the collection as well. Bryskett's poem is a dialogue between his speaker, "Lycon" (15), and "Colin" (1). As Fredric Tromly notes, "the name Bryskett adopts for himself (Lycon) is clearly an anagram for 'Colin'" (386). By fictionalizing himself as Lycon, Bryskett draws on the same pastoral

conventions as Sidney and Spenser. Sidney's Astrophil and Spenser's Colin are both poetic personae they construct and maintain throughout their works. Bryskett brings Spenser's persona into his own poem, engaging with Spenser on the terms of his works. The dialogue form is necessarily communal, and Bryskett's elegy alludes to the model of poetry represented in *Colin Clout* and in "Astrophel." Cheney recognizes the similarity between the *Colin Clout* and Bryskett's elegy, offhandedly mentioning that "[p]erhaps…as Spenser ventriloquizes Sidney's grieving sister, so Bryskett ventriloquizes Spenser, and both poetic acts 'rehearse' the act of 'aemuling' between Colin and the Shepherd of the Ocean earlier in the 1595 book" (252). Like Clorinda's "The Lay," Bryskett's poem also draws on the vocabulary of "Astrophel." As the poem begins, Lycon pleads Colin to "tune" a "dolefull lay" (9), a phrase used twice in "Astrophel" (232, 340). This tune is picked up by both Lycon and Colin as they collaborate to mourn. These intertextual allusions further consolidate the bond, leading Tromly to conclude that, although the poets grieve for Sidney, "'A pastorall Aeglogue' is an act of homage to Spenser as well" (387). Poetic competitions between shepherds are a conventional pastoral trope. However, competitions are also often a source of tension between pastoral poets. In Bryskett's elegy, the trope is revised into an opportunity for collaboration. As Tromly writes, "[i]nstead of competing, his [Bryskett's] Lycon and Colin sing together and suffer together" (388). Lycon's and Colin's grieving is constructed between their lines of dialogue. A poetic community is established through their mutually "dolefull ryme[s]" now that "Phillisides is dead" (78).

Throughout the rest of *Astrophel*, to different degrees, similar poetic devices are used by the elegists and the collection's compiler[s]. [18] Although the poems are largely

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[18] Dominic Baker-Smith notes the various allusions of these poems to classical works. See "'Great Expectation': Sidney's Death and the Poets," esp. 88.

conventional,[19] they relate to one another through imagery, terminology, and other forms of representation. Matthew Royden's "An Elegie, or Friends Passion, for His Astrophil" engages with Sidney through terminology: "Our Astrophil did Stella love" (133). Raleigh, fictionalized in *Colin Clout* as Colin's companion, also contributes his "An Epitaph…" to the collection. Raleigh's speaker recognizes that ways in which Sidney's death engenders community. He speaks to Sidney, claiming that "England doth hold thy limes… / Flaunders thy valure… / The campe thy sorrow… / Thy *friends*, thy want; the world, thy vertues fame" (45-48; my emphasis). Like Spenser, these poets use poetry to create their communal ties.

The poetics of the collection culminate in the last poem, titled "Another of the Same." In many ways, the poem is indeed 'another of the same,' a highly conventional poem often attributed to Fulke Greville (Bullen xviii, 316). However, it serves as a suggestive concluding poem when viewed in light of the collection as a whole. The *Astrophel* community is foregrounded as the poem as the speaker takes his leave:

> Farewell to you, my hopes, my wonted waking dreams,
>
> Farewell, sometimes enjoyed joy, eclipsed are thy beames,
>
> Farewell selfe pleasing thoughts, which quietness brings foorth,
>
> And farewel friendships sacred league, uniting minds of woorth.
>
> (29-32)

The speaker builds the community from line to line. He begins by addressing Sidney (29-30), moving to address himself (31), and ends with an address to the community to which he declares "farewel friendships sacred league, uniting minds of woorth" (32). Like the other poems of the collection, "Another of the Same" not only makes Sidney part of a larger poetic

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[19] A. H. Bullen remarked that "Matthew Roydon's elegy is too difuse…. I find Raleigh's elegy somewhat obscure…. Nor can I profess any admiration for 'Another of the same,' where the vehemence of the writer's grief choked his utterance" (xix).

collective but emphasizes that their ties are textual. The poem concludes by addressing poetry

itself, sending verse off to engage with Sidney:

> Now Rime, the sonne of Rage, which art no kin to Skill,
>
> And endless Griefe, which deads my life, yet knows not how to kill,
>
> Go seeke that haples tombe; which if ye hap to find,
>
> Salute the stones that keep the lims that held so good a minde.
>
> (37-40)

These lines bind the poets and their works, associating the "[r]im[ing]" lines of poetry with the

"lims" that previously held Sidney together (37, 40). By incorporating Sidney's works, the

Astrophel poets demonstrate a communal form of memorialization. They not only accord poets

a space to mourn Sidney but reveal how intertextuality is a form of collaboration. Approaching

Sidney through his works allows Spenser and the other poets of the collection to engage with

one another on similar terms, establishing a communal poetic that they develop and sustain in

between the "[r]ime[s]" that hold Sidney (37), themselves, and their elegies together.

Throughout the *Astrophel* collection, Sidney is transformed into a poet who is

introduced into a literary community formed by his elegists. In light of Spenser's *Colin Clout*,

"Astrophel" and the other elegies demonstrate a model of communal poetics. Rejecting the

individualism associated with Sidney's heroic death in battle, the poets assimilate him into a

poetic community that allows for continual interaction with Sidney and his work. And,

although all participate in the community, neither Sidney nor the elegists forfeit their distinctive

voices. "Astrophel" advances the image of Sidney the poet by criticizing the isolated behavior

that leads to his death. The poem argues for a communal approach, one that is demonstrated

by the speaker, his fellow shepherds, and Clorinda through representations of Astrophel and

its formal structure. This approach is mirrored by the other *Astrophel* elegists. The members

draw on and repurpose multiple allusions to Sidney and other participating poets, acting together and, ultimately, "uniting minds of woorth" ("Another of the Same" 29). The transformation and treatment of Sidney marks a shift in what poets mean to society; Spenser's *Astrophel* is a precursor to the collective literary practices that will permeate the dead-poet elegies of the succeeding century.

CONTINUING THE CONVERSATION:
READERS AND IMMORTALITY IN ELEGIES FOR SHAKESPEARE

Your monument shall be my gentle verse,

Which eyes not yet created shall o'er-read;

And tongues to be your being shall rehearse

When all the breathers of this world are dead;

You still shall live, such virtue hath my pen,

Where breath most breathes, even in the mouths of men.

(Shakespeare "Sonnet 81" 9-14)

But since he died and poets better prove,

Theirs for their style I'll read, his for his love.

(Shakespeare "Sonnet 32" 13-14)

By early 1622, a group of publishers, printers, bookbinders and booksellers had begun work on *Mr. William Shakespeares Comedies, Histories & Tragedies*. This was to be the First Folio edition of the plays of William Shakespeare. Shakespeare, deceased since 1616, was by then the top best-selling quarto author of Renaissance England (Rasmussen 20, 23). Many scholars have noted that the Folio project was fundamentally collaborative. As many as four different rights holders of Shakespeare's individual plays had joined together as a publishing "syndicate" for the precarious project, which turned out to be "by far the most expensive playbook that had ever been offered to the English public" (Rasmussen 23, 26–27).[20] In order to turn a profit on this risky venture, the syndicate was in turn reliant on many contributors; the "support-network of patrons, stationers, printers, actors and discerning critics, whose conspicuous endeavors validated and added value to the printed remains of the playwright" (Laoutaris 49).[21] Most importantly, however, they relied on readers. In order to appeal to the

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[20] Shakespeare's First Folio was popular by 17th-century standards. For more information, see David Frost's "Shakespeare In the Seventeenth Century."

[21] For information about the printing of Shakespeare's First Folio, see B. D. R. Higgins' "Printing the First Folio."

reading public, the syndicate depended on literary communities to generate interest by promoting the Folio as a volume of literary worth.

The stationers had experience with dead poets' works and their dissemination. They also recognized the importance of the poetic community in producing a financially successful book. Edward Blount, a publisher of the First Folio, had been formerly apprenticed to William Ponsonby, publisher of Sir Philip Sidney's works and Edmund Spenser's *Astrophel* collection (Laoutaris 54). Like Ponsonby, Blount had ties to literary societies. At the time of the publication of Shakespeare's plays, he held the rights to Ben Jonson's *Sejanus*. Blount was also in business with and a friend of, James Mabbe, Leonard Digges, and Hugh Holland (Scragg 117-18). All these poets wrote elegies for Shakespeare's First Folio and their contribution was crucial for the Folio's success. Given England's still relatively low literacy rates and the exorbitant price of the First Folio, prospective buyers were most likely aristocrats or from the upper middle classes (Mayer 104, 106-07).[22] In order to appeal to this demographic, stationers sought to elevate the book from the disparaged category of plays to that of "Workes," a stature of cultural worth (Laoutaris 50). Shakespeare's elegists furnished the Folio with cultural capital. As T. J. B. Spencer writes, "[the publishers] achieved a kind of social sponsorship of the volume by its dedication…[and] Ben Jonson's intellectual sponsorship was as important" (25). By providing the Folio with "the musty gravitas" of cultural significance (Laoutaris 50), Jonson and Shakespeare's other elegists helped generate the readership that the publishers required.

The stationers and prefatorial poets collaborated to elevate and sell Shakespeare's Folio. In order to provide Shakespeare's plays with the weight of classical poetry, the stationers used the Folio format, which was usually reserved for "theological tracts, legal treatises, tomes

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[22] Jean-Christophe Mayer notes that the contemporary equivalent would have been approximately 160 British Pounds.

recording national history or works by classical authors" (Laoutaris 50). Moreover, in the early 16th century, Shakespeare was primarily considered a playwright. The First Folio contained only dramatic works, and plays were often trivialized in comparison with the more highly regarded poetry. It is for this reason that Chris Laoutaris contends that the publishers of the Folio omitted the word "Workes" from the primary title (50), a term that Jonson had provocatively used in 1616 for his collection of both poetry and plays. However, the publishers were able to present Shakespeare's classical status through the secondary title of the Folio, printed after the prefatorial material: "The Workes of William Shakespeare…" (17).[23] Using the word "Workes" on a separate page allowed the stationers to avoid Jonson's ostentatiousness while still claiming that the Folio was a book of literary worth. By elevating the Folio, the stationers appealed to the upper-class demographics that could afford Shakespeare's works.

The stationers sought to generate cultural interest in the Folio by presenting Shakespeare's works as a monument maintained by an active readership. They also participated in a topical debate regarding whether Shakespeare should have a monument in Westminster Abbey. The monument *topos* is a classical trope attributed to Horace and Ovid and popular among early modern authors.[24] Conventionally, the *topos* creates a distinction between physical and textual monuments. Writers often used monument imagery to claim that they "have crafted a monument more lasting than bronze" (Horace *Odes* 3.30 1). The alternative to the physical monument is their own poetry, which guarantees that they "will not totally perish" and that they "will be read" (Horace *Odes* 3.30 6, 9). Poets like Horace and Ovid would draw on the monument *topos* to proclaim their everlasting fame. These representations sought to question the ways in which a poet could metaphorically be made immortal and offered authors

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[23] Quotations from the First Folio are taken from *The Norton Facsimile: The First Folio of Shakespeare*. I have standardized the print. I have also consulted the online transcription provided by *Project Gutenberg*. George Parfitt's edition of *Ben Jonson: The Complete Poems* was consulted for Jonson's poems as well.

[24] Lina Perkins Wilder acknowledges the popularity of the *topos*, remarking that Horace is "one of the most important models on which Renaissance aspirations to poetic immortality are based" (486).

options for representing continuity after death. Shakespeare's remains were not moved to the Poets' Corner, and a physical monument would not be erected until 1741.[25] By representing Shakespeare's texts as a monument, the stationers offered Shakespeare's works as the imperishable substitute.

Shakespeare's Folio opens with monument imagery. The engraving of Shakespeare has the profundity "of a tomb effigy" (Laoutaris 51), and Jonson's "To the Reader" acknowledges this representation by punning on "Graver" to mean both engraver and grave (3). John Heminge and Henry Condell's dedication to the Lords also contributes to the aesthetic. They claim to have preserved Shakespeare, saying that they have "done an office to the dead…to keepe the memory of…our SHAKESPEARE" (6). Their religious analogy declares the sacrosanctity of their endeavor and offers Shakespeare's works as his "remains" because "the most, though meanest, of thins [*sic*] are made more precious, when they are dedicated to Temples. In that name therefore, we most humbly consecrate to your H.H. these remains of…Shakespeare" (6). Laoutaris recognizes the monument aesthetic, claiming that "Shakespeare's fellow actors are guardians of, and 'pious' worshippers at, this textual memorial which they have erected, the playwright's words having accrued a cultural and spiritual value worthy of 'Workes'" (51).

Yet, as Laoutaris suggests, for the Shakespearean monument to be both profitable and relevant, the stationers required other people. Heminge and Condell explicitly acknowledge the need for readership by addressing "the great Variety of Readers," declaring that

the fate of all Bookes depends upon your capacities: and not of your heads alone, but of your purses…. It had bene a thing, we confesse, worthie to have bene wished, that the Author himselfe had liv'd to have set forth, and overseen his owne writings…. But it is not our province, who only gather his works, and give them

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[25] See the Shakespeare entry on the official website of Westminster Abbey, https://www.westminster-abbey.org/abbey-commemorations/commemorations/william-shakespeare.

you, to praise him. It is yours that reade him. And there we hope, to your divers

capacities, you will finde enough, both to draw, and hold you: for his wit can no

more lie hid, then it could be lost. Reade him, therefore; and againe, and againe:

And if then you doe not like him, surely you are in some manifest danger, not to

understand him. And so we leave you to other of his Friends, whom if you need,

can bee your guides: if you neede them not, you can leade your selves, and others.

And such Readers we wish him.

(7)

By emphasizing readers rather than the book, Heminge and Condell lay the responsibility of

maintaining the Shakespearean monument on readers. Their marketing strategy relies on the

public. Other poets participate as the "Friends" and "guides" of Shakespeare and his works.

Newer readers, too, can become guides and generate more readers: "if you neede them not, you

can leade your selves, and others" (7). For Heminge and Condell, an active readership is

required for the Folio's success. They anticipate the preface of *Jonsonus Virbius*, a collection

of elegies for Jonson, which similarly demands active reading. Heminge and Condell conclude

by endorsing "such Readers," those who "reade" "againe, and againe" until they "understand

[Shakespeare]" (7). Their multiple insistences also suggest the stakes: otherwise, "it could be

lost" (7).

Shakespeare's elegists take up the stationers' endeavor. Many wrote poems for the First

and/or Second Folios. However, other elegies for Shakespeare that were circulated during the

early 17th century are similar. Shakespeare's elegists transform his works into a monument.

Although they all claim that Shakespeare's works enable his afterlife, they qualify their claim

by surrounding his monument with readers and declaring them essential. The elegists

assimilate the public into their poetic community by engaging with Shakespeare's works and

demonstrating the importance of reading and discussion. Their strategies also allowed the poets

to explore and revise Shakespearean poetics. Like the *Astrophel* elegists, the prefatorial poets

drew on the deceased's works for memorialization. Jonson, Holland, Mabbe, and Digges, develop the forms of engagement that Spenser had begun in the previous century. In the same way that the *Astrophel* poets interacted with Sidney through his imagery, Shakespeare's elegists rework Shakespeare's concern with poetic immortality and suggest ways to incorporate the reading public. As a result, their treatment of Shakespeare is more complex than the *Astrophel* elegists' engagement with Sidney. They question the efficacy of Shakespeare's version of the monument *topos* to confer poetic immortality and propose alternative ways to memorialize the poet that include both current and future readers. The elegists enter into poetic dialogues with other poets and debate with one another through response poems. For them, the elegy unites both poets and readers into a communal poetic conversation.

The elegists' discussions of poetry demonstrate the elegy as a pertinent medium for debate and as an opportunity for revision. They offer Shakespeare continuity by reworking Shakespeare's own representations of poetic immortality. John Milton contributed an elegy to the Second Folio, later republished in his *1645 Poems* as "On Shakespear" (44). Milton's elegy exemplifies the elegists' revisionary engagement. It interrogates Shakespeare's use of the monument *topos* by explicitly rewriting Shakespeare's model. Milton's departures from Shakespeare suggest how the elegy also allows for criticism, a practice that Jonson and his elegists will further develop in the following decade. Brought together through the dead-poet elegy, these poets demonstrate that exploration, debate, and revision are communal strategies that eternalize Shakespeare.

The prefatorial elegies of the First Folio introduce the complex forms of engagement that Jonson, Holland, Mabbe, and Digges request of the Folio's readers. For their use of the monument *topos*, they draw on Shakespeare's *Sonnets* (published by Thomas Thorpe in 1609). Elegists rework Shakespearean imagery into opportunities for immortalization by incorporating readers into their discussions of Shakespeare's poetry. Marlin E. Blaine claims

that the *topos* was especially appropriate for a discussion of Shakespeare as it was "a favorite Shakespearean theme" (218-19). Shakespeare's use of the monument *topos* is broadly conventional. In his most explicit use of the trope, Shakespeare promises his addressee continuity, claiming that

> Not marble, nor the gilded monuments
>
> Of princes shall outlive this pow'rful rhyme,
>
> But you shall shine more bright in these contents
>
> Than unswept stone besmeared with sluttish time.
>
> …
>
> The living record of your memory…
>
> 'Gainst death, and all oblivious enmity
>
> Shall you pace forth, your praise shall still find room,
>
> Even in the eyes of all posterity
>
> That wear this world out to the ending doom.
>
> So, till the judgment that yourself arise,
>
> You live in this, and dwell in lovers' eyes.
>
> (Sonnet 55, 1-4, 8-14)[26]

Like Horace, Ovid, and others, Shakespeare offers poetry as an alternative to the physical monument because "[n]ot marble, nor the gilded monuments / Of princes shall outlive this pow'rful rhyme" (1-2). Poetry provides an afterlife through substitution. Shakespeare's "pow'rful rhyme" is the alternative, "[t]he living record of…memory" that stands "['g]ainst death" (2, 8-9). Indicating the sonnet itself, Shakespeare concludes by declaring: "You live in

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[26] All citations to Shakespeare's *Sonnets* are taken from *The Oxford Shakespeare: The Complete Sonnets and Poems*, edited by Colin Burrow.

this" (14). Shakespeare slightly revises the classical trope. Instead of proclaiming immortality for himself, Shakespeare offers eternity in verse to his addressee by repeatedly emphasizing the second-person "you" (3, 10, 14), "your" (8, 10), "yourself" (13). Despite Shakespeare's insistence, the "name" that "from hence immortal life shall have" is never given to the reader and the *Sonnets* ultimately immortalize the speaker rather than the addressee (Sonnet 81, 5). Yet, Shakespeare's use of the tope creates the opportunity for communal perpetuity. Shakespeare's revision of the *topos* departs from an individual proclamation of fame and invites another to participate in the eternalizing project. The monument *topos*, Shakespeare suggests, may be reworked for exploring opportunities for immortality that include other people.

Jonson's "To the Reader," Holland's "Upon the Lines and Life of the Famous Scenicke Poet, Master William Shakespeare," and Mabbe's "To the memorie of M.W. Shake-speare" are all similar to one another. Like the stationers, the elegists helped generate readership by elevating Shakespeare, particularly by eliding the distinction between the playwright and the poet. To different degrees, they all participate in the monument *topos*. They propose Shakespeare's works as an alternative to the physical monument and draw on the monument *topos* to declare the lasting quality of his works. They subtly depart from the conventional trope, however, by emphasizing Shakespeare's reception. By explicitly addressing the public or by offering opportunities for the public to engage with Shakespeare's works, Jonson, Holland, and Mabbe all show that readers are essential for continuity.

The first elegy of Shakespeare's works, Jonson's "To the Reader," sets up the themes of the Folio. Reception, in the form of the "[r]eader," is immediately foregrounded by the title. The elegy presents the Folio as a textual monument, stating to the public that the engraving of Shakespeare,

This Figure, that thou here seest put,

It was for gentle Shakespeare cut;

Wherein the Grauer had a strife

with Nature, to out-doo the life:

O, could he but haue drawne his wit

As well in brasse, as he hath hit

His face; the Print would then surpasse

All, that was euer writ in brasse.

But, since he cannot, Reader, looke

Not on his Picture, but his Booke.

(1-10)

For Jonson, Shakespeare's worth is his "wit," which cannot be captured either "in brasse" or "his Picture" (5, 6, 10). As a result, Jonson declares that "Reader, look / Not on his Picture, but his Booke" (9-10). Jonson's reorients the focus of the monument *topos* by presenting the monument to the reader rather than to Shakespeare. The title and final imperative, "Reader, looke" (9), introduce the public as the recipients of Shakespeare's remains.

Both Holland's and James Mabbe's elegies complement Jonson's introduction. They fulfil the publisher's promise to elevate Shakespeare to the status of a worthy poet and call for readers' continuous engagement with the deceased. Like Jonson's "To the Reader," Holland's sonnet, "Upon the Lines and Life of the Famous Scenicke Poet, Master William Shakespeare," claims that Shakespeare is eternalized through his works. For Holland, Shakespeare is both playwright and poet. As the title indicates, Shakespeare is both "Scenicke" and "Poet," both the writer of "[t]ragedies" and "Poets King" (8). Holland requests that readers equate Shakespeare's life with his literary remains. The title begins the comparison through the

alliteration which identifies "the Lines" and the "Life" of Shakespeare. Holland's opening line transforms Shakespeare's death into the end of a play. He tells the public that "[t]hose hands, which you so clapt, go now, and wring" (1). By emphasizing the clapping audience, Holland implies the importance of Shakespeare's reception. Later, Holland's chiasmus suggests that while life is transient, Shakespeare's works are immortal: "For though his line of life went soone about, / The life of his lines shall never out" (13-14). Though "[h]is days are done" (3), Shakespeare lives on through his work.

Holland demonstrates his engagement with Shakespeare through the form of his elegy. Holland's poem initially begins as a Petrarchan sonnet, with the ABBAABBA rhyme scheme. However, he does not conclude with the conventional CDECDE of the Petrarchan sonnet. Instead of the *volta* that typically follows the second quatrain, the last six lines transition to the CDCDEE rhyme scheme. The interlocking rhyming quatrain and final rhyming couplet signal the aptly named Shakespearean sonnet, the form Shakespeare uses throughout his poetry. The shift to the Shakespearean form suggests Hollands attentiveness to Shakespeare, but also demonstrates the readers' acknowledgement of Shakespeare's poetry. Both readers and poets, Holland declares, should *turn* to Shakespeare's verse.

Mabbe, like Holland, frames Shakespeare's death as drama. Shakepeare's death has concluded the play, because he "went'st so soone / From the Worlds-Stage" ("To the memorie of M.W. Shake-speare" 1-2). However, the Folio allows for rebirth, because "this thy printed worth, / Tels thy Spectators, that thou went'st but forth / To enter with applause" (3-5). The Folio, "this…printed worth" (3), allows Shakespeare to "acte a second part" and promises continuity (6). Like Holland, Mabbe emphasizes the public's ability to still receive Shakespeare with clapping hands. The Folio is significant as it "[t]els th[e] *Spectators*" that Shakespeare has left only to return "with applause" (4, 5; my emphasis). He emphasizes the uncertainty of the audience, claiming that "[w]ee wondered" and "[w]ee thought thee dead" (1, 3). The textual

monument, however, offers Shakespeare "a Re-entrance to a Plaudite" (8). Like Holland, Mabbe highlights the presence of the audience, Shakespeare may enter "with applause" "to a Plaudite" (5, 8). Jonson, Holland, and Mabbe all participate in the monument for Shakespeare; they proclaim his literary worth, his rebirth through the Folio, and suggest the importance of reception by introducing and addressing readers and audiences into their elegies.

Leonard Digges' "To the Memorie of the deceased Authour Maister W. Shakespeare" ("To the Memorie of the deceased") goes further than Holland and Mabbe. Digges declares the importance of readership by stressing that poetic afterlife depends not only on current readers, but on posterity. He draws on Shakespeare's Sonnet 55 but subtly reworks the intimate relationship between Shakespeare's speaker and his addressee. Digges acknowledges the significance of the public by expanding the Shakespearean relationship to include other poets. He qualifies Shakespeare's use of the *topos* and introduces posterity to suggest that monuments are only as immortal as their reception. The speaker initially presents Shakespeare's immortality through conventional imagery, stating that "[w]hen Brasse and Marble fade, [this Booke] shall make thee looke / Fresh to all Ages" (6-7). Like Shakespeare's speaker, Digges promises eternity to another. Yet, Digges expands the intimate relationship to include Shakespeare's "pious fellowes" (1). Together, they bequeath to the entire

world thy Workes: thy Workes, by which, out-live

Thy Tombe, thy name must when that stone is rent,

And Time dissolves thy Stratford Moniment,

Here we alive shall view thee still. This Booke,

When Brasse and Marble fade, shall make thee looke

Fresh to all Ages: when Posteritie

Shall loath what's new, thinke all is prodegie

That is not Shake-speares; ev'ry Line, each Verse

Here shall revive, redeeme thee from thy Herse.

(2-10)

The poem begins with classical imagery. Digges claims that physical monuments are transient while Shakespeare's eternal monument is his "Booke" (5). Yet, Digges departs from Shakespeare's use of the trope and shifts his focus to Shakespeare's reception. In Sonnet 55, Shakespeare identifies verse as force that allows others to last: "this pow'rful rhyme" (2). Future generations are passive, acknowledged but not regarded; the addressee lives "*[e]ven* in the eyes of all posterity" (11; my emphasis). Later, Shakespeare's speaker states that "[the addressee] live[s] in this [poem]," only offhandedly noting the possible future readers in which he may "dwell" (14). In contrast, Digges frames Shakespeare's rebirth from the perspective of readers: "*we* alive shall view thee still" (5; my emphasis). Posterity is the immortalizing force. Initially, Digges claims that the Folio itself "shall make thee looke / Fresh to all Ages" (6-7). However, Digges qualifies his statement by introducing public opinion mid-line, acknowledging the possibility that "when Posteritie / Shall loath what's new, thinke all is prodegie" (7-8). Although Digges believes that the public will always favor Shakespeare's plays, he concedes that Shakespeare's monuments may perish if "our backrout Stage be sped / …with some new straine t'out-do / Passions of Juliet" or if "[Digges] heare[s] a Scene more nobly take, / Then…parlying Romans spake" (14-18). Digges will believe Shakespeare is dead if *future audiences* declare a better playwright. His elegy suggests that verse monuments are not sufficient for guaranteed continuity. By emphasizing posterity's influence on Shakespeare's rebirth, Digges departs from the conventional monument *topos*. Immortality depends on the future readers of poetry.

The most famous of the Shakespeare Folio elegies is Ben Jonson's, "To the memory of my beloved, The Author Mr. William Shakespeare: And what he hath left us" ("To the memory

of my beloved"). Jonson explicitly states that an active readership is necessary for poetic immortality. He requests "Shakespeare" to "rise" (19), declaring that he is

> a Moniment, without a tombe,
>
> And art alive still, while thy Booke doth live,
>
> And we have wits to read, and praise to give.
>
> (22-24)

The "Moniment" grants Shakespeare continuity through his "Booke" (22, 23). However, for Jonson, Shakespeare's afterlife fundamentally depends on readers. Only as long as they "have wits to read, and praise to give" will Shakespeare remain "alive" (24, 23). The Jonsonian rhyming couplet highlights the reliance of the textual monument on continuous reception and approval by linking Shakespeare's "li[f]e" with "praise to give" (23, 24). The recognition that immortality relies on readers has precedent in Shakespeare's *Sonnets*. In Sonnet 18, Shakespeare states to the speaker that "in eternal lines to time thou grow'st. / So long as men can breathe or eyes can see, / So long lives this, and this gives life to thee" (12-14). Jonson nuances Shakespeare's claims by suggesting that the mere existence of posterity is not sufficient. Jonson acknowledges the necessity of "wits" for intelligent reading (24). For Jonson, this form of reading also results in commentary by readers, who have "praise to give" (24).[27] Jonson goes further than Shakespeare's early elegists by suggesting that active and thoughtful engagement with Shakespeare's works is necessary to maintain the textual monument.

Jonson acknowledges that he, too, is a part of the reading community. By acting as a mediator between Shakespeare and the public, Jonson extends an invitation to posterity to interact with Shakespeare's works. Throughout the elegy, Jonson oscillates between addressing

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[27] Charles Martindale makes similar claims about reception theory in his *Redeeming the Text: Latin Poetry and the Hermeneutics of Reception*. In his analysis of Percy Bysshe Shelley's "Ozymandias," Martindale demonstrates the futility of self-proclaimed immortality: "*[m]eaning…is always realized at the point of reception*" (3; emphasis original).

Shakespeare and addressing readers. Jonson initially stresses the first-person "I" (2, 3, 6, 17) and second-person "thy," "thine," and "thou" (1, 2, 3, 6, 12, 15). As he "begin[s]" (17), Jonson moves from the personal address to the plural address, conceding that he is one of many: "*our* Stage," "*we* have wits to read," "to *us*," "in *our* waters yet appeare" (18, 24, 34, 72; my emphasis). Jonson then shifts his address from Shakespeare to the entire reading public. He signals this transition by describing Shakespeare in the third-person "[h]e," declaring to the readers that: "He was not of an age, but for all time!" (43). Jonson continues to primarily address readers in the following thirty lines (47, 48, 58, 62, 66, 68). By incorporating the public as he declares Shakespeare's immortality "for all time" (43), Jonson suggests that Shakespeare's continuity depends on posterity.

Jonson's elegy also demonstrates ways to explain and evaluate Shakespeare. Jonson remarks that "Nature her selfe was proud" of Shakespeare's poetry, and describes Shakespeare's artistic process, "though the Poets matter, Nature be, / His Art does give the fashion" (57-58). He contends that Shakespeare's natural inclinations and artistic craft worked together to write poetry. Jonson likens Shakespeare's creative process to the work of a laboring blacksmith, stating that "[w]ho casts to write a living line, must sweat, / (Such as thine are) and strike the second heat / Upon the Muses anvile" (59-61). For Jonson, these are the qualities of successful artists. He draws on Shakespeare's works to make claims about poetic craft, arguing that Shakespeare is praiseworthy (as is Jonson himself) because "a good Poet's made, as well as borne" (64). If, as Jonson states, Shakespeare may live as long as "we have wits to read, and praise to give" (24), his elegy also demonstrates this claim by presenting to Shakespeare's readership his evaluation and recommendation of Shakespeare's works.

Jonson's elegy engages with Shakespeare's own works by reworking the parent-offspring imagery of the *Sonnets*. In Shakespeare's poetry, children offer parents an opportunity for immortality. Parents achieve continuity through replication. In Sonnet 3,

Shakespeare's speaker tells the young man that "[n]ow is the time that face should form another" (2), and in Sonnet 6 that it is time "for thyself to breed another thee / … / Then what could death do if thou shouldst depart, / Leaving thee living in posterity?" (7, 11-12). "[A]nother" "face" and "another thee" both suggest replication ("Sonnet 3" 2; "Sonnet 6" 7). In Sonnet 13, too, he states that the addressee becomes "[y]ourself again after your self's decease, / When your sweet issue your sweet form should bear" (7-8). A child is another "[s]elf" that perpetuates the parent after death ("Sonnet 13" 7). Poems offer a comparable form of immortality to the poet. Like children, poems enable the continuity of authors through "duplication" (Quinones 305). In "Sonnet 11," Shakespeare's speaker claims that "[t]hou shouldst print more, not let that copy die" (14). In "Sonnet 17," Shakespeare makes the comparison between children and poems explicit: "But were some child of yours alive that time, / You should live twice, in it, and in my rhyme" (13-14). Both poems and "children are intended to be great means of protection against…replacement [by others]," and Ricardo Quinones contends that "such duplication is fundamental…which emphasizes the fact of continuity and seems to reverse the sting of age and replacement" (305). Children and poems both offer eternity by allowing parents and poets to persist after death.

In Jonson's elegy, the relationships between parent and offspring and poet and poems offer more than continuity for the parent or poet. Jonson reworks the Shakespearean model into an opportunity for posterity to engage with Shakespeare. Initially, Jonson represents Shakespeare's poems as the children of Shakespeare, recognizable by their likeness to the poet. He demands readers

> Looke how the fathers face
>
> Lives in his issue, even so, the race
>
> Of Shakespeares minde, and manners brightly shines

In his well torned, and true filed lines:

In each of which, he seemes to shake a Lance,

As brandish't at the eyes of Ignorance.

(65-70)

Shakespeare's likeness, "the fathers face" (65), lives on in "his issue" (66), his "true filed lines" (68).

However, Jonson modifies the form of continuity that the Shakespearean model provides. For Jonson, the significance of the parent-offspring dynamic is that it creates the possibility for others to actively engage with Shakespeare's works. Jonson shifts focus from the continuity of the poet through his lines to the possibility of beholding him now that Shakespeare's "issue" "brightly shines" (66, 67). As Shakespeare lives in verse, all can

see thee in the Hemisphere

Advanc'd, and made a Constellation there!

Shine forth, thou Starre of Poets, and with rage,

Or influence, chide, or cheere the drooping Stage

(75-78)

For Shakespeare, the opportunity to "live twice, in [the child], and in my rhyme" is the addressee's "true rights," "termed a poet's rage" (14, 11). The "rage" of the poet is the source of the addressee's eternity, of his "righ[t]" to persist ("Sonnet 17" 11). Colin Burrow describes Shakespeare's lines as the act of "[p]oetic or prophetic enthusiasm or inspiration" (414 n11). By employing the voice of a poetic prophet, the sonnet offers an individual model of continuity. Rage is an emotion that originates in the poet and is enacted in the poem, finding relief by granting the subject an afterlife. The poet is active while the recipient is merely present as subject matter. Yet, Jonson suggests an alternative to this model by using enjambment,

acknowledging Shakespeare's model of "rage" (77), but implying other options for continuity by splitting the line through his conjunction: "Or" (78). Jonson proposes a more interactive form of engagement between the conferrer of immortality and the recipient, departing from Shakespeare's poetic "rage" by calling Shakespeare to engage with the future through "influence" ("Sonnet 17" 11; Jonson 78).[28] Jonson's stresses that Shakespeare's works do not merely grant eternity to the poet, but allow the poet to continuously *interact* with his audiences and readership. Shakespeare's shining issue is placed in the "Constellation" which everyone can see (66, 67, 76). Shakespeare's light is intended for readers, not the poet, as it shines on future generations, further signaled by Jonson's request to readers to "[l]ook" (65). As a "[s]hin[ing]" star (77), Shakespeare's issue may criticize or commend the community by "chid[ing] or cheer[ing] the…Stage" (78). Jonson use of "influence" suggests that audiences and readers may take an active role in this dynamic by both drawing from and responding to the effect of Shakespeare's verse (78). Jonson's belief in the significance of Shakespeare's influence is also seen in the title of his elegy. The poem is concerned with Shakespeare's "memory," but perhaps more importantly, with "what he hath left us." Throughout his elegy, Jonson presents Shakespeare's works as a monument that requires posterity. He incorporates readers into his poem and invites them to participate in the practices of reading Jonson deems necessary for monuments to exist. Rather than subscribe to the individual model of continuity seen in Shakespeare's poetry, Jonson draws on the parent-child imagery to signal an alternative, an active form of engagement between Shakespeare and the future. By revising Shakespeare's imagery to allow the deceased to interact with posterity, Jonson expands the scope of the Shakespearean monument and demonstrates how readers' participation can immortalize Shakespeare as well.

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[28] These lines are likely an explicit allusion to Shakespeare's Sonnet 17. As Burrow notes, Shakespeare's Sonnet is the first cited instance of the term "poet's rage" (414 n11).

The elegies of the First Folio are all preoccupied with the ways in which monuments eternalize poets. The elegists' explorations of Shakespeare's monument develop conversations about poetry that are necessary for the continuity of a poet by incorporating and addressing readers and audiences, emphasizing the dependence of poetic afterlife on posterity, and engaging with the deceased's oeuvre. As Douglas Lanier claims, the prefatorial elegies "are remarkable not only as the first instances of Shakespearean criticism but also for the fact that they conceive of Shakespeare's corpus as 'literature' by meditating on self-presentational tropes already established by the Sonnets" (228). The elegists recognize that they, too, participate in posterity. Their meditations all inform readers in the ways in which a monument stays "[f]resh to all Ages" (Digges 7), remains both read and relevant. The elegists preserve Shakespeare through explorations of his poetry while inviting others to do the same; the First Folio prefatorial poems keep Shakespeare alive by perpetuating the conversation.

Like the elegists of the *Astrophel* collection, Shakespeare's elegists engaged not only with the dead poet's works, but with each other's. These interactions took the form of debates, conducted through response poetry to others elegists' poems. The elegists' works positioned themselves as both poets and readers. They also demonstrated how elegies offered them opportunities for criticism by commenting on poetry through poetry. Jonson's "To the memory of my beloved" is an explicit response to a lesser-known elegy for Shakespeare by William Basse, titled "On Mr. Wm. Shakespeare." Basse's poem is presumed to have been written immediately following Shakespeare's death in 1616 and was extensively circulated in manuscript (Freehafer 63). However, it was not published until 1633 when it was erroneously attributed to John Donne in his poetry collection (also prefaced by elegies). Although the poem was not published in either of the Folios, several critics have suggested that Jonson's poem replaced Basse's elegy as the title work of the First Folio's prefatorial material (Lanier 232; Hadfield 204-06).

In his elegy, Basse seeks to preserve Shakespeare by attempting to metaphorically place him in Westminster's Abby. He requests that poets of the past move over in order to make room for Shakespeare in their tomb:

> Renowned Spencer lye a thought more nye
>
> To learned Chaucer, and rare Beaumond lye
>
> A little neerer Spenser, to make roome
>
> For Shakespeare in your threefold, fowerfold Tombe.
>
> To lodge all fowre in one bed make a shift
>
> Untill Doomesdaye, for hardly will a sift
>
> Betwixt this day and that by Fate by slayne,
>
> For whom your Curtaines may be drawn againe.
>
> If your precedency in death doth barre
>
> A fourth place in your sacred sepulcher,
>
> Under this carved marble of thine owne,
>
> Sleepe, rare Tragedian, Shakespeare sleep alone;
>
> Thy unmolested peace, unshared Cave,
>
> Possesse as Lord, not Tenant, of the Grave,
>
> That unto us and others it may be
>
> Honor hereafter to be layde by thee.
>
> (Basse, "On Mr. Wm. Shakespeare" 1-16)[29]

Although Shakespeare should be in Westminister with his fellow artists, he remains alone: "[in] Thy unmolested peace, unshared Cave" (12-13). The past is saturated, Basse suggests, because the tomb that houses "Spencer," "Chaucer," and "Beaumond" is at full capacity (1, 2). However, Shakespeare's significance – his "precedency" (9) – creates an opportunity for future

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[29] Quotations to Basse's elegy are from the digitized version of the British Library's "Manuscript copy of William Basse's elegy on William Shakespeare." The transcription available online from the *Spenser and the Tradition: English Poetry 1579-1830* website was also consulted.

poets. Now that Shakespeare "sleep[s] alone" (12), his grave for "us and others it may be" as well (15). While Basse suggests that Shakespeare is consequential for posterity, he does not use the conventional monument *topos* to proclaim Shakespeare's textual immortality. Shakespeare is not located inside his works, but within a physical monument, a "fowerfold Tombe" "[u]nder this carved marble" (4, 11). For Basse, the monument is imperishable, preserving Shakespeare, but also future writers for which it will be an "[h]onor hereafter to be layde by thee" (16). As early as the late 1610s, Basse recognizes that Shakespeare is important for future dead poets. By placing Shakespeare within a space of posterity, Basse suggests that Shakespeare's death offers future poets eternal recognition as well.

Jonson's "To the memory of my beloved" develops Basse's elegy through revision. While Basse transforms Shakespeare's death into an opportunity to coexist with future poets, those poets are suggestively deceased, "layde" side by side next to the dead Shakespeare (16). Jonson, however, insists on offering Shakespeare a form of life, and a place of relevance within future *living* poetic communities. He requests that

> Shakespeare, rise; I will not lodge thee by
>
> Chaucer, or Spenser, or bid Beaumont lye
>
> A little further, to make thee a roome:
>
> Thou art a Moniment, without a tombe,
>
> (19-22)

Whereas Basse places Shakespeare in the ground, Jonson bids Shakespeare to "rise" (19), later locating him in among the stars (76). For Jonson, Basse's "[t]ombe" is an inappropriate monument to Shakespeare because his earthly sepulcher suggests that Shakespeare cannot live on (4). Jonson reconfigures Basse's tomb into an explicitly textual monument, remarking that Shakespeare is indeed "a Moniment," but "without a tombe" (22). Shakespeare is eternalized

by his book, allowing Jonson to claim that Shakespeare is "alive still" within his works (23). While Basse argues that Shakespeare is the first within the space of future deceased poets and thus "alone" (12), Jonson locates Shakespeare within an existing poetic community that includes both readers and writers. Shakespeare is placed within "*our* waters" (72; my emphasis), next to the theaters "upon the banks of Thames" (73). Like Sidney, Shakespeare is revived through interaction with his community of poets and readers. Jonson's revision of Basse's elegy offers Shakespeare metaphorical rebirth.

Jonson suggests that Basse's representations are detrimental to Shakespeare's memory. He juxtaposes his explicit departures from Basse with an exploration of the forms of praise appropriate for the dead poet. He implies that Basse's elegy is but

> blinde Affection, which doth ne're advance
>
> The truth, but gropes, and urgeth all by chance;
>
> Or crafty malice, might pretend this praise,
>
> And think to ruin, where it seemed to raise.
>
> These are, as some infamous bawd, or whore,
>
> Should praise a matron. What could hurt her more?
>
> (9-14)

Uninformed, "blinde Affection" that untruthfully fails to "raise" Shakespeare has potentially harmful implications. Jonson claims that praise of the sort is "as some infamous bawd, or whore, / Should praise a matron," asking: "What could hurt her more?" (9-11, 13-14). Instead, he both raises and praises Shakespeare, foregrounding his own attempts to "advance / The truth" of the poet (9-10). Shakespeare's "Booke" (2), Jonson's replacement of Basse's "[t]ombe" (4), is seen "in the Hemisphere" by the "[v]olumes light" (80). By raising Shakespeare out of the ground, Jonson has made the poet visible to all. Viewed as a response

to Basse's poem, Jonson's "To the memory of my beloved" demonstrates how elegies are a form of discussion between poets. Jonson comments on the imagery of Basse's poem, placing Shakespeare within a larger conversation of the living rather than among the silent gathering of the dead. Although Basse suggests that Shakespeare's death has created a space for future writers, for Jonson, Shakespeare's existence is perpetuated through poetic debate.

Leonard Digges responded to Jonson's elegy with his "Upon Master William Shakespeare, the Deceased Authour and his Poems" ("Upon Master William Shakespeare"). Digges' poem was published in 1640 as part of the prefatorial material to Shakespeare's *Poems*.[30] The 17th century inherited two theories that defined 'good' poets (Freehafer 68-71). One theory endorses the natural poet, whose poetry is original and flows naturally. The other theory contended that the successful author was the artificial poet, who must labor for verse. Jonson's "To the memory of my beloved" subscribes to the later. Jonson openly declares that "a good Poet's made, as well as borne" (64). Digges, however, challenges Jonson from the start, retorting that

> Poets are borne not made, when I would prove
>
> This truth, the glad rememberance I must love
>
> Of never dying *Shakespeare*, who alone,
>
> Is argument enough to make that one.
>
> …
>
> Reader his Workes for to contrive a Play:
>
> To him twas none.

---

[30] Like Basse's elegy, Digges' poem was not included in either the First or Second Folios. However, critics assume that the elegy was intended for one of them. The poem extensively references Shakespeare's dramatic works but ignores the poetry volume which Digges' elegy prefaces (Halliwell-Phillipps 88; Freehafer 64).

$$(1-4, 8-9)^{31}$$

Digges' opening lines argue that the true poet is the natural poet, one who is "borne not made" (1). Jonson claims that the successful poet labors for art because "he / Who casts to write a living line, must sweat" (58-59). By identifying Shakespeare's plays as his works, Jonson both elevates Shakespeare and presents drama as a form of deliberate labor. Digges, however, puns on the word "play" as both drama and recreation: "Reader his Workes for to contrive a Play: / To him twas none" (8-9). Not unlike Milton, and the Romantic poets of the late 18th- and early 19th-centuries that (mis)interpreted him, Digges believed that Shakespeare was a natural talent.

Digges explains his theory by contrasting Shakespeare and Jonson. Jonson had claimed that he cannot "give nature all: thy art / My gentle Shakespeare, must enjoy a part / For though the poet's matter, nature be, / His art doth give the fashion" (55-58). Shakespeare's deliberate craft is crucial, too, in the creation of his poetry. Digges contends "that Shakespeare's plays proceed from 'Nature onely'" and that Shakespeare does not require the classical sources Jonson was widely known to use (Freehafer 70). Shakespeare's works are

> Art without Art unparaleld as yet.
>
> Next Nature onely helpt him, for looke thorow,
>
> This whole Booke, thou shalt find he doth not borrow,
>
> One phrase from Greekes, nor Latines imitate,
>
> Nor once from vulgar Languages Translate,
>
> Nor Plagiari-like from others gleane,
>
> Nor begges he from each witty friend a Scene

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[31] All references to Digges' "Upon Master William Shakespeare, the Deceased Author, and his Poems" are taken from the digital version of the University of Oxford English Faculty Library facsimile of *Shakespeare's Poems: 1640*. I have standardized the text.

> To peece his Acts with, all that he doth write,
>
> Is pure his owne, plot, language exquisite.
>
> (10-18)

For Digges, Shakespeare's work is utterly original, "pure his owne, plot, language exquisite" (18). Jonson's poetry and plays, however, are "[p]lagiari-like" because he "from others gleane[s]" (15). Digges criticizes Jonson by alluding to his plays, arguing that he is one of the "needy Poetasters of this Age," whose "*Catilines*" is "tedious (though well labored)" and whose "*Sejanus* too was irksome" (28, 46, 47). At the same time, Digges' response develops the suggestions of Jonson's elegy. Digges not only endorses the form of engaged reading that Jonson deemed necessary for Shakespeare's afterlife, he actively enters into a debate about the nature of poetry with Jonson.

Both poets demonstrate the significance of reading by offering their interpretations of Shakespeare. Although Digges and Jonson hold contradictory views, both read Shakespeare's works as examples of their poetic theories. Jonson states that a true poet, "*[s]uch as thine are*" "must sweat" to write "a living line" (60, 59; my emphasis). In contrast, Digges believes that Shakespeare exemplifies *his* claims, that a 'true' poet is original. He finds justification for his theory in Shakespeare's works, calling readers to "looke thorow, / This whole Booke, thou shalt find he doth not borrow / One phrase" (11-13). As Lanier writes, "[i]f mediation by readers in inescapable, it is also, by its very nature, a never-ending process of revision" (231). Although the elegists hold opposing views, their treatment of Shakespeare is similar, as both believe in the importance of his works for posterity. Both poets mediate Shakespeare by offering different interpretations of his works and by demonstrating their close reading of Shakespeare's oeuvre through their revision of each other's elegies. Digges concurs with Jonson on the need for future readers, concluding by bequeathing Shakespeare to posterity, "whose lines, in every page, / Shall pass true currant to succeeding age" (63-64). He also

recognizes that succeeding generations will continue the conversation he has developed with Jonson: "But why doe I dead *Shakespeares* praise recite, / Some second *Shakespeare* must of *Shakespeare* write" (65-66). The First Folio elegists foregrounded the role of readers in keeping the poet alive. Digges' response fulfills their request. As Jonson and Digges reveal, debates about poetry are a form of active reading. If readership necessitates a "never-ending process of revision" (Lanier 231), Digges's and Jonson's dialogue is itself a form of immortalization. By creating, continuing, and sustaining the poetic conversation about Shakespeare, the ages that follow will make sure that the steady stream of Shakespeare's readers will be "never-ending" as well (Lanier 231). Seen together, Jonson's and Digges' elegies anticipate the 1638 elegies for Jonson, which further develop the elegy as a vehicle for poetic criticism between elegists and their elegiac subjects.

The themes of Shakespeare's earlier elegists are picked up in the Second Folio, published in 1632.[32] While many of the elegies are taken from the First Folio, there are three new additions. Among them is John Milton's "An Epitaph on the admirable Dramaticke Poet, W.Shakespeare" ("An Epitaph").[33] In many ways, his elegy is a product of the First Folio prefatorial poems. Milton, too, elevates Shakespeare by representing him as both "Dramaticke" and "Poet," and draws on Shakespeare's imagery and, in particular, his use of the monument *topos*. The poem itself is very Shakespearean, to the extent that "commentators as prestigious and diverse as de Man and Samuel Schonbaum, for instance, accidentally refer to it as a sonnet" (Stevens 385). Their mistake suggests Milton's successful assimilation of Shakespearean

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[32] See William B. Todd's "The Issues and States of the Second Folio and Milton's Epitaph on Shakespeare" for a discussion of the material conditions of the Second Folio.

[33] While outside the scope of this chapter, consideration should be given to the epitaph written on the tomb of Sir Thomas and Edward Stanley located in the Collegiate Church of St Bartholomew, in Tong, Shropshire. During the 17th century, the epitaph was attributed to Shakespeare. Gordon Campbell convincingly argues for the intertextual relationship between Milton's elegy and the epitaph. See Campbell's "Shakespeare and the Youth of Milton."

aesthetics. Milton begins conventionally by dismissing the need for physical monuments. He asks:

> What neede my Shakespeare for his honour'd bones,
>
> The labour of an Age, in piled stones
>
> Or that his hallow'd Reliques should be hid
>
> Under a starre-ypointing Pyramid?
>
> Dear Sonne of Memory, great Heire of Fame,
>
> What needst thou such dull witness of thy Name?
>
> (1-6)[34]

Milton revises Jonson's use of rhyme (Lanier 237), particularly the rhyme of "fame" and "name" (Milton 5, 6). Jonson's "To the memory of my beloved" equates Shakespeare's name with his fame, wishing "[t]o draw no envy (Shakespeare) on thy *name*" and questioning whether he is "ample to thy Booke, and *Fame*" (1-2; my emphasis). However, Jonson places "name" first (1), suggesting that Shakespeare's "fame" follows his substantial self (2). For Milton, "[f]ame" precedes Shakespeare's "[n]ame" (5, 6). His inversion of Jonson implies that Shakespeare, his "[n]ame" (6), is only as substantial as his recognition, his "[f]ame" (5). Milton recognizes the significance of reception and his revision of Jonson's couplet reinforces the need for readers who can provide Shakespeare with recognition.

Milton, however, goes further than Shakespeare's earlier elegists by explicitly reconfiguring the monument *topos* to incorporate readers as active participants (Blaine 227). Unlike other elegies, "An Epitaph" does not contrast the physical monument with the textual

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[34] All citations to Milton's elegy are taken from the digital Meisei University facsimile of the Second Folio. I have standardized the text.

monument. Milton explicitly identifies the Shakespearean monument *as* readership. Milton brings the physical and the textual monument together in the reader, claiming that Shakespeare,

> in our wonder and astonishment
>
> Hast built thy selfe a lasting Monument:
>
> …
>
> Those Delphicke Lines with deepe Impression tooke
>
> Then thou our fancy of her selfe bereaving,
>
> Dost make us Marble with too much conceiving.
>
> (7-8, 12-14)

The monument as neither tomb nor tome, but reception. It is "in our wonder and astonishment" that Shakespeare "[h]ast built…a lasting Monument" (7-8). Readers are transformed by Shakespeare's works into stone, further suggested by Milton's pun on "a*ston*ishment" (7; see Stevens 386; my emphasis). As Nicholas McDowell states, "each reader becomes a memorial to the affective power of Shakespeare's words" (253). Readers of Shakespeare are affected by "[t]hose Delphicke Lines," which [have] "deepe Impression tooke" (12). As a result, Milton notes, Shakespeare "[d]ost make us Marble" (14). While Jonson and Digges both acknowledge the need for readers, Milton explicitly rewrites the *topos* to frame readers as the monument itself.

Although Milton acknowledges the "affective" influence of Shakespeare's words (McDowell 253), he also suggests that monuments are produced by active and engaged readers by emphasizing the mental processes of readers. The Shakespearean monument is constructed in the readers' "wonder and astonishment" (7), and Milton contends that Shakespeare has made an "[i]mpression" on "our *fancy*" (13; my emphasis). The monument is located in readers' *consideration* of Shakespeare's works, constructed by "conceiving" of Shakespeare (14). Like

Heminge, Condell, and Jonson, Milton suggests that successful monument-readers must be thinkers as well.

Milton's "An Epitaph" develops the dead-poet elegy by elaborating the strategies of Shakespeare's other elegists. It engages in a preliminary form of criticism through poetry; Milton draws on the conventional monument *topos*, explores the implications of its imagery, and ultimately revises the trope for his own purposes. Milton, too, acknowledges the elegists' debate concerning poetic theory, noting "th'shame of slow-endeavouring Art" that contrasts with Shakespeare's "easie numbers" which "flow" (9-10). Milton's deliberate consideration of tropes and his acknowledgement of other elegists' conversation are both suggestive. He demonstrates how authors may revise others' poetry to sustain poetic conversations, whether through engagement with the deceased or with other elegists. By the end of the decade, Jonson's peers and elegists will emulate Milton's revisionary form of engagement. All Shakespeare's elegists concur that Shakespeare "[h]ast built" his "lasting Monument" through verse (8). Milton, however, places engaged readers in the midst of the process. For an author to remain vibrant for posterity, Milton suggests, the entire poetic community must be actively involved.

Shakespeare's elegists develop and complicate the project Spenser had begun in the previous century. While Hugh Holland, James Mabbe, Ben Jonson, and Leonard Digges engage with Shakespeare and with one another, they all declare that poetic immortality ultimately relies on reception. Poets and readers alike are invited to revise, to comment and to debate poetry. Jonson and Digges demonstrate how reading allows poets to redefine relationships between texts, readers, and dead poets. Jonson's revision of Basse and Digges' revision of Jonson both suggest how readerships may eternalize the deceased by perpetuating conversations about them. Milton's elegy is the epitome of this process. He offers posterity a new model for poetic immortality that can include the literary community. His representation

of engaged readers and his active revision anticipate the following decade, in which Jonson's elegists will use similar techniques for Jonson's own memorialization. All these poets recognize how writing and reading can create debates, invite participants, and sustain their discussion. Their elegies for Shakespeare fundamentally immortalize him through conversation.

POETIC CRITICISM & CRITICAL SOCIETIES:
THE LANGUAGE OF JONSON'S LITERARY COMMUNITIES

To judge of poets is only the faculty of poets; and not of all poets, but the best.

(Jonson, *Discoveries* 148a)

The reading of all good books is like a conversation with the best people of past centuries who have written them—nay, even a studied conversation, in which they disclose to us only their best thoughts.

(Descartes qtd. in Mahaffy 13)

Ben Jonson occupies a unique position in the development of the dead-poet elegy as both elegist and elegiac subject. Often hailed as the leading critic of his day (Spencer 22), Jonson emphasized the importance of criticism and the evaluation of literature throughout his life. For him, communal discussions about poetry were as important as the writing of poetry. As his elegies for William Shakespeare show, readers were paramount for Jonson and their significance is declared throughout his other works as well. Jonson's and others' elegies for Shakespeare anticipated the elegies of the 1630s which further developed the conversations about poets and poetry by offering readers ways to actively enter and participate in the discussions the elegists had begun in the previous decade.

For Jonson, even the act of reading was not sufficient: he demanded active, intelligent reading from his public. In "To the Reader," the poem that opens Jonson's *Epigrams*, he requests: "Pray thee, take care, that tak'st my book in hand, / To read it well: that is, to understand" (1-2). Reading "well" requires more than perusal (2) – it requires "understand[ing]" (2). Understanding was a key term for Jonson and was closely related to his endorsement of artistic judgement and the evaluation of poetry. In his elegy for William Shakespeare, "To the memory of my beloved, The Author Mr. William Shakespeare: And what he hath left us" ("To the memory of my beloved"), Jonson tells Shakespeare that: "Thou… / …art alive still, while thy Booke doth live, / And we have wits to read, and praise to give" (22-

24).[35] Readers must have "wits" that allow for insightful reading and engaged readers are active recipients of literature (24). Jonson couples proper reading with "praise to give" (24). Praise, Jonson claims, is not simply "blind affection" (10), but a product of reading that may "advance / The truth" about the deceased's works (9-10). Intelligent reading results in judgement. In order to be a good reader, Jonson's elegy argues, one must evaluate poetry. Jonson demonstrates his personal engagement with Shakespeare by praising his works. Throughout his poem, Jonson also shows that in order to "praise" poetry one must also *write* about poetry (24). Indeed, in Jonson's *Discoveries*, he explicitly claims that "[t]o judge of poets is only the faculty of poets; and not of all poets, but the best" (148a). Good readers must write, because only good writers can evaluate poetry. For Jonson, this form of engagement is criticism.

Throughout his life, Jonson attempted to instill his theories of critical reading into his readers, his peers, and his enemies. Raphael Falco notes his didacticism, claiming that "Jonson is inclined to be instructional, to delight and to bring profit in verse" (129). Jonsonian reading and writing were entrance requirements into Jonson's personal circle, often called his "Sons" or members of his "Tribe." In "An Epistle Answering To One That Asked to Be Sealed of the Tribe of Ben," Jonson initiates his pupil by claiming to dismiss "those that merely talk, and never think," because they are "[s]ubject to quarrel only" (9, 11). He concludes by granting acceptance into his "tribe":

> So short you read my character, and theirs
>
> I would call mine, to which not many stairs
>
> Are asked to climb. First give me faith, who know
>
> Myself a little. I will take you so,

---

[35] Quotations from the First Folio are taken from facsimile edition of *The First Folio of Shakespeare*. I have standardized the print. I have also consulted the online transcription provided by *Project Gutenberg*. All other citations of Jonson's poems are from *Ben Jonson: The Complete Poems*, edited by George Parfitt.

As you have writ yourself. Now stand, and then,

Sir, you are sealed of the tribe of Ben.

(73-78)

People who "never think" are rejected because they do not understand (9). Jonson's imperative, "[n]ow stand" (77), alludes to his request to readers to "understand" ("To the Reader" 2). Only those who have read and understood Jonson's works and those of his fellow poets are offered an opportunity for membership (73-74). Jonson concludes by suggesting that his addressee's acceptance hinges on his writing in particular, declaring to "take you so, / As you have writ yourself" (77). To be a member of Jonson's poetic community, readers and writers had to subscribe to Jonson's ideals of literary practice.

For Jonson, critical engagement was not merely an intellectual endeavor. He assimilated his theories into his works as poetic technique. Stanley Fish notes that "Jonson's habit of beginning awkwardly is intimately related to the project of his poetry" (172). His characteristic delays not only question "whether or not the reader can do what he is asked to" but also "whether or not the poem can do what it sets out to do" (Fish 172). Jonson's delays, then, are formal opportunities to express his critical ideas. His poem to Shakespeare is structured in two parts. The first meditates on appropriate and inappropriate forms of poetic praise and develops William Basse's "On Mr. Wm. Shakespeare," the elegy to which, I argued earlier, Jonson is responding. The second part puts forth Jonson's preferred forms of praise and judgement, a result of his exploration of Basse. Jonson begins by questioning the form of judgement appropriate for the dead poet, stating that "seeliest ignorance" and "blind affection" "[w]ere not the paths I meant unto thy praise" (7, 9, 6). As demonstrated in the previous chapter, Jonson proposes his own "ways" by explicitly revising Basse's representations of Shakespeare (4). Jonson suggests that only flatterers (like Basse, perhaps), "might pretend this praise, / And think to ruin, where it seemed to raise" (11-12). When proclaimed out of "ignorance" (7),

Jonson suggests, praise is dangerous. Such praise is "as some infamous bawd, or whore" would "praise a matron" (13-14). Jonson asks: "What could hurt her more?" (14). The first sixteen lines of Jonson's poem interrogate false and inappropriate forms of praise. Throughout the rest of the poem, Jonson represents Shakespeare as alive through his works and praises Shakespeare by emphasizing his influence on future readers and audiences. Jonson's elegy to Shakespeare demonstrates how Basse's poem fails to "do what it sets out to do" through its formal presentation and the poem's structure reveals Jonson's argumentative strategy (Fish 172). By incorporating Basse's elegy as a subject of query within his poem, Jonson evaluates and revises Basse. His elegy assimilates his ideals of critical engagement as a structuring principle of the poem. Criticism, for Jonson, is also part of poetic craft.

Jonson's poetic criticism was developed throughout his career and helped consolidate his persona as the model of a poet-critic among his peers.[36] Jonson had high aspirations for himself and he often represented himself as an immortal author of classical profundity (Falco 129; Peterson 185 n26; Shargel 69). After Jonson's death, William Cartwright would write that Jonson wanted to be "read as Classick in [his] life" (108).[37] Richard Helgerson concurs, noting that "Jonson is far more insistent in his laureate self-presentation than either Spenser or Milton, so insistent that sometimes the poet overwhelms the poem" (*Self Crowned Laureates* 103). On the one hand, Jonson was an independent writer aspiring for poetic glory who celebrates individualism in his poetry. On the other hand, however, he was reliant on his literary community for recognition and continuity after death. These two aspects of Jonson often came

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[36] Throughout his life, Jonson often used prefatorial texts as an opportunity for presenting his literary ideals. Paul D. Cannan terms these texts "prefatory criticism" (195). For information on how these texts informed readers' reception of Jonson's plays, see Cannan's "Ben Jonson, Authorship, and the Rhetoric of English Dramatic Prefatory Criticism."

[37] Cartwright's declaration is cited from his elegy for Jonson, taken from the *Jonsonus Virbius* collection. Citations from *Jonsonus Virbius* are taken from the online version of Oxford's *Ben Jonson, Vol. 11*, edited by C.H. Herford, Percy Simpson, and Evelyn Simpson. The British Library's digitized manuscript version, available on *Early English Books Online*, was also consulted.

into tension with one another. While Jonson was delighted to instruct his poetic circle in criticism, he often did not appreciate criticism of his own work. As Jennifer Brady writes, "[t]he readers' contract with Jonson can be revoked by the poet at any time. He considers it cancelled whenever his work is misunderstood, or read in bad faith, that is, with a smug assurance of our moral equality with the speaker" (110). Jonson's theories were a double-edged sword. They allowed him to "raise the despis'd head of poetrie againe" (qtd. in Barton 7), but also provided others with the strategies to turn Jonsonian criticism against his own works.

Jonson's "sons'" were aware of this contradiction and they, too, had developed Jonson's practices of reading and evaluation. Because the "tribe" was mentored by him, they employed Jonsonian strategies for engaging with Jonson's own works. As Robert C. Evans writes: "Ethics and art: these are the criteria by which [Jonson] both judged and was eventually judged himself" (88). By using Jonson's criteria, his "sons" not only gave credence to his ideals of critical engagement, they disseminated a poetic language with which people could practice poetry through the discussion and evaluation of literature. Poems by members of Jonson's literary circle demonstrate his instruction both before and after his death. In 1629, Jonson's play, *The New Inne*, was performed for the first time. The play failed disastrously, and Jonson blamed the actors and the ignorant masses (Barton 263; Peterson 159). Following the negative reception of the play, Jonson wrote his "Ode to Himself" ("Ode"). In his "Ode," Jonson criticizes 17th-century audiences for preferring "mouldy tale[s]" (21), calling himself to "leave the loathèd stage, / And the more loathsome age" (1-2). His poem was extremely popular; it was Jonson's only work to be translated three times into Latin, by three different and all well-known authors (Evans 76). Moreover, many different supporters and detractors of Jonson responded to his "Ode" with their own poems. These poems begin the poetic dialogues about Jonson's poetry and the values of poetic criticism, while also anticipating the *Jonsonus Virbius* collection of elegies written for Jonson following his death. Evans acknowledges the poem's

widespread effect, stating that "[i]f documented reader response indicates a work's impact, then this poem might seem one of the most significant Jonson ever wrote" (80). These responders wrote poems that explicitly engaged with Jonson's poem, either to attack, defend, or rewrite Jonson's rendition of the events.

Although the "New Inn" poems were occasional poetry, they were concerned more with Jonson's "Ode" than with the failure of *The New Inne*. As Evans writes, "[b]oth his friends and his foes respond to him mainly as a *writer*" and both friends and enemies of Jonson replied on "literary grounds" (Evans 84, 87 n12; emphasis original). In their attempts to attack or defend Jonson as a failed playwright, they construct him as a poet by drawing on his poetry. The "New Inn" poems engage with Jonson's "Ode" by contesting or reaffirming his imagery, his comparisons, or his formal techniques. I.C.'s, Owen Feltham's, and others' reworking of the "Ode" show Jonson's ideals of critical engagement by using Jonsonian strategies *on* Jonson. As a result, their evaluation of Jonson's "Ode" through their own poetry showcases the communal practices that Jonson sought to develop. By turning Jonson into the object of his own criticism, the "New Inn" poets demonstrate their ability to understand and to judge by using Jonsonian language, suggesting the importance of Jonson's ideals for thriving poetic communities.

Throughout Jonson's "Ode," he criticizes contemporary drama and audiences. In the headnote to the published version of *The New Inne* (1631), Jonson had declared that his play is: "Now, at last, set at liberty to the Readers, his Majesty's / Seruants, and Subiects, to be iudg'd" (qtd. in Zukerman 483). Like the faculty of understanding, the capacity to "judge," as Cordelia Zukerman notes, "was a lifelong preoccupation of Jonson's" (484). In his poem, too, Jonson is preoccupied with evaluation and he denounces his audiences for being poor judges of art as well as incapable readers. He tells himself to

Come leave the loathèd stage,

And the more loathsome age,

Where pride and impudence in faction knit,

Usurp the chair of wit:

Indicting and arraingning every day,

Something they call a play.

Let their fastidious, vain

Commission of the brain,

Run on, and rage, sweat, censure, and condemn:

They were not made for thee, less thou for them.

(1-10)

Jonson compares the process of intellectual engagement to the consumption of food, likening unsatisfactory art to "acorns," "lees," and "[l]ike Pericles," works that are "mouldy tale[s], / …and stale / As the shrieve's crust, and nasty as his fish" (12, 19, 21-23). These works, Jonson suggests, are not only unsatisfying and crude, but are potentially unhealthy, "mouldy" "and stale" (21, 22). Audiences that watch plays of the sort, Jonson declares, lack "wit," are proud, impatient, and "vain" (3, 4, 7). The audiences' appetite is equated to intellectual curiosity, or lack thereof. Jonson criticizes his detractors as people that "have no taste," and "[w]hose appetites are dead" (14, 16). They cannot understand Jonson's works because they do not possess the capacity to enjoy quality food. Jonson, whose works are compared to "a surfeit of pure bread" and "lusty wine," must therefore "quit" writing plays (15, 19, 34). Yet, their insufficient appreciation for his hearty intellectual food is not Jonson's fault. The audiences'

ignorance is to blame. "Envy them not," Jonson states to himself, because "their palate's with the swine" (20). Jonson's audience has judged him wrongly, and he had found them wanting.[38]

Jonson's poem presents a contradiction. On the one hand, the poem, like his elegy for Shakespeare, recognizes the necessity of others. The public is the object of criticism and the reason for Jonson to "leave the loathèd stage" but is also the audiences that see and pay for Jonson's play (1). On the other hand, Jonson actively dismisses those who engage with his works. He creates a distinction between the ignorant masses and the intelligent readers who can understand and enjoy his poetry (and high-quality food) (41-42). The audiences prefer, in Jonson's terms, "[s]omething they call a play" (6). While Jonson does not believe his audiences to be his "peers" (35), the failure of *The New Inne* suggests that the public has judged Jonson – as he demanded of his readers – and found him wanting as well. Although he endorsed criticism, Jonson did not accept judgement from people whom he believed lacked the capacity for intellectual engagement. Fish notes this tension throughout Jonson's poetry, describing Jonson's works as poetry that is "unwillin[g] to open itself to inspection": "its often-proclaimed inability to specify or describe the values that inform it…[and] its tendency to issue invitations (to look, to understand, to be sealed)… [all] have the effect not of bringing readers into the community but of keeping them out" (185). Jonson attempts to solve this contradiction in the last stanza by transforming the detractors of his *The New Inne* into supporters of his poetry. He declares to all:

> But when they hear thee sing
>
> The glories of thy king;
>
> His zeal to God, and his just awe of men,

---

[38] Cannan notes the similar treatment of readership in Jonson's headnote to *The New Inne* octavo (1631). See esp. 197-99.

> They may be blood-shaken, then
>
> Feel such a flesh-quake to possess their powers,
>
> That no tuned harp like ours,
>
> In sound of peace or wars,
>
> Shall truly hit the stars
>
> When they shall read the acts of Charles his reign,
>
> And see his chariot triumph 'bove his wain.
>
> (51-60)

Jonson qualifies the claims of the preceding five stanzas with a conjunction, "[b]ut" (51), suggesting a shift in the representation of his audiences. If he associates himself with the king through verse, others will know his worth when he will "truly hit the stars" (52, 54-55, 59). Yet, although much of Jonson's poem elaborates on the different varieties of food that ignorant audiences enjoy, Jonson does not explain how his audience will be transformed into his supporters. Jonson, like Shakespeare, becomes a constellation but his new "read[ers]" do not critically engage with his works (59). After experiencing Jonson's poetry, "[t]hey may be blood-shaken, then / Feel such a flesh-quake to possess their powers" (54-55). Their judgement of Jonson will be transformed by bodily and primordial forces, through their "blood" being "shaken" and the "quak[ing]" of their "flesh" (54, 55). The catalyst of change is "Charles" and, Jonson implies, outside of the hands of the poet (59). Suggestively, the audiences do not move from criticism to praise through their intellectual capacities of understanding that Jonson strove to instill in his students. Rather than accept the evaluation of others, Jonson simply demands that they change.

Jonson's poem evoked at least five separate responses from fellow poets. Some of the "New Inn" poets vehemently defended Jonson, while others recognized that the negative

reception of Jonson's play was more accurate than Jonson allowed. Yet, all engaged with Jonson's poem by drawing on the themes and formal strategies of his "Ode." Even those who supported Jonson recognized the ironies and contradictions of his poem, subtly alluding to them or explicitly foregrounding and reworking them in their responses. By using strategies that Jonson has proclaimed integral to literature, they demonstrated the efficacy of their own poetic and critical engagement. Moreover, they revealed the necessity of criticism within literary communities by positioning Jonson, the cornerstone of many poetic circles, as the object of their collective criticism.

Shortly after the composition of Jonson's "Ode," I.C.'s "Ode to Ben Jonson, upon his Ode to Himself" was written and circulated.[39] I.C.'s poem takes both its theme and form from Jonson's "Ode." It strongly defends Jonson but argues for Jonson to stay, rather than leave the stage. While I.C., too, agrees with Jonson's criticism of the age, he revises Jonson's food imagery and Jonson's appeal to majesty into opportunities to delay or prevent Jonson's proclaimed self-imposed exile. I.C. begins, like Jonson, by declaring his argument. Rather than "leave," he demands that Jonson: "*Proceed* in thy brave rage / Which hath raised up our stage" (1-2; my emphasis). I.C. echoes Jonson's elegy for Shakespeare. Jonson requested that Shakespeare with "rage / Or influence, chide or cheer the drooping stage" (78). I.C. reworks Jonson's individual "rage" into a "brave" and collaborative opportunity for Jonson to continue to "rais[e] up *our* stage" (1-2; my emphasis), transforming Jonson's spiteful commentary into a heroic endeavor. Jonson, I.C. declares, should continue to better the stage, even as he is criticized. I.C. concurs with Jonson's claims that the audiences are ignorant. However, he subtly qualifies Jonson's absolute distinction between the "high-relished" readers and the "shadows" of the theater world by stating to Jonson that

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[39] Evans notes that I.C. was probably James Clayton (87 n12). Jesse Bradley and Joseph Adams contend that the poem was probably written around 1629 (145).

> if thou make thy feasts
>
> For the high-relished guests
>
> And that a cloud of shadows shall break in,
>
> It were *almost* a sin
>
> To think that thou shouldst equally delight
>
> Each several appetite.
>
> (21-26; my emphasis)[40]

To let the shadows sit at the table, I.C. notes, is "almost a sin / To think" they should partake in Jonson's food (24). Although the criticism of audiences is identifiable, I.C.'s language is more nuanced than Jonson's terminology. He distances himself from the binary Jonson creates through the word "almost" and presents the feast as a thought experiment rather than a metaphorical event (24, 25). He refuses the absolute separation between those who endorse Jonson and those who do not by hinting at the possibility for Jonson to entertain all guests together, to "equally delight" everyone's appetite (26).

For I.C., the ignorant masses can never change without the presence of Jonson. His primary request to Jonson is to "[p]roceed" rather than leave (1). I.C. declares that Jonson does not sacrifice anything by allowing lesser writers and audiences to remain ignorant, because

> If thou thy full cups bring
>
> Out of the Muses' spring
>
> And there are some foul mouths had rather drink
>
> Out of the common sink,

---

[40] All citations to the "New Inn" poems are taken from *The Jonson Allusion-Book*, edited by Jesse Franklin Bradley and Joseph Quincy Adams.

There let them seek to quench th' hydropic thirst

Till the swoln humour burst.

Let him, who daily steals

From thy most precious meals,

Since thy strange plenty finds no loss by it,

Feed himself with the fragments of the wit.

(31-40)

Inevitably, I.C. concedes, there will be "some foul mouths" that will drink from the sink and steal from Jonson's own plate. Rather than leave the stage or rage at plagiarists, however, I.C. requests Jonson "let them," and to "let him," and to "let those" continue to consume lesser food (33, 35, 41). By "let[ting] them" participate (33), even minimally, I.C. places the responsibilities of understanding in the hands of the audiences. I.C. attempts to persuade Jonson to allow those "who daily stea[l]," whether audience or plagiarizers, to "[f]eed [themselves] with the fragments of the wit" (37, 40). Only by offering them a place at Jonson's "feasts" will those audiences have the opportunity to be transformed (21). Their "weak, empty mind[s]" are a result of "[t]heir barbarous feeding on such gross base stuff" (47, 21). By allowing audiences to enjoy Jonson's "surfeit of pure bread" they are given the option to develop a taste for quality literature (15). If Jonson leaves the stage, I.C. implies, audiences have no hope at all.

Jonson was himself known to indulge in both food and alcoholic beverages. I.C.'s revision of the "Ode's" food imagery calls attention to Jonson's use of metaphors, teasing Jonson for his habits and suggesting that Jonson has enough food for everyone, an intellectual plethora in which all can partake. He mentions Jonson's eating habits by hinting at his "most precious meals" and punningly alludes to Jonson's love of drink, those moments when he

"takest that *high spirit*" (37, 51; my emphasis).[41] Jonson's plagiarizers have no effect, because

Jonson's works and size, his "strange plenty" (36), "finds no loss by it" (39). I.C. demonstrates

his ability to rework Jonson's representations by poking fun at the poet. Jonson's intellectual

plenty and sheer size protect him from the ignorant people who do not understand him. I.C. not

only revises Jonson's argument, he calls attention to his ability to use Jonson's imagery. The

claims of I.C.'s poem are suggestively Jonsonian as well. His response offers audiences

opportunities to develop by both understanding and enjoying high-quality nourishment. Like

Jonson, I.C. focuses on others' intellectual capacities and concurs with Jonson regarding

audiences' ignorant state. Yet, I.C. also nuances Jonson's "Ode." He draws on Jonson to subtly

claim that, perhaps, others can be transformed when allowed a seat at his table.

I.C. suggests that Jonson's poetry is for real people, not the heavens, and that poetic

power comes from Jonson's works rather than royalty. He redefines Jonson's relationship to

majesty by casting Charles, the English king, as Apollo, the poetic king. Charles' triumphant

"chariot" now "runs his whole / Bright course about each pole" ("Ode" 60; 73-74), responsible

for both the sunrise and the sunset. By emphasizing Apollo rather than Charles, I.C. locates the

transformative power of Jonson's verse in poetry rather than in the king. Here, majesty is a

bloodline of poets, offering Jonson continuity through a poetic genealogy. Jonson is the

successor, the "[g]reat Prince of Poets," "[c]rown[ed]" with "Delphic bay" (61-62). I.C.'s

revision suggests that poetic mastery has the same ability as majesty to transform others, and

that Jonson should trust in the potency of his poetry rather than the "glories of thy king" and

"[h]is zeal to God, and his just awe of men" ("Ode" 51-53). I.C. proposes an alternative theme,

available to all of society rather than limited to the upper classes as implied by Jonson's

allusions to royalty. Rather than "Charles his reign" ("Ode" 59), Jonson should focus on the

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[41] Jonson, in 1612, wrote the first cited instance of "spirit" in the sense of "[l]iquid such as is obtained by distillation…that which is of an alcoholic nature" (*OED* n. 21b).

poetic "rain" of "the Roman harper" (I.C. 75), metaphorically rewriting Jonson's subject matter into poetry itself. Jonson's appeal to majesty is reconfigured into a request that Jonson continue focusing on poetry – to write rather than to leave. I.C.'s initial imperative, "[p]roceed" (1), is clarified by the specificity of his final request, that Jonson

> Sing, English Horace, sing
>
> The wonder of thy King;
>
> Whilst his triumphant chariot runs his whole
>
> Bright course about each pole.
>
> Sing down the Roman harper; he shall rain
>
> His bounties on thy vein,
>
> And with his golden rays
>
> So gild thy glorious bays,
>
> The Fame shall bear on her unwearied wing
>
> What the best Poet sung of the best King.
>
> (71-80)

I.C. demands Jonson act now rather than look forward to the future, telling him to "Sing" in the present tense three times in the final stanza (71, 71, 75). If he does so, Jonson's "sound shall pierce so far" "[i]t shall strike out the star" of Greece, "whilst [Jonson's star] / With all due glory here on earth shall shine" (70, 67-68). I.C. revises Jonson's aloofness by declaring that poetry is earthly, implying that even the 'groundlings' deserve to hear Jonson's lines. His audiences will not engage with his works in the "stars" (Jonson 58), but "on earth" (I.C. 68, 70). By moving Jonson's influence from the sky to the ground, I.C. suggests that his poetry is for everyone, even those too low to appreciate the now "raised…stage" (2).

Like Jonson's "Ode," I.C.'s poem follows the AABBCCDDEE rhyme scheme, five rhyming couplets that construct ten-line stanzas. I.C.'s metrical pattern is identical to Jonson's as well; they both alternate between three- and five-feet lines. Yet, unlike Jonson, I.C. adds a seventh stanza. By elaborating Jonson's six stanza "Ode," I.C. suggests that the qualification of Jonson's conclusion is insufficient. Jonson should *continue* writing, further emphasized by his repeated imperative: "Sing" (61, 61, 65). By refocusing Jonson on poetry and placing him within a succession of poets from antiquity, I.C. claims that Jonson will achieve the recognition he desires, "[t]hat Fame… / What the best Poet sung of the best King" (79-80). Fame, I.C. suggests, comes from the capacity to write, to "Sing" (71), not the subject matter of Jonson's verse. Although Charles is "the best King" (80), he remains nameless in I.C.'s poem. I.C. deemphasizes the king in favor of the act of singing. Throughout his response, I.C. draws on Jonson's "Ode" in order to demonstrate how critical engagement may benefit Jonson. He rewrites the poem in order to engage with the contradictions manifest in Jonson's response to *The New Inne* failure and reveals how Jonson's own techniques may be repurposed to assist both with Jonson's reconciliation with the public and with his aspirations for continuity.

Not all of the responses to Jonson's "Ode" favor Jonson. An anonymous writer in 1629 calls explicit attention to the tensions inherent in Jonson's poem. "The Cuntry's Censure on Ben Johnsons New Inn" highlights Jonson's use of imagery and reworks his food metaphors to attack Jonson. Like Jonson and I.C., the writer begins with an imperative. He positions Jonson as his addressee, and demands that he listen to his own criteria:

> Listen (decaying Ben) and Counsell heare
>
> Wittes have their date and strength of braines may weare
>
> Age, steept In sacke, hath quencht, thy Enthean fier
>
> Wee pittye now, whom once, wee did Admire.

(1-4)

Jonson, who noted that audiences have no "wit" (4), is represented as a writer with no intellectual capacity. For the writer, Jonson's "lusty wine" is precisely the reason for his decay (19), the "sacke" having "quencht" his "Wittes" (3, 2). Attacking both Jonson's overindulgent drinking and his failure as an artist, the speaker explicitly appropriates Jonson's use of food related metaphors. He claims that Jonson's "bellye" now "holde[s] that little Learning, whiche is fled; / Into thy Guttes; from out thy Empyte head" (32-34), suggesting that Jonson's imagery only proves that Jonson's wit declines as Jonson himself grows larger. While the writer's attack seems excessively personal, the anonymous writer demonstrates his awareness of Jonson's representations by rewriting them for his personal criticism of Jonson and his poem.

Particularly, however, the anonymous writer opposes Jonson's dismissal of others, claiming that Jonson is unable to practice what he preaches. His argument is apparent from the first line. The writer suggests Jonson's failure to acknowledge the audience's judgement, demanding Jonson "[l]isten," rather than leave and that he "Counsell heare" (1). He finds particular fault with Jonson's response to *The New Inne*, declaring that: "Thy Argument's as tedious as thy play" (26). He explicitly calls attention to the "[a]rrogance," "[p]ride," and "presumption" of Jonson in his rejection of others' judgement (38, 39), and demands Jonson accept criticism. The writer rejects the resolution of Jonson's "Ode" in which Jonson's self-proclaimed poetic mastery triumphs over the ignorant masses. Many have criticized the play, the speaker claims, "[y]ett thou art Confident; & darst still swear, / The fault's not In thy Brain, but In their eare" (35-36). Jonson, the writer suggests, refuses to do what Jonson denounces his audiences for not doing: think critically. For the anonymous writer, Jonson's arrogance is the cause of his downfall; it is "[p]ride and presumption, [that] hath dethronde thy witt" (39). Instead of sulking, the writer declares, Jonson needs to "listen" to the "[c]ounsell" of those audiences he dismisses (1). The writer argues that audiences are qualified to evaluate works by

calling attention to the word "Justlye" to describe their judgement, telling Jonson to "forbeare / To dare to wright, what others Loath to heare / and Justlye" (5-7). Throughout the poem, the writer emphasizes his criticism by repeating variations of the word multiple times: "Justlye" (7, 44, 49), and "Just" (19, 42). He tell Jonson to "[s]urrender then thy right to th' stage" (5) because plays, the writer implies, belong to the public that financially endorses and supports those works. A playwright is dependent on his audiences.

For the anonymous writer, the distinction Jonson creates between his understanding readers and his ignorant audiences is less rigid than Jonson supposes. Audiences too, think critically. He claims that "readers, and spectators both agree" "that sensure must Impartiall be" (52, 51), suggesting that the audience evaluates favorably those plays that "[j]ustly merritt Prayse" and negatively those that "[j]ustly doth dispise" (44, 49). The writer also offers Jonson a way to reconcile with the public that does not demand his departure from the stage. He declares that audiences and he "proner are to Advise thee, then to blame" (54). If Jonson would listen, his own poetic community may come to his assistance. Although his words are harsh, the anonymous writer suggests Jonson's success as an instructor. The terminology the writer uses is strongly Jonsonian, drawing on typical words to connote Jonson's preoccupations with didacticism, criticism, and judgement. Jonson must accept "[a]dvise," "blame," and needs to acknowledge "that sensure must Impartiall bee" (54, 51). For the anonymous writer, readers and audiences are similar, as both may employ Jonsonian language to criticize Jonson when necessary. Jonson needs to accept his own critical language, even when used against him. The poem illustrates the tension inherent in Jonson's "Ode." The writer, like I.C. and Jonson himself, recognizes the dependence of playwrights and poets on audiences and readers. To maintain their relationships, he suggests, writers must allow the public to engage with their works. Jonson should not only write for but listen to the community.

Feltham's "An answer to the Ode, leave the loathed Stage, &c" ("An answer") strikes a middle ground between I.C. and the anonymous writer. Although Feltham seems to have been an admirer of Jonson (Evans 86), he does not defend Jonson like I.C., and later Thomas Randolph (Bradly and Adams 157). Feltham draws attention to Jonson's arrogance and calls for Jonson to accept the criticism of his play. However, he offers Jonson an explicit form of reconciliation with his judging public. The poem begins by calling Jonson to

> Come leave this sawcy way
>
> Of baiting those that pay
>
> Dear for the sight of your declining Wit;
>
> 'Tis known it is not fit,
>
> That a Sale Poet, just contempt once thrown,
>
> Should cry up thus his own.
>
> I wonder by what Dower,
>
> Or Patent, you had power
>
> From all to rape a judgement. Let't suffice,
>
> Had you been modest, y'ad been granted wise.
>
> (1-10)

Jonson's imperative, "[c]ome" (1), is reworked into a request for Jonson to leave the argument of his "Ode" and his isolating arrogance. Feltham acknowledges the importance and support of the community Jonson writes for, requesting Jonson "leave… / …baiting those that pay / Dear" (1-3). For a poet, especially "a Sale Poet" who works for pay and depends on audiences that can afford to enjoy the theater, "it is not fit" to "cry up thus his own" (4-6). Like the anonymous writer, Feltham declares that if Jonson forgoes his pride, he will be granted counsel by the community. He remarks: "Let't suffice, / Had you been modest, y'ad been granted wise"

(9-10). By drawing on Jonson's argument and positioning Jonson as the object of scrutiny, Feltham reworks Jonson's desire to leave the community into another opportunity for Jonson to be reconciled with his audiences.

"An answer" demonstrates Feltham's authority to criticize Jonson by calling attention to Feltham's capable revision of the "Ode." The poem exactly imitates the metrical and stanzaic structure of Jonson's poem, presenting Feltham as an able judge of Jonson through his close emulation of the poet. As Evans notes, "Feltham's poem (which seems to have circulated widely) is devastating satire, especially since it so *skillfully* parodies both the structure and the diction of Jonson's 'Ode'" (86; my emphasis). Whether or not Feltham's poem is a satire has been debated by critics, but Feltham is a skilled poet who demonstrates control over the "Ode's" form by using Jonsonian language, "[i]ronically turning Jonson's own standards against him" (Evans 86). Jonson's values are used throughout Feltham's "An answer," implying that Jonson is not immune to his own criteria. Feltham focuses on Jonsonian evaluation, claiming that Jonson has taken "[f]rom all" the "power" in order "to rape a judgement" (9, 8). Jonson's response has shown lack of judgement in his attempts to usurp the power to evaluate from his audiences. However, Feltham suggests that both audiences and himself are entitled to "judg[e]" the *The New Inne* as well (9). Audiences can evaluate poets and their works: "Stages, yet can judge / Not only Poets looser Lines, but Wits" (34-35). Feltham blurs the distinction between audiences and readers by declaring that spectators equally "can judge" both poets and their poetry (34). He questions Jonson, "[w]hy Rage then? when the Show / Should Judgment be and Know-/ Ledge" (31-33). The irony between Jonson's current irrational behavior, his "[r]age" and "rape" (31, 9), and the "Judgment" and "Know-/Ledge" that Jonson endorses is explicitly noted (32, 33). For Jonson, the audience's "brain[s]" lack "wit," and are both proud and "vain" (4, 7-8). "An answer" reworks the terms into descriptions of Jonson himself. Feltham divides Jonson's self-assumed "Know-/Ledge"

through enjambment and depicts Jonson's "declining Wit" (33, 3), criticizing the poet as the audiences had. The audience's intelligence and capacity to judge are suggested by Feltham, who describes Jonson's writing as not worthy of the public, containing "[j]ests so nominal" that "[a]re things so far beneath an able Brain" (3, 23). Jonson, who behaved proudly, now needs to accept "modest[y]" because "humour vain" and "[s]elf-conceit" "[e]clipse[d] what else is good" (10, 51, 53, 54). Feltham's control over Jonsonian language provides him with the authority to criticize Jonson on Jonson's own terms.

Feltham also offers Jonson an opportunity for reconciliation with the judging public. He suggests that by listening to audiences, Jonson may achieve his aspirations for fame. Jonson's denouncement of the public is detrimental to his desire to be "read" in "the stars" ("Ode" 59, 58). "Fame," Feltham claims to Jonson "is as coy, as you / Can be disdainful; and who dares to prove / A rape on her, shall gather scorn, not Love" (48-50). Like judgement, fame is not to be "rape[d]" but earned and Jonson's egotism will only lead to his downfall (50). Ultimately, Feltham, like I.C., revises Jonson's royal imagery into an opportunity to reconcile Jonson with his audiences. Poetic fame is only granted by the people, Feltham claims, as he calls Jonson to

> Leave then this humour vain,
>
> …
>
> And but forbear your Crown,
>
> Till the World puts it on:
>
> No doubt from all you may amazement draw,
>
> Since braver Theme no Phoebus ever saw.
>
> (51, 57-60)

Recognizing Jonson's aspirations for glory, Feltham suggests that Jonson's appeal to the king is but a shortcut to recognition. True fame depends on others, on "all" (59), and Feltham tells Jonson to cease with his self-aggrandizement until "the World puts…on" his "Crown" (58, 57). The crown imagery suggests the poetic inauguration of Jonson by the public rather than by royal anointment of the king. Feltham rewrites Jonson's "Ode" and engages with Jonson by using the forms of criticism that Jonson strove to instill. The necessity of Jonsonian criticism is implied by Feltham, who demonstrates how Jonson's language may be used both against him and for him, often concurrently. Jonson is not exempt from his own criteria, even from audiences that he does not regard. Jonsonian language is offered by Feltham as a vehicle through which poetic communities may be maintained, as Feltham reconciles Jonson's individual aspirations with his judging public through Jonson's own terminology. "An answer" ultimately suggests that Jonson's aspirations for literary fame may be achieved – but only by accepting the very judgement that Jonson declared necessary for poetic practice.

The responses to the failure of *The New Inne* in 1629 are suggestive of the ways Jonson and his peers engaged with one another. As the "New Inn" poems demonstrate, criticism is necessary for literary communities. They employ Jonsonian representations and formal techniques in order to revise Jonson's own arguments and imagery, and to call attention to the tensions inherent in Jonson's "Ode." If Jonson believed that his works could better his "loathsome age" ("Ode" 2), his responders, too, could use similar strategies to better Jonson's engagement with his public. They all revise Jonson to suggest that the individual poet's aspirations may be achieved by engaging both with audiences and with readers. Jonson taught his students well.

A year after Jonson's death in 1637, his friends and students published thirty-three poems, most of them in English, as *Jonsonus Virbius* (1638). *Jonsonus Virbius*, literally "twice a man" (Donaldson 431), was one of the few verse compilations written for a deceased poet

during this period (Shargel 41). Today, the volume is often regarded as lackluster poetry that simply idealizes Jonson and an early prefiguration of the contrast between his and Shakespeare's aesthetics (Shargel 41). Raphael Shargel notes that "[c]ontemporary critics who study it make the indisputable point that no individual poem stands out, that the verse is at best mediocre" (41). However, *Jonsonus Virbius* also demonstrates the Jonsonian criticism of the "New Inn" response poems. Jonson's elegists memorialize him by using Jonson's own language, suggesting the validity of his critical reading by engaging with and commenting on Jonson's poetry and ideals. Jonson is represented as both poet and critic, and his elegists also act as both poets and critics interacting with his works. They tease out and explore the tensions between Jonson's aspirations for individual poetic fame and his dependence on the coteries he helped develop. The poets engage with – evaluate, revise, and depart from – Jonson's works to argue for the importance of criticism within literary circles. By commenting on Jonsonian strategies of reading and writing, Jonson's elegists show how Jonson's poetry and his death allowed others to become engaged readers and writers as well. While many of the elegies of *Jonsonus Virbius* indeed glorify Jonson, others are more nuanced than critics allow. They not only suggests that poets require critical practices, they showcase how their implementation of Jonsonian strategies develops the conversations that maintain poetic communities.

The collection's Jonsonian engagement is made apparent from the first page. Following the full title of the collection, *Ionsonvs Virbivs, Or, The Memorie Of Ben: Johnson Revived By The Friends Of The Muses*, E. Purslow (E.P), the printer, addresses the public. In Jonsonian fashion, E.P. also suggests the importance of evaluation by drawing on the language of Jonson's values. He states that

> 'Tis now about six months since the most learned and judicious Poet, B.
> IOHNSON, became a subject for these Elegies. The time interjected between his
> death and the publishing of these, shewes that so great an Argument ought to be

consider'd, before handled; not that the Gentlemens affections were lesse readie to grieve, but their judgements to write. At length the loose Papers were consign'd to the hands of a Gentleman, who truly honor'd Him (for he know why he did so) To his care you are beholding that they are now made yours. And he was willing to let you know the value of what you have lost, that you might better recommend what you have left of Him, to your posteritie.

(429-30)

E.P. notes that it is the poets' quality of "judgements" rather than their "affections" that have postponed the publication of the collection (429). Jonson had requested of his readers "[t]o read [his book] well: that is, to understand" ("To the Reader" 2). *Jonsonus Virbius*, too, demands thinking and understanding, as E.P. remarks that "so great an Argument ought to be *consider'd*, before handled" (429; my emphasis). Now, the collection is placed in the hands of the public who "might the better recommend" Jonson's poetic remains to "posteritie" (430). Recommendation is also a form of evaluation, as Jonson had demonstrated by both praising and advocating for Shakespeare throughout his elegy. E.P.'s use of Jonsonian terminology suggests that critical engagement is necessary for Jonson's continuity into the future.

E.P.'s vocabulary is taken up by the elegists of the collection. As Brady writes, "the contributors to *Jonsonus Virbius* tend to enshrine the poet in his own words" (96). For Brady, the elegists' use of Jonsonian language exposes their inability to move forward; she claims that

Jonson's impact on these consenting men, the almost visceral presence of his dominant personality and collected Works, can be felt throughout *Jonsonus Virbius*. …[T]he very redundancy of these eulogies, the similarity of their phrasing and terminology, is itself significant…. They are cowed by his example, shackled by his authority.

(96)

Brady argues that the Jonsonian poetics of the collection shows that the elegists' cannot free themselves from Jonson's "authority" (96). However, many of Jonson's elegists anticipate Brady's criticism. Rather than shackle themselves to Jonson, they draw on Jonson to demonstrate the efficacy of their poetic devices to memorialize the deceased. Thomas May, a contributor to the collection, claims that the appropriate way to elegize Jonson is through deliberate consideration of language because "[i]f high, it fits [his] Fame: / If low, it rights [Jonson] more, and makes men see, / That English Poetry is dead with [him]" (12-14). By equating English poetry with the dead poet, May suggests that now all language is Jonsonian. The elegists must therefore all draw on Jonsonian language and aesthetics to elegize and represent the deceased.

John Beaumont, in his "To The Memory Of Him Who Can Never Be Forgotten, Master Beniamin Johnson," also claims that the appropriate language with which to memorialize Jonson is his own. He demonstrates his engagement with Jonson by drawing on the vocabulary of Jonson's elegy for Shakespeare. Initially, the elegy begins with a declaration of Beaumont's inability to write about Jonson. Beaumont believes that Jonson cannot be captured in verse, claiming that

> Had this bin for some meaner Poets Hearse,
>
> I might have then observ'd the lawes of verse:
>
> But here they faile, nor can I hope t'expresse
>
> In Numbers, what the world grants Numberlesse.
>
> (1-4)

Like many of Jonson's poems, too, Beaumont's elegy expresses its inability to perform the task it sets out to do. Beaumont claims that the "lawes of verse" "faile" to elegize a poet of Jonson's stature. He cannot "hope t'expresse / In Numbers, what the world grants Numberless" (2-4).

However, like "a Jonson poem" which "always has the problem of finding something to say" and which "is solved characteristically when [the poem] becomes itself the subject of the poem" (Fish 178), Beaumont's elegy moves forward by shifting the subject of the elegy to poetry and language itself. By speaking in Jonson's language and drawing on Jonson's themes, Beaumont finds a way past his "fail[ure] (3). Jonson

> made our Language pure and good,
>
> To teach us speake, but what we understood,
>
> We owe this praise to him, that should we joyne
>
> To pay him, he were payd but with the coyne
>
> Himselfe hath minted, which we know by this
>
> That no words passe for currant now, but his.
>
> (41-46)

Jonson had taught Beaumont and the other elegists not only to "underst[and]" but to "speake" – to write – about what they understand (42), and Beaumont declares that suitable repayment is with the language Jonson himself had "minted" (45). In writing the elegy, Beaumont repays Jonson for his language with his language. The title of Beaumont's elegy, "To the Memory of him…," echoes the title of Jonson's elegy for Shakespeare, "To the memory of my beloved." Beaumont, too, alludes to the intelligent readers Jonson favors in his tribute to Shakespeare, those who have "understood" how to "pay" "this praise to him" ("To the memory of my beloved" 42, 44, 43). False praise, for Jonson, will "ne'er advance / The truth" ("To the memory of my beloved…" 9-10). Beaumont responds to Jonson's elegy by declaring that his commentary contains only "the Truths, we ought to speake of Thee, / Thou great refiner of our Poesie" (5-6). Jonson has become the "wonder" (62), the same word used by Jonson to

represent Shakespeare (the "wonder of our stage" (18)). Beaumont not only draws on Jonson's words, he expresses Jonson's poetry and values.

By making Jonson's language both the vehicle and the subject of his poem, Beaumont succeeds "t'expresse / In Numbers" his tribute to the deceased (3). The entire poem, like most of Jonson's works, is in rhyming couplets. Throughout his poem, Beaumont records and conveys those aspects of Jonson that will live on. He calls attention to Jonson's disappointment in the "prostituted Stage" that led to *The New Inne* failure (15). Jonson's belief in instruction is considered by Beaumont, and especially Jonson's successful attempts to improve the dramatic arts. Beaumont elevates Jonson to the status of the nation's teacher, declaring that "[h]e in a blinder age could change / Faults to perfections" (47-48). Commenting on Jonson's preoccupation with evaluation, Beaumont writes that of Jonson's "words, and such expression… / Ther's none but judgeth" (38-39). Admitting Jonson's indulgence in drink, Beaumont concedes that "vice he onely shew'd us in a glasse" (21). The entire "English language" is indebted to Jonson (31). But Latin, too, must "thanke him, for he Latin Horace found" (32), suggesting that Jonson has made classical texts accessible for England to enjoy. Even as Beaumont claims to "faile…t'expresse" Jonson (3), he successfully represents the particularities and values of the dead poet. Beaumont concludes by humbly remarking that "[c]ould I have spoken in his language too, / I had not said so much as now I doe" (59-60). Yet, Jonson's own elegy for Shakespeare is longer than Beaumont's poem, and Beaumont's use of the "coyne / [Jonson] Himselfe hath minted" is precisely an exercise in "his language" (45-46, 59). Jonson claimed in his *Discoveries* that "[a] man coins not a new word without some peril…for if it happen to be received, the praise is but moderate; if refused, the scorn is assured. Yet we must adventure; for things at first hard and rough are by use made tender and gentle" (431-32). Beaumont's conclusion is more suggestive than Bradly allows. He repays Jonson by using Jonson's own "coins" to represent the deceased (431), and in so doing, develops Jonson's

language by making it "tender and gentle" through "use" of his language (432). By claiming to fail, Beaumont calls attention to his success in preserving Jonson in Jonson's own words. Beaumont's tribute to the deceased poet demonstrates how Jonson constructed an apt language with which poets may engage with other poets. Rather than being "shackled" to Jonson (Bradly 96), Beaumont shows how poets can memorialize Jonson by repaying him with his own words and by using Jonsonian strategies.

For other elegists, Jonson's poetry also offered an opportunity to develop poetic skills with which to enter Jonson's poetic communities. Jasper Mayne, in his "To The Memory Of Ben. Iohnson," draws on Jonson's poem on Shakespeare for the imagery with which to commemorate Jonson and demonstrates how elegies invite others to enter conversations with both the deceased and each other. Mayne, too, believes that Jonson's elegists must first assimilate Jonson's own language. Initially, he cannot represent Jonson, declaring that "[w]hat thou wert… / …cannot bee told" (7-8). In order to speak of Jonson, the elegists "must be ravish first," and Jonson "must infuse / [him] selfe into us both the Theame and Muse" (9-10). They must incorporate not only Jonson's "Muse" (10), his poetry, but also his "Theame" (10). As Dennis Flynn recognizes, Jasper's poem is highly Jonsonian. Flynn defends the poem, claiming that "'To the Memory of Ben Jonson…skillfully incorporates stylistic allusions to Jonson's writing, especially its epigrammatic density" and that "[a]s in Jonson's own verse, the prosody is exact though compressed, and the meaning is clear though dense" (207, 208). Not only must Jonson's language be used, but also his treatment of the subject matter and ideals of poetic craft.

Mayne demonstrates his understanding of Jonsonian preoccupations by drawing explicitly on Jonson's elegy for Shakespeare in order to create a poetic space of interaction for deceased poets and their elegists. Mayne, like Beaumont, echoes Jonson's elegy on Shakespeare through his title. He understands the importance of careful praise. As we saw in

the beginning of his elegy, Jonson calls attention to the forms of "crafty malice" that just "pretend praise" ("To the memory of my beloved" 11). Mayne concurs that unsuitable language will have a similar effect on the dead poet, as "[v]erses on Thee [Jonson] / And not like thine, would but kind Libels be" (21-22). Mayne, too, believes that appropriate monuments for poets are not physical monuments, but their works. As a result, the elegists have

> buried [Jonson] in Rime,
>
> So that in Meeter wee had heard it said,
>
> Poetique dust is to Poetique laid:
>
> And though that dust being Shakspears, thou might'st have
>
> Not his roome, but the Poet for thy grave.
>
> (14-18)

Buried in "Rime" (14), Jonson will now "live" (20), like Shakespeare. Jonson's "[p]oetique dust" (16), housed in "Meeter" (15), creates the opportunity for rebirth – an opportunity the elegists have "heard" of in Jonson's own elegy (15). Mayne suggests that Jonson's engagement with Shakespeare's "dust" has created a space for the continuity of deceased poets (14, 17). By alluding to and drawing on other poets, elegists may offer poetic immortality to the deceased by burying their remains in verse. Jonson's dusty space is a textual Poet's Corner, where other poets may interact with the author, and ultimately "lie" beside him (20) – as he now lies with Shakespeare. They all defy death, Mayne claims, both by "liv[ing]" in verse but also by virtue of their poetic conversations with the deceased (20).

Mayne, like Jonson, acknowledges that engagement with deceased poets is communal. Mayne's plural "wee," "[o]ur," and "us" throughout the poem suggest that he speaks for a society that collaborates to memorialize the poet (11, 12, 25). Like Basse, Jonson, and Leonard Digges, Mayne places the deceased among his peers. Jonson is recognized for his uniqueness

and is located alongside other "rare" poets, "[a]s Beaumont, Fletcher, or as Shakespeare were" (130). Through his engagement, Mayne, too enters the community. He not only draws on Jonson's poem, but he enters the debates of the Shakespeare elegists on the nature of poetic craft. He parodies those that "[s]corne[d]" Jonson and their belief that "[h]e that writes well, writes quick" (49, 65). For Mayne, such poets "write so thin, that they can't be / Authors till rotten" (37). Instead of proposing his own poetic theories, however, Mayne revises the poetic debate between Digges and Jonson and so acknowledges his debt and gratitude. Whether poetry is created through hard labor or natural talent, "[p]oets and Kings are not borne every day" (132). Mayne's allusion to the theoretical debate between Jonson and Digges shows his reading of Jonson and his self-introduction into their elegiac community. He places Jonson in, and enters into, the collaborative conversation of the elegy.

As Jonson suggests throughout his elegy on Shakespeare, future communities are necessary for the continuation of deceased poets. Mayne's elegy declares the need for posterity by recognizing that even language can be worn away by time. Jonson, however, has created the opportunity to restore others' words. Posterity can recover authors' poetry, "when Time hath fed on [their] Tombe[s], / Th'inscription worne out" and when the "words expir'd so long before" by becoming critical readers (27-28, 30). As Mayne declares, "'twould pose a Critick to restore" those works. Jonson himself has instructed these "Criticks" through his poetry (29). Mayne concedes that on their first encounter with Jonson "[w]ee, like the Actors did repeat" his innovations (71), rather than understand them. However, after "[t]he first time [they] saw [his plays], the next conceiv'd thy Wit" (72). Jonson taught readers how to comprehend and engage with literary works. Eventually, they "were made Judges" by viewing and reading Jonson (96). Jonson's ideals, "rules," and "Arts" may be incorporated by others as well, by "learning" from the poet (73, 33). Jonson has created the opportunity for poetic immortality by instructing interpreters, and by developing and teaching the language required to continuously

engage with other poets. As a result, when Jonson is "of Homers years, no man will say / [his] Poems are lesse worthy" (43-44).

If Jonson's works instruct others in engaged critical reading, they also teach poetic craft. Mayne implies that by reading Jonson, elegists can become poets. The *Jonsonus Virbius* collection, Mayne admits, was an attempt "to make thy Herse / Our Workes" (11-12). Mayne suggestively uses the same word, "Workes" (12), as Jonson had in 1616 to signal the significance of his published plays and poems. The elegists were not only taught how to labor, but to produce. Mayne recalls the accusations of plagiary towards Jonson by defending Jonson's classical allusions. Jonson's teaching and translation of the "Greeke Authors" show his "humanitie" because he provided the "English" with "[t]heir learning" (121, 126, 124). Rather than "[t]heft" (126), Mayne declares that Jonson's allusions are "borrow'd" and that "in [Jonson they] did grow [his] by th'change" (128). In his *Discoveries*, Jonson had claimed that a "requisite" of a "poet, or maker, is imitation, to be able to convert the substance, or riches of another poet, to his own use" (448). Now a model of "Antiquitie" (33), Jonson, too, may be imitated and appropriated by other poets. Those who engage with Jonson will also become elegists "by the th'change" (Mayne 128), "convert[ing] the substance" of Jonson's own works (Jonson 448). As elegist Sir Thomas Hawkins confesses, Jonson's "Poems" "[f]orce inspire, / Knowledge, and wit infuse," but most importantly, "mute tongues unlose" (7, 8-9). Readers are not only "made Judges" by Jonson (Mayne 96), they are made poets as well.

Feltham, who had criticized Jonson for his arrogant individualism in his response to *The New Inne* failure, also contributed a poem to *Jonsonus Virbius*. The writer had a complex relationship with Jonson. Early scholars of Feltham have debated whether Feltham was "an admirer or an "antagonist" of Jonson (Pebworth and Summers 28 n1). Today, "[t]he correct interpretation seems to be that Feltham was indeed an admirer of Jonson, but was not blind to the great man's fits of egotism" (Pebworth and Summers 28 n1). Feltham's elegy for Jonson

expresses his understanding of Jonson. On the one hand, he, like the other elegists, draws on Jonson's poetry to praise and memorialize the deceased. Feltham recognizes that poetic continuity depends upon posterity and understands that his role as an elegist is to immortalize the dead. On the other, however, he notes the contradictions between Jonson egotism and the poetic communities on which he depended for readership. Feltham's elegy continues the conversation of his "An answer." He positions Jonson at the receiving end of Jonsonian critical reading and memorializes the author by using Jonsonian language.

In Feltham's "A Rule in Reading Authors" from *Resolves: Divine, Morall, Politicall* (1623), he argues for the importance of both reading and writing. He depicts the forms of reading he has encountered using traditional metaphors, claiming that "[s]ome men read Authors as our Gentlemen vse flowers, onely for delight and smell; to please their fancy and refine their tongue. Others like the Bee, extract only the hony, the wholesome precepts" (qtd. in Pebworth 58-59). Those who "extract…the hony" (qtd. in Pebworth 59) practice a form of reading that develops their writing and are able to learn through the "transformative imitation" of the material of others (Pigman "Versions of Imitation in the Renaissance" 5). As G.W. Pigman notes, writers' process of engagement is "not merely [the] eclectic gathering" of poetry. Rather they incorporate poetry by changing it, like "bees" that "convert flowers into honey by a process," an image incidentally comparable to a Jonsonian favorite, "digestion in men" ("Versions of Imitation in the Renaissance" 5). Most readers practice one form of engagement or the other. However, Feltham declares that "[i]n reading I will care for both," because "the one serues to instruct the mind; the other fits her to tell what she hath learned" (qtd. in Pebworth 61). The second form of reading is particularly important to Feltham, who argues that "he that hath worth in him, and cannot expresse it is a chest keeping a rich Iewell, and the key lost" (qtd. in Pebworth 61). A reader who cannot express their ideas, for Feltham, is worthless. Like Jonson, Feltham believed that engaged reading must be coupled with

commentary. "[P]ity it is," Feltham states despairingly, that reading and writing "should be deuided" (qtd. in Pebworth 61), that people practice one without the other. By demonstrating how engagement with Jonson offers opportunities for both reading and writing, Feltham presents and maintains the critical qualities of Jonson's language for posterity.

Like the other poets of the collection, Feltham draws on Jonson's poetry and shows his engagement with Jonson through allusion and revision. His elegy also echoes Jonson's elegy for Shakespeare through its dedicatory title, "To The Memory Of Immortall Ben," and is in rhyming couplets. Feltham begins by acknowledging the importance of Jonson. Although Jonson was "[s]o farre beyond conceipt" "[t]hat almost all will doubt" his strengths, Felltham states that "all must heare" them (3-4). His declaration suggests the motivation of his elegy, not only commemorating Jonson but representing him for the world to understand. Jonson had compared Shakespeare to the authors of antiquity, "Aeschylus, Euripides, and Sophocles" (33-34), as well as "Pacuvius, Accius," and Seneca the younger (35). Jonson's catalog of classical authors spans ten lines without reaching a full stop, imitating the "thundering" "forth" of the poets (32). Jonson, Feltham contends in Jonsonian fashion, has assimilated "Pindar's height," Plautus' "wit, and Seneca's grave weight," as well as the "matchlesse Nerves" of "Horace" and that "high phrase" of "Lucan" (5-8). These authors "like a Torrent move" through Jonson's "Workes" (11). Like Jonson's, Feltham's syntax mirrors the imagery. His lines also move like torrents, running on for ten lines without stopping and tumble over one another, joined through multiple uses of the word "and" rather than with full stops (6, 7, 11). Jonson's "call" to the authors is to bring them "[t]o life again" so that they may see a Shakespeare play (33, 36). For Feltham, Jonson provides the poets of antiquity new life through Jonson's own verse, "[a]s if each line to life were property'd" (10). Jonson's engagement with the poets from antiquity is key, Feltham suggests, for where else "shall old Authors in such words be showne, / As vex their Ghosts, that they are not their owne?" (47-48). As Jonson offers classical authors

immortality, Feltham grants continuity to Jonson. Jonson receives new life in Feltham's verse. Like Shakespeare, Jonson is placed in the heavens as one of "[t]hose planets placed in the higher Sphaeres" which "[e]nd not their motion but in many yeares" (51-52). Jonson's influence will shine on. Feltham places Jonson beside "Shakespeare" and "Beaumont" and together they comprise the "Crowne" of "the Stage" (29, 25), making "up the Jem in point Verticall" (30). By closely following Jonson's poetics, Feltham commemorates Jonson on his own terms.

Feltham contends that readers and writers must acknowledge Jonson's ideals of criticism. He calls attention to the importance of understanding and judgement, the two essentials of Jonsonian reading, and presents these as the legacy of the dead poet. Now that Jonson's dead, "[t]he Stage hath seene her glory and decay" (32). However, Feltham suggests the possibility of the rebirth of the stage by following Jonson's guidance. He questions, "[w]hose judgement was't refined [the stage]? Or who / Gave Lawes, by hereafter all must goe / But solid Johnson?" (33-35). Feltham not only declares that Jonson's ideals of "judgement" have bettered the stage but demonstrates that Jonson's continuation may be achieved by adhering to his "Lawes" (34). He calls attention to Jonson's own use of "judgement" in his elegy for Shakespeare. Whereas Jonson's "judgement" allowed him to place Shakespeare in dialogue with his contemporaries (27), Feltham repeats the word twice to represent the worth of Jonson's deliberate style (33, 49). Jonson's "full strong quill, / Each line did like a Diamond drop distill, / Though hard, yet cleare" (35-37). By comparing Jonson's verse to "a Diamond," Feltham calls attention to the conscious labor and worth of Jonson's verse. Deliberately crafted poetry, he suggests, is clear, durable, and precious. Felltham recognizes that both readers and writers must labor at Jonson's lasting poetry. Unlike other poets' works, in Jonson

every line

Must be considered, where men spring a mine.

And to write things that Time. [*sic*] can never staine,

Will require sweat, and rubbing of the braine.

Such were those things he left.

(61-65)

Like E.P.'s address "To the Reader," in which he declares that "so great an Argument ought to be consider'd, before handled" (429), Feltham presents Jonson's verse as an exercise in understanding. The solidity of Jonson's verse suggests its difficulty: it is hard as a diamond and, like a mine, must be exploded open in order to attain its valuables (Pebworth 75 n10). By "consider[ing]" Jonson's works (62), people become readers. Yet, reading alone is not sufficient. As in his "A Rule in Reading Authors," Feltham couples reading with writing, and concurs with Jonson's declaration that those who "write a living line, must sweat" ("To the memory of my beloved" 59; Feltham 64). The title of Jonson's elegy for Shakespeare allowed Jonson to claim that Shakespeare "hath left us" the possibility of future engagement with the poet (title). For Feltham, Jonsonian values are his legacy – reading and writing, "[s]uch were those things he left" us (65).

Jonsonian ideals, Felltham suggests, are crucial for future poetic communities maintained through textual conversation. Feltham's poem is in dialogue with his own "An answer" to Jonson's "Ode," in which he criticized Jonson egotism. Here, too, Felltham suggests that egotism is detrimental to a poet who is reliant on his community by offering multiple possible interpretations of his poem. Ted-Larry Pebworth notes that Feltham alludes to *The New Inne* in his elegy by comparing the "Stage" with Jonson, as both are now both "bed-rid by thy age" (15, 16). In his "An answer," Feltham declared that "[h]ad [Jonson] been modest, [he'd] been granted wise" (10). In his elegy, Feltham again suggests Jonson's arrogance by

drawing on the same word "modest," claiming that "to write of [Jonson] *Truth*: will be thought to forfeit modesty" (1-2; my emphasis). Feltham is in dialogue with Jonson, remembering Jonson's claim that elegiac verse is an opportunity to "advance / The truth" about deceased poets ("To the memory of my beloved" 9-10). Yet, Feltham's allusion suggests two different truths. Either Jonson's achievements are too remarkable for modest description, because Jonson is *truly great*, or Feltham recognizes that to *speak truly* about Jonson requires acknowledging Jonson's vanity and self-absorption.

Feltham's praises of Jonson are qualified by allusions to his own earlier poem. He concludes his elegy by claiming that Jonson will live on because

<div align="center">When Time has made</div>

Slaughter of Kings that in the World have sway'd:

A greener Bayes shall Crowne BEN. JOHNSONS Name,

Then shall be wreath'd about their Regall Fame.

For Numbers reach to Infinite. But He

Of whom I write this, has prevented me,

And boldly said so much in his owne praise,

No other-pen need any Trophie raise.

<div align="right">(69-74)</div>

In "An answer," Feltham states that even the classical poets have never "taught so bold assuming of the Bayes, When they deserved no praise" and requests Jonson to "forbear [his] Crowne / Till the world puts it on" (43-44, 56-57). The same words, "bold," "Bayes," "praise," "World," and "Crowne," structure both Feltham's criticism and his praise. By using the same terminology, Feltham nuances his valorization of Jonson. He suggests that what Jonson "boldly said" was "so much in his owne praise" that future poets have no reason to "any Trophie raise"

(73-74). As he had declared in "An answer," only the "world puts [the Crown] on" Jonson (58). The rhyme of the final couplet, "praise" and "raise" (73, 74) further alludes to Jonson's elegy for Shakespeare, in which Jonson represents undesired forms of praise. Feltham too, suggests the "crafty malice" that "pretend[s] [to] praise" but only "*seem[s]*" to commemorate the poet (11-12; my emphasis). By rewriting Jonson's description of unsuccessful praise into a comment about Jonson's self-representation of "his owne praise" (Feltham 73), Feltham implies that egotism, too, only "seem[ed] to raise" Jonson (Jonson 12).

The ambivalence of Feltham's conclusion is also suggested by scholars' historical disagreement over the interpretation of his elegy. While Edmund Malone contended that Feltham means simply that "Jonson did not rely on the praises of others" because he "wrote lines commending himself," William Gifford maintained that "[t]he *praise* refers to [Jonson's] works" (qtd. in Pebworth and Summers 75 n11). Their debate highlights the passage's ambiguous syntax, suggesting different ways of understanding Feltham's lines. The world has crowned Jonson. But perhaps, Feltham suggests, a poet who "boast[s] so much" will receive no elegy at all ("An answer" 56). His elegy teases out the tension between Jonson's self-aggrandizement and his justified poetic fame through its anagram-like quality and by using ambiguous language. Feltham represents both aspects of Jonson in order to argue for a necessary balance between individual egotism and the supporting (or critical) community. His argument is geared toward future authors and readers. The poem is written in the future tense, suggesting that he has taken posterity, rather than Jonson, as his addressee. Feltham repeatedly insists on the future of Jonson's verse, claiming that it "*will* be thought to forfeit modesty" to speak of Jonson because "all *will* doubt" the potency of Jonson's poetry which "*[w]ill* require sweat, and rubbing of the brain" (2, 4, 64; my emphasis). Feltham's poem, like Jonson's "Wits," is suggestively for "all that after come" (24). He provides posterity not only with Jonson's memory, but also with Jonsonian language and Jonsonian conflicts, reworked to

maintain future communities. Feltham's elegy depicts, demonstrates, and perpetuates the forms of critical engagement that Jonson endorsed.[42]

Many of the other elegists draw on the themes of Beaumont, Mayne, and Feltham. Their verse is preoccupied with Jonson's poetry, his instructional criticism, and with the other elegies of the collection. The elegists also call attention to their own developing poetry by explicitly meditating on poetry and by alluding to other writers. Lucius Cary writes the first elegy of the collection, a pastoral dialogue between two shepherds in the tradition of Spenser's "Astrophel."[43] Cary comments on Jonsonian forms of engaged reading to memorialize the poet. Like Mayne, Cary declares his use of Jonson's language by claiming to "imitate in this [poem] the Pen I praise" (286). Jonson's virtues shine through his poetry, as "in his works we most transcendent see, / Wit, Judgement, Learning, Art, or Industry" (89-90). These are the values his disciples have learned. Jonson was also the teacher of poetry, Cary notes, who instructed them "[t]o meditate on what his Muse had taught" (66). His death, in particular, is an opportunity for others to write. If "no other Pen doe joine / In this Attempt" to memorialize Jonson (261-62), Cary reveals, "[t]he whole world suffer[s]" (264). But, he questions, "[s]uppose that many more intend the same, / More taught by Art, and better knowne to Fame" (265-66)? Others better instructed in the Jonsonian "[a]rt" of verse may achieve "[f]ame" by writing elegies as well (266). By "[a]dmit[ting] meane Partners in this Flood of Teares" such as himself (270), the *Jonsonus Virbius* collection offers the opportunity for "the Humblest" to

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[42] Although not often studied today, Feltham's poetry was commended by his contemporaries (Pebworth 16). Pebworth, too, maintains that:

> Feltham's 'To the Memory of immortal Ben' is a considerable achievement. The poem stands as further testimony to the critical insight Feltham displayed in his poem on Randolph and in his 'Answer' [to Jonson's Ode]: he recognizes the greatness of the early seventeenth-century drama and the supremacy of Shakespeare and Jonson. But, more importantly, the poem succeeds as a convincing and sincere tribute to the dead playwright. Its success lies in its careful construction, its deft use of biography and convention, and its beauty of language…it certainly must rank among the most distinguished tributes Jonson received. (95-96)

[43] Lucius Cary's contribution to *Jonsonus Virbius* was appropriate. One of Jonson's most widely studied poems, "To the Immortal Memory and Friendship of that Noble Pair, Sir Lucius Cary and Sir H. Morison," was written following the death of Cary's friend, Morison, in 1629.

"joine with Loftiest Things" (271). Inexperienced authors can become poets too; they may practice Jonson's beloved art by elegizing him.

By writing elegies for Jonson, others join the literary communities Jonson both established and instructed. *Jonsonus Virbius*, like the *Astrophel* and the Shakespeare elegies, draws its communal ties through allusions to other elegies. Cary calls attention to his engagement with Feltham's poem by also representing Jonson's verse as a "[t]orrent" that "grow[s]" (92). He uses the same rhyme as Feltham's "To the Memory of Immortall Ben" to declare that "the *Age*" "laments…the widdow'd *stage*" now that "[h]er great instructer [is] gone" (47-48; my emphasis). Dudley Digges, in his "An Elegie on Ben Jonson," alludes to Mayne's representation of "[p]oetique dust" by revealing how Jonson "rescu'd" other deceased poets "from the *dust*" and as a result "did receive new life" (Mayne 15; Digges 37; my emphasis). Jonson's life-granting elegies are more vital than life itself. These poets have yet to experience "[t]rue life, until they were entomb'd by Thee" (38). Richard West's elegy declares explicitly that Jonson's verse creates authors by claiming that his "Poems make us Poets" (73). Jonson's instruction and poetic language has established their textual society, West writes, because

> Hee that can but one speech of thine reherse,
>
> Whether hee will or no, must make a Verse.
>
> Thus Trees give fruit, the kernels of that Fruit.
>
> Doe bring forth Trees, which in more branches shoot.
>
> (75-78)

Like Jonson's *Forest*, a collection of poems on different individuals, *Jonsonus Virbius* is a collection of individual "Trees" (77). Those trees, the elegists and future poets, seeded by Jonson will "give fruit" as verse (77). Jonson's works, and elegies written for him, generate

more poets who will speak the "speech of thine" (75), Jonson's own language. Together, they expand, sustain, and nourish the forest that Jonson had sowed. The *Jonsonus Virbius* collection immortalizes Jonson by continuing his poetic project, inviting in the readers and poets of the future. If authors are only as immortal as the readers and commentators of their poetry, the solution to mortality, Jonson and his elegies concur, is the continuity of the poetic community.

Both before and after his death, Jonson's peers draw on his ideals as strategies of engagement among writers, readers, and critics. The "New Inn" poets demonstrate the importance of Jonsonian criticism by evaluating Jonson according to his own criteria. They suggest that audiences as well as readers can and should employ Jonsonian strategies. The poets not only conduct a conversation through their revision of Jonson's "Ode," they suggest the importance of communities for the aspirations of the individual poet. The elegists of *Jonsonus Virbius* similarly engage with Jonson and his values to memorialize Jonson. They show their understanding of Jonsonian criticism through their representations and allusions to Jonson's works. All declare the virtues of Jonsonian language. Beaumont consciously uses Jonson's language to represent aspects of Jonson preserved for posterity. Mayne and West not only practice Jonson's engaged reading but suggest how Jonson created the opportunities for others to become poets. The elegists show how *Jonsonus Virbius* offered them a place within the critical conversation and reveal how others can similarly participate in their poetic project. Other elegists like Feltham employ Jonsonian language to suggest the necessity of a community that may accommodate the individual subject. By entering into dialogue with his earlier "An answer" and Jonson's own poetry, Feltham uses Jonsonian strategies to balance the inherent tensions between poets and their communities. Like Spenser, the elegists suggest that a poet is always both individual and communal. For all, however, Jonson's language allow poetic communities to form, to develop, and to thrive. West defines the relationship between Jonson and Jonson's contemporaries. Perhaps

> Shakespeare may make griefe merry, Beaumonts stile
>
> Ravish and melt anger into a smile;
>
> In winter nights, or after meales they be,
>
> I must confesse, very good companie:
>
> But thou exact'st our best hours industrie;
>
> Wee may read them; we ought to studie thee.

<div align="center">(25-30)</div>

The difference between the poets, West suggests, is that Jonson created the language of instruction through verse. Jonson had declared that "a good Poet's made, as well as borne" ("To the memory of my beloved" 64). His works not only prove his claim, but as his many commentators have noted, they also teach other poets how to *make* themselves by laboring, "stud[ying]" (30), during their "best hours [of] industrie" (West 29). Both the "New Inn" poets and Jonson's elegists reveal that not only is criticism essential for poetry, but that Jonson is foundational to criticism. His language is still alive in our current practices of engaged reading, critical evaluation and judgement. Practitioners of English literary criticism continue the conversation that Spenser began and that Jonson and his and Shakespeare's elegists developed. We, too, believe that authors who are not read and critically engaged with may be forgotten. By using Jonson's criticism, we not only grant Jonson immortality through our critical discourse, we offer many other poets – both before and after Jonson – continuity into posterity. And, we too may "better recommend them" to the future (E.P. 430).

THE END OF THE BEGINNING

Then I decided that there was NO BETTER WAY to communicate with a dead poet you loved than through the process of creating poetry with them, and for them.

(Conrad "Marsupial Afternoon" 5)

The breath whose might I have invok'd in song

Descends on me; my spirit's bark is driven,

Far from the shore, far from the trembling throng

Whose sails were never to the tempest given;

The massy earth and sphered skies are riven!

I am borne darkly, fearfully, afar;

Whilst, burning through the inmost veil of Heaven,

The soul of Adonais, like a star,

Beacons from the abode where the Eternal are.

(Shelley *Adonais* 487-95)

it was a loss

I couldn't recover from, I was awake

night after night but I can't even remember

his name, I lost it years ago, dear Shelley,

this was Adonis too,

praise him.

(Stern "Adonis" 26-31)

The works discussed throughout this thesis are but case studies in a much larger corpus of dead-poet elegies in Renaissance England. Authors as diverse as Michael Drayton, Robert Herrick, Andrew Marvell, and Izaak Walton have written on many deceased canonical and less canonical poets of the period. Other contemporaneous poets such as George Herbert and John Donne also inspired elegy collections similar to *Astrophel* or *Jonsonus Virbius*. Later, too, poems were written on John Milton by Andrew Marvell and John Dryden. There are many more to discover and discuss.

Historically, the elegy continued to prosper, and became particularly prominent in the Romantic period during late 18th- and early 19th-century England. Among others, Percy Bysshe Shelley further develops and explores the dead-poet elegy through his *Adonais*. His elegy for John Keats incorporates, explores, and revises the poetry of the deceased, and, in turn, offers others opportunities for constructing and exploring poetic communities. Indeed, Shelley's elegy is still continuously recalled and revived. Artists after Shelley have drawn on and engaged with his poem in order to commemorate and memorialize other artists. Following the death by drowning of Brian Jones, a *The Rolling Stones* bandmember, in 1969, Mick Jagger famously read out an abridged version of Shelley's *Adonais* in performance. Contemporary poet Gerald Stern also recently published his own revision of Shelley's elegy in *The New Yorker*, titled *Adonis*, to treat the death of an anonymous artist. Poets have never stopped dying, and the tradition of engaging with deceased poets has similarly never died out. A practice consolidated in the English Renaissance has become a fundamental part of our ritualistic treatment and communal understanding of artists and their works.

The transhistorical quality of the genre, as well as the sheer number of elegies from the Renaissance to the 21th century, suggest the necessity for further research. This thesis has chosen case studies from the formative period of the print elegy to discuss how elegies commemorate deceased poets and the implications of their discussions for literary culture. However, the questions posed throughout are far from exhausted. Research on the transition of elegiac verse from the Medieval to the early modern period would further illuminate this narrative by accounting for the cultural and religious shifts that made such printed genres possible. Women elegists such as Mary Sidney, Anne Bradstreet, Katherine Philips, and many others all require close examination through theoretical frameworks offered by cultural, gender and queer studies. A study of the genre would be particularly fruitful in the late 18th and early 19th centuries, where the dynamic between the individual and the communal poet is especially

topical. Moreover, explorations of the dead-poet elegy of the recent centuries would benefit from critical race theory, as well as investigations into English language poetry from other countries and nations. It is intuitive to assume that different cultures have unique treatments of deceased artists and their communities. Examining these traditions will not only reveal other intricacies of dead-poet elegies, but also specific cultures' approaches to art, death, and communal memorialization.

Broadly, my project has traced the development of the elegy from a precursory form of collaboration to an opportunity for active conversations between poets and their works – whether dead or alive. The dead-poet elegy offered a space for debates between writers, readers, and critics alike. I have attempted to tease out the particularities of these conversations: their emphasis on intertextual strategies, their explorations of the place of poets in society, and their contribution to the forms of engagement fundamental to literary communities to this day. The dead-poet elegy developed the conversations around the deceased, but also contributed by creating the elegists and commentators that helped immortalize the poets we still discuss today.

Spenser and the *Astrophel* elegists initiate the early modern dead-poet debate. They successfully transform Sidney from soldier to poet and position him within a society of shepherds. The writers argue that communities are fundamental to poets. By constructing a society comprised of both texts and poets, Spenser and his peers offer opportunities to revive the deceased and to engage with other elegists through allusion and intertextual strategies. Their collaborative endeavor is taken up by Shakespeare's elegists in the First and Second Folios, and in other manuscripts circulated during the period. Shakespeare's elegists draw on Shakespeare's aesthetics to comment on literary memorialization and argue for the need for readers and active interaction with the deceased. They reveal that poetic immortality depends on communal conversations. By entering into dialogue with Shakespeare and other elegists, these authors create the conversations that offer continuity to the deceased. Jonson and his

elegists further develop the elegy as an opportunity for commentary and criticism. Jonson's language is taken up by other poets both before and after his death to show how critical engagement is crucial for poetic societies. By using Jonsonian criteria to evaluate Jonson himself, they demonstrate how criticism may be used to sustain communities through debate and revision. Like Astrophel, Jonson finds himself alone. Yet Jonson's self-expulsion is reworked by his peers into opportunities to reconcile Jonson with his community. After his death, Jonson's elegists not only memorialize Jonson on his own terms, they reveal how Jonson's strategies contribute to literary societies by creating writers, readers, and critics alike.

The elegists of Sidney, Shakespeare, and Jonson were all successful in their attempts to create and pass on discussions about literature to posterity. In his *Defense of Poetry*, Sidney argues that those who disdain poetry will precisely *not* be remembered:

> But if (fie of such a but) you be born so near the dull-making cataract of Nilus that you cannot hear the planet-like music of poetry…thus much curse I must send you in the behalf of all poets—that while you live, you live in love, and never get favor for lacking skill of a sonnet; and when you die, your memory die for want of an epigraph.

(126)

None of the dead poets discussed in this thesis suffer from Sidney's curse, and for good reason. It is precisely their "epigraph[s]" (126) – their elegies, with their strange plenty of allusions, debates, arguments, revisions, questions, and unsatisfactory answers – that helped provide poets with a place in our literary culture. And, today, we may still engage with these artists. We enter the conversation by ways of writing, reading, and criticism, appending new generations of poets and scholars to the star chart that traces the communal constellation of English literature. We, too, are part of the dead-poet society. Through these conversations, we

may still hear, enjoy, and continuously contribute to, "the planet-like music of poetry" (*Defense of Poetry* 126).

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