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Sustaining Fiction: Preserving Patriarchy in Marvell's *Upon Appleton House*

by Katie Kadue

Many readers of Andrew Marvell's Upon Appleton House *note the poem's deviation from typical country house poems, finding in this deviation evidence of Marvell's ambivalence, eccentricity, or even, in the poem's challenges to heterosexual norms, "queerness." This essay argues, on the contrary, that Marvell's apparent queerness serves to sustain, rather than threaten, heterosexual norms. Marvell's role is thus analogous to that of the early modern housewife, who, "other" as she was, was integral to the preservation of her household. This parallel between poets and housewives resonates today, as the intellectual labor that preserves culture becomes increasingly devalued and "feminized."*

ANDREW Marvell—lifelong bachelor, gleeful transgressor of generic boundaries, romancer of plants—has been of much interest to scholars of the "queer early modern." Marvell's polymorphously perverse interests in trees, solitude, and poetry itself could be read as "queer" insofar as they demonstrate a reluctance to circulate one's sexual or economic assets through socially acceptable channels, a reluctance often deemed improper, un-Christian, or criminal. Insofar as a refusal to yield to traditional literary and historical understandings, even to understandings of queerness itself, could be called "queer," Marvell's indefinite and vaguely anti-heterosexual ideas and lifestyle comport with Jonathan Goldberg and Madhavi Menon's project of queer "unhistoricism"[1] or with Carla Freccero's open-ended invitation

[1] Goldberg and Menon, "Queering History," *PMLA* 120 (2005): 1608–17. Goldberg and Menon explain that "to produce queering as an object of our scrutiny would mean the end of queering itself, a capitulation to a teleology . . . 'at once heterosexual and heterosexualizing'" (1608–9).

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to allow the word "queer" to continue "to exploit its productive indeterminacy as a word used to designate that which is odd, strange, aslant" and to resist the word's "hypostatization, reification into nominal status as designating an entity, an identity, a thing, and to allow it to continue its outlaw work."[2] Claims like these may help produce the inclination to associate Marvell with "queerness" in as imprecise a sense as possible, where imprecision on the part of critic and poet alike is lauded as a virtue.

The pleasure with which we locate queerness in early modern poetry, however, can blind us to the ways in which content or form that is "odd, strange," or "aslant" often helps reproduce the very normative structures it ostensibly undermines, "outlaw work" that only further entrenches the law. Marvell's ardent attention to the sexual possibilities of plants in poems like "The Garden," for example, has been celebrated as offering alternatives to heteronormative structures of desire. Writing of that poem's solitary speaker, who luxuriates in flowers and melons and prefers a life "without a mate," Marjorie Swann has claimed that Marvell's erotic tree-hugging can be understood as a version of Timothy Morton's concept of "queer ecology," because, as she quotes Morton, "To contemplate ecology's unfathomable intimacies is to imagine pleasures that are not heteronormative, not genital, not geared to ideologies about where the body stops and starts."[3] And yet, as this essay will show, pleasures and practices can be polymorphous, "not genital," and not explicitly heteronormative themselves, and still work, as they do in Marvell's poetry, in the service of heteronormative ideology.

The invitation to read queerness into Marvell's poetry is perhaps most extensively offered by the 1651 "pocket epic" *Upon Appleton House*. The poem's indeterminate modes and resistance to linear temporality can easily be read as subversive of poetic convention, aristocratic values, and general heterosexuality. It strays far from the expected formula of the country house poem, usually a straightforward celebration of an aristocratic patriarch who presides—with the help of his chaste and very organized wife—over a magnificent (but tasteful) estate that perfectly complements nature's harmony, just as his forefathers have

[2] Freccero, *Queer/Early/Modern* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2006). Freccero goes so far as to argue that "all textuality, when subjected to close reading, can be said to be queer" (5).

[3] Morton, "Guest Column: Queer Ecology," *PMLA* 125 (2010): 280, qtd. in Swann, "Vegetable Love: Botany and Sexuality in Seventeenth-Century England," in *The Indistinct Human in Renaissance Literature,* ed. Jean E. Feerick and Vin Nardizzi (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 153.

done and his heirs will continue to do. In contrast to these expectations, *Upon Appleton House*'s main attractions include sybaritic nuns, pastoral self-pleasuring, and the complication of dynastic lines, subverting the genre's conservative, deeply heteronormative conventions.[4] However, the network of normative ideologies behind these conventions, of which patriarchy is perhaps the most apparent, thrives on just such safe "subversion" of chronology and genealogy. The poem dramatizes, particularly through figures of aristocratic housewives and their analogs, how heterosexuality—in order to fill in its own gaps, gloss over its own contradictions, and maintain its position of natural inevitability—paradoxically relies on that which seems to subvert it. The result of this continuous, minor subversion is less a rejection of teleology than a suspension of it, preserving the tools of heterosexual ideology—as housewives preserved fruit, flowers, and household order—for possible later, or indirect, use.

Understanding Marvell's poetry through a lens of teleological suspension offers an alternative way of explaining what a significant number of Marvell's critics have decided, to their mixed frustration and glee, is an illegibility on the part of the poet that makes him impossible to pin down ideologically.[5] *Upon Appleton House* has earned such blurbs as "unsettling" and "bafflingly private," "one of the most eclectic poems of the seventeenth century," a work of "dazzling subversion," "slipperiness," and "scandal."[6] Frustrating as Marvell's amphibious habits are to readers, they also inspire admiration and delighted speculation: it's more fun to read syntactical confusion, dilatory tactics, and unspecified sexuality as loosely subversive than as, in certain specific ways, conservative. And yet the very traits we may be tempted to identify with sub-

[4] For the ideological investments of the English country house poem, see Raymond Williams, *The Country and the City* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975).

[5] Andrew McRae joins many in pronouncing the man "elusive" and his writing "hedged with caveats" ("The Green Marvell," in *The Cambridge Companion to Andrew Marvell*, ed. Derek Hirst and Steven N. Zwicker [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011], 122); Derek Hirst and Steven Zwicker call him an "androgyne" ("Andrew Marvell and the Toils of the Patriarchy: Fatherhood, Longing, and the Body Politic," *ELH* 66 [1999]: 631); while the subtitle of Nigel Smith's biography, *Andrew Marvell: The Chameleon* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2010), puts this undecidability in no uncertain terms.

[6] Derek Hirst and Steven N. Zwicker, *Andrew Marvell, Orphan of the Hurricane* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 46; J. M. Wallace, *Destiny His Choice: The Loyalism of Andrew Marvell* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 232; Wallace, *Destiny His Choice*, 244; Hirst and Zwicker, *Orphan of the Hurricane*, 46; Wallace, *Destiny His Choice*, 233; and Jonathan Crewe, "The Garden State: Marvell's Poetics of Enclosure," in *Enclosure Acts: Sexuality, Property, and Culture in Early Modern England*, ed. Richard Burt and John Michael Archer (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1994), 283.

version, up to and including forays with flora, are in fact better understood precisely as conservative. Marvell, even in and precisely through his slippery subversions, works to preserve the ideology of patriarchy even as he challenges it. *Upon Appleton House*, by celebrating the kind of activity that appears at odds with futurity but that contributes to reproducing dominant social and cultural values, demonstrates how freezing forward movement can be crucial in keeping progress-oriented sexual and economic ideologies going—especially when, as in the troubled case of Marvell's patron, those ideologies are facing real-world complications. The cloistered stanzas of Marvell's epyllion stage as domestic drama the struggle between what R. Howard Bloch calls "the genealogical discourse of the epic" and "the lyric disruption" that threatens it.[7] The upshot of this struggle in *Upon Appleton House* is that lyric disruption can *yield* epic continuity, demonstrating how even "queer" interventions can serve the continuation of genealogical discourse.[8] More than simply exploring the tension between what David Quint calls, in a variation on Bloch's formulation, the "linear teleology" of epic and the "random or circular wandering" of romance[9]—the end-oriented narrative of history's victors on the one hand and the dilatory, interior exploration of losers on the other—Marvell suggests that the latter can provide the tools to effect the former.

This apparently disruptive but fundamentally preservative labor is crystallized, in *Upon Appleton House*, in the narrated practices of physi-

[7] Bloch, *Etymologies and Genealogies: A Literary Anthropology of the French Middle Ages* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983), 174.

[8] Patricia Parker identifies this dynamic in *The Faerie Queene,* which "seems to be exploring the implications of this opposition [between lyric and epic] in its very form—narrative in its forward, linear quest and yet composed out of lyric stanzas that, like the enchantresses within it, potentially suspend or retard" (Parker, *Literary Fat Ladies: Rhetoric, Gender, Property* [New York: Methuen, 1987], 66). For Parker, this opposition amounts to a suspension in itself: "A poem, finally, as dedicated as [Edmund] Spenser's to the polysemous perverse could easily encompass the psychological dynamic of the overpowering of a potentially castrating female, the covert political allegory of the overgoing of a lyricism associated with Elizabeth, and a simultaneously aesthetic and moral uneasiness about the seductiveness of lyric 'charm,' even if that charm is an inseparable part of the attraction of his own poetry, its own tantalizingly suspending instrument" (66). Where Parker keeps the ends of this ambivalence open—and I will expand on the implications of her argument at the end of this essay—I argue that when early modern poetry acts as such a suspended and suspending instrument, it is often functioning conservatively.

[9] "To the victors belongs epic, with its linear teleology; to the losers belongs romance, with its random or circular wandering. Put another way, the victors experience history as a coherent, end-directed story told by their own power; the losers experience a contingency that they are powerless to shape to their own ends" (Quint, *Epic and Empire: Politics and Generic Form from Virgil to Milton* [Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993], 9).

cal preservation performed by the nuns and, late in the poem, by young housewife-to-be Mary Fairfax. Early modern housewives, in an oft-cited concentricity, were charged with preserving both perishable organic material and the health of its eaters—people consumed preserves to help preserve themselves—and, by extension, preserving the larger cultural narrative in which the woman-run household played an increasingly central part. In manuals aimed at housewives, instructions for preserving foods emphasized that the end goal was to put off the question of productive ends until later: recipes for everything from chickens to rose petals conclude with the injunction to "keepe all the yeare,"[10] to keep things as they are for the indefinite future. The centrality of preserving to early modern households, and to Marvell's poem, dramatizes how the conservation of symbolic order requires activity that appears to be at odds with the furthering of the dominant ideology; that suspends in order to allow for the possibility of future furthering.

NUNS PRESERVING BADLY

Not all the poem's preservation technologies, though, are created equal: some forms of suspension prove preservative in ways opposed to the ultimate goal of preserving an aristocratic order. The poem's genealogical narrative begins at an abbey acquired by the Fairfax family shortly after the dissolution of the monasteries a century before and thereafter converted into the current Fairfax residence at Nun Appleton. Though *Upon Appleton House* is nominally celebrating the patriarchal values of the English gentry as embodied by the family estate, Marvell's conception of aristocratic lineage is an imaginative one. After a few stanzas jocoseriously praising the manor's features, Marvell informs us of the house's parentage: "A nunnery first gave it birth / (For virgin buildings oft brought forth."[11] This revelation of the parthenogenetic abbey's con-

[10] Early modern domestic manuals, drawing heavily from Xenophon's *Oeconomicus,* figured the ideal household economy as divided between acquisitive husbands and frugal wives. A husband's job, according to John Dod and Robert Cleaver's popular *Godlie Forme of Household Government,* was "to get goods"; the wife's was "to gather them together, and save them" (qtd. in Lorna Hutson, *The Usurer's Daughter: Male Friendship and Fictions of Women in Sixteenth-Century England* [London: Routledge, 1994], 20). Housekeeping was about "keeping" in a very broad sense that covered, in Wendy Wall's survey of the word's semantic range, being "productive, chaste, organized, silent, insulated, modest, and gifted at recycling, classifying, and preserving" ("Forgetting and Keeping: Jane Shore and the English Domestication of History," *Renaissance Drama* 27 [1996]: 125).

[11] Marvell, *Upon Appleton House, To My Lord Fairfax*, in *The Poems of Andrew Marvell,* ed.

tribution to the family history does nothing to soften the poem's Protestant suspicion of the place as a papist stronghold, money-hoarding Cave of Mammon, brothel, and lesbian love nest all in one, a manifold threat to the continuation of aristocratic bloodlines and to reproductive futurism more generally. And these nuns, even more than most nuns, are the avowed enemies of reproductive futurism: we learn they're trying to confine a young, rich, perfectly marriageable girl to a life of cloistered *jouissance* among women. Isabel Thwaites, future wife to William Fairfax, is a ward of the abbess, and the nuns are waging a campaign to keep her in their custody—whether on account of her personal charms, personal fortune, or both, is unclear.

The erotic (as well as economic) undertones of the nuns' interest in Isabel come out most clearly when one cunning nun launches into a lengthy recruiting pitch highlighting the abbey's most attractive features: incessant prayer and weeping are like spa treatments, working wonders on the complexion ("And holy-water of our tears / Most strangely our complexion clears," 111–12), Isabel will be treated like a princess, exempt from the rules ("The rule itself to you shall bend," 156), and, best of all, every night Isabel will get a new "virgin bride" to sleep with her, lying "As pearls together billeted. / All night embracing arm in arm, / Like crystal pure with cotton warm" (186 and 190–92). The speech concludes with the nun inviting Isabel to join the sorority on a trial basis, no strings attached ("The trial neither costs, nor ties," 196), and Isabel seems to be on board: "The nun's smooth tongue has sucked her in" (200). Like the monastic order in the Protestant imagination more generally, these advertisements for self-indulgent, gynocentric living would tempt Isabel away from the true religious work of what Diane Purkiss calls "building a new and properly reproductive nation," a collective undertaking that had the English family at its center.[12]

But for all the nun's smooth talk of candies, crystal, and same-sex sleepovers, the idyll she describes is far from a den of isolated idleness. Despite the Protestant superstition that monastic lands were cursed by God with decay, infertility, and a lack of productivity, these nuns speak in the terms of commerce, alluding to commodities like crystal, cotton, and mass-produced altar hangings.[13] What is so insidious about the

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Nigel Smith (Harlow: Pearson Longman, 2003), 85–86; all subsequent references to *Upon Appleton House* are from this edition and will be cited parenthetically within the text by line.

[12] Purkiss, "Thinking of Gender," in *The Cambridge Companion to Andrew Marvell*, ed. Derek Hirst and Steven N. Zwicker (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 68.

[13] Purkiss, "Thinking of Gender," 69. Hirst and Zwicker argue that the nun's prom-

living arrangements of these "subtle nuns" (94) and their bid to thwart Isabel's prospects of Protestant housewifery is not only their seductive stance against reproduction but also the asexual productivity that they seamlessly and surreptitiously mix in with carnal pleasure. Marvell prefaces the nun's speech by saying she "weaved, / (As 'twere by chance) thoughts long conceived" (95–96), where careful craft is dissimulated as aimless "chance" chatter, and "long conceived" conceits are passed off as spontaneous emissions. What the nun is trying to slip Isabel is a life not of sinful loafing but of sinfully productive labor. Even the nun's assurance that the convent will allow ample time for leisure paints a picture of never-ending domestic industry:

> 'Nor is our order yet so nice,
> Delight to banish as a vice.
> Here pleasure piety doth meet;
> One perfecting the other sweet.
> So through the mortal fruit we boil
> The sugar's uncorrupting oil:
> And that which perished while we pull,
> Is thus preserved clear and full.
> (169–76)

Rather than posing a threat to piety, pleasure sweetly perfects it, just as, over in the convent kitchen, fruit is preserved with sugar. But the nun oversells the restorative powers of the "uncorrupting oil": because the fruit had already "perished" as soon as it was plucked, its apparent preservation by sugar will do nothing to restore its rotten core. With the "mortal fruit" suggesting not only the natural process of decay but also the fatal forbidden fruit itself, this procedure only superficially sugarcoats the effects of the fall, confecting Eve's apple into a literally sinful dessert.

The kind of preservation-minded culinary labor the nuns perform might otherwise be too boring to be damning. Richard Halpern, noting the recipe-like instructions in Shakespeare's procreation sonnets, quips that sonnet 5's heavy family-planning emphasis "makes sex seem as ex-

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ise that Isabel's features will appear in a thousand embroidered portraits of "our Lady" evidences "a veritable reproductive technology, other ways of sowing, multiplying, disseminating" (*Orphan of the Hurricane,* 47). They go on to explain this suggestion of "female autonomy" as "question[ing] and counterpoint[ing] masculine prerogative" (47), but one reason this mechanical reproduction does not exactly threaten heterosexual ideology is that it produces mere copies, more like commodities than children—reproduction is, like so much else in the nuns' imagination, all too literal.

citing as putting up preserves."[14] The presumed unsexiness of putting up preserves has been contested by critics like Wendy Wall, but as a cornerstone of domestic management, preserving's focus was clearly on function rather than fun. Sugary fruit products were prepared in bulk and kept on hand for use in medicines, desserts, and preservatives, and women of all classes could be involved, to varying degrees, in their production. Although sugar could be synecdochal for the lavish expenditure of banquets, using sugar to preserve food was a foundational practice of thrifty housewives and central to a lived philosophy of frugality.[15] But the nuns' candies are not intended to nourish. Rather, like the confectionary "void" of a banquet spread, they are made only to vapidly impress or to tantalize potential new recruits. Passing off rotten fruit ("that which perished") as "clear and full," the nuns are guilty of false advertising.

This is a dead end in more ways than one. Even if they are indeed uncorrupted, the fruits play no part in the operations of a healthy household; the nuns' unhusbanded housewifery does not participate in the narrative of genealogical continuity that Isabel Thwaites, by leaving the nunnery and marrying William Fairfax, will soon buy into. Unlike many other variations on the theme of applying sugar to fruit, candied whole fruit was a delicacy, meant for sale and not for regular household consumption. Candying fruit "clear and full" was costly and labor-intensive, unnecessary and hardly habitual within the confines of a home.[16] The nun's casual reference to this market-driven culinary practice, as opposed to subsistence-level production for home use, underscores how, for all the insistence on their cloistered exemption from the world of men—in rhetoric echoed in the seventeenth-century casting of the home as preserved from the vagaries and vulgarities of commerce[17]—the nuns speak the language of commercial exchange. Their

[14] Halpern, *Shakespeare's Perfume: Sodomy and Sublimity in the Sonnets, Wilde, Freud, and Lacan* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002), 14. Halpern accounts for this seeming unsexiness by gesturing to the discourse of alchemy—literally, the sublimation of corporeal (and feminine-coded) impurities, performed by men in closed-off rooms.

[15] Amy L. Tigner, "Preserving Nature in Hannah Woolley's *The Queen-Like Closet; or Rich Cabinet*," in *Ecofeminist Approaches to Early Modernity*, ed. Jennifer Munroe and Rebecca Laroche (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 135 and 132.

[16] Theodora Jankowski, "Good Enough to Eat: The Domestic Economy of Woman-Woman Eroticism in Margaret Cavendish and Andrew Marvell," in *Privacy, Domesticity, and Women in Early Modern England*, ed. Corinne S. Abate (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2003), 96.

[17] Natasha Korda finds in *The Taming of the Shrew* evidence of "the emergence of the

labor is visible, shamelessly advertised rather than obliquely lyricized, and gestures to possibilities outside of home use, and thus it has no place in a good Protestant home. The bad influence that the nuns would exert on Isabel stems from the fact that their concept of domestic activity is not cleanly ideologically separated from the commercial sphere.

SECURELY PLAYING

The abbey's preservative labor, then, is too at odds with an ideology of Protestant domesticity to be absorbed by it. It is, however, translated. If the poem spends what seems an inordinate amount of time on the question of the virgin Thwaites's fate, any anxiety over her assimilation into ascendant Protestant family values is assuaged when William Fairfax, Marvell's current patron's ancestor, rescues (or, possibly, rapes) Isabel, the happy couple goes on its procreative way, and the commercially oriented, morally questionable preservation of mortal fruit gives way to the domestically oriented, morally sanctioned preservation of the Fairfax patriarchy. After the nunnery dissolves into thin air (269–72), the poem introduces a new cloistered entity: the poet-speaker himself, who recedes into his own mind as he wanders the estate's gardens, hallucinates a pastoral reenactment of the civil war, and then retires to the woods in a way reminiscent of the current Lord Fairfax's recent, possibly ignoble retirement from public life.

Unlike the hyper-productive nuns, the speaker in these middle sections of *Upon Appleton House* is defined by his idle errancy.[18] The long middle section of the poem would seem to offer, even more than the extended dallying with the nuns, evidence for an "odd, strange, aslant" Marvell, a renegade, self-sabotaging poet doing what Freccero calls the "outlaw work" of queerness. Even in the tamer meadow portion, readers have seen in the figure of Thestylis an indication that Marvell is letting his poetic world spin out of control, and that her female voice, like the

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ideological separation of feminine and masculine spheres of labor," a separation that guarded against the threat of "the market's infiltration of the household through the commodity" (Korda, *Shakespeare's Domestic Economies: Gender and Property in Early Modern England* [Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002], 72).

[18] This is true even when, wandering a psychoactive meadow that evokes the battlefields of the civil war, he mimes public engagement. Critics have insisted on a separation of the garden and the meadow, with their clear allusions to the very public civil war, from the forest, which the speaker treats as a solitary writer's retreat. But the scenes in the meadow amount to mere playing at publicness, a diversion on the way to the desired end of private refuge, and his experience of the collective event is itself utterly private.

nun's, exposes the precarity of the male speaker's power. While it is true that Thestylis, a pastoral stock character elsewhere seen in Marvell's œuvre making hay-ropes and forestalling Ametas's advances,[19] inserts herself into the narrative in answer to the speaker, her role is less to break the poem's frame than to sustain it. After one of the mowers mistakenly, and much to his distress, mows down a young rail hidden in the grass, Thestylis decides to make the best of the situation by serving the bird for lunch. (She then bags another one, for later.) Appearing to have overheard the speaker's comparison of the mowing camp to Israelites at line 389, Thestylis offers "to make his saying true," substituting the slaughtered rails for the quails of Exodus 16:

> But bloody Thestylis, that waits
> To bring the mowing camp their cates,
> Greedy as kites, has trussed it up,
> And forthwith means on it to sup:
> When on another quick she lights,
> And cries, 'He called us Israelites;
> But now, to make his saying true,
> Rails rain for quails, for manna, dew.'
> (401–8)

Hirst and Zwicker identify in "bloody Thestylis" a "masculine enterprise . . . mockingly transfigured into female brutality, exultation, and appetite,"[20] but as unhappy as the "orphan parents" (413) of the mowed rail may be, Thestylis's aims are fundamentally restorative. Supplying the mowers with the provisions they need to sustain their own labor, she acts as a preservative laborer who plays a supporting role in a much larger drama, as if Marvell had outsourced some of his own frame-supporting work to her. Available for the male laborers when they need her, Thestylis "waits" both in the sense of deferring action and in the sense of serving as an attendant at table. Thestylis's trussing begins the work that converts death into life, redeeming the mower's senseless destruction. Bloody as she may be, her "quick" work is economical rather than excessive—mirrored in the economy of the poet's "on another quick she lights," where "quick" could describe both Thestylis's pace and the bird's status as alive, which will quickly become obsolete as its life is subsumed into the ongoing project of sustaining the mowers' lives.

[19] Marvell, "Ametas and Thestylis Making Hay-Ropes," *The Poems of Andrew Marvell,* 147.

[20] Hirst and Zwicker, "Andrew Marvell and the Toils of the Patriarchy," 636.

As the speaker retires to his "sanctuary in the wood" (482), he retreats from the imagined fields of domestic politics and domestic labor, but he retains an interest in the structuring principles of those spheres. If his world descends into disorder, it also sets itself up, by maintaining the appropriate instruments, to be more perfectly reordered when the time comes. Purkiss contrasts the speaker-poet's "pastoral" and "natural" reveries with the dreamy scenes evoked by the nun, which "are the result of and metaphorized through craft and artisanal labour,"[21] but this glosses over the extent to which the "pastoral" and the "natural" are always, and here in quite explicit ways, constructed by and described in terms of labor and craft. The poet "weaves" prophecies from leaves to construct an artifact "Like Mexique paintings" (578 and 580) and proceeds to "embroider" himself in an "antic cope" of oak leaves that reduces the old ("antic" or antique) religion of Catholicism to a costume gag (587–92). Finally, "languishing with ease" (593), he finds an inviting mossy bank where he can, in a holdover of his fanciful military mode, "[encamp his] mind" and "securely play" (602 and 607), which seems to mean wrapping himself in the "silken bondage" of vines—an echo of the warm cotton embraces suggested by the nun—and acting out a masochistic *imitatio Christi* fantasy, complete with "courteous briars" for nails (614 and 616). That the speaker, for all his prancing around, never does anything but "securely play" speaks to how the apparent paradox of conservative security and liberating play dissolves when play is understood as a fixture of a conventional system.

PRESERVATION RESTORED

Order is formally restored to this apparently antic world with the entrance of Lord Fairfax's young daughter and Marvell's tutee, Mary Fairfax:

> But now away my hooks, my quills,
> And angles, idle utensils.
> The young Maria walks tonight:
> Hide trifling youth thy pleasures slight.
> 'Twere shame that such judicious eyes
> Should with such toys a man surprise;
> She that already is the law
> Of all her sex, her age's awe.
>
> (649–56)

[21] Purkiss, "Thinking of gender," 69.

The languishing poet is embarrassed to have Maria even look upon his "idle utensils," his "hooks," "quills," and "angles"—his fishing gear, but also, by implication, the tools of his other form of recreation, writing. Maria goes on to manifest herself as "the law / Of all her sex" in the following stanza, with her mere presence spurring the sun, like the poet, to pull itself together in shame ("The sun himself, of her aware, / Seems to descend with greater care," 661–62).

What Maria is doing—or not doing—is a form of symbolic labor that reverses or forestalls the decomposition of her surroundings. Simply by providing herself as an organizational principle, and without the aid of sugar, she restores disintegrating material: "See how loose Nature," Marvell entreats us, "in respect / To her, itself doth recollect" (657–58). The "respect" nature affords Maria could be understood as both an affective and a formal relation: she inspires both spiritual awe and a physical reconfiguration of a degenerate scene, such that to "recollect" is both an ethical and a practical act by which the environment becomes more properly itself.

Maria's feminine power to organize the landscape is nothing new in pastoral poetry—it goes back at least to Virgil—but it departs from tradition in how neatly it fits the job description of the early modern housewife, whose role was transitioning from the industrious producer of household goods to the savvy consumer and curator of goods from outside. Natasha Korda explains how the valorization of the housewife's domestic leisure that Thorstein Veblen locates in the late nineteenth century was beginning to appear in England as early as the late sixteenth century. Relieved of her duties to brew, bake, wash, spin, and card, which were outsourced to lower classes, a woman of a certain status could devote herself to what Veblen calls the "performance of leisure," in the sense that "little or no productive work is performed."[22] Her primary function as a housekeeper requires symbolic, rather than productive, labor,[23] more semiotic than manual. The housewife's task was thus not only to keep house, but also, and primarily, to keep a cultural network of signs together.

This arranging and manipulating of signs, an integral part of Maria's

[22] Veblen, *The Theory of the Leisure Class: An Economic Study of Institutions* (1899; New York: The Macmillan Company, 1912), 58; qtd. in Korda, *Shakespeare's Domestic Economies*, 56.

[23] Ibid., 56–57. Korda assimilates Veblen's views on housewifery to Jean Baudrillard's in *For a Critique of the Political Economy of the Sign,* trans. Charles Levin (St. Louis: Telos, 1981).

role, is continuous with physically preserving them. The manual aspect of housekeeping blurs with its function as symbolic organization when Maria "vitrifie[s]" the world, making it congeal like glass or crystallized sugar (688). Like the "modest halcyon" who, in accordance with its fabled calming abilities, "Admiring Nature does benumb" and makes "stupid fishes hang, as plain / As flies in crystal overta'en," or as carp suspended in jelly, Maria oversees the sort of divinely sourced and approved kitchen experiments that reduce the world to an exquisite stillness: "by her flames, in heaven tried, / Nature is wholly vitrified" (672, 677–78, and 687–88).[24] Like an alchemist, she purifies matter through fire, and in a manner far more effective and sanitary than the "giddy rockets . . . / Which from the putrid earth exhale" (685–86). But the resulting transformation is hardly as dramatic as that of base metal to gold. As Marvell concludes in the poem's penultimate stanza, the difference between "Paradise's only map" (768)—Nun Appleton—and the rest of the world—"a rude heap together hurled" (762)—is almost imperceptible. The "lesser world" is almost "the same," just a little tidier, "in more decent order tame": a better home and garden, but not by much.

That this extended encomium climaxes with a would-be housewife's small but focused power to curate a portion of the world's "rude heap" makes clear that not all the workings of heteronormativity are directly related to sexual reproduction, even if they are indirectly related. In the case of the mythical halcyon, biological reproduction plays an implicit role in the effecting of quiescence; the bird is only able to charm stormy seas into stillness when it is breeding.[25] The kingfisher that swoops into Marvell's poem takes on, with its poetic moniker, these ancient associations with both reproduction and environmental calming with-

[24] Smith, in explanation of the "jellying stream" (675) that is benumbed along with the rest of nature, calls attention to alchemists' interest in the halcyon's proverbial abilities: "in alchemical theory, the halcyon was believed to calm seas by making them solid with a substance called *halcyonium,* 'spuma maris concreta' (solidified sea foam)" (*The Poems of Andrew Marvell,* ed. Smith, 238). But a compilation of typical contemporary recipes offers a more banal analogue to Maria's effects on the world. "To souce Tench" requires that you make a brine ("liquor"), "strain the Liquor thro' a Jelly-bag," and add isinglass, a binding agent made from swim bladders. Once the liquor is boiled, "lay your Fish into the Dish, strain the Liquor through the Bag into the Dish, let it stand 'till it is cold, and serve it. This Jelly will serve to jelly Lobsters, Prawns, or Cray-fish; hanging them in some Glass by a Thread at their full Length, and filling the Glass with the Jelly while it is warm" (John Nott, *The Cooks and Confectioners Dictionary: Or, the Accomplish'd Housewives Companion* [London, 1724], Ll4).

[25] *Oxford English Dictionary,* 2nd ed., s.v. "halcyon."

out needing to actually *be* the fabulous halcyon or even needing to be fertile. Marvell performs a similar operation of association by calling to mind the presiding woman of the house, whose domestic management in other country house poems goes hand in hand with motherhood. Marvell can cast Maria, thirteen years old and at the cusp of menarche and marriageability, as a potential *magna mater*; the poem takes place in the "[m]eantime" before her marriage (745), when she will be, Marvell parenthetically informs us, "worthily translate[d]" into a modern-day Isabel Thwaites and matched with a man similarly translated into "a Fairfax" (747–48). This kind of willful translation on Marvell's part is necessary for the line to continue at all: Mary, Fairfax's only child, cannot carry on the family name the way a son could, no matter how good a household manager she proves to be. Summoning the phantom, indefinite "Fairfax" who would somehow carry on the family name—despite coming from outside the family—papers over that problem. Setting the scene in the "[m]eantime," with this impossible translation safely shelved in parentheses, conveniently keeps any such future in suspension.

This situation in the mundane meantime, rather than in the dramatic apocalyptic end times imagined by Margarita Stocker, suggests that the calm wrought by vitrification is, like the halcyon's hibernal nesting, a regular, secular phenomenon. The apocalyptic overtones Stocker sees in Maria's vitrification of nature could just as easily describe everyday conditions in an early modern kitchen; eschatological events can be thus recast as mundane culinary routines. The vivid present tense in which the poem's closing is, as Derek Hirst and Steven N. Zwicker put it, "brilliantly fixed"[26] was also the tense that, in recipes, governed the brilliant fixation of fruit in sugar. Instructions on how "To keepe Barberyes" note the desired fixity of the substance—"lyke Birdlyme"—and end, like many recipes of the type, with an entreaty to "kepe" things that way:

> Take claryfied Suger, & boyle it tyll it be thick, which you shal perceve yf you take a little betweene your fingers, it wyl rope lyke Birdlyme: Then put in your Barberyes, and let them boyle with a soft fyre, untyll you perceave thei be tender, then put them in a Glasse and cover them: and so kepe them.[27]

[26] Hirst and Zwicker, *Orphan of the Hurricane*, 49.

[27] John Partridge, *The treasurie of hidden secrets, commonly called, The good-huswives closet of provision, for the health of her houshold . . . practised by men of great knowledge* (London, 1633), n.p.

Hirst and Zwicker conclude of Marvell's treatment of Maria/Mary Fairfax that "[t]he child frozen in time, withheld from futurity" amounts to "a denial of name, lineage, and inheritance: the promise the child bears in a progenitive order" in a way they find to "question the very ideology of dynastic continuity."[28] As the preceding pages have shown, however, if Marvell is questioning that ideology, he is also flagging the answers it can provide to such questioning, showing just how resilient the patriarchal model is: its logic is carried out in the non-genital reproductive labor performed by good housewives and perverse poets alike.

Even in its avoidance of the future, then, Marvell's poetry participates in the ideology of reproductive futurism as defined by Lee Edelman, who equates that ideology with politics itself. "For politics," Edelman writes, "however radical the means by which specific constituencies attempt to produce a more desirable social order, remains, at its core, conservative insofar as it works to *affirm* a structure, to *authenticate* a social order, which it then intends to transmit to the future in the form of its inner Child."[29] This conservative core can hold even when the social order is not functioning as seamlessly as its most privileged participants would like. Hirst and Zwicker declare that English political patriarchy in the mid-seventeenth century had "exploded" and that marriage within Marvell's demographic was on the decline. They conclude, "It is of course in the nature of ideology not to be wholly coincident with social reality, and the greater the distance between them, the greater the violence ideology performs on social reality."[30] Yet something other than "violence" may be in order when social reality fails to follow the pattern of ideology: namely, the more aesthetically appealing but no less effective avenues of legerdemain, suspension, and distraction. Marvell's "subversive" machinations effect a suspension of a particular patrilineal continuity that will prove necessary to the preservation of patriarchy as ideology.

THE GREEN WORLD

If aristocratic reproduction relies on its strategic disruption at a narrative level, it also relies on it at a practical level. Barry McCrea explains

28 Hirst and Zwicker, *Orphan of the Hurricane,* 50, and "Andrew Marvell and the Toils of the Patriarchy," 634.

29 Edelman, *No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2004), 2–3.

30 Hirst and Zwicker, *Orphan of the Hurricane,* 72.

the supposedly insular aristocracy's counterintuitive dependence on outside interference with a reading of the opening of Marcel Proust's *Sodom and Gomorrah*, when the narrator waxes botanical while idly lying in wait for the arrival home of his aristocratic landlords. After implying that flowers, sessile though they may be, act coquettish with pollinating insects and do not await an apian "ambassador" any more passively than a writer-in-training awaits his experiences, the narrator continues to think about which modes of reproduction produce sweet flowers and which offspring are more likely to meet with base infection:

> If the visit of an insect, that it is to say the transportation of the seed from another flower, is generally necessary for the fertilisation of the flower, this is because self-fertilisation, the insemination of a flower by itself, would lead, like a succession of intermarriages in the same family, to degeneracy and sterility, whereas the crossing effected by insects gives to the subsequent generations of the same species a vigour unknown to their forebears.[31]

In McCrea's reading of what follows, the narrator—as he watches unfold before his eyes not the awaited homecoming of a heterosexual aristocratic couple but, instead, a scene of cruising between a middle-aged baron and a younger man of a lower class—comes to identify queerness with exogamous fertility and aristocratic heterosexual reproduction with inbred sterility. Queerness, as the narrator is able to realize here in his idle repose (but not later, obsessing over Albertine's possible affairs with women), is not simply an aesthetically refreshing or ideologically destabilizing alternative to the dull linearity of hereditary lines. Rather, the continued dull linearity of those hereditary lines depends on its habitual commerce with queerness.

This can help explain how Marvell's antisocial quirks could strengthen Fairfax's sense of security in his precarious social role. Hirst and Zwicker carefully tease out how Marvell's slightly off-kilter mirroring of Fairfax's flaws—the poet both demonstrating the virtues of his patron's new apolitical lifestyle and displacing its more uncomfortable aspects from his patron to himself—allows Fairfax to "have it both

[31] Proust, *Sodom and Gomorrah,* trans. C. K. Scott Moncrieff and Terence Kilmartin, rev. D. J. Enright (London: Random House, 1993), 3; "Si la visite d'un insecte, c'est-à-dire l'apport de la semence d'une autre fleur, est habituellement nécessaire pour féconder une fleur, c'est que l'autofécondation, la fécondation de la fleur par elle-même, comme les mariages répétés dans une même famille, amènerait la dégénérescence et la stérilité, tandis que le croisement opéré par les insectes donne aux générations suivantes de la même espèce une vigueur inconnue de leurs aînées" (Proust, *Sodome et Gomorrhe I* [Paris: Garnier Flammarion, 1993], 65).

ways."[32] Marvell's goal, though, is not just to absolve Fairfax for his choice of retirement; he must also recast Fairfax's failure to issue an heir as, effectively, a nonissue. In other words, Marvell serves as a "surrogate," as Hirst and Zwicker put it, in a sense beyond acting as a repository for potential accusations against Fairfax; he must also perform a task on par with producing a child. Outsider that he is, Marvell uses his strangeness to make himself a fit for the role of perpetuating the family name. As McCrea reminds us, defining the "queer secret" at the heart of heterosexuality as the simple fact of exogamy, family names are *always* carried on by strangers:

> Queerness already has a structural role in the genealogical narrative template, and it is not so hidden and subversive. . . . Because genealogical continuity relies on the destruction of the nuclear family unit and the incorporation of an outsider into the line, an element of queerness, in the sense of a rival to the family, is an inherent part of the process.[33]

It should be noted that the current Lady Fairfax, considered "outspoken" and having gained notoriety for twice loudly interrupting Charles's trial,[34] is all but absent from *Upon Appleton House*, her undomesticated "element of queerness" proving too difficult for the poet to assimilate.

Thus the challenge the dysfunctional Fairfaxes pose to their encomiast is met by Marvell's insistence on an extra-biological continuation of the family name. In this case, destabilizing convention is the best way of ensuring its survival. If there will be no entailment, in the legal sense, of Fairfax's property to a son, then "goodness doth itself entail / On females, if there want a male" (727–28), where immaterial goodness "itself" stands as the more ideal form of mere material goods. After deriding vain women who place all their "useless study" on their faces

[32] "To locate the moral dangers of retirement in the psyche of the troubled youth and moreover to shape the crisis so exactly to the personal circumstances of the poet and tutor who had followed his patron to Nun Appleton is both to acknowledge the allurement of retreat and to exclude Lord Fairfax from its dangers. Marvell allows his patron to have it both ways: watchful and wary in the garden, Fairfax enjoys retirement as escape from the stains and toils of public life and yet remains clear of the vices of ease. The forest episode acts to diffuse self-accusation, to acknowledge criticisms—the moral and spiritual dangers so vividly signaled in the luxuriance of the forest—but to demur: *the idle poet serves as surrogate,* scapegoat for charges that might have been laid to the patron's account" (Hirst and Zwicker, "High Summer at Nun Appleton, 1651: Andrew Marvell and Lord Fairfax's Occasions," *The Historical Journal* 36 [1993]: 257, emphasis added).

[33] McCrea, *In the Company of Strangers: Family and Narrative in Dickens, Conan Doyle, Joyce, and Proust* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011), 9–10.

[34] Hirst and Zwicker, "High Summer at Nun Appleton," 260.

instead of cultivating their souls ("knowledge only could have filled / And virtue all those furrows tilled," 735–36), Marvell implies that Maria is a much more productive agriculturist: "Hence she with graces more divine / Supplies beyond her sex the line" (737–38). This praise for the "divine" graces Maria enlists in order to surpass what is expected of women places her virtues squarely in a world "beyond" one governed by male primogeniture.

Bequeathing a legacy of "goodness" and "graces" rather than of little Fairfaxes, performing "beyond" (but also, crucially, less than) the normal duties required of her sex, Maria would supply a line that was not patrilineal. But that does not mean her role is not wholly compatible with heteronormative ideology or even necessary to that ideology's maintenance. An occasional reprieve from understanding things in straightforwardly patrilineal terms is necessary, Northrop Frye argues, for the reproduction of the heterosexual couple as an institution. In Frye's schema, the child's transition from his parental home to his own new household is interrupted by a foray into a "green world," a literal or figurative forest, as McCrea paraphrases, "free of parental supervision and social constraint, and it is characterized by unchecked erotic impulses, gender bending, and altered or mistaken identities,"[35] as in the comic confusion that makes up much of the action of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. With these "queernesses" safely out of the child's system, the comic plot resolves with weddings and foretellings of procreative futures. Patricia Parker, also in reference to *Dream*, argues by contrast that the reestablishment of an aristocratic heterosexual order in act 5 highlights how that order is just as constructed as the laborious, manual "joining" performed daily by "rude mechanicals."[36] Parker assumes that revealing the "Elizabethan World Picture" as artificially constructed would shake its very core, but a well-constructed plot proves the opposite to be true: more than affording "aery nothing / A local

[35] McCrea, *In the Company of Strangers*, 10.

[36] Parker, *Literary Fat Ladies*, 124. The workmen's botched theatrical production "has the effect of laying bare the mechanics of that *Ordo* . . . spoken of in the [rhetoric] handbooks as a 'naturall' order. . . . They serve, that is to say, to call attention to the process of construction itself. . . . In evoking the language and larger implications of proper joining both in matrimony and in discourse, and of the controlling or disposing of a potentially wayward *materia*, Shakespeare is *not necessarily, as some readers of this play's ending conclude, dramatically validating, for better or for worse, the Elizabethan World Picture, but rather laying out and laying bare, demonstrating precisely as a 'process,' its own forms of construction*" (124–25, emphasis added). Parker concludes by referencing how rhetoric handbooks "reveal, deliberately or not, that what is presented in all these different contexts as ostensibly 'naturall & necessary' is instead something both constructed and manipulable" (125).

habitation and name," as Theseus scoffs before the workmen-players take the stage, the story maintained by poetic labor "grows," as Hippolyta gently corrects her husband, "to something of great constancy."[37] Calling attention to the growth potential of constructed forms, to how a well-sustained human artifact "grows" as if in nature, allows for the power of poetic labor to fix meaning even in the absence of a solid foundation in the physical world.

In *Upon Appleton House*, any dalliance in a green world, or in "queerness" more generally, more successfully provides models for heterosexual coupling than offers any real alternatives to it. These are models, specifically, for passing off artificial connections as natural ones. Taking stock of the wood he has stumbled into in stanza 62, the speaker marvels at how the planted grove resembles a joint family tree as much as a series of independent biological organisms:

> The double wood of ancient stocks
> Linked in so thick, an union locks,
> It like two pedigrees appears,
> On one hand Fairfax, th'other Vere's.
> (489–92)

That cultural artifacts could be indistinguishable from natural formations is a convenient truth for a poet seeking to use his poem as cover for the lack of a dynastic heir.

Botanical language smooths over the progeniture problem most directly in stanza 93, where Mary, who "like a sprig of mistletoe / On the Fairfacian oak does grow" (739–40), is compared to what is botanically a parasite. But despite its leeching of nutrients from its host tree, mistletoe becomes, when processed by culture, a fruitful bearer of meaning: Druid mythology assigns the vine, in conjunction with the oak, the symbology of fertility.[38] In reference to Marvell's announce-

[37] William Shakespeare, *A Midsummer Night's Dream,* in *The Riverside Shakespeare,* ed. G. Blakemore Evans (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1974), 242; all subsequent references to Shakespeare's plays are from this edition. Theseus sees the job the workmen-players have done as transparent and thus just a bunch of "tricks" (5.1.18). Hippolyta answers with a defense of the collective maintenance done on works of poetic labor. The play's protagonists' enduring commitment to consensus turns the merely "strange" into "something of great constancy": "But all the story of the night told over, / And all their minds transfigur'd so together, / More witnesseth than fancy's images, / And grows to something of great constancy; / But howsoever, strange and admirable" (5.1.23–27). Theseus is spared having to consider this by the entrance of the lovers.

[38] Vitaliy Eyber, *Andrew Marvell's "Upon Appleton House": An Analytic Commentary* (Madison, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2010), 237.

ment that "Whence, for some universal good, / The priest shall cut the sacred bud" (741–42), Hirst and Zwicker gloss, "when Marvell contemplates Mary Fairfax's entry into that frame [of heterosexuality], he does so not in terms of marital and sexual union but in a language of grafting—neutered, violent, and programmatically deployed," with "implications of dismemberment and displacement."[39] But gardening books, not to mention any number of poems, describe grafting as evolving organically from natural processes and, often, in the terms of romantic love. Gentlemen gardeners were advised that a rootstock must not simply tolerate the foreign scion joined to it but positively rejoice in its company. The author of *The Country-mans Recreation* explains the seriousness of the commitment by reminding readers "How Graffes never lightly take": the saps of stock and scion "must be set in just one with another: for ye shall understand, if they doe not joyn, and the one delight with the other, being even set, they shall never take together."[40] Or, as the disguised Polixenes explains to Perdita in *The Winter's Tale*:

> You see, sweet maid, we marry
> A gentler scion to the wildest stock,
> And make conceive a bark of baser kind
> By bud of nobler race. This is an art
> Which does mend Nature – change it rather; but
> The art itself is Nature.[41]

The archaic meaning of scion as "branch" or "shoot"—the natural outgrowth of a tree—later came to mean a cutting taken from one tree and grafted onto another,[42] as if natural operations were etymologically evolving into (horti)cultural ones. If grafting is, as Hirst and Zwicker suggest, "neutered, violent, and programmatically deployed," it is not any more so than the marriages of heterogeneous parts at the center of dramatic plots and the dominant sexual ideology.

Rather than making the New Historicist argument of "subversion and containment," summarized by Louis Montrose as the "capacity of the dominant order to generate subversion so as to use it to its own ends,"[43] I want to emphasize that the "ends" of the dominant order are,

[39] Hirst and Zwicker, "Andrew Marvell and the Toils of the Patriarchy," 635.

[40] Thomas Barker, *The Country-mans Recreation, or The Art of Planting, Graffing, and Gardening, in Three Books* (London, 1654), 29.

[41] Shakespeare, *The Winter's Tale,* in *The Riverside Shakespeare,* 1589.

[42] *Oxford English Dictionary,* 2nd ed., s.v. "graft."

[43] Montrose, *The Purpose of Playing: Shakespeare and the Cultural Politics of the Elizabethan Theatre* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 8.

both in Fairfax's case and on a national level, a bit frayed; the best thing to do for the moment is not to further them but to suspend them in a poetic fabric. To return to Quint's distinction between epic's victors and romance's losers, Lord Fairfax lives uneasily between the two: powerful enough to hold on to the trappings of aristocratic power and keep a personal poet in his employ, he is still not enough of a clear winner to let history, or genealogy, speak for itself.

Upon Appleton House is an encomium to the kind of symbolic labor that maintains the fiction of aristocratic lineage in particular and of the linear narrative of history more generally *as a fiction* in a way that, following Parker, we might think would threaten the naturalized institution by outing it as "both constructed and manipulable."[44] But Marvell, for all his rhetorical self-positioning as a "trifling youth," is no rude mechanical, and he uses the power of poetry, like agricultural grafting or preservative culinary techniques, as an artificial mode of giving artificial constructions all the legitimacy of the natural. The principle behind this is what Victoria Kahn calls "poiesis," which she defines as "the principle, first advocated by [Thomas] Hobbes and [Giambattista] Vico, that we know only what we make ourselves. This kind of making encompasses both the art of poetry and the secular sphere of human interaction, the human world of politics and history."[45] While Kahn's main interest lies in arguments that politics has no need of transcendent backing and can thus function perfectly well without religion, her reasoning could apply as well to social institutions, like the family, whose legitimacy must be continually renewed by cultural—or, in a broad sense, poetic—labor. *Upon Appleton House* presents literary production as the preservative and conservative domestic labor of putting futurity itself into suspension. This constant labor of maintaining the fiction of the family is performed both by those outside the dominant order—poets, idlers, and, imperfectly, nuns—and by the real and hopeful housewives within it.

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[44] Parker, *Literary Fat Ladies,* 125.

[45] Kahn, *The Future of Illusion: Political Theology and Early Modern Texts* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2014), 3.