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Raising the Last Hope: British Romanticism and the Resurrection of the Dead, 1780-1830

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RAISING THE LAST HOPE
BRITISH ROMANTICISM AND THE RESURRECTION OF THE DEAD, 1780-1830

by

DANIEL R. LARSON

B.A., University of New Mexico, 2009
M.A., University of New Mexico, 2011

A thesis submitted to the
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This thesis entitled:
“Raising the Last Hope:
British Romanticism and the Resurrection of the Dead, 1780-1830”
written by Daniel Larson
has been approved for the Department of English

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Jeffrey Cox

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Jill Heydt-Stevenson

Date____________________

The final copy of this thesis has been examined by the signatories, and we
Find that both the content and the form meet acceptable presentation standards
Of scholarly work in the above mentioned discipline.
ABSTRACT

Larson, Daniel R. (Ph.D., English)

Raising the Last Hope: British Romanticism and the Resurrection of the Dead, 1780-1830

Thesis directed by Professor Jeffrey N. Cox

This dissertation examines the way the Christian doctrine of bodily resurrection surfaces in the literature of the British Romantic Movement, and investigates the ways literature recovers the politically subversive potential in theology. In the long eighteenth century, the orthodox Christian doctrine of bodily resurrection (historically, a doctrine that grounded believers’ resistance to state oppression) disappears from the Church of England’s theological and religious dialogues, replaced by a docile vision of disembodied life in heaven—an afterlife far more amenable to political power. However, the resurrection of the physical body resurfaces in literary works, where it can again carry a powerful resistance to the state. This resistance arises in a variety of forms: Evangelical liturgical revisions like William Cowper’s *Olney Hymns*, the unseemly Gothic characters like Byron’s Manfred, and Shelley’s syncretic mythology in *Prometheus Unbound* all use raised physical bodies to undermine state authority while echoing key aspects of the Christian doctrine. The dissertation contributes to the fields of literary criticism, political theology, and history. While recent works in British Romanticism rediscover the period’s rich religious context, the dissertation analyzes the interplay between Christian theology and literary production through the state-authorized Church of England, a site that scholars have yet to substantially engage. Furthermore, the project accounts for a blind spot in the field of political theology, where the ramifications of the doctrine of the resurrection could shed new light on the friction between Christian orthodoxy and state power. Likewise, the
dissertation fills a gap in the history of theology, highlighting the impact of literature on doctrinal
development in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. While Anglican theological
writings of the period fail to engage the doctrine, Romantic literature subverts the Anglican
establishment by drawing from the resurrection of the dead a radical right beyond state power.
As a whole, “Raising the Last Hope” spans mystical revelation, gothic horror, and even
expressly anti-Christian revolution, showing how resurrection could again become the body
through which resistance might rise.
For Buddy, who will get his body back.
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When I entered the Ph.D. program at CU Boulder, I was told on my first day of orientation, “The dissertation is King.” And (I think now it’s safe to say) it feels good to have conquered a king. I could not have done it without the help and support of so many co-conspirators.

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INTRODUCTION

Ain’t no grave can hold my body down.

—Johnny Cash

He raises the dead? I do not wish Him to do that. I forbid Him to do that. I allow no man to raise the dead. This Man must be found and told that I forbid Him to raise the dead.... To change water into wine, to heal the lepers and the blind... He may do these things if He will. I say nothing against these things. In truth, I hold it a good deed to heal a leper. But I allow no man to raise the dead.

It would be terrible if the dead came back.

—King Herod, Salomé

Joanna Southcott’s body was tightly wrapped in layers of flannel, propped up in the bed where she had died four days earlier. Her death was not unexpected—Richard Reece, her attending physician, anticipated her deteriorating body would soon give up its ghost; her followers—twelve in particular whom she had invited to live with her—had been expecting her to die as well for nearly twenty years: the flannel they wrapped her body in had been purchased eighteen years earlier with this occasion in mind. Joanna Southcott was a prophet: she had promised she would die and that her death would be attested to by medical men (like Richard Reece); this was necessary, she proclaimed, so that her resurrection from the dead would be all the more miraculous. Southcott—and her followers too—believed she was a second Christ. She

1 Oscar Wilde, Salomé: A Tragedy in One Act, trans. Aubrey Beardsley (London: John Lane, 1912), 48-49.
sealed up her prophetic writing with a symbol: two stars, and the letters “I. C.,” “C” for Christ, and “I” for Joanna. But four days had passed since she had died, and now the body was beginning to putrefy. Reece attempted to reason with the Southcottians who faithfully attended the body of Joanna while they awaited their miracle:

On Thursday, I paid another visit to the remains of Joanna. The body was then beginning to be offensive, her lips and fingers had assumed a black appearance, but even this change did not shake the faith of her followers, and I was obliged seriously to address Mr. Sharpe [one of the twelve], stating to him that putrefaction had actually begun to take place, that the warmth employed would accelerate the process, and if continued, it would be to no purpose to open the body. To this he replied, rather sharply, do not be uneasy, you will not suffer by it, for depend upon it she will return to the body.”

Of course, Joanna Southcott’s followers were mocked. How could anyone believe that a body, once dead, would return to life again? And yet this absurd notion—the resurrection of the physical body—had always been the central hub of the Christian religion.

While Southcott’s followers vainly hoped for their prophet to return to life, strange representations of other resurrected bodies appeared in prominent literary works of the time. For example, in S.T. Coleridge’s “Rime of the Ancient Mariner,” the dead bodies of the speaker’s shipmates are reanimated by heavenly spirits to help the condemned man pilot his ship:

They groaned, they stirred, they all uprose
Nor spake, nor moved their eyes;

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2 Richard Reece, *A Correct Statement of the Circumstances that Attended the Last Illness and Death of Mrs. Southcott, with an Account of the Appearances Exhibited on Dissection: and the Artifices That Were Employed to Deceive Her Medical Attendants* (London, 1815), 86 (emphasis original).
It had been strange, even in a dream,
To have seen those dead men rise.³

The lines—unchanged between Coleridge's Unitarian early writing in *Lyrical Ballads* and his transition to Trinitarian orthodoxy long before the final edition of the poem in 1834—are not meant to refer to the Christian doctrine of the resurrection, even if the poem itself operates in an increasingly orthodox paradigm over the course of its revision: the resurrection of the dead is “strange, even in a dream”—the dead cannot return to life. This raises the question: why would one of the most renowned English Christian theologians of the early nineteenth century include the rising of dead bodies in a way wholly outside the Christian tradition? Again, at the opposite end of the religious spectrum, P.B. Shelley’s “The Mask of Anarchy” employs resurrection in a way strikingly similar to the Resurrection of Jesus. The poem’s allegorical representation of Anarchy—who incites the stampede of Murder, Fraud, Hypocrisy, “And many more Destructions” to trample the freedom of men—marries the description of the conquering Christ of Revelation 19:11-16 with Death described in Revelation 6:

Last came Anarchy: he rode
On a white horse, splashed with blood;
He was pale even to the lips,
Like Death in the Apocalypse.

And he wore a kingly crown,
And in his grasp a scepter shone;

---

On his brow a mark I saw—

‘I am God, and King, and Law!’”

Hope, sacrificing herself before the trampling hoofs of chaos, rises to vanquish Anarchy, and in turn gives hope to mankind. Still, the poem goes on to incorporate an explicit representation of the resurrection of the dead in a way incompatible with orthodox Christianity:

From the workhouse and the prison

Where pale as corpses newly risen,

Women, Children, young and old

Groan for pain, and weep for cold—

Perhaps stranger still is the way the risen dead appear in the Gothic. Gothic writing employs resurrection (and parodies of resurrection) in a variety of ways: the creature of Mary Shelley's Frankenstein, the immortal villain of Charles Maturin's Melmoth the Wanderer, the poetic repurposing of the biblical Cain, and the first incursions of the vampire in English literature, for example, all imagine the resurrection of the body in ways that correlate to Christian doctrine, but also deviate significantly from it as well. What allows for this proliferation of resurrected bodies?

I read both the reaction to Southcott’s death and the literary representations of physical resurrection within a larger question regarding the Christian doctrine of the resurrection of the dead in the period. In the late eighteenth century, bodily resurrection disappears from the theological discourses of the Church of England, replaced by a vision of disembodied eternal life in heaven.

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5 Ibid., 275-279.
In this dissertation, I trace the development of the Christian doctrine of the resurrection of the dead as it migrates through British Romantic literature, roughly between the years 1780 and 1830. In the period a subtle but significant change comes to the Christian afterlife: historically, the “Christian hope” included heaven after death only as a temporary state before the final resurrection of the body at the end of the age; during the period, however, future bodily resurrection is replaced with belief in eternal life among ethereal clouds. The shift is pervasive, and results from a collision between the structure of English Sovereignty, increased political and international instability unique to the period, challenges from Enlightenment rationality and Dissenting Christian traditions, and the role of the Church of England as a bulwark of social unity and national identity. The change in the doctrine of the resurrection from raised physical bodies to disembodied life in heaven is further complicated by Christianity’s structural adherence to tradition: what is orthodox cannot be new, and what is new cannot be orthodox. The change in the doctrine is therefore found in a change to the definitions of already canonized words. These definitions were tightly regulated by the Church of England, the sanctioned religious power authorized by the state. However, while the resurrected body disappears from theological and religious discourses in the Church of England, it resurfaces in various literary representations and new literary forms—from poetry to hymns to gothic writing to engagements with mythology. As such, these new artistic literary forms can begin to unlock the theological language that had been

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6 Periodization is an imprecise science—the development of doctrine is far more complex than can be fully attested to within the strict perimeters of these decades. However, the end of the eighteenth century can be read as a culmination of the various (political, international, theological or religious) developments that had been building (and decaying) through the sixteenth, seventeenth, and early eighteenth centuries, as well as the root for the development of doctrine into the later nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Suffice to say that roughly between the American Revolution and the Reform Act of 1832, or between the Gordon Riots of 1780 and Catholic Emancipation in 1829, or the rise of Evangelical influence to the Oxford Movement, the fifty-year span saw enough considerable changes (and challenges) to political and religious life to warrant historical distinction.
regulated by the State Church, retrieving the traditions of wider Christian orthodoxy obscured by state sanctioned beliefs.

British Romantic literature makes use of the doctrine of the resurrection in two distinct ways: first, as a representation of a silent or unspoken orthodox Christian tradition; second, as an articulation of raised bodies that operates alongside or even against the orthodox Christian tradition. When writers are discussing the Christian hope in a more or less orthodox way, resurrection remains silent; when articulated, resurrection is outside the scope of the Church of England. This project looks at the relationship between the resurrection of the physical body as expressed or silenced within the discourses of Christian theology and the representations of resurrection in various forms in the imaginative literature of the Romantic period. I argue the use of resurrection in these literary texts engages a range of theological ideas—ideas once bound up in belief in the raised body—that move progressively further from the dominant view of the afterlife as expressed by Anglicanism in the period, which imagined only a disembodied future life in heaven. This progressive dispersion within literature, I argue, deconstructs the heaven-earth dualism assumed in the Anglican vision of the afterlife and offers instead a variety of alternative frameworks, within which bodily resurrection functions as fundamental element. In a sense, the silence of the Anglican Church on bodily resurrection allows a range of writers to give voice to their own visions of resurrection.

Throughout the dissertation, two terms will become increasingly important: “orthodoxy” and “Anglicanism.” I employ these terms as part of a set of related notions within a religious discourse. Religious discourse, a discourse navigated through institutions of power (not only in, say, the English State Church, but also in “Dissenting” churches, groups marginalized by the state), shapes the range of potential religious expression in a specific historical era. It therefore
serves as a general heading under which religious expression originates. Within religious
discourse, ideas and beliefs may become articulated as theological systems, the codification of a
series of practices, rituals, or prayers held together within a religious body or tradition, practices
that seek to articulate a particular orientation toward the divine or some other ultimate absolute.  
Orthodoxy is a more difficult term, as its definition is usually locked in the thick surroundings of
“right” practice and “true” belief, as the word itself suggests: etymologically, “orthodoxy”
simply means “right thinking.” As “right thinking,” Christian orthodoxy invokes both a historical
tradition accumulated through centuries of Christian praxis, and the contemporary milieu of
accepted belief. Taking these two aspects into account, Rowan Williams, former Archbishop of
Canterbury, defines orthodoxy by its pragmatic uses: “what ‘orthodoxy’ and the idea of orthodox
tradition are for is to guarantee that the language and image-making and image-contemplating of
a group retain an element of dialogue with the past and of self-critical adaptability. If orthodoxy
is understood as inseparable from the continuing life of some human group, it ought not to be a
purely static principle.”  
Therefore, Christian orthodoxy as such represents an evolving
understanding of a set of distinctly Christian doctrines, drawn from interpretations of the Bible,
the Church Fathers, and the early Ecumenical Councils (particularly Nicaea and Chalcedon);
Anglican orthodoxy pertains to the beliefs considered “right thinking” according to the dictates
of the Church of England in the period. The distinction rests on the fact that Christian orthodoxy

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7 Under this definition, I realize it would be possible to have an “Atheistic” theology—
nationalism might too be a fitting set of practices that count as what I’m calling a “theological
system.” See James K.A. Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom: Worship, Worldview, and Cultural
Formation* (Grand Rapids MI: Baker Academic, 2009); William T. Cavanaugh, *The Myth of
Univ. Press, 2009), esp. chap. 2.

8 Rowan Williams, “What is Catholic Orthodoxy?” in *Essays Catholic and Radical: A Jubilee
Group Symposium for the 150th Anniversary of the beginning of the Oxford Movement, 1833-
itself finds a variety of expressions during the late 18th and early 19th centuries, of which only Anglicanism receives state authorization. As such, and contrary to a good many analyses of religion—and contrary to state sanctioned Anglicanism itself—“Christian orthodoxy” is not synonymous with “Anglicanism,” “theology,” or “religion.” While this specific taxonomy is not articulated within the historical context, the content itself assumes the shape of these divisions. Therefore, I will often use the term “State Church” (or some variant) to describe the Church of England in the period. The State Church is that historically particular iteration of Anglicanism that was sanctioned by the Crown at the end of eighteenth and beginning of the nineteenth centuries—it does not extend to or encompass the beliefs expressed within the Anglican Communion today (in fact, a large portion of my theological framework for this project stems from contemporary Anglican theology). Moreover, at times, I have even found it necessary to pit these two terms against one another as a reminder that even Anglicanism (as a theological system) is subject the State Church of England. “Church of England,” too, is different from the broader term “English Church,” by which I mean the entire body of those who profess Christian belief in England in the period—Anglican, Catholic, Dissenting, Heterodox, or otherwise. This last definition helps to underscore that Anglicanism and orthodoxy are therefore two spheres that intersect, but do not encompass one another.

My primary intervention in this dissertation begins from that intersection, and uses the collision of trans-historical Christian orthodoxy with the historical State Church to investigate the migration of the doctrine of bodily resurrection from the regulated definitions of the State Church to the imaginative artistic expressions of literary works. In this process, I hope to discover new ways of articulating how literature relates to the formation and development of doctrine, transgressing the tidy lines of religious discourse. Most analyses of Romanticism and
religion tend either toward addressing literature’s role in the relationship between secular and sacred, or turn instead to reclaim a more developed picture of the variety of religious belief proliferated during the period. However, missing from these analyses is an in-depth engagement that begins with the state-authorized Church of England to analyze the interplay between Christian theology and literary production.

The first tendency in Romantic criticism—exemplified in critical mainstays such as M.H. Abrams’s *Natural Supernaturalism*—explores the ways Romantic literature repurposes religious and theological practices and symbols in post-religious and a-theological contexts. Romantic Religion, in this context, is ironic: the purpose of religious language in poetry and literary texts is simply to transport those ideas into more productive secular settings. The inverse of this critical tendency might be Robert Ryan’s *The Romantic Reformation*: Ryan argues, rather than an escape from the sacred into the secular, Romantic era authors engage in a project of *reforming* Christianity. While Ryan’s account does credit to the authentic religious concerns in the period, under this framework even irreligious ideas are part of a broad attempt to reshape the Christian religion. Reading Romantic era literature as a project commensurate with the rising tide of secularism (or, for Ryan, resisting the influence of an increasingly non-religious world) offers good historical insight into the religious lives of English readers, who would be caught up in the ever widening gulf rent between secular and sacred (though the default position for most historical subjects would be religious: in fact, most would have considered themselves members

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of the Church of England). More recently, Colin Jager’s *Unquiet Things*\(^\text{11}\) has bridged this divide by addressing Romantic era literature through a post-secular framework. Rather than collapsing literary works into either the harbingers of the end religious belief or stalwart reformers, Jager reads authors and texts caught up in a moment of historical transformation, in particular the transformation of the social role and function of religion. Jager employs the term “after the secular” (rather than the more amorphous “post-secular”\(^\text{12}\)) to convey at once the drive of some British Romantic authors to secularize religious ideas (a kind of “chasing after the secular”), of others to engage the world divided by secular and sacred (taking “after the secular” the way a child takes after a parent), and of contemporary critics of Romanticism living in the dissolution of that division (living, as it were, “after the secular” has faded). While these secularizing and post-secularist approaches begin to tease out the complex relationship between the English Church and the state, they ultimately result in collapsing the very diverse (and at times, even idiosyncratic) religious beliefs in the period into a simple binary of the “religious” versus the “secular.” This collapse—as a number of post-secular theorists have demonstrated\(^\text{13}\)—

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undermines the very definitions by which the distinction between what counts as “secular” or what can be labeled “religious” can even be made. That is, at a certain point, even the secular, with its rites of initiation and forms of accepted belief (what we might call its own “orthodoxy”) begins to be indistinguishable from religion, while the very different expressions of religious belief themselves are smoothed over into homogenous (and often ill-defined) belief structures.

The other strand of scholarly work on romanticism and religion has begun to reconstruct the rich diversity of religious belief in the period. Daniel E. White’s *Early Romanticism and Religious Dissent*\(^\text{14}\) engages the variety of dissenting religious positions vying against the State Church. In spite of quite significant theological differences, Dissenting positions were codified as a single political position, set in opposition to the favorite son of the English State, Anglicanism. While the term “Dissent” is one often used in the period, even by those included in Dissenting traditions, it represents religion only at the level of political discourse, since the category itself was the product of political acts. White therefore characterizes Dissent as being comprised of “conflicting models of self-understanding,” in which “Dissenters were divided by their characteristic differences of faith and practice,” yet were “united by their self-defined, libertarian principles of separation.”\(^\text{15}\) This framework produces an effective reading for a variety of poems, but also skirts the issue of theological difference among dissenting traditions, while simultaneously merging the State Church with Christian orthodoxy. Numerous other works that seek to fill out the panoply of religious belief similarly avoid engaging with the State Church. Mark Lussier’s *Romantic Dharma*\(^\text{16}\) addresses the influence of Buddhism on romantic writers;


\(\text{15}\) White, *Early Romanticism and Religious Dissent*, 11.

Michael Tomko’s *British Romanticism and the Catholic Question*\(^{17}\) reconsiders the tensions in the era through the status of Roman Catholic belief in England; *British Romanticism and the Jews*\(^{18}\) (a collection of essays edited by Sheila Spector) engages the concerns of Jewish communities in England struggling between national identity and religious belief, a tension that intersects a number of Romantic texts; at the far end of the religious spectrum, Martin Priestman’s *Romantic Atheism*\(^{19}\) shows ways Romantic literature is involved and invoked in discussions surrounding Free Thought in the period. While all of these works offer a significant contribution to understanding the relationship between romanticism and religion broadly in the period and offer productive historical insights into the multifaceted and manifold expressions of English religion, there remains a gap around the only sanctioned religious belief in the period: only Anglicanism has the power of the Crown behind it. By specifically engaging Christian doctrine, I intend to fill this gap by showing how Anglicanism—among other English Christianities—has the power to shape the meaning of Christian doctrines and deploy them in politically constructive ways. My analysis considers the relationship between Church and State as implicated in the messy work of making meaning in language, and therefore, furthermore, a necessary element in understanding the literary works of the period.

My use of orthodox Christianity as a baseline is by no means arbitrary; rather, I take the multiplex arrangement of orthodoxy, and the particular expression of orthodoxy in Anglicanism, as my starting point for several reasons. First, as the system endorsed by political power,


Anglicanism receives authorization as the “status quo” system of belief, a set of practices enforced by acts of law. There is no need to rehearse here the means through which particular instances of such endorsements manifest themselves—whether as the Act of Uniformity (established in 1558, but unrevised until the 1850s) or the blasphemy laws (based on a series of acts, not completely abolished until 2008)—aside from the recognition that the state is actively involved in constraining the expressions of religion to an established set of authorized norms. Still, not all English subjects of the period were orthodox Christians, much less Anglicans; but even those who explicitly oppose the Christian religious system (however broadly construed) position themselves in relation to it, if only to contradict it (be it Shelley's atheism, Godwin's anarchism, or even Richard Payne Knight’s Priapism). That is, systems of atheism and irreligion in this period are constructed against the current state sanctioned religion; as such, the peculiar shape they take can be explained, at least in part, by the beliefs and practices they oppose. Perhaps more subtly, divergent dissenting systems are given voice by appropriating fragments of Christian religion without conforming to Christian orthodox belief: Deism, for example, adopts the transcendence of god to affirm both the order and origin of the universe (while ignoring the immanence of the Christian god as present throughout history and the material world); while pantheism, on the other hand, adopts the immanence of god manifested in nature (while ignoring the transcendence of the Christian god beyond nature). Of course, this does not mean that all atheism, all irreligion, all theistic belief necessarily spring from orthodox Christianity; rather, the particular manifestations of these systems of thought in late eighteenth and early nineteenth-century England take the shape they do because of their relationship to the enforced status quo system of belief—a system built to accommodate the State Church.
Second, beyond enforcement by the state apparatus, Christianity receives further authorization as the socially normative system of belief. The Society for the Suppression of Vice, for example, works to establish a particular form of Christian morality as the standard to which society must conform. That is, beyond (or in tandem with) the enforcement of status quo religious praxis by the state, Anglicanism is privileged as the normative moral system. My dissertation does not attempt to either affirm or critique these levels of authorization; rather, I recognize these factors are firmly in place and are significant contributions to the particular contours of literary production in the period. Therefore, analyses of Romanticism and religion that do not account for the significant place of Anglican belief—whether by collapsing the religious milieu into a sacred/secular binary or addressing the multiple ancillary belief structures that independently influence writers and readers—would benefit from a detailed understanding of Anglicanism as a sort of baseline belief structure of readers as well as writers of literature that informs and colors all other religious opinions in the period.

Finally, reconsidering the distinction between “orthodoxy” and “Anglicanism”—or Christianity and the State more broadly—has implications in the field of political theology as well. Recent high profile analyses of political theology—from Slavoj Zizek, Giorgio Agamben, Alain Badiou, and Alain de Botton, 20 to name a few—have argued that religion might be deployed in service to the state, as a measure for existential meaning, social unity, resistance to capitalism, or political control. The Christian religion—emptied of its transcendental meaning or

historical veracity—becomes a grand metaphor for universalization or the end of class struggle or simply a way build communities. However, recognizing that some aspects of doctrine gain authorization while others do not highlights the friction between the State and Church. Orthodoxy—so long as it remains superordinate to its historical iterations and appropriations in systems like the English State Church in the period—will always house doctrines and practice that resist the tidy appropriations called for by modern political theologians. After all, Jesus “came not to send peace, but a sword.” Therefore—notwithstanding the political and social authorization Christianity receives in England in the period—the complete content of orthodoxy should not be confused with the set of practices sanctioned by the state. While these ideological and state apparatuses predicate themselves on Christian doctrine and are formulated in Christian language, “English National Religion” in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries does not encompass all of Christian orthodoxy. True, there are practices and beliefs that are perfectly comfortable within the limits enforced by society and state, but certain doctrinal positions and Christian practices find themselves silenced by the very apparatuses designed around their authorization. On the contrary, both the practices of Christianity and the theoretical and theological foundations of Christianity were formed in opposition to political power: if Jesus is king, then neither Caesar nor George can be. When political power assumes Christianity—when George claims Christ’s throne—certain orthodox beliefs come into tension with political power. This tension is evident in one of the most central tenets of Christian orthodoxy, the doctrine of the resurrection of the physical body.

This leads to the central term in my dissertation: “resurrection.” The definition of this term—or rather the change in its definition—is the main fulcrum my dissertation pivots on.

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21 Matt. 10.34. All biblical references are from the King James Version.
There are two key aspects to understanding what resurrection is: the first is to consider the term in its broader use in Christianity orthodoxy, and the second is to recognize the way resurrection is understood in the specific historical context of the Church of England in the period. I will discuss each in turn.

The doctrine of the resurrection, always considered a foundational tenet of Christian belief, includes both the physical Resurrection of Jesus Christ and the hope for the future eschatological resurrection of the bodies of his followers—not only that Christ rose bodily from the grave, but that a future bodily resurrection awaits the church at the end of time. In addition, the “Christian Hope” (as the doctrine of the resurrection is often called) also has room for a temporary state of heavenly rest between physical death and bodily resurrection.

The Christian religion, in an important sense, is founded on the doctrine of the resurrection. Even before the coming of the Messiah, Second-Temple Jewish belief—out of which Christianity sprang in the first century—looked forward to the time when God would reconcile the world through his chosen people, finally putting an end to humanity’s long exile, the estrangement from the Creator God that was the root cause of death.22 According to readings of the biblical narrative, when Adam fell in the Garden of Eden he alienated the human race from their creator, revoking humanity’s initial commission to be the “image-bearer” of God. This “image-bearer” status was restored to the people of Israel, provided they adhere to the divine law given at Sinai; unable to keep God’s holy Torah, Israel—like a second Adam banished from Eden—was exiled from the promised land.23 The coming Messiah would reassemble the Jews


23 A number of recent post-liberal theological works recreate this narrative: See Richard J Middleton, *A New Heaven and a New Earth: Reclaiming Biblical Eschatology* (Grand Rapids,
under a renewed theocratic kingship; following the prophetic image given in Ezekiel 37, Israel would be called to life again, resurrected from the dry bones of Babylonian exile. God would save his people—it was a part of his great promise to Abraham to build a nation, a promise ratified in Moses through Torah, and exemplified (and reiterated) in the great king David (to whom God Himself promised an everlasting throne)—a promise the people lost in exile would cling to: God would be just. But if God were to be just, then he would have to do something about all those who had been separated from him; that is, at the restoration, God would have to be just to all those who had already suffered death. When Jesus proclaimed himself to be the Messiah, preached the arrival of the Kingdom of Heaven, and gathered to him twelve followers (a deeply symbolic number for the Jewish people), he acted according to the expectations associated with this promise. However, when he was killed and three days later rose again, the metaphorical image of the resurrection of God’s people took on a far greater—and more literal—meaning. For the early Christian Church, then, God’s promise to redeem Israel was realized in the Resurrection of Jesus: God had dealt once and for all with the problem of death. Furthermore,


See Beale, A New Testament Biblical Theology, esp. chaps. 3-4; Gentry and Wellum, 479-481; Brian Neal Peterson, John’s Use of Ezekiel: Understanding the Unique Perspective of the Fourth Gospel (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2015), esp. chaps. 6.


for the Christians, when God raised Jesus from the dead it proved he was in fact the expected Messiah he had claimed to be; at the same time, Christian ecclesiology expanded from the Jewish race (a people assembled under the “Old Covenant,” the Law) to encompass all who believed in Jesus as Christ (a “New Covenant,” a people in whom God’s own Spirit would dwell). Furthermore, because God had solved the problem of death, and because he had extended his salvation to all mankind, the promise for restoration—now realized as the promise for a physical resurrection from the dead—could too be hoped for by all. Because Christ was raised, his followers too would be raised, a hope for final reconciliation at the end of time. In the interim, the time between physical death and the fulfillment of God’s promise in the resurrection of the body, God himself would care for the souls of his people. Resurrection then, for the Christians, was not just a curious moment in history, or the prime miracle among other miracles; it was the resolution of a story set in motion at the very beginning of mankind’s history, an apocalyptic rejuvenation of God’s new creation springing up right in the middle of the ruined old world, and a promise for final reconciliation at the end of all things; it was the solution to the problem of death, of sin, the reconciliation between God and man—and by extension heaven and earth; it was the restoration of mankind as God’s image bearers, and therefore, too, the restoration of God’s place as sovereign over the universe through Jesus Christ.

It should not be surprising, then, that resurrection has long been considered a “revolutionary doctrine”: Karl Barth in the mid-twentieth century famously claimed the Resurrection of Jesus was the “crisis of all history,” in which the “eschaton” on the fringes of history erupts in the middle of history to challenge every human temporal system, including

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political powers.\(^{28}\) More recently, N.T. Wright, focusing on the formations of first century Christian belief, has said, “The early Christians insisted that what had happened to Jesus was precisely something new; was indeed, the start of a whole new mode of existence, a new creation.”\(^{29}\) Furthermore, “If Jesus had been raised from the dead, if the new creation had begun, if they [the early Christians] were themselves the citizens of the creator god’s new kingdom, then the claims of Jesus to Lordship on earth as well as heaven would ultimately come into conflict with those of Caesar himself.”\(^{30}\) It was for this reason that the early Christians found in the Resurrection of Jesus (and its necessary counterpart, their own future resurrection) ground to resist the oppressive powers of the Roman state. If Jesus was King, then Caesar could not be; indeed, all sovereign power—all those who appropriated for themselves the right to deal out death—was illegitimate, pretending to the power that was rightly won by Christ at the resurrection. Caesar could kill, but only Jesus—the true master over death—could restore bodies to life.

As Christianity developed through the following centuries, articulations of the doctrine of the resurrection would vacillate between emphasizing the raised body and emphasizing the soul’s interim in heaven. Still, while certain historical periods would favor one aspect of the Christian Hope over another, it was never at the cost of the other; that is, resurrection never drowned out heaven, and heaven never replaced resurrection. In the only historical analysis of the development of the doctrine, Caroline Walker Bynum traces the uses of resurrection rhetoric from the second through the twelfth centuries, positioning the development of the doctrine


\(^{30}\) Wright, *The Resurrection of the Son of God*, 583.
“against the background of persecution and conflict, gender and hierarchy and of norms and rituals for the care of the dead,” where the resurrection of the body is “part of the full narrative of changing soteriological and eschatological hopes.”

Broadly, as the Christian religion developed through late antiquity and into the middle ages, the revolutionary potential within the doctrine of physical resurrection would rise and fall inversely with the tranquility of earthly powers: in times of peace, invocations of the doctrine favored heavenly (disembodied) life after death; in times of turmoil, discourse would return to the final resurrection of the body at the end of time. As such, in times of peace the doctrine could be a reminder not to rest one’s hopes in the order of the world, while in times of instability resurrection would revive a present hope for the rectified order of the here and now. This overarching historical generalization, of course, becomes far more complex when the church and state ally power, and more complex still when that alliance comes in the context of a modern secular state. When Henry VIII cut ties with Rome, English sovereignty established itself as a secular power; when he declared himself master the of English church, secular power took on priestly garments. In the intervening centuries, though various Christianities flourished in England, the power of the Anglican Church became more and more solidified, the favored son of the Kingdom of Earth.

Furthermore, the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century saw significant challenges to the Christology, ecclesiology, and eschatology that relate directly to the resurrection. Increasingly on the continent (and particularly in Germany), Christology during the period began to move toward mythologized accounts of the life of Christ; this mythologization parallels the


rising interest in comparative religion in England, particularly regarding debates over the authenticity of the Christian religion. Naturally, such debates called into question the legitimacy of Church authority, an issue particularly important in England, where the church finds official sanction within the state. This challenge to ecclesiastic hegemony was exacerbated by the increasing numbers of Deist and dissenting Christians in England, not to mention the emergence and increasing (if still quite limited) popularity of explicitly non-Christian and anti-Christian thinkers. Further, the catastrophic events of revolutions in American, France, and Haiti had drawn to the surface both the millennial hopes and eschatological fears latent in English culture and religion. Southey famously reflected on the apocalyptic hope generated by the French Revolution in an 1824 letter to Caroline Bowles: “what a visionary world seemed to open upon those who were just entering it. Old things seemed passing away, and nothing was dreamt of but the regeneration of the human race.” Tim Fulford has recently shown that “after the unprecedented upheaval of the French Revolution many abandoned the conventional view [that the millennium was a distant event] and expected the millennium to arrive in their own lifetime, preceded by apocalyptic destruction.” These shifting tides in the history of ideas result in the peculiar shapes theological expression takes during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, certainly including the doctrine of the resurrection. The specific challenges and

trans. George Elliot (London, 1892). This mythologized strain of Christology will reach its climax in the mid-twentieth century with the work of Rudolf Bultmann.

33 C.f. Charles François Dupuis The Origin of All Religious Worship (New Orleans, 1872). While Dupuis’ work is earlier than period under consideration, it created significant waves in religious and irreligious circles felt well into the 19th century.

34 Robert Southey, The Correspondence of Robert Southey with Caroline Bowles (Dublin, 1881), 52.

changes within English society result, oddly enough, in the spontaneous silencing of the resurrection of the physical body.

During the period, the doctrine of the resurrection (disembodied or otherwise) finds itself largely unarticulated by the major strands of orthodox Christian theology; most notably, in the discourses emerging from the Church of England. By the end of the eighteenth century, the tension between state authority and the inherently revolutionary doctrine of the resurrection (which might seem allied with the secular revolutionary movements of the time) results in the erasure of significant discussions of the bodily resurrections of both Christ and his followers—not a refusal of the doctrine, nor a disavowal of it (as such specific actions would necessitate articulation of the resurrection), but a thorough-going silence. For this reason, there are very few theological discourses on Christ’s Resurrection in the Romantic period, and the “Christian hope” of life after death is translated from new bodies in a new earth to a disembodied heaven. We move from a vision of the literal resurrection of the body at the end of time to an image of a timeless, disembodied heaven filled with clouds and angels and harps.

There is a significant difference, therefore, between what Christian orthodoxy believed about the resurrected body and the disembodied heaven of the late eighteenth-century English State Church. Bodily resurrection had been a central theological tenet of the faith, grounding the historical formation of the church while uniting both the origins and ultimate future of mankind, the solution to the problem of death that also promised all systems of oppression would be called to account as the Kingdom of Heaven came into being in the here and now; when collapsed into the State Church’s vision of a disembodied heavenly afterlife, however, these elemental features of Christian orthodoxy are lost. One of the main questions I hope to answer in this dissertation, then, is what happened to the resurrection of the body? A number of recent major theological
works have addressed the resurrection of the dead, and note the vast difference between the revolutionary raised physical body of Christian doctrine and the rather tepid modern idea of disembodied eternity in heaven. One of the more significant trends in recent resurrection theology is the attempt to retrieve the physical body from its modern equivocation with life in heaven. Sustained engagements from Hans Frei, N.T. Wright, Michael R. Licona, and William Lane Craig\(^3\) point to the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries as the significant turning point for how the doctrine of the resurrection was influenced by modern philosophy. Likewise, more general articles from Rowan Williams and Alistair McGrath\(^4\) have also nodded in the direction of the nineteenth century as the moment when the doctrine of the physical resurrection underwent significant revision. However, theological analyses favor direct examination of the doctrine itself, rather than engaging in its historical mutations. As such, while many theologians point to the period as a moment of significant change in the doctrine, few articulate how and why this change comes about.

Therefore, my argument will investigate a variety of ways the resurrection of the body appears (and disappears) in the period. While the resurrection of the physical body falls silent in the socially and politically dominant Church of England, it migrates to the literature of the


period, appearing in new imaginative forms that come to house the revolutionary and world-transforming promises of the doctrine.

First, it will be of utmost importance to clearly understand the relationship between the Crown and the State Church. In chapter 1, therefore, I engage the foundational documents unique to the Church of England such as The Book of Common Prayer, as well as the very structure of English sovereignty itself. I argue that the role of the King as head of the church validates only certain interpretations of key orthodox and Anglican texts, interpretations that resist the revolutionary potential within the doctrine of bodily resurrection. Far more amenable to state power is a disconnected heaven, unseen and inaccessible from earth. These favored interpretations of the Christian afterlife result in a redefinition of the term “resurrection” to mean only disembodied life in heaven. Exacerbating this redefinition, the inadequate training of English clergy would make challenging this dominant interpretive paradigm nearly impossible. However, theological education of the majority of English subjects would come not only through officially sanctioned church rubrics or sermons, but through artistic works as well. As such, I also engage three examples of Romantic era poetry that reproduce the Crown’s political theology—Poet Laureate Robert Southey’s “Funeral one for the Princess Charlotte,” Felecia Hemans’s “Mary Magdalene Bearing Tidings of the Resurrection,” and Richard Mant’s “The Christian Consolation on the Death of Friends.”

Second, it will be necessary to account for the most obvious literary representations of physical resurrection—the parody of the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead that appears in gothic literature, and specifically gothic tinged romantic literature. In chapter 2, I read this parody alongside changing attitudes and beliefs about death and burial. The State Church’s metaphorical monopoly on authorized Christian doctrine was mirrored by a more literal
monopoly the Church of England held over consecrated burial ground: with very few exceptions, the dead were buried on State Church property with Anglican rites, regardless of a person’s professed beliefs in life. In the face of this, I argue the literature of the period offers the figure of the wanderer: cast out from the society of the living and cursed to live “life-in-death,” the wanderer circumvents the systems of control (over life, but also over death through burial) emanating from the State Church. In the process, the Anglican interpretation of “resurrection” as an eternal heavenly afterlife is challenged by figures who refuse to enter “eternal rest,” becoming instead a parody of the risen body. One place we might discover the return of the resurrected body, therefore, might be outside the confines of civil order—a kind of “wandering orthodoxy” marginalized by the Crown. However, because of the character’s transgressive nature, when resurrection appears in the wanderer, there is no guarantee it will conform to the ideas of Christian orthodoxy either. In the wanderer, the resurrected body becomes unruly, a difficulty for both the State Church and the orthodox doctrine it obscured.

Paradoxically, another potential way resurrection might arise in the State Church is by not arising at all. In chapter 3, I will engage the way the resurrection of the body returns through meditative reflection upon its very absence, articulated not in a literary image of a raised body directly, but *indirectly* through the explicit use of silence. Here, I will examine what Geoffrey Hartman called Wordsworth’s *via naturaliter negativa*—“nature’s negative way”—to discover the way Wordsworth’s poetry generates an alternative liturgy, one that enables a silent expression of the mysteries obscured within the State Church. A similar alternative liturgy is found in the popular Evangelical hymns of the late eighteenth century, exemplified in William Cowper’s contributions to the *Olney Hymns*. In these “silent liturgies,” one of the primary aspects of the orthodox doctrine of the physical resurrection of the dead returns as the division
erected between heaven (a disembodied and discontiguous spiritual realm) and earth (the kingdom of physical bodies subjected to sovereign rule) disintegrates. As the evangelical singers in unison sing their hymns, they bring about the reality of heaven on earth in the here and now; likewise, while Wordsworth meditates on the beauty of nature, a space arises in which to imagine mankind reconciled to the natural world and the problem of death solved. Not surprisingly, both Wordsworth’s poetry and the hymns of the Evangelicals must move outside the church grounds before the object of their silent liturgies becomes clear; even so, with the language of “resurrection” occupied by the State Church’s heavenly hereafter, the only way the reconciliation of heaven and earth could be spoken of is through silence.

While a “silent liturgy” might deconstruct the State Church’s tidy heaven/earth dualism, a radical reworking of the entire narrative of the Christian religion could retrieve the world-altering apocalyptic registers of the doctrine of the resurrection. In the final chapter, I argue that Shelley’s *Prometheus Unbound* demonstrates this kind of reworking. In the drama, Shelley aligns his own mythological characters with Jesus Christ, vivifying the central figure of the Christian religion (and the symbol upon which all of the Christian narrative hangs) as a literary—rather than religious—symbol. In so doing Shelley weighs in on important Christological ideas in the period, while drawing from the well-established genre of mythic syncretism. In this way, Shelley anticipates the moves toward “remythologizing” the Christian religion that would dominate theology into the twentieth century. Finally, with Jesus Christ recreated as a literary figure, the redemption of the world comes through the culturally transformative work of poetry. Likewise, what was an inaugurated eschatology in the orthodox idea of resurrection is culminated in the continued work of poets and artists to make the world new. Both in the orthodox idea of bodily resurrection and in Shelley’s hopeful image of a world
made new, transformation is made possible through the paradigm set by the central figure (Jesus for the Christians, Prometheus for *Prometheus Unbound*), a figure who suffers because of his resistance to power, but who is ultimately vindicated for his refusal to be coerced through violence.

There are, of course, other ways resurrection in the period might be understood beyond the scope of this project. For example, while I have considered the relationship between State and Church in the period to be the primary force inhibiting articulation of orthodox doctrine in the State Church, it may be that increased classical influences in art and philosophy made more fashionable a return to the Gnostic idea of souls trapped in bodies. The classical afterlife was one in which the soul departed from the body for eternity. Departed souls might either lament their lot (like Achilles before Odysseus) or celebrate having finally fled the confines of their corrupted bodies (such as in the Platonic view of the soul escaping back into the world of pure light sketched out in the *Phaedo* dialogue), but there was no option in the classical paradigm for bodily resurrection. Eurydice, in spite of Orpheus’s best efforts, always falls back into the underworld.\(^{38}\) It may be, then, that as the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries cultivated classical (and neoclassical) aesthetic and philosophical interests, the idea of a disembodied afterlife absorbed the distinctly Christian idea of bodily resurrection. On the other hand, just as there may be influences obscuring the resurrected body well outside the State Church, it is certainly the case that religious representations of the doctrine of the resurrection continued well beyond the scope of the English Church. Joanna Southcott, mentioned earlier in this introduction is a prime example; but the poetry of William Blake, too, fits this model. In both cases, the physical

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resurrection of the dead appears alongside what appears to polite society as a kind of madness, but also part and parcel of a larger prophetic statement.³⁹ It seems, then, to speak of physical resurrection requires one to speak in modes outside of what could be called “sanity,” modes more easily dismissed in the post-Enlightenment world. While any of these avenues would certainly yield productive insights for understanding more fully how the doctrine of the resurrection transforms in the period, I have here focused only on the instances that pertain to the powerful Church of England, directing my attention to the way proximity to the Crown itself distorts religious beliefs by examining works that directly engage with the State Church.

I have titled this project “Raising the Last Hope”; the Christian hope had always been that at the end of all things God’s victory through Christ would solve the problem of death that had so long kept humankind in exile. This victory was hinted at in the prophets, but proclaimed in Resurrection of Jesus, a proclamation that came with a promise—the bodies of those who followed God’s true Messiah would—like his—be brought to triumphant life again. In England during the late eighteenth century, this hope was buried by the structures of power that had come to envelop the Church; but the Last Hope was precisely the hope that buried things would not remain buried—that dead things would come to life again, richly new yet in strangely familiar bodies. The last hope, the hope for resurrection, erupted in unlikely literary forms, calling for the reunion of heaven and earth in mystical revelations, the promised body glimpsed in gothic horror, the triumph of God’s King in expressly anti-Christian revolutions; in literature, the resurrection became again the body through which resistance could rise.

CHAPTER I.
“HE IS NOT HERE”: THE ABSENCE OF THE RESURRECTED BODY
IN THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND

“Why seek ye the living among the dead? He is not here, but is risen.”
-Luke 24.6-7

“where no death is, there can be no resurrection from the dead.”
-Bishop John Pearson, An Exposition of the Creeds

Almost a decade ago, a massive expansion project broke ground in the area just behind the Royal London Hospital in Whitechapel, annexing land that was once occupied by the hospital’s long unused cemetery.\(^1\) The graves were marked, and bodies were carefully unearthed and transferred to yet another final resting place; but as the excavation pushed passed the boundaries of the known burial ground, construction crews were surprised to find that the graves continued, now not so well marked, often containing mismatched or incomplete bodies, many sharing hastily made coffins: one body had additional limbs; another grave contained three bodies that shared a skull; in another, they found a femur bone that appears to have been turned on a lathe.\(^2\) The excavation caused a good deal of excitement at the time, but also turned the

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\(^1\) Formerly the churchyard St. Augustine’s. There now stands a medical museum in what was the church’s crypt.

\(^2\) The discovery would become an exhibit at the Museum of London later that year. See Louise Fowler and Natasha Powers, *Doctors, Dissection and Resurrection Men: Excavations in*
public’s attention back toward to the early part of the nineteenth century, when the clandestine traffic in human cadavers was a lucrative trade. At the dawn of the nineteenth century, the Royal London Hospital—then the London Hospital—was implicated in a controversy surrounding the burial of deceased patients. Given the accepted practice at the time, admittance to the hospital was precipitated by a small fee to cover the costs, care and, in some unfortunate cases, burial of the patient; if a patient could not afford these fees, some kindly porter of the hospital would often foot the small bill: a contemporary account records, “If the individual [i.e., the patient] recovered, the generosity of this good Christian [porter] went unrequited: but if he died, then … while the spirit of the poor sufferer ‘winged its way to Abraham’s bosom,’ the porter walked away with the body to the dissecting-room, and found himself a gainer of four guineas.”3 From the burial ground at Whitechapel, it seems porters at the London Hospital took full advantage of this practice, becoming a small part of the underground marketplace of illegal trade in corpses, a marketplace made notorious by gangs of body-snatchers and grave-robbers known as Resurrectionists.

By now, the history of the Resurrectionists’ rise and fall is relatively well known. English law stipulated that anatomists could dissect only the bodies of executed criminals, resulting in a small supply to match the strong demand of a growing science, a demand exacerbated by the business of anatomy schools. For example, Sir Astley Cooper, a noted surgeon in the period, would draw nearly 700 spectators to his anatomy lectures, which included dissections; his students required 4 to 12 cadavers each over the course of their study. Under English Law, the state alone could supply cadavers for the anatomists from executed criminals, part of an act to

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3 An Account of the Circumstances Attending the Imprisonment and Death of the Late William Mallard (London: Anne Millard, 1825), 9.
deter murder. As the bourgeoning discipline of human anatomy became increasingly fashionable, the requisite cadavers became more and more scarce—a scarcity the Resurrection Men capitalized on by unearthing indiscriminately the recently interred, like thieves in the night traipsing through graveyards to find bodies for the dissection table any way they could. But the Resurrectionists’ game couldn’t last forever: empty graves were met with outrage and public umbrage; the moral outcry over decency and decorum would prevail before long, as the commerce of body-snatching deteriorated. Dr. Joshua Brookes, for example, the victim of a cadaver deal turned sour, was delivered bodies not-so-freshly dead, and not-so-discretely as he would have preferred; when two ladies out for an evening stroll literally stumbled upon the rotting corpses dumped outside Brookes’s back door, the ensuing commotion nearly lead to a riot. But the biggest scandal involving Resurrection Men was, of course, the infamous Burke and Hare murders in Edinburgh in 1828. With graveyards under tighter security, Resurrectionists had a more difficult time meeting their orders; William Burke and William Hare took matters into their own hands, murdering together sixteen people to provide cadavers for anatomists. The pair were caught, and Hare turned King’s evidence against Burke, who was tried, found guilty, executed, and subsequently sent to the anatomist’s table. Three years later, a series of similar murders would be committed in London; again, bodies were delivered to anatomists suspiciously fresh, and again the murderers were convicted, executed, and offered for dissection. The result of the Resurrectionist murders lead to the Anatomy Act of 1832, whereby cadavers could be

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4 See Murder Act, 1752, 25 Geo. 2, c. 37.

willfully donated to science in an attempt to dismantle the market of the Resurrectionists entirely.⁶

But the Resurrectionists were only in business because the English state had organized its laws regarding burial around the State Church; and the Church of England had insisted on its particular burial practices because of its professed beliefs in the Christian afterlife—the resurrection of the dead.⁷ For the Christians, death itself was a result of the sin of Adam; at God’s great restoration, at the forgiveness of sin, the problem of death would have to be reversed.⁸ Once dead, a body would wait until the general resurrection at the end of time, where it would be reinvigorated and renewed at the restoration of all things, a belief fossilized in the burial practices of the English State Church, where bodies could not be cremated and were placed in the ground facing toward the east, where Christ would come again. But the rhetoric surrounding the Anatomy Act of 1832 shows a fascinating change in how burial practices were understood, now no longer as a part of the Christian eschatological hope, but rather as part of a Christian’s moral duty. Rather than preserving the body for future resurrection, one should consider donating one’s body for current scientific advancement. An anonymous open letter to Secretary of State Robert Peel in 1829 calls for reform of burial laws in order to facilitate dissection by anatomists: comparing the “immutable commands” pronounced by God with the “dim and shadowy image” of a man-made legal system, the author concludes “I would dare, in

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⁶ The act itself explicitly claims to be a response to “diverse great and grievous Crimes … and lately Murder.” Anatomy Act, 1832, 2 & 3 Will. 4, c. 75.

⁷ I will explore the rituals surrounding death and burial more fully in the following chapter.

⁸ See N.T. Wright’s *Resurrection of the Son of God* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2003) esp. chap. 2.4. The Christian doctrine of the resurrection forms in response to the main line of Jewish eschatology in the first and second centuries predating Christ—that God’s restoration of the Kingdom of Israel (and by extension, the restoration of mankind and his commission on earth) would need to bring justice for the dead as well as the living.
such a matter, to disobey all human governors, rather than provoke the one Eternal Governor of the Universe, by neglecting any means of increasing my usefulness to mankind.”

For many by the start of the nineteenth century, the resurrection of the dead had ceased to have social utility, and the laws once connected to it became arcane and futile. Put another way, the Resurrection Men themselves were necessitated by a change in the meaning of the doctrine of the resurrection.

Traditionally, the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead rested on two principles: first, the bodily resurrection of Jesus three days after his crucifixion, and second the bodily resurrection of all believers at the restoration of all creation; the founding moment of the Christian faith is woven into the eschatological hope for the Christian’s future. While the general resurrection of the dead remained an expectation of the future, the resurrection of Jesus erupted in the middle of human history. Importantly, the resurrection of Jesus, the “first fruits” of God’s long-promised new creation also vindicated Christ’s claims to authority. Jesus came preaching the Kingdom of Heaven had invaded earth—that he himself was its promised King, the Messiah; His resurrection, therefore, was the proof of his royal right that not even death could deny him. For this reason, twentieth-century theologian Karl Barth claimed the Resurrection of Jesus was the “crisis” moment of all history, by which all political powers are shown to be shadowy pretenders to Christ’s rightful throne. Barth writes, “This is the general victory of Christ announced in the resurrection, which, once known in its absoluteness, although never and nowhere present, is yet always and everywhere to be conceived of as the crisis of every human temporal thing.”

Barth’s assessment of the Resurrection of Jesus draws from a very traditional

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view of Christian eschatology—the “already” of the Kingdom of Heaven and the “not yet” of the final restoration—to assert a fundamental unity between these distinct historical moments. The Resurrection of Jesus, a vision of the promise for the resurrection of mankind (and therefore the ultimate justification of God’s righteousness as a solution to the problem of death), are both moments with one foot in eternity and another in time, “something,” says Barth, “bordering on the end of history…hovering at the frontiers of humanity” (70). In this eschatological paradigm, there was room for a temporary disembodied state—a sort of interlude for souls caught up between physical life and bodily resurrection. But if there was room for an ethereal Heaven, it was never intended as the “end game” of the Christian hope.

For Christian doctrine, then, the resurrection was initiated in Jesus but not yet complete, a process begun in Christian believers with Christ himself, punctuated by life in heaven after death, and culminated with a general physical resurrection of the body after a temporary time in heaven. So St. Paul writes in the foundational chapter on the resurrection in 1 Corinthians 15, “now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the first fruits of them that slept.” This dyadic vision of the resurrection—already begun but not yet complete—produced in the early church an unshakable ground from which to resist the power of the oppressive Roman State: if Christ had been raised, then the power of Rome was ultimately defeated. The only threat Caesar could hold against them was a threat against their bodies; but they had no fear as they would get those bodies back, just as Jesus had. Nothing could be taken from them—nothing to do with all the strength of Rome. Hence Athanasius of Alexandria in the early fourth century would write of women and children gleefully dragging lions by their chains toward them, hastening their
execution in the Coliseum\textsuperscript{11}—they believed they would receive those very same bodies back, because the victory in Christ was already theirs.

However, by the eighteenth century, when the authority of the Church was sanctioned under the authority of the state, the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead underwent an important transformation. In England, the concession that the King was the head of the church legitimated the authority of the state—George and his sons would take the place of Jesus at the head of the earthly Kingdom, while Jesus would rule in the separate Kingdom of Heaven. Rather than insisting upon bodies being restored, new accounts of the doctrine of the resurrection tended to imagine only a disembodied afterlife in the ethereal clouds of Heaven, a realm wholly distinct from earth.

In this chapter, I will plot the ground out of which the popular imagination would harvest this new conception of the afterlife. I will first explain how the structure of English sovereignty after the Reformation and through the eighteenth century constrained theological discourse, particularly in regard to the physical resurrection of the dead. As testament to the power of sovereignty, the official documents of the State Church remind subjects that the King of England commands their primary loyalties while Jesus reigns in a far off Heaven. This theology of “two kingdoms”—one in heaven and the other on earth—authorized only one aspect of the traditional doctrine of the resurrection, overshadowing the hope for physical resurrection by overemphasizing the disembodied soul’s rest in Heaven. Compounding the theological limits placed by the proximity of the Crown over the Church, the foundational statements regarding the bodily resurrection of the dead undergo an interpretive shift that affirmed only one aspect of the Christian Hope—life in heaven. The seeds of the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead

scattered in the documents of Church of England—the *Book of Common Prayer*, the Ecumenical Creeds, the Articles of Religion—allow for the resurrection as both a (temporary) disembodied state and (final) physically raised body, as traditional Christian orthodoxy maintained; however, in the period, interpretations of these documents only allow for a disembodied and discontiguous heaven. The physical resurrection of the body therefore fell completely silent. Finally, exacerbating the silence of physical resurrection in the State Church, the critical lack of theological training the Anglican clergy received made a retrieval of bodily resurrection nearly impossible within the theology of the Church of England, an absence notable in both critical academic dialogue and popular preaching. As a result, the once revolutionary doctrine of the resurrection of the dead became replaced by the rather tepid hope for life in heaven after death; the “crisis of every human temporal thing” was neutralized by a wall erected between heaven and earth.

But the Church of England was not the only venue for the spread of theological ideas; religious concepts had long been a mainstay in English literature. Recently, a volume in a series on Christian spirituality by L. William Countryman took for its title *The Poetic Imagination: an Anglican Spiritual Tradition*. Linking English spirituality with English lyric poetry in particular, Countryman writes, “Spiritualities flourish in face-to-face conversation, the arena of the spoken word, where...people who have found themselves, perhaps quite against their own preferences, living in the presence of the divine Mysteries seek each other out in the hope of sharing the task of priestly discernment.” According to Countryman, spirituality broadly considered is often best expressed in poetry; in England specifically, poetry has “been particularly characteristic of

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Anglican spirituality.”\textsuperscript{13} Likewise, Emma Mason and Mark Knight remind us, “Theological debate was almost inseparable from philosophic, scientific, medical, historical, and political thought in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.”\textsuperscript{14} To assume literary discourse was immune to theological engagement “is to demarcate religious space in a narrow and misleading manner.”\textsuperscript{15} Moreover, during the period, “the doctrinal intricacies of the Church were experienced through texts that were unlikely to appear in a course of formal theology: hymns tracts, poetry, and fiction.”\textsuperscript{16} By and large, I believe the influence of art in religion pushes past structures of authority to imagine alternative visions to the status quo, retrieving ideas or beliefs occluded in discourses by systems of power. However, at times, even artistic expression might come within the well-guarded hedges of state power and take on the sanitized language of the authorized Church. While literature provides a particularly effective vehicle for the doctrine of the resurrection in the period, the idea of a disembodied heaven in the place of bodily resurrection also surfaces in a number of poems. In subsequent chapters, I will take up some of the ways in which authors offered radical re-thinnings of the doctrine of the resurrection; here, however, I will provide three notable examples of ways bodily resurrection is elided in the affirmation of a disembodied heavenly realm. Still, even in these elisions, poetic expression allows room to being to push against the barriers imposed on theological expression in the period.

First, Poet Laureate Robert Southey’s ode for the year 1818 takes the topic of the tragic death of Princess Charlotte; as the poem progresses, the Princess disappears, while the speaker

\textsuperscript{13} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{15} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{16} Knight and Mason, \textit{Nineteenth-Century Religion and Literature}, 7.
dwell instead on the past kings and royals strewn about the graveyard. Just as the presence of
the king in the Church of England blocks bodily resurrection, so too the presence of past
sovereigns obstructs resurrection in Southey’s poem. Next, I will turn to Felecia Hemans’s
sonnet “Mary Magdalene Bearing Tidings of the Resurrection,” which takes on the same
ambiguities surrounding the doctrine of the resurrection found in the Book of Common Prayer.
Hemans’s sonnet at once relies on the Resurrected Jesus to elevate the poem’s heroine Mary
Magdalene but also elides the resurrected body of Jesus from the poem’s narrative. Finally,
Anglican Bishop Richard Mant’s “The Christian Consolation on the Death of Friends” shows the
same transposition of bodily resurrection with disembodied heaven seen in the teaching and
preaching of the Anglican church. Overall, the degree to which poetry comes into relation with
the state and State Church limits the range of expression available to that poetry; the more
closely the two become aligned, the less likely it becomes for bodily resurrection to surface.
These three poems demonstrate the reproduction of State Church’s burial of the resurrection of
the dead by rehearsing the image of heaven as a disembodied world absolutely divided from
earth.

Political Theology and the Deathless Sovereign

Uncovering the relationship between the subjects of the English Church and the historical
doctrines of Christianity is quite complicated in the period we identify with romanticism. On the
one hand, the formative texts for English religion were not designed as doctrinal catechisms. On
the other hand, the Book of Common Prayer and the Thirty-Nine Articles of Religion—consistent
with the rhetoric of Reformers—expressly claim to follow from the teachings of the universal
Christian Church (often drawing on the Church Fathers) and reverence the historical creeds. The *Thirty-Nine Articles* attests to the Church of England’s reliance on the Athanasian, Apostolic, and Nicene creeds, with the stipulation that these creeds “may be proved by most certain warrants of Holy Scripture.”

The three ecumenical creeds are worked into the text of the Prayer Book as well: while the Athanasian Creed and its emphasis on the trinity were allotted a distinct section in the 1662 edition, both the Nicene Creed and Apostle’s Creed were more modestly folded into the orders and rubrics of the liturgy.

The formal structure of the Church of England was designed to accommodate a degree of theological malleability. The *Book of Common Prayer* had been the formative guide for practices and piety of the English Church since the early stages of the Reformation, though the book itself offers little by way of theological instruction. Rather than insisting on a rigid canon of authoritative theological texts, the establishment of the Church of England as a *via media* between the excesses of Protestantism and the limitations of Rome necessitated a degree of doctrinal flexibility. As such, the mainspring of the English Church would be its liturgy. Thomas Cranmer’s 1549 first edition of the *Book of Common Prayer* was compiled from a vast treasury of Medieval and Patristic sources, drawing heavily on the 11th century Use of Sarum—the traditional rubric used at Catholic Salisbury before the reformation—and John Damascene’s canons of Eastern Orthodoxy. However, through the social and political upheaval during the Commonwealth and Restoration, the Prayer Book underwent a series of revisions and expansions, consistent with specification of Article XXXIV of the *Articles of Religion*:

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18 For a complete list of sources for each of Cranmer’s collects, see C. Frederick Barbee and Paul F.M. Zahl, *The Collects of Thomas Cranmer* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1999).
“Traditions and Ceremonies…may be changed according to the diversity of Countries, Times, and men’s Manners,” provided such changes were endorsed by the Church and did not violate the Bible. As such, the prayer book did contain some clear boundaries for the development of dogma: in addition to the ten commandments and ecumenical creeds, the prayer book featured scriptural recitations entwined in service orders.19 Guiding these historical shifts in “Traditions and Ceremonies” was a medley of clerical and lay writings—produced by the conductors and the practitioners of English spirituality—used to coordinate the Church of England’s theological traditions.20

However, in spite of the wide theological banks outlined by the prayer book, the development of doctrine encountered unique obstacles in the period, obstacles that would have significant impact on the doctrine of the resurrection of the body in particular. The 1662 edition of the Book of Common Prayer introduced a number of affirmations to the King’s ultimate authority over the Church.21 The solemn oaths in the Acts of Uniformity were added as a preface to the liturgy, while the rubrics and collects for the state services were placed in the concluding

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19 Most significant for the doctrine of the resurrection of the body, the Order for the Burial of the Dead includes several key passages from the Old and New Testaments. I will discuss the implications of the Book of Common Prayer’s Order for the Burial of the Dead in Chapter 2.

20 In spite of the body of theological writing produced during the English Reformation and the later Restoration, Mark Chapman notes “there were virtually no universally recognized classics or ‘normal texts’ of theology on which to base Anglican theology.” Anglican Theology (London: T&T Clark, 2005), 11.

21 John Cosin’s 1662 edition would be the last until the 20th century; Anglicans during the Romantic movement would have used this edition. Cummings goes so far as to call Cosin a “second father (after Cranmer) to the English Prayer Book.” Introduction to The Book of Common Prayer: Texts of 1549, 1552, 1662, ed. Cummings (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 2013 (xlii). In the late 18th century there were some attempts to revise the prayer book, though none were endorsed by the Church of England. In addition to Wesley’s well-known adaptation of the Book of Common Prayer for American Methodist churches, the most noteworthy alternative was Benjamin Franklin’s and Francis Dashwood’s Abridgement of the Book of Common Prayer in 1773. Designed to appease Deist-leaning clergy, the Abridgement substantially cuts service length by omitting most mentions of Jesus and uses of scripture.
Ordinal. With these affirmations of the King’s rule over the church in place, reminders of the role of the sovereign became the bookends to English piety. When the church came under the headship of the state (as the *Book of Common Prayer* advocated), the political resistance generated through the doctrine was lost, and belief in a resurrected body was replaced with belief in eternal life among the clouds, a soul’s escape into a radically discontiguous world of spirits.

Notwithstanding the ubiquitous authority of the Crown, the status of a state-authorized version of Christianity produced tension between the King and the Church of England. The nagging fear that the Crown would show too much sympathy to the Catholics, for example, or show too little dedication to the Church of England generated intense scrutiny on the king’s own religious opinions. The inadequacy of English kings after the Reformation was often measured in terms of the Crown’s attempts to dictate the theological content of the Church’s beliefs. On the other hand, the State Church’s role as a bulwark of social unity required continual professed allegiance to the Crown. Oaths of allegiance included in *The Book of Common Prayer*, occasional addendums to the liturgy in the “Prayers by His Majesty’s Special Command,” the 39 *Articles of Religion*, and *Constitutions and Canons of the English Church* all testify not only to the Crown’s sovereignty over the church, but also to the Church’s need to regularly remind its people to whom their allegiance belonged. In a sense, then, a king was measured by his allegiance to the Church of England; but at the same time, the Church of England was subject to the Crown. This striking cognitive dissonance was navigated in part by the distinction between the king as an individual person and the Crown as a position of authority, the basic structure of English sovereignty.

English sovereignty was authorized by two intersecting beliefs. First, the sovereignty of the King on earth was granted by his relationship to the King of Heaven: George was to be the
representative of Jesus, and the state’s authority was an extension of Jesus’s authority. Second, the authority of the English Crown extended to the position of the King, more than simply the person of the king. Hence, Ernst Kantorowicz characterized English sovereignty through the “fiction” of the two bodies of the king: the figure of the King stands in for the political body of the state, while the natural body of the king (the man himself) may change. Kantorowicz located the genesis of this double vision of sovereignty in Christian theology in particular: he writes, “Notwithstanding … some similarities with disconnected pagan concepts, the King’s Two Bodies is a offshoot of Christian theological thought and consequently stands as a landmark of Christian political theology.”

Likewise, Carl Schmitt based his seminal Political Theology on the idea that the modern state after the Protestant Reformation legitimizes itself by appropriating theological ideas, granting the earthly sovereign the authority that once belonged only to God. Schmitt writes, “all significant concepts of the modern theory of the state are secularized theological concepts not only because of their historical development—in which they were transferred from theology to the theology of the state, whereby, for example, the omnipotent God became the omnipotent lawgiver—but also because of their systematic structure.” For Schmitt, state power is designed as an analogue to religious power: where once God was ruler of all, now the state held ultimate authority. Kantorowicz added, the King embodies this power as an actor embodies a theatrical role; however, following the English Reformation, the Crown was recast as the sole actor in the play of sovereignty—“a personification in its own right which was not only above its members, but also divorced from them…which bore all the features and attributes of an

\[\text{\textsuperscript{22}}\text{Ernst H. Kantorowicz, The Two Bodies of the King: A Study in Medieval Political Theology} (\text{New Haven, CT: Princeton Univ. Press, 1997}), 506.\]

\[\text{\textsuperscript{23}}\text{Carl Schmitt, Political Theology, (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1985), 36.}\]
‘angel’ or other supernatural being.”24 In this recast play of sovereign power, all others—including the Church—had only subordinate parts.

While the “fiction” of the King’s two bodies ameliorated the friction resulting from the secular state’s priestly role, the king’s god-like status resulted in the need for the Crown to be free from the possibility of death. Therefore, drawing from Kantorowicz, Georges Bataille concluded that the king, insofar as the king plays the role of King, is not subject to death. Even if a king dies, sovereignty itself persists. Bataille writes, “The sovereign is he who is, as if death were not. Indeed, he is the one who does not die, for he dies only to be reborn. He is...essentially the embodiment of the one he is but is not. He is the same as the one he replaces; the one who replaces him is the same as he. He has no more regard for the limits of identity than he does for the limits of death, or rather these limits are the same; he is the transgression of all such limits.”25 Building from Bataille, Achille Mbembe recently applied the deathlessness of sovereignty to biopolitics, showing how state power uses death to manipulate and control its subjects. Mbembe writes, “ultimately [sovereignty] is the refusal to accept the limits that the fear of death would have the subject respect.”26 This assertion of power over death Mbembe terms “necropolitics,” where the sovereign’s rule over death “profoundly reconfigure[s] the relations among resistance, sacrifice and terror.”27 Mbembe’s important addition to the ongoing theorization of political sovereignty is to contrast the eternal “life” of the king with the death of his subjects: not only is sovereignty immune from death, he is the just arbiter of life and death for everyone else.

24 Kantorowicz, The Two Bodies of the King, 382.
27 Ibid., 176.
Therefore, the deathlessness of the King resulted from the structure of English sovereignty, and English sovereignty was so constructed as to facilitate the king’s relationship over the Church. However, this relationship created significant restrictions for theological expression—particularly for the resurrection of the physical body, the doctrine once so intimately connected with the sovereign rule of Christ and vindication of his power over the kings of the earth. When death itself became subject to the rule of the earthly sovereignty, then the King’s inability to die nullified the resurrection of the dead. Only the King’s body could live forever; and only the King could dictate life and death. It is not simply that the system of sovereignty found it more expedient to ignore resurrection, it must ignore resurrection—it could not function in a world in which bodily resurrection happens. If Jesus had been resurrected, then there is a legitimate challenge to the power wielded by the “deathless” English Crown; if all are resurrected, the Crown no longer has the power to deal out life and death: bodily resurrection posits a power higher than the Crown’s. Therefore, the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead is a challenge to state sovereignty. If George was King of England, then the risen Christ could not be; but Christ had to be king, according to the essential claims of the Christian faith. The simplest solution was to make Christ king of someplace else: in heaven, instead of earth.

Once brought under the authority of the Crown, religious language would be constrained by the parameters set by the structure of English sovereignty. These political barriers would circumscribe poetic language as well, but only where poetry was subject to the Crown, most obviously seen in the official poems written by the Poet Laureate. Reflecting on the unsavory tasks of the laureate position, Leigh Hunt would recall in 1850, “The office of laureate may require that a man should be understood to entertain aristocratical opinions in matters of government, and… require him to entertain the received opinions of orthodoxy in matters of
What was determined “orthodox” by the State Church was not up to the Poet Laureate to question, only to defend. For this reason, by 1813—when Robert Southey was named Laureate, the position was already overshadowed by brooding cynicism. The title of Poet Laureate was one bestowed by the King, not as a sign of poetic merit or literary influence; the Laureate was a tool of the state, and versifier in the pocket of the sovereign. Hunt derided the position, writing in *the Examiner* “In every point of view, the Laureateship is a ridiculous office.” Similarly, Francis Jeffrey’s particularly acerbic condemnation in the *Edinburgh Review* begins “A poet-laureate…is naturally a ridiculous person.” Jeffrey continues, “The laurel which the King gives, we are credibly informed, has nothing at all in common with that which is bestowed by the Muses; and the Prince Regent’s warrant is absolutely of no authority in the court of Apollo…. A poet-laureate has no sort of precedence among poets,—whatever may be his place among pages and clerks of the kitchen.” Southey himself recognized the general feeling that the Laureateship had sunk into “a sleepy torpor…established by precedent,” though he viewed his own tenure more optimistically: “‘he intended to ‘make’ it ‘an honor,’ for such it will be ‘to him who shall be thought worthy to wear it after me.” Whether or not he succeeded in restoring honor to the office, his affiliation to the state during his tenure reinforced Southey’s

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30 Francis Jeffrey, “[Review of] The Lay of the Laureat; Carmen Nuptiale” in *The Edinburgh Review: Or Critical Journal* (26.2, 1816), 441-442. It is quite likely Jeffrey’s condemnation is as much an attack on Southey himself. At least, for Jeffrey the role of laureate was made even more ridiculous having been attached to Southey.


32 Ibid.
image as a political apostate, an image complicated by the republication in 1817 of the “un-Laureate-like poem,” *Wat Tyler*. Following *Wat Tyler*, a number of critics accused Southey of abandoning his youthful trifling with radical politics once coming under the patronage of the Crown. Radical publisher William Hone’s snide assessment of Southey summed up the sentiment nicely: “Mr. Robert Southey, a gentleman of credit and renown, and, until he became Poet Laureate, a Poet.” For his part, Southey himself saw little merit in the charges, and acknowledged instead a consistency in his thoughts, even if his youthful perspectives were only the half-formed “verse of a boy, of which he thought no more than of his school exercises.” It may be that Southey’s political rivals exaggerated claims about the poet’s apostasy, and “his intellectual development was more complex than his opponents implied” after all.

Still, the Laureateship does seem to have had an effect on Southey’s religious position. Stewart Andrews has recently shown Southey’s later prose becomes increasingly entrenched in defenses of the State Church as one of the few remaining strongholds of English social stability. Andrews notes, “Southey claimed in 1812 that he could have never subscribed to the 39 Articles, but he championed the constitutionally established Anglican Church as the only buttress against the social deprivation and degenerating public morality of the age.” In this way, Southey

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anticipates the didactic analyses of political theology in the twentieth century in that he recognizes the social utility of religious belief but does not adhere to orthodox theology: for Southey the Church is a necessary social body; its beliefs about the nature of God or salvation or the afterlife are merely useful tools for crafting social unity. Because of his proximity to the Crown as Poet Laureate, his endorsement of the social function of the State Church and lack of what we might call “religious feeling,” Southey serves as a prime example of how the English State’s political theology could be rendered in poetic works.

The most obvious example of the State Church’s influence on Southey’s poetry can be found in the New Year’s Ode, “Funeral Song for the Princess Charlotte,” in 1818. The Ode addresses the death of George’s only heir in childbirth—an event that filled the nation with a sense of shock and loss. Henry Brougham, radical Whig lawyer, recalled, “it really was as though every household throughout Great Britain had lost a favorite child.” Southey, later reflecting on the Ode, recalled “the circumstances which made this national calamity be felt almost like a private affliction.” But that death would visit two potential monarchs at once was a shock that the structure of English sovereignty was already prepared to address: Charlotte was dead, and so was her baby, and so were a number of other Kings and Queens who had gone before her, but here on earth the Crown prevails. Public mourning for the Princess manifested as religious calls for repentance, while reaffirming the steadfast Providence of God as the orchestrator of all things. One contemporary minister said,


39 Henry Brougham, quoted in Lynda Pratt et al., Introduction to “New Year’s Ode for 1818,” in Poems from the Laureate Period, 123.

40 Robert Southey, Sir Thomas More, or Colloquies on the Progress and Prospects of Society (London, 1829), 1-2; quoted in Pratt et al., Introduction to “New Year’s Ode for 1818,” 118.
Public calamities are the voice of God to the nation. … Children weep over their parents, servants over their master. Now a nation is but a larger family, a more numerous and extensive household. The calamity, therefore, which is commissioned to summon away from the scene of mortal life, any beloved and distinguished member of the community, is to be regarded as the voice of God to all.\textsuperscript{41}

In the process of mourning the nations favorite daughter, Charlotte was re-born in the social imaginary as the image of moral virtue to be emulated by young women of the kingdom. In this context, Southey’s Ode served as a reminder of “the heavenly reward [death] brings, a reward that…will necessarily involve happy ‘family’ reunions that connect the newest occupant of heaven with a host of royal predecessors,”\textsuperscript{42} as poem remembers the past inhabitants of Windsor conjured by the royal remains left in the graveyard.

The poem itself is built on a chiasmus, a structure made obvious in the repeated lines mirrored in Stanzas 2 and 9: “Ye whose relics rest around, / Tenants of this funeral ground” (11-12; 125-126), the “Spirits” (13) in their “immortal spheres” (126) to whom Charlotte is now entrusted. At the crux of the chiasm are two women—Elizabeth Woodville (stanza 5) and Jane Seymour (stanza 6), wives of Edward VI (the patron of stanza 4) and Henry VIII (of stanza 7) respectively. While the early stanzas of the poem record lives of kings lived to their full potential, the stanza’s following the crux focus on the failures of the English throne: Henry VI, “of “saintly worth” (21), “fixed on heaven his heavenly mind” (31), is contrasted with “Hateful” Henry VIII (108); and while the unnamed “bold dethroner” Edward IV (37) “sought his rightful

\textsuperscript{41} Quoted in Stephen C Behrendt \textit{Royal Mourning and Regency Culture: Elegies and memorials of Princess Charlotte} (New York: St Martin’s Press, 1997), 171.

\textsuperscript{42} Behrendt, \textit{Royal Mourning and Regency Culture}, 86.
claim” to the throne (44), the overthrow of Charles I (also unnamed in the poem) is remembered for the “plague” of Civil War that was “loose upon our guilty earth” (121) after his execution.\textsuperscript{43} Thinly stretched end to end across the cross-shaped poem is the body of Charlotte, the princess herself appearing only in the first and last stanzas. Charlotte’s absence in the majority of the poem is indicative of the move the poem makes from heaven to earth: on earth there is mourning and burial, in heaven there is reconciliation and rest, and never the twain shall meet. That is, the speaker resides in the burial ground on earth and finds consolation in the idea that Charlotte now goes to the inaccessible and detached world “in the seats above” (86), resting in the remote “Immortal spheres” of Heaven, though he cannot see into the heavenly realm himself.

Caught up between the two mentions of Charlotte is an extended deesis, where the speaker turns from mourning the now wilted “Flower of Brunswick” Charlotte to directly address the “Spirits” “whose relics rest around / …this funeral ground.” The remainder of the poem functions almost as a prayer to the departed royal spirits, a supplication that they receive the spirit of departed Charlotte. Following the turn in stanza 6, the speaker beseeches Jane Seymour to receive Charlotte “with a greeting, / Such as sisters use at meeting” (83-84),

\begin{center}
While together, spirits blest,
Here your earthly relics rest,
Fellow angels shall ye be
In the angelic company. (90-93)
\end{center}

\textsuperscript{43} Pratt et al. connect the “waking eye” of line 115 to the exhumation of Charles’s corpse in 1813, where it was reported one of Charles’s eyes had yet to decompose; the poem uses the eye as an omen for the radical currents in English politics in 1817, condemning them as ‘A Plague, of bloodier, baser birth” than the English Civil War. See Pratt et al., \textit{Poems from the Laureate Period}, 676, n. 25, 26.
The closest the poem can come to imagining the departed spirits is through turning backward toward history—toward English traditions represented in the remembrance of the successions of kings in particular. Heaven, therefore, is only accessible to the imagination through the English Crown. Conversely, the spirits of departed royals, for their part, are not only wholly removed from their bodies after death “eternally” (124), they are translated into heavenly beings—“fellow angels”—ignorant of the events on earth. The kingdom in heaven and its angel agents await news of the progress of the King on earth and “Tidings of old England’s weal” (131), for which Charlotte has become a messenger. Beyond simply reaffirming that all heavenly residents are “angelic” in nature, there may be a subtle pun shared between the “fellow angels”: the departed spirits are represented as traditional winged spirits of heaven, while Charlotte plays the role of messenger—the Latin root that stands behind the English “angel.” The pun reinforces the idea that traffic moves between heaven and earth on a one-way street—there is no commerce between the “angelic company” and humans in their bodies below. Not only is there no chance for what is in heaven to come down to earth, heaven itself has closed up its windows to the physical world below, unable to witness the historical movements of its sister Kingdom in England.

However, worked in to the image of heaven’s angelic company of happy royals is a snapshot of the other eternal realm of State Church orthodoxy, Hell. Henry VIII, whose “fiery heart” (98) and “tyrannic spirit” (99) have invalidated him from Heavenly reward is absent from the heavenly royal cohort. Southey writes,

Not with his tyrannic spirit,

Shall our Charlotte’s soul inherit;

........................................
Hateful Henry, not with thee,

May her happy spirit be! (99-100; 108-109)

That Henry’s spirit still exists though not in heaven implies an orthodox division of the Christian afterlife into heaven and hell: where Henry is, the blessed Charlotte can not be, though both spirits are absent from their bodies on earth. Moreover, just as with the imagined Heaven above, the imagined Hell of Henry VIII receives only tangential mention; far more time is spent listing the people Henry had executed as evidence that his soul cannot reside with the virtuous Charlotte. Thus, the speaker can no more see into the realm of Hell than he can Heaven, and is left instead grasping at the history of the English Crown to fill in the gaps.

The Ode’s vision of the afterlife with its assumptions about punishment and bliss conforms to the period’s conflation between the Christian religion and public morality, a conflation an increasingly conservative Southey was quick to embrace alongside his belief that the political theology of the State Church was the linchpin of social stability. The poem ends with a pronouncement of England’s glory: at the death of Charlotte, the dead kings of England hear “the endless glory, / Of her father’s splendid reign” (142-143), particularly represented through victory at Waterloo. Few poets outside the lackey Laureate would have characterized Prince George’s regency as an “endless glory” or “splendid reign;” but here praise for England is represented metonymically through praise for the Crown. The “endless glory” of Charlotte’s father therefore underscores the perpetuity of English sovereignty.

Therefore, the Poet Laureate’s tribute to Princess Charlotte sews together the popular belief in Heaven as a place in the clouds where the dead become angels with the continued power of the English state. More than just replacing bodily resurrection, Southey goes a step further refocusing the Christian hope towards a celebration of the perpetuity of English
sovereignty. The consolation for the death of Charlotte is not that she will one day be resurrected—it is that she carries the tidings of earth with her into Heaven, and consequently avoids Hell. The only “Christian hope” offered by the poem is that now that a new messenger from earth has arrived Heaven can again rejoice at the supremacy of England.

Managing Ambiguities and Making Metaphors

The structure of English sovereignty constrained the limits of what could be said within the State Church, radically rewriting Heaven as an extension of the English Kingdom. Sequestering Jesus’s domain to the heavenly hereafter resulted in a reshaping of the doctrine of the resurrection, shifting the weight of the Christian hope squarely to the disembodied afterlife while recreating a vision of heaven molded on the hierarchy of earthly sovereignty: the kingdom came in heaven as it had on earth. “Resurrection” in this transfer became a term that referred to the process by which a soul leaves the domain of the earthly crown and enters the domain of the heavenly crown, a synonym of eternal life in heaven. Any mention of resurrection in the State Church’s documents would be interpreted by this definition.

The close connection between the Crown and the church made challenging this interpretive paradigm much more difficult. A 1773 publication of The Constitutions and Cannons of the Church of England—141 laws outlining ecclesiastical polity for the State Church—opened with a statement from the King himself:

That if any publick Reader in either Our Universities or any Head or Master of a College, or any other person respectively in either of them, shall affix any new Sense to any Article, or shall publickly read, determine, or hold any publick
Disputation, or suffer any such to be held either way, in either the Universities or Colleges respectively; or if any Divine in the Universities shall preach or print any thing either way, other than is already established in Convocation with Our Royal Assent; he or they the Offenders shall be liable to Our Displeasure, and the Church Censure in Our Commission Ecclesiastical, as well as any other: And We will see there shall be due Execution upon them.\textsuperscript{44}

Under threat of “due Execution”—which was likely excommunication, a punishment resulting in ineligibility for public positions that required oaths to the King\textsuperscript{45}—inquiry into the meanings or authorized interpretations of State Church documents was significantly constrained. It is difficult to imagine a more direct statement of the King’s ability to repress theological discourse: to move outside the established “Sense” given to any article, or even to encourage open discussion in universities about their meanings, was an offense that could be met with loss of one’s public position and livelihood. The King’s dictum goes far beyond securing the throne against insurrection; rather, it restricts even the possibility of free discourse. One could have one’s religion, provided it did not interfere with the state.

Facilitating the deathless sovereign’s control over the church’s articulation of doctrine, during the period key texts included in the Book of Common Prayer began to receive new interpretations that redirected potential ambiguities (in the Ecumenical Creeds in particular) toward a sequestered heavenly afterlife, detached and disembodied. While the creeds were

\textsuperscript{44} The Thirty-Nine Articles and the Constitutions and Canons, of the Church of England; together with several Acts of Parliament and Proclamations concerning Ecclesiastical Matters (Not in the former Editions,) Some whereof are to be read in Churches: to which are added, His Majesty’s Directions for the Preserving of unity in the Church, and the Purity of the Christian Faith…. (London, 1773), 2.

\textsuperscript{45} Oaths of allegiance were required for any public office: magistrates, teachers, clergy. Excommunication was still no small penalty. Loss of standing with the Church of England could result in loss of title, position, livelihood, and even one’s home.
designed to guard against the influence of heretical teachings, their historical formation and subsequent translations introduced some ambiguities,\footnote{Most notably, of course, in the Great Schism between eastern and western catholicism in the mid eleventh century, where the new Roman Latin translation fostered the inclusion of the “filoque” clause—“the Holy Spirit..who proceeds from the the Father and the Son”—a clause eastern bishops objected to as unorthodox. See Pelikan Vol 2} particularly in regard to the afterlife and the resurrection. These ambiguities allowed for an easy conflation between life-after-death and what N.T. Wright has recently called “life after life-after-death”\footnote{N.T. Wright, *Surprised By Hope: Rethinking Heaven, The Resurrection, and the Mission of the Church* (New York: Harper One, 2008), 148-152.}—that is, between belief in heavenly rest for the soul after death and the final bodily resurrection of the Saints in a freshly restored physical creation at the end of time. The three creeds attested to in the Thirty-Nine Articles and contained in the prayer book—the Apostles Creed, Athanasian Creed, and Nicene Creed—make explicit mention of the resurrection; however, each encounters interpretive difficulties in the period that either render physical resurrection of no account, or transfer the raised body to a discontiguous heavenly realm.

The expressly Trinitarian Athanasian Creed offers the most lucid iteration of the doctrine of the physical resurrection. Bluff and succinct, the creed reads, “[Christ] Who suffered for our salvation: descended into hell, rose again the third day from the dead…. At whose coming all men shall rise again with their bodies: and shall give account for their works.”\footnote{Book of Common Prayer, 259 (emphasis added). Hereafter cited in text.} The Athanasian Creed was to be used at Morning Prayer for twelve feast days per year—including Christmas, Easter, and Trinity Sunday—in the place of the Apostles creed. However, controversies amongst bishops in the mid-eighteenth century questioned the legitimacy of the Athanasian Creed for the Anglican via media—not for its mention of bodily resurrection, but rather for its harsh language about hell. Immediately following the affirmation of the general resurrection of the body, the
creed continues, “And they that have done good shall go into life everlasting: and they that have done evil into everlasting fire” (259). On one hand, the language of “good” versus “evil” works simultaneously grates against the Calvinist penchant toward total depravity and resists the Armenian belief in free grace: two factions long in tension within English Protestantism could find a common enemy in the unlikely target of the Athanasian Creed. At the same time, Evangelical preaching rested on God’s complete forgiveness of past sins, and would resist language about the perseverance of evil implied by the creed; correspondingly, the increasing popularity of Deistic and Unitarian attitudes within the latitudinarian State Church no longer found room for eternal torment in hell after death. Perhaps most disconcerting for the average layperson was the creed’s insistence that salvation was predicated on adherence to the anathematic Romish belief of salvation by works: “they that have done good shall go into eternal life.” But the Catholic heritage was inextricable from the Athanasian Creed, even from the opening phrase, “Whosoever will be saved: before all things it is necessary that he hold the Catholic Faith” (257).

Taken together, the controversial passages in the creed became known as the “damnatory clauses.” Anticipating the looming debate, in late 1730 Edmund Gibson (then Bishop of London) assigned apologist Daniel Waterland the task of discovering a precedent for the continued use of the creed. While the Athanasian Creed had served a vital role in principle texts of Protestantism on the European Continent, Waterland conceded the English Church’s use in the liturgy was unique. The controversy persisted throughout the remainder of the eighteenth century and well into the nineteenth, finding its way into print in works such as The doctrine of the Athanasian

creed analyzed and refuted; by a member of the Church of England in 1786, or the more
graciously titled Thoughts on the Athanasian Creed in 1790.\textsuperscript{50} The Athanasian Creed, then, was
placed on unstable ground in the State Church, and criticized openly and widely. The result was
that the clearest articulation of an authoritative statement regarding the resurrection of the body
was marginalized, without those who disputed the creed ever actually engaging a discussion of
the doctrine of the resurrection itself. In this instance, the orthodox statement of bodily
resurrection was buried under the surrounding controversies of extraneous debates over
language: the controversy over the Athanasian Creed silenced the resurrection without ever
having to mention it.

The Apostles’ and Nicene Creeds did not have such an ostentatious place in the prayer
book, but they were incorporated into the rubrics for regular morning and evening prayer and the
communion service, respectively. Here, resurrection was far less obtrusive than in the
Athanasian Creed, as mentions of resurrection were merged with statements on the heavenly
afterlife. The Apostles’ Creed, most often used in Anglican services, divides the Resurrection of
Jesus from the general resurrection of the dead by several clauses regarding Christ’s Ascension,
future judgment, the person of the Holy Spirit, the unity of the Church, and the communion of
the saints, forgiveness of sins, with the resurrection affixed to end of these items. In full, the brief
creed reads,

\begin{verbatim}

\textsuperscript{50} The controversy would boil over in the mid to late nineteenth century with a series of
argumentative tracts and open letters, both for and against the use of the Athanasian Creed. In
1867, the first Royal Commission on Ritual was called to address the problem, resulting in an
overwhelming vote against the use of the creed (in spite of Edward Pusey’s threats to abandon
Anglicanism if the creed were omitted). The Convocation of Canterbury relieved some tension
by issuing a new translation; but subsequent prayer books omitted the creed entirely. See Philip
J. Schaff, The Creeds of Christendom, with History and Critical notes (New York, 1878), 1: 41
and n. 86.
\end{verbatim}
I believe in God the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth; and in Jesus Christ his only Son our Lord, Who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, Born of the Virgin Mary, Suffered under Pontius Pilate, Was crucified, dead, and buried, He descended into Hell; The third day he rose again from the dead, He ascended into Heaven, And sitteth on the right hand of God the Father Almighty; From thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Ghost; The holy Catholic Church; the Communion of Saints; The forgiveness of sins; The resurrection of the body, And life everlasting. Amen. (247)

Structurally, the Apostle’s creed moves through two distinct sections, first regarding the doctrine of God and Christology, then into the Spirit-led Church. In the English translation, each specific clause of the creed is punctuated by a semicolon, with sub-clauses separated by commas. Tellingly, while each section of the creed makes mention of the doctrine of the resurrection, both do so as sub-clauses in longer articles. Christ’s resurrection precedes his ascension into heaven, merging the two events into one, a common interpretative move in theological discourses dating back as far as at least the tenth century. Similarly, the “resurrection of the body” in the final article merges with “life everlasting.” While the orthodox doctrine of bodily resurrection can fit into this structure, the punctuation demarcating articles and clauses added in the English translation readily facilitates the conflation between resurrection and life in heaven by uniting them as a single syntactic unit.

The “life everlasting” of the Apostles’ Creed is made more ambiguous when read alongside the wording from the Nicene Creed. With similar structure and syntactic breaks between clauses, the Nicene Creed closes, “I look for the Resurrection of the dead, And the life in the world to come. Amen.” This closing statement is echoed in a common refrain included in a number of the structured prayers in the Book of Common Prayer, “world without end.” Here, the merging of resurrection with “life in the world to come” pushes the “life everlasting” in the Apostle’s creed to a discrete realm outside and apart from earth: the “world to come” is not the world that is, and resurrection is intended for the discrete realm beyond earthly life.

The interpretive controversies and the general ambiguities surrounding the creeds were exacerbated by influential texts written as interpretive guides that perpetuated the trend to read resurrection as a disembodied, otherworldly state. For example, the conflation between resurrection and life in heaven takes a more dramatic turn in Gilbert Burnet’s perennially influential An Exposition on the Thirty-Nine Articles of the Church of England. Though written in 1699, Burnet’s Exposition enjoyed nearly two centuries of reprints and various editions, the last in 1881. Moreover, following the recommendations of Henry Owen, Chaplain to the Bishop of Llandaff, An Exposition became in 1766 part of the unofficial post-graduate training suggested for Church of England clergy.52 One of the only thorough commentaries produced on the Thirty-Nine Articles, An Exposition provides a good barometer of the more tenacious attitudes toward the articles through the later eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. In particular, Burnet’s discussion of Article IV demonstrates some staggering theological gymnastics regarding the raised body of Christ. While the Articles make no mention of a general resurrection, Article IV, regarding the Resurrection of Jesus carries the same potential ambiguity seen in the Apostles’

Creed: it can easily be read as pertaining to the resurrection as well as to the ascension. It reads, “Christ did truly rise again from death, and took his body, with flesh, bones, and all things appertaining to the perfection of mans [sic] nature, wherewith he ascended into heaven, and there sitteth, until he return to judge all men at the last day” (674). As with the implications of the punctuation added between clauses of the Apostle’s creed in the Book of Common Prayer, Burnet’s analysis pushes the Fourth Article toward a radically discontiguous, dualistic division of heaven and earth. While Burnet spends a good deal of time defending the bodily Resurrection of Jesus—that three days after death, Christ returned to his yet uncorrupted body, bones and all—his conclusion about the ascension of Jesus virtually nullifies the need for Jesus’s raised body at all. Burnet writes,

As to the manner of his ascension, it is also questioned whether the Body of Christ as it ascended, was so wonderfully changed, as to put on the Subtlllity [sic] and Purity of an Ethereal Body; or whether it retains still the same Form in Heaven that it had on Earth; or if it put on a new one: It is more probable that it did; and that the wonderful Glory that appeared in his Countenance and whole Person at his Transfiguration, was a manifestation of that more permanent Glory to which it was afterward exalted.53

The resurrected body of Jesus, then, for Burnet—for the Church of England who endorsed and sanctioned Burnet—was nothing but a temporary measure, awaiting a “more permanent glory” in the an “Ethereal Body.” Burnet was doubtlessly drawing on St. John’s well-known dictum, “we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him;”54 but Burnet nonetheless had to

54 1 John 3.2.
presuppose an ethereal heavenly body awaiting believers at the general resurrection. From the perspective of the Thirty-Nine Articles, the accepted interpretation of the State Church regarding Jesus was the opposite of the traditional orthodox doctrine of the resurrection. Rather than a temporary division between soul and body until the eschaton, bodily resurrection was a half-measure, discarded when the pure spirit of one’s Heavenly, incorporeal frame would be realized. What is meant for heaven could not be of earth.

Burnet’s move to translate Jesus’s raised physical body into a “more permanent glory” is also seen in literary works in the period, such as Felecia Hemans’s sonnet “Mary Magdalene Bearing Tidings of the Resurrection.” One of a series of sonnets on Mary Magdalene in 1833’s Sonnets on Female Characters in Scripture, the poem contributes to the collection’s task of reinserting women into prominent roles in stories from the Bible. Emma Mason and Jonathan Roberts note, “The biblical tableaux that Hemans depicts in the sonnets all involve male protagonists in their original narrative forms, but these figures are not mentioned in Hemans’s sonnets. … Mary Magdalene, ‘bearing tidings of the Resurrection,’ does not, as in the account in John 20.18, relate them to a group of cloistered male apostles, but rather to a world of ungendered ‘human hearts.’”55 The sonnet, as the title makes clear, recalls Mary’s discovery of the empty tomb, and moves toward a climactic statement summarizing the meaning of Christ’s ministry. In full, the sonnet reads,

Then was a task of glory all thine own,
   Nobler than e’er the still small voice assigned
   To lips, in awful music making known
   The stormy splendors of some prophet’s mind.

“Christ is arisen!”—by thee, to wake mankind,

From the sepulchre those words were brought!

Thou wert to send the mighty rushing wind

First on its way, with those high tidings fraught—

“Christ is arisen!”—Thou, thou, the sin enthralled,

Earth’s outcast, Heaven’s own ransomed one, wert called

In human hearts to give that rapture birth:

Oh! raised from shame to brightness!—there doth lie

The tenderest meaning of His ministry,

Whose undespairing love still own’d the spirit’s worth.

The Mary of Hemans’s sonnet is given an elevated role “of glory all thine own,” preceding the Holy Spirit himself as “the mighty rushing wind,” at once an inversion of the voice of God heard by the prophet Elijah56 and a foreshadowing of the empowerment of the male disciples at the Day of Pentecost.57 The resurrection of Jesus becomes the means by which even the “sin enthralled, / Earth’s outcast” Mary is glorified above the prophets and disciples, restoring the woman to a place of priority.

However, there is a syntactic ambiguity in the poem’s final line: “Whose undespairing love” is it that exactly “still own’d the spirit’s worth”? The line may refer to Mary—the subject of the poem (addressed in the second person throughout)—but it may also refer to Jesus (as a further explication of “His ministry”). The sonnet’s ending then blurs the distinction between

56 1 Kings 19.11: “And he said, Go forth, and stand upon the mount before the Lord. And, behold, the Lord passed by, and a great and strong wind rent the mountains, and brake in pieces the rocks before the Lord; but the Lord was not in the wind: and after the wind an earthquake; but the Lord was not in the earthquake.”

57 Acts 2.2: “And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting.”
Christ and Mary. In this way, more than imagining just a higher social position for women, the poem translates Mary into a higher state of being altogether. Here, the Resurrection of Jesus elevates Mary as the symbolic embodiment of the New Creation—she is the first product of the first-fruits of the resurrection: she has taken on the role of Jesus even before the rest of the disciples are charged with the Great Commission “to give that rapture birth.”

And yet, the risen Christ is nowhere present in Hemans’s retelling of the story at the empty tomb. Of course, as the title itself shows, the conceit of the Sonnets on Female Characters in Scripture is that the poems will focus on female characters—not even Jesus, the God-man, is an exception. As a result, the sonnet presents not the Risen Jesus, but the message of the Risen Jesus; the physical resurrection of the body of Jesus is not as important for the poem as its messenger is. Still, it is only because “Christ is arisen!” that Mary’s voice can “send the mighty rushing wind” that far exceeds in power “the still small voice assigned / To… / …some prophet’s mind.” The resurrection is therefore necessary for the elevation of Mary, but it is also absent—much the way resurrection plays into the pages of the Book of Common Prayer, where the doctrine of the resurrection (and notably the Resurrection of Jesus) make the foundation for the forms of worship and religious action prescribed for the church, but are still elided in those very forms. In both the State Church and Hemans’s sonnet, the physical resurrection of the body of Jesus is replaced: just as Burnet required Jesus’s risen body to again transform into an “Ethereal body,” Hemans’s “Tidings of the Resurrection” has to transform the resurrected body of Jesus into the message given to Mary. What neither have room for is the “crisis of every human temporal thing,” the physical resurrection of the dead.

However, Hemans’s “Mary Magdalene Bearing Tidings of the Resurrection” does show the tension between the potential freeing of language in poetic ambiguity and the collapse of
language into state sanctioned, managed definitions. The resurrection, elided in the poem, does not resolve in “disembodied heaven,” but instead moves into the “human hearts” that receive Mary’s message. By repositioning “The tenderest meaning of (Jesus’s) ministry” from salvation to the restoration of Mary “raised from shame to brightness,” Hemans reintroduces the possibility that the doctrine of the resurrection could at least do new metaphorical work outside the Church of England’s prescribed meanings. This ambiguity highlights what Sarah Ferguson recognized as “the basis for Romantic and post-Romantic claims about literariness itself,” that the written word is ambiguous. Every text—sacred or profane—can produce multiple meanings, meanings that are not necessarily possible to harmonize. The State Church’s control over interpretation was meant to short circuit the meaning making potential inherent in its written documents, managing meanings to harmonize with the King’s rule over the church. However, in spite the potential ambiguity Hemans’s new metaphor might generate, within the State Church—where the orthodoxy and therefore the authority of doctrines was determined—there was no room to negotiate new meanings. Even before Hemans could employ “resurrection” as a metaphor for the transforming power of Mary’s “tidings,” “resurrection” first had to refer to a soul’s migration from earth to heaven—Hemans metaphor would only work because of this definition. While any language could be employed metaphorically, the power to define doctrine remained with the State Church, were certain words—like “resurrection”—would not be so easily unmoored.

Clerical Training

The reinterpretation of the doctrine of the resurrection was necessitated by the structure of sovereign rule in England, and facilitated by the ambiguities of the documents of the State Church; but it was solidified in the substantial lack of theological training in the Church of England. Within the church service itself, there was little room for doctrinal education at all. The historical conditions that shaped the eighteenth century created an institutional structure that avoided the nuances of theological inquiry and polemics in standard worship services. The rise in Latitudinarian influence early in the century compounded with the growing numbers of religious dissenters and the energetic Evangelical movement in the middle of the century resulted in the increased importance to consider the State Church a via media—a “middle road” that could accommodate increasingly polarized Christianities in English culture. By all accounts, the eighteenth-century church building served a vital social function as a hub of activity—both in more rural locations and in urban centers; \(^{59}\) but, the rituals surrounding daily life offered little by way of theological instruction, much less careful analysis of Christian history and the development of doctrine. Rather, since the purpose of the State Church was to generate social unity, the role of preaching was primarily moralizing, and only accidentally theological. The public face of the church and the work of the clergy were therefore directed toward ethical

\(^{59}\) In spite of its central social function, many churches were facing financial and infrastructural challenges: rural parishes were often underfunded, while church-going populations of booming urban centers quickly overtaxed church facilities. See Stewart J. Brown, *Providence and Empire: Religion, Politics and Society in the United Kingdom, 1815-1914* (Harlow: Pearson Longman, 2008): “A major cause of this desperate situation was the failure of the established church to expand its parish system in response to the rapid population growth in the new urban districts” (43). See also Nigel Yates, *Eighteenth-Century Britain: Religion and Politics, 1714-1815* (Harlow: Pearson Longman, 2008), who claims decreased church attendance “was allied to a serious shortage of new churches in growing centers of population” (31).
practices and Christian morality. Ultimately, theological meditations on the resurrection of the body were given little importance—and less space—in the everyday life and teaching of the late eighteenth-century English State Church. If theological instruction were to happen anywhere, it would have to be in the university training of the clergy.

However, the theological education of clergy was, by all accounts, in dire need of reform. The ordination process, designed under the very different conditions of the Reformation, made it difficult for a man of ordinary means to get a university theology degree: the time invested to earn a degree was often prohibitive, and required a significant monetary investment that promised little return in future salary. Still, A.W. Jacob notes that the majority of clergy came from the middle class, with few poor people (mostly from rural areas in the north) and fewer nobles, though bishops preferred to ordain men of relatively wealthy backgrounds. However, the time it took to earn a degree in theology (preferred if one hoped to advance in the Church of England) made such an education cost prohibitive, regardless of family wealth. The minimal training clergy could receive as undergraduates would be at Cambridge or Oxford, where the

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60 The last revision on theological training was made in the 12th year of Elizabeth I’s reign. See R.N. Adams, “Appendix” to The Qualifications for the Christian Ministry, in Trevor Park, “Theological Education and Ministerial Training for the Ordained Ministry of the Church of England 1800-1850” (Ph.D. diss., Open University, 1990), 2: 22-24.

61 The cost of tuition for divinity school at Oxford or Cambridge was between £16 and £30—a considerable sum when the average yearly wage was £40. While securing an apprenticeship in medicine or law was significantly more expensive, the earned wages of the clergy were never as lucrative.


63 In 1817, St Bees Clerical Institution, the first of a handful of theological schools, was opened, followed by C.M.S Institution in 1825, St David’s College in 1827, and King’s College in 1831; following the Oxford Movement (outside the scope for this project) Durham University (1833), Chichester Diocesan Theological College (1839), Wells Diocesan Theological College (1840), St Aidan’s College (1847), St Augustine’s Missionary College (1848) and The Queen’s College Theological Department (1850) would offer theological training for clergy as well. See Park, “Theological Education,” vol 1.
general undergraduate Bachelor of Arts degree required four years of study; from the B.A. to a Master would be an additional three years. After the Masters degree, the first theology degree—the Bachelor in Divinity—required an additional seven years of study; from there, the Doctor of Divinity required an additional five years. Naturally, with a nineteen-year time-to-degree program, most would opt for a different profession, still, the university could easily defend itself against claims that it was not offering enough theological training by pointing to the rigorous theology degree program available to all enrolled students: calling for reform in 1830, R.N. Adams records a typical university response, “that the fault does not rest with [the university], but with the students, who defer their admission to so late a period in life, that they are called upon to desert her … long before her appointed time for commencing the course of professional study.” And “desert” they did—in increasing numbers as the eighteenth century wore on. While a majority of clergy would have received at least an MA degree at the instantiation of the Hanoverian dynasty (a bit more than 67%), by the end of the eighteenth century, as low as 25% of clergy would have any training beyond a Bachelor’s degree.

Moreover, undergraduate curriculum facilitated the fashionable understanding of the resurrection of the dead as a disembodied eternal life in heaven. Oxford and Cambridge each fostered certain strengths in undergraduate training—while Oxford excelled at the classics, Cambridge became the center for mathematics. Early in the eighteenth century, these two specialties served as valuable foundations for later theological study in a divinity degree, with Oxford’s emphasis on language preparing future theologians for study of the Bible and patristic

64 An “undeclared” student would be assumed to be on the Theology degree track, until he officially declared an alternative degree in Civil, Law, or Medicine. See Adams, “Appendix” to The Qualifications for the Christian Ministry, 23.

65 Quoted in Park, “Theological Education” 2:23.

66 Jacob, The Clerical Profession, 56
writings and Cambridge’s mathematical expertise making it easy for students to access the increasingly popular Newtonian bent in theology.\textsuperscript{67} Certainly, the universities were ostensibly institutions of religious instruction, where students would engage their studies in the context of prayer and Bible study; but neither school provided undergraduates with significant studies in theology or doctrine. At the very least, most undergraduates would be required to read Joseph Butler’s 1736 \textit{The Analogy of Religion}, a primarily apologetic work written to show “that the system of Religion, both natural and revealed…is not a subject of ridicule, unless that of Nature be so too.”\textsuperscript{68} Using analogy, Butler’s aim was to show the confluence of Natural Theology and revealed religion, “to join abstract reasonings with the observation of facts, and argue from facts as are known to others that are like them” (xxvii-xxviii): thus, if something was demonstrably true in the natural world, it could be reasonably assumed the same held true for religion. Moreover, for Butler, if we trust our reasoning to generate universal truths about the natural world, we could, with the same degree of probability, discover truths about religion. That is to say, we cannot call into question truths about religion without also calling into question the very structure of reasoning by which we understand the known world. Still, Butler’s method is not without a degree of humility, as analogy (though the ground for knowledge of all kinds) is itself a game of “Probable evidence” (xxv). As such, not even the natural world can be known with certainty; all the more reason to approach knowledge with faith, rather than faith with knowledge. Butler’s \textit{Analogy}, then, provides a Christian apologetic that moves progressively away from natural theology and toward revealed religion, reflected further by the two main divisions in the book, the first titled “Of Natural Religion” (dealing with proofs of general

\textsuperscript{67} See Jacob, \textit{The Clerical Profession} 45. Jacob particularly notes Oxford’s contribution to Christian thought through apologetics in the eighteenth century.

theistic principles) and the second “Of Revealed Religion” (in which Butler takes a more defensive posture for specifically Christian assumptions). Because Butler’s *Analogy* was a major part of general university education, and was designed to prove the Christian religion revealed in the Bible, it stands at the very least as an indication of how the university system would have explicated and interpreted important aspects of scripture.

It is concerning (though not surprising) that Butler makes no mention of the doctrine of the resurrection—neither of Christ’s nor of the Christians’. While Butler offers in the second part of *The Analogy of Religion* an explanation for miracles consistent with traditional Christian apologetics before Hume offers his account (i.e., that miracles operate on a higher “law” of nature inaccessible to human understanding), he limits his defense to the basic quality of the miraculous as an indication of divine revelation. That is, contrary to the Deists, miracles in general prove God interacts with the world he created. However, wholly absent from Butler’s apologetic on miracles is any discussion of the resurrection—a mainstay in both historical and contemporary defenses of Christianity. The resurrection of Jesus was central for the Church Fathers as evidence of the truth of Christianity; it seems to be the crux upon which St. Paul pivots all other aspects of the Christian life in 1 Corinthians. Similarly, the apologetic revival of the 20th century took the accounts of Jesus resurrection as the primary example against Hume’s *Of Miracles*. It is important to note, then, that one of the most influential apologetic

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69 See, e.g., Justin Martyr’s *On the Resurrection* (interestingly, Justin argues from the general resurrection toward the Resurrection of Jesus); and Tertullian *On the Resurrection of the Flesh* (written to a primarily Christian audience) as two notable examples.

70 See Barth *The Resurrection of the Dead*; Wright *The Resurrection of the Son of God*, esp. chaps. 6–7.

texts of the period makes no mention of the Resurrection of Jesus (much less the future general resurrection)—the distinguishing feature of Christian belief—in a work designed explicitly to demonstrate the truth of Christianity distinctly.

On the other hand, what Butler’s *Analogy* does offer Christian theology in the period is a robust philosophical argument in support of a discontiguous spiritual afterlife. In place of bodily resurrection, *The Analogy* opens with a defense for a disembodied heaven, consistent with the ambiguities of the *Book of Common Prayer* and the power of the King of England on earth: Butler ends the work’s introduction, “I shall begin with that which is the foundation of all our hopes and fears—all our hopes and fears, which are of any consideration—I mean a Future Life” (xxxii). Butler derives the essence of this “Future Life” primarily from an argument for personal identity; but an identity grounded solely on immaterial, non-physical attributes: personhood, for Butler, cannot be reduced to the cohesive unity of a physical body, but must exist prior to and in spite of the material it animates. A person may lose an arm, Butler contends, without changing his or her identity; likewise, one may use a tool to enhance her or his body without becoming a different person. Therefore, Butler concludes, personal identity remains distinct from the body it wills to action. In regard to “our power of moving, or directing motion by will and choice,” Butler writes, “upon the destruction of a limb, this active power remains, as it evidently seems, unlessened; so as the living being who has suffered this loss, would be capable of moving as before, if it had another limb to move with. It can walk by the help of an artificial leg; just as it can make use of a pole or a level, to reach toward itself and to move things, beyond the length and power of its natural arm” (13-14). Butler takes the irreducibility of soul to body one step further, claiming “Our gross organized bodies, with which we perceive objects of sense, and with which we act, are no part of ourselves; and therefore shows us, that we have no reason to believe
their destruction to be ours” (10); therefore “we can have no reason to conclude that what befalls those systems of matter at death to be the destruction of the living agents” (11). Personal identity for Butler cannot be reduced to the physical body; moreover, there is nothing in the death and decay of the physical body that would indicate the essence of a “person” would die with it. Still, Butler acknowledges that even if this abstract characterization of personhood implies a continuation of life after the dissolution of the body, it is not alone a proof of the Christian religion: “Indeed, a proof, even a demonstrative one, of a future life, would not be a proof of religion. For that we are to live hereafter is just as reconcilable with the scheme of atheism, and as well to be accounted for by it, as that we are now alive is” (21). To harmonize the “Future Life” with revealed religion, Butler’s argument from natural theology must develop further: his next chapter then deals with the certainly that the sort of life we are to experience outside the body is one of either punishment or reward, a truth he derives from the natural “government” of the world, a system reflected in the civil institutions of state and law. Therefore, the argument for the afterlife most accessible to undergraduate future clergy was directed toward disembodied spirits caught in a retributive model of punishment and sovereignty that mirrored the English Crown. The upshot of the opening section of The Analogy is that life after death must be disembodied.

Furthermore, implied in Butler’s argument is that bodily resurrection is inconsistent not only with observations of nature, but with revealed religion as well. Butler’s apologetic was determined to reconcile the revealed religion of Christian orthodoxy with the increasingly powerful naturalism of the English Enlightenment, a discourse utilized by the Deists; its expressed purpose was to show a consistency between the natural world and Christian scriptures so tightly linked that to deny one would be to deny both. At best, Butler’s argument makes
bodily resurrection a superfluous addition to the afterlife—why would this soul have need of another tool to move around? Why would it require the “same numerical body” (as earlier discussions of the doctrine had phrased it) that was dissolved after death? What is the purpose of any kind of restoration if the essential person is complete without it? At worst, Butler’s argument makes the resurrection of the body out of place in Christian belief. What was once the foundational principle upon which Christian belief was built became in Butler not just ancillary to revealed religion, but opposed to it. But even more directly to the point, Butler never even mentions bodily resurrection, keeping with the silence of Anglicanism regarding the doctrine.

That Butler’s arguments regarding the immortality of soul have proved less philosophically enduring than the ideas of his intellectual peers (both Berekely and Hume considered Butler a first-rate thinker72) should not blind contemporary historians from their significance at the time. Butler’s *Analogy* was immensely popular—not only at Cambridge and Oxford, but to a wider audience as well. His book was consistently in print, new editions surfacing every couple of years from the time of its publication in 1736 well into the late nineteenth and even early twentieth century. In part, the popularity of *The Analogy* reflects a cultural mindset assumed by the reading public in which Christian doctrine was not interested in the bodily resurrection of the dead, a mindset propagated through the education of the spiritual leaders of England.

While Butler’s *Analogy* was a touchstone in the undergraduate curriculum of the universities, it was not the only theology students would learn. Exams before graduation would require knowledge of the thirty-nine articles, as well as the ability to read the New Testament in Greek. However, it was widely accepted that theological training in the university needed to be

supplemented through individual private study. As early as the late 1760s, Henry Owen, then chaplain to the Bishop of Llandaff, recommended a course for further study for those already serving as clergy in the Church of England. Owen’s recommendations, however, proved to be more of the same sorts of texts already studied at Oxford and Cambridge, beginning with classical studies and languages, “reading Tully’s Offices, Plutarch, Seneca, Epictetus, and Marcus Aurelius…. Xenophon’s Life of Socrates was recommended as ‘the best book of pagan antiquity.’”73 In addition, clergy were encouraged to read widely on works of Christian morality, and to keep the Scripture as the primary focus of all study. However, works on doctrine on Owen’s list were few, including—for example—Burnet’s Exposition on the thirty-nine articles. Even when trying to reform and rectify theological training, members of the State Church remained silent on the resurrection of the dead.

This well-demarcated lacuna in theological training is further evident in the sermons of the period. Two notable examples come from William Jones of Nayland and Richard Hurd, Bishop of Worcester. Jones of Nayland was a mid-level clergyman: after earning a BA from Oxford in 1749, Jones was ordained curate of Finedon before advancing to the curacy of Nayland in 1775 (for which he became best known); he would later be assigned Chaplain to the Bishop of Norwich, with whom he had a life-long friendship. Citing Jones as one of the primary figures representative of Anglican political theology, J.C.D. Clark considers him “among the most active entrepreneurs in the field of publicity” for the State Church in the period.74 However, Jones is remarkable mostly for being unremarkable: though not a major figure in the history of the English Church, he was quite well known at the end of the eighteenth century for being a

73 Jacob, The Clerical Profession, 57.
74 J.C.D. Clark, English Society, 1688-1832: Ideology, social structure and political practice during the ancient regime (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1985), 247.
mouthpiece of High Church orthodox Anglicanism. The monumental Schaff-Herzog
Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge records Jones was “one of the most prominent churchmen
of his time,” and one who stood as a spiritual predecessor for the Oxford Movement.75 Joseph
Lightfoot, one of the most influential theologians of the later Victorian period, described Jones as
“one of the faithful ones who kept alive the Truth of Christ’s Church during the dark days of the
eighteenth century.”76 From the perspective of the history of theology, Jones reflects the general
attitude regarding the doctrine of the resurrection in the late-eighteenth century Church of
England. In 1801, one year after his death, Rivington published Jones’s complete works in a
massive twelve volume collection; in 1810, another collection of Jones’s sermons and essays was
published, again by Rivington, but this time in a more manageable 6 volumes (that would receive
yet another printing in 1826). Jones was not adverse to doctrinal engagement: his most well
known work was the 1756 tract The Catholic Doctrine of the Trinity; but he also contributed to
debates regarding natural theology. Still, Jones’s mass of collected works make only scattered
mentions of the doctrine of the resurrection, even in its disembodied form. In most cases, the
resurrection of Jesus is brought up tangentially in polemic contexts as an undefined and
undefended point in favor of the truth of Christianity, often tacked on at the end of argumentative
sections or long paragraphs. When given any substantial explanation, resurrection is used as a
synonym for the disembodied state of life after death. For example, in a sermon delivered on
Matthew 28 titled “Considerations on the Circumstances of Christ’s Resurrection,” Jones draws
on the narrative elements surrounding the Gospel accounts of Jesus’s Resurrection to elicit moral
action from his readers: he says, “There is not one circumstance attending the Resurrection of

75 Samuel Macauley Jackson, ed., Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge (New
76 Quoted in Arthur Middelton, “William Jones of Nayland, 1726-1800” Project Canterbury,
Jesus Christ, which doth not carry instruction with it … and they were undoubtedly recorded for our instruction and edification.”\textsuperscript{77} However, in the course of the sermon, the “circumstance” Jones ignores is the risen body of Christ Himself. He elaborates on the metaphorical power of the risen sun in the morning, the earthquake at the coming of the angel, the angel himself, the women and their task to spread the news, even the false report of Christ’s stolen body; the one thing missing from Jones’s sermon on the resurrected Jesus is Jesus resurrected. In other instances, Jones even goes so far as to counteract the orthodox understanding of the resurrected body, which had been understood in the Christian tradition as “a body which was still robustly physical” even if “also significantly different from the present one,”\textsuperscript{78} a quality N.T. Wright has recently termed “transphysicality.”\textsuperscript{79} Wright continues, “If anything—since the main difference [the early Christians] seem to have envisaged is that the new body will not be corruptible—we might say not that it will be less physical, as though it were some kind of ghost or apparition, but more.”\textsuperscript{80} In his essay “The Metaphorical Usage and Application of Sleep,” Jones claims the resurrected body is not “an actual regeneration of the same body into a more glorious shape,” but rather “a transfusion of the same life into a different substance.”\textsuperscript{81} One can easily lay Gilbert Burnet’s thoughts on Christ’s “Ethereal Body” next to Jones’s “transfusion.”

Far more well-known than Jones of Nayland, Richard Hurd, Bishop of Worcester advanced in the church purely on the popularity of his theological writings; his prominence in the church, popularity with readers, and unique proximity to the throne make him a strong

\textsuperscript{78} Wright, \textit{The Resurrection of the Son of God}, 478.
\textsuperscript{79} Ibid., 477.
\textsuperscript{80} Ibid., 478.
\textsuperscript{81} Jones, \textit{Works}, 3: 322.
representative of state sanctioned Anglicanism in the period. The son of a Staffordshire farmer, Hurd received an MA degree from Cambridge in 1742; over the next twenty-five years, Hurd was a fellow at the university, until earning a DD in 1768. Hurd published regularly during his time at Cambridge, including many editions of classical texts. In 1774, he was appointed Bishop of Lichfield and Coventry, before being transferred to the see of Worcester; while most bishops advanced to prominence in the Church of England through powerful private connections, Hurd’s high status came thanks to his expansive publishing record.\textsuperscript{82} Hurd was not only popular as a theological writer, but popular with the court as well—in 1776, he became the tutor of young George, Prince of Wales.\textsuperscript{83} In his earliest works, Hurd engaged the naturalist philosophy that had taken root in the early-eighteenth century, with Hume as a central target. His first substantial work—completed shortly after earning his Bachelor in Divinity degree in 1749—was a response to William Weston’s \textit{Enquiry into the Rejection of Christian Miracles}, followed by his \textit{Remarks on Hume’s Natural History of Religion} in 1757. In 1811, three years after his death, his complete works were published in eight volumes—including his apologetic tracts and sermons alongside his defenses of the English Crown. Not surprisingly, Hurd makes even fewer mentions of resurrection than Jones does; though, like Jones, the sparse mentions tend to serve as tertiary points, rattled off in lists of the hallmarks of Christian belief or additional rhetorical features to

\textsuperscript{82} See Richardson, \textit{Classical Victorians}, Appendix A.

\textsuperscript{83} In addition to his well-known theological works, Hurd was also an accomplished translator of Classical works, publishing commentaries on Horace’s \textit{Ars Poetica}, and \textit{The Epistle to Augustus}. Further, he frequently wrote essays on poetry and poetics, expanding his influence to aesthetics as well: his \textit{Letters on Chivalry and Romance} in 1762 would provide a reasoned (and acceptably orthodox) defense for the use of Medieval literature in contemporary poetry, smoothing the way for popular acceptance of the Gothic in coming decades. See Audley L. Smith, “Richard Hurd’s \textit{Letters on Chivalry and Romance}” \textit{English Literary History} 6, no. 1 (1939): 58-81. Perhaps most germane to his association with the Crown, 1759’s \textit{Moral and Political Dialogues} concluded with two essays on “The Constitution of the English Government,” a substantial defense of English sovereignty.
flesh out conclusions, included as one of a number of things that need no further explanation. These few mentions of resurrection—less than twenty in total spread across over 3000 pages of text—are dwarfed by mentions of “heaven” or “eternal life.” Even in the most conspicuous places—defenses of Christian miracles and sermons on prophecy—the resurrection of the dead (disembodied or otherwise) is completely absent. The closest Hurd comes to a discussion of the resurrection of the dead is in a miscellaneous sermon preached in November of 1774, discussing I Peter 1.15: “Be ready to always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope, that is in you, with meekness and fear.” Here, Hurd spends considerable time defining what that “hope” might be. At first, he concludes the disciples—of whom Peter was chief—would understand this to be “the hope of an eternal life, the hope of a resurrection from the dead, the blessed hope, in short, of salvation through Jesus Christ.” While the conflation of “eternal life,” “resurrection,” and “salvation” opens considerable interpretive space (enough, possibly, to allow even for bodily resurrection) Hurd considers this answer sufficient only for those who would have witnessed the Resurrection of Jesus first hand, “those who had seen the Lord and conversed with him after his resurrection.” Rather, what Christians contemporary to Hurd (indeed, every Christian who was not a contemporary of the Apostles) could find assurance in was the accounts written in the New Testament. Hurd then turns from resurrection to an apology for the formation of the biblical canon, leaving the resurrection behind as an unexplored and ultimately superfluous doctrine along the road to biblical inerrancy. While “resurrection from the dead” may have been a suitable answer for “every man who asked” St. Peter, it seems it had become insufficient reason for “the hope that was in” eighteenth-century English Christians. At

85 Ibid., 114.
the same time, in the rest of his writings Hurd far prefers to discuss “heaven” than “resurrection.” Even in these numerous discussions, however, Hurd’s uses of “heaven” are overwhelmingly locative: things are either going “into” or coming “from” heaven, further reinforcing the dramatic and absolute division between heaven and earth.

Replacing bodily resurrection with life in heaven was not isolated to the sermons of clergy, but extended to their poetic works as well. Poet Richard Mant, Bishop of Downs and Connor, received an MA from Oxford in 1800. Shortly thereafter, he was assigned the task (along with George D’Oyly, under the supervision of Charles Manners-Sutton, Archbishop of Canterbury) of creating an annotated edition of the Bible, with footnotes referencing the most influential English commentators and preachers of the Church’s history; in 1820, he would begin work on a similar annotated collection of the *Book of Common Prayer*. In addition to copious theological and historical writings, Mant was also well known for his poetry. Recognized for his writing at the university, Mant would gain further notoriety for his satirical attack on the “New…Anti-Classical School” of poets from the Lake District in his 1808 “The Simpliciad.”

Including all his works, Mant’s catalogue entry in the British Library runs over five pages long. In 1820, he was consecrated Bishop of Kilialoe; in the same year, he was conferred a Doctor of Divinity degree from Oxford. Unlike many clergy of the period, Mant had the privilege of a very thorough theological education; moreover, Mant was also an accomplished poet.

Perhaps not surprisingly, in his poetry Mant reinforces the division of heaven and earth subscribed to by the State Church. First published in *Gospel Miracles* in 1832, “The Christian Consolation on the Death of Friends” makes this transposition quite clear. Carrying the

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sympathetic tone of seasoned pastoral counsel, the poem’s main vehicle is the tension between sorrow and joy at the passing of a Christian—sorrow resulting from loss, but joy rejoicing at the heavenly glorification of the departed—“that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope.” The poet begins, “Tho’ tears of natural sorrows start, / ’Tis mix’d with pleasure when we grieve.” Of course, this “pleasure” is not present when the deceased filled “the allotted pilgrimage on earth, / With earthborn passions grovelling low” (9-10); such pleasure is only for those “such as tread, with loftier scope, / the Christian’s path with Christian hope” (13-14). While the phrase “Christian hope” directly conjures the broader traditions of Christian eschatology and their bearing on the death of individual Christians, the “Christian’s path” is one that forgoes earth for heaven, rather than bringing heaven to earth. The poet then turns to the deceased body itself:

We grieve to see the lifeless form,

The livid cheek, the sunken eye:

But sweet to think, corruption’s worm

The deathless spirit can defy,

And claim its kindred with the sky.

Lo! there the earthly vessel lies;

Aloft the unbodied tenant flies. (22-28)

The “Christian’s Consolation” is that the dead are no longer bound to bodies, but are gone forever from the living, into heaven above. Mant makes no mention of the reconciliation of the spirit with the body, no mention of recreation; most surprising for a poem explicitly about

87 1 Thes. 4.13, *KJV*

“Christian hope,” there is no mention of bodily resurrection. The heaven of “The Christian Consolation” is a far off world, out of reach, out of sight, and out of body.

The physical resurrection of the dead was therefore removed from the eighteenth-century English State Church—but its removal was never directly mentioned. In fact, it could not be mentioned, as discussing its absence would have been tantamount to challenging the accepted interpretation of the Church’s documents—an act of open rebellion. The preaching of the period naturally followed suit, as even the most educated clergy in the Church of England obscured or ignored the physical resurrection of the dead. Heaven could happily remain within the paradigm of the State Church, and as such the disembodied afterlife came to absorb the meaning of the term “resurrection.” So thorough—and so subtle—was the shift that the Crown, its sanctioned church, and its spokesmen the clergy could not have even recognized the central doctrine of Christian theology had gone missing.

Conclusion

The doctrine of the physical resurrection of the dead was very subtly pushed to the margins and silenced—buried—in the late-eighteenth century Church of England. In its place rose the distorted idea of a disembodied heaven authorized through the linguistic ambiguities of the State Church’s framing documents, a heaven conducive to the stable rulership of the English Crown, propagated to the public through inadequate theological training. These three factors certainly worked in conjunction with other historical circumstances—the influence of enlightenment skepticism, the rise of Deistic philosophy, the latitudinarian leanings of the eighteenth-century State Church, the rise of emotional or sentimental responses to Christianity
like Evangelicalism and Methodism, even the fears and external pressures of revolutions in Haiti, America, and nearby France. However, in England itself, the Anglican Church’s proximity to the Crown, its framing documents, and the training of its clergy solidified some very dense borders that constrained theological discourse in the period. The elimination or amelioration of any one factor would make little difference—had the clergy received more thorough training, for example, there would still be no room for the doctrine of the resurrection to arise in the State Church given the historical conditions.

At the very same time that the doctrine of the resurrection was being buried in the State Church, the bodies of English subjects were being exhumed by the so-called “Resurrectionists.” While the State Church let fade the orthodox belief in bodies raised to new life at the restoration of all things, Burke and Hare and their compeers raised the freshly dead—even added to their numbers—for dissection. But not every body raised by the Resurrectionists went to the anatomist’s table. James Legg is a notable counterexample. Imprisoned for the murder of his neighbor William Lamb in 1801, the 80-year-old Legg was executed by hanging; his body, lawful property of the state, was allotted for the study of human anatomy. However, as was sometimes the case, the corpse was granted for anatomical studies in art rather than medicine. To settle a debate raging in the Royal Academy of Art, sculptors Thomas Banks, Benjamin West, and Richard Crossway sought to show the failures of true anatomical depictions of the Crucifixion of Jesus—and the body of 80-year-old Legg would do nicely. Lifted from the gallows, they nailed the still-warm body to a wooden cross, stripped it of both its clothes and then its skin, removed the genitals, and covered it in plaster to make a mold. The resulting cast became the centerpiece for the 2006 exhibit at the London Museum (displayed alongside the unearthed remains discovered behind the Royal London Hospital). The cast of Legg’s frail and
aged body—flayed, naked, and castrated—gleams white against a dark wood cross; the stomach bulges, pulled down by gravity, while the nailed arms are pulled up and outward, opening the ribcage: pulled in three directions, a large cavity forms at the heart of the sculpture, a deep, smooth, empty depression.

Raised from the grave to be nailed to a cross, the dead body of James Legg can be seen as an image for bodily resurrection in the State Church. Rather than hoping for their bodies to be glorified, the position of the Church of England was that bodies festered while spirits moved off into another world, disconnected and remote. Without bodily resurrection, the Church crucified the revolutionary potential inherent in the “crisis of all human temporal things.” Pulled in three directions—toward the Crown, carefully managed interpretations of church documents, and inadequate clerical training—the heart of Christian belief was made an empty cavity.

But this cavity would not remain empty. James Legg’s body was forever hung in execution; but Jesus’s body was not. When Mary Magdalene went to the tomb three days after the crucifixion of her lord, she was shocked to find an angel waiting for her there. “Why do you look for the living among the dead?” he asked her. “He is not here; for he is risen.” With the transposition of the doctrine of the resurrection from an embodied new creation to a disembodied heaven in the clouds, the angel’s pronouncement to Mary takes on a new meaning for the late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century Church of England: the resurrected body was absent in the framing documents of English piety, absent in the political relationship between church and state, absent in the training of clergy at the universities, absent in the popular sermons of the period—again and again, at every turn we find “He is not here,” “He is not here; for he is risen.” The risen body had vacated the State Church, but behind it left an empty grave.
A quick way to unearth the history of ideas that inform a culture’s values is to pay
attention to the way it cares for its dead. Rituals surrounding burial are often the slowest to
change, fossilizing traditional beliefs as ritual practices long after the meanings of the rituals
themselves have been forgotten. Such is certainly the case with the practices of English burial at
the turn of the nineteenth century, where care for the dead was caught up in a much larger web of
authorizations and boundaries, mostly produced by the practices sanctioned under the State
Church since the English Reformation.

One of my primary goals in this chapter, then, is to account for the way the state’s
absorption of religious rites significantly impacted the doctrine of physical resurrection through
the burial of the dead. In the previous chapter, I discussed the many ways in which the language
of the foundational documents of the State Church was transformed in the light of English
sovereignty. In particular, a major transformation comes to the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead: rather than considering “life in heaven” as a temporary state between the death of the body and its resurrection (as had been traditionally believed), in this period the word “resurrection” shifts to mean only disembodied life in heaven, and the location of heaven itself is pushed increasingly off into an inaccessible other world. In this chapter, I will discuss the ways in which the Anglican “Burial of the Dead”—a rubric outlined the Book of Common Prayer—undergoes a similar transformation. By the early-nineteenth century, burial had become so thoroughly secularized that any doctrinal or theological resonances would have been calcified in empty rituals of “proper decency” or fashion. At the same time, the State Church remained virtually the only sanctioned holy ground available for burial, with “holy ground”—ironically—remaining one of the significant notions associated with “fashionable” burial. The link between secularized burial and the State Church’s ownership of burial grounds further testifies to the tight controls the political theology of the early-nineteenth century placed on theological discourse, particularly in relation to the resurrection of the body.

At the same time as burial’s secular transformation is finalized by the changes I am outlining here, there arises a unique figure in the literature of the period—the wanderer. A common figure in gothic texts, the wanderer is often a tempter or seducer, enticing the hero or heroine to a life of limitless power—often expressed as access to some kind of esoteric or forbidden knowledge—at the cost of his soul. In other instances, the hero himself is the wanderer, traipsing beyond the limits of human rationality and proper action, a transgressor who embraces and cultivates his own transgressions, moving outside the limits of legal and social boundaries. On the outside of society, the wanderer lives in a place caught between life and
death—Coleridge’s Ancient Mariner described it as “The Nightmare Life-in-Death.”¹ As such, the strongest manifestation of the wanderer’s transgression comes from his ability to circumvent the power of the Crown over burial by circumventing the systems of life and death, existing instead in a state of “life-in-death.” Since the wanderer is not dead, he is not subject to burial; since he is not alive, he is not subject to the biopolitical control of the sovereign. Figures like Maturin’s Melmoth, Polidori’s Lord Ruthven, the Monster of Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein*, Byron’s Manfred, and even Coleridge’s Ancient Mariner all fit this broad model.

Of course, the archetype behind this figure—the Wandering Jew—had stalked literature for centuries, but in the late eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries the figure was given new life in the period’s new literary forms. The legend of the Wandering Jew springs from Jesus’s words to John in Matthew 16.28: “Verily I say unto you, There be some standing here, which shall not taste of death, till they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom.” John the Disciple was eventually replaced with the far more marginal Ahasuerus (a name drawn from the Old Testament Book of Esther), an imagined servant in the house of Pilate, who was cursed to live until the second coming after mocking Christ on his way to Golgotha.² The legend of the Wandering Jew was common on the continent in the Middle Ages, where it often served as a metaphor for the nomadic and seemingly inextinguishable Jewish race; however, there is little evidence it ever took significant root in England. While the legend of Wandering Jew was widespread in colloquial English folklore by the mid-seventeenth century, G.K. Anderson notes

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² Ahasuerus is the Hebrew form of Xerxes, the King of the Persians. It is uncertain how the name became associated with the Wandering Jew.
that it “swelled to enormous proportions in Continental literature after 1750." Brian Stableford likewise writes “[The Wandering Jew] had previously figured in various obscure works as a satirical device or as a witness to history, but it was the Romantics...who felt free to work creatively upon the framework of the myth, analyzing or reinterpreting the plight of its central character according to taste." Critics have long recognized the Romantics’ unique appropriation and reinterpretation of the Wandering Jew: nearly a century ago, Eino Railo claimed, “Not until the ’70s of the eighteenth century did the legend begin to exert influence on poetry.” As the Wandering Jew took on his new Romantic vestments, the metaphorical relationship with the Jewish people wore off. Anderson notes, “The tremendous growth of the legend of the Wandering Jew...drove the popular tales [of earlier centuries] more and more into the background.” This appropriation allowed the Wandering Jew to be redeployed in “a prolific catalogue of poems, plays, novels, and short stories examining his predicament from every possible point of view.” As such, the specific folkloric figure of the Wandering Jew transforms into the broader (and no longer religiously or ethnically definite) “wanderer”—an archetype that could inform Wordsworth’s “Song for the Wandering Jew,” Shelley’s representation of Ahasuerus in Queen Mab, and Maturin’s Melmoth alike. Efriam Sicher therefore claims, “The

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7 Stableford, “Introduction” to Tales of the Wandering Jew, 8.
legend was highly assimilable to the figure of the wanderer prominent in the Romantic poets’
creative consciousness and in their actual situation of exile and wandering.”

In the period, the wanderer often bridges gothic and high romantic texts. Michael Gamer,
“tracking late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth-century invasions of gothic into other high-
cultural forms,” has shown the historical tension between what critics call “Romanticism”—a
high form of avant-garde literature—and “the gothic”—the popular form that dominated literary
works in the period. While Anne Williams made very clear that “‘Gothic’ and ‘Romantic’ are
not two but one,” Gamer approaches the two forms from the perspective of reception and
readership to show “how romantic ideology articulates itself in terms of genre.” Certainly the
“invasion” from “low” into “high” pertains to the figure of the wanderer, who appears in both
Romantic and gothic texts. As such, the wanderer can therefore represent a popular and
pervasive parody of bodily resurrection. Just as Jesus’s resurrected body supervened over the
power of Roman execution and the religious rituals of Jewish burial alike, and just as the general
resurrection of human bodies at the end of time would be the final statement on God’s position
as the just judge who overrules the power of death and need for burial, so too the wanderer is
untouched by the laws of the state (regulating life) and the customs of burial (regulating death).

In this chapter, therefore, I hope to provide a framework that will begin to explain how
the representation of physical resurrection in gothic and romantic literature intersects with the
Christian doctrine of the resurrection. The physical resurrection was silenced in the church, but it

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8 Efraim Sicher, “Imagining ‘the jew’: Dickens’ Romantic Heritage” in *British Romanticism

9 Michael Gamer, *Romanticism and the Gothic: Genre, Reception, and Canon Formation*
(Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2000), 12.

10 Anne Williams, *Art of Darkness: A poetics of Gothic* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press,

was nonetheless embedded in the language and rites of Christian orthodoxy still employed by the Crown. That is, the raw materials that made up the resurrection of the body remained available through the Church of England, but in a state of suspended animation, unable to be articulated as the physical resurrection of the body. As such, there is nothing to keep these raw materials—Bible verses, the language of the creeds, the teachings of the catholic church, the theology of the Church Fathers, and so on—from migrating beyond the walls of the State Church. However, unable to be expressed in one unified doctrine, the raised physical body might arise without—or even against—both Christian orthodoxy and the Anglican Church. Obversely, the theological work of the doctrine of the physical resurrection could resurface in forms that did not explicitly mention raised bodies. In fact, since the language of “raised bodies” would have been synonymous with “disembodied life in heaven,” it stands to reason that the presence of an actual physical raised body could not carry the theological weight of the doctrine of the resurrection.

As such, in this chapter I will talk about the most frequent literary site where physical resurrection would take place—the gothic. On the one hand, the wanderer’s circumvention of life and death in “life-in-death” provides an image of a deathless one—a living, “transphysical” body raised from the failed life that once contained it. However, the wanderer is not the only parody of physical resurrection that appears in the Gothic: live burial, another frequent trope, also draws attention to the physical life of a body even after being committed to the grave. While the wanderer shows the way physical resurrection transgresses social barriers, the trope of live burial demonstrates exactly the opposite—a body subjected to death even while alive, contained, controlled, and sequestered. There are numerous texts from the period make use of these tropes: as Gamer has demonstrated, the characters and situations of the Gothic often make incursions into High Romantic texts, attesting to the far reaches wanderers might traverse. Therefore, in
this chapter, I have limited my scope to examine texts that offer significant engagements with theology and doctrine; moreover, the texts I have chosen trouble the presumed synonymy between “orthodoxy” and “Anglicanism,” showing that there are often orthodox ideas outside the State Church. As such, I turn primarily to texts long considered primarily “High Romantic,” and perhaps only accidentally gothic: Coleridge’s “The Wanderings of Cain,” Byron’s dramas *Cain: A Mystery* and *Manfred*, and Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein*. In so doing, I hope also to contribute to understanding these texts and authors as involved in the popular story forms of the period. Finally, oddly enough, from these texts it seems both wandering and live burial fail to articulate the theological potential of the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead. In the end, the mere physical presence of a raised body does not carry the full theological power of the physical resurrection.

To grasp the relationship between the physical resurrection of the dead and the role of the wanderer and the use of live burial in these texts, it will help first to better understand the divorce between Christian burial and the doctrine of the resurrection.

**The Burial of the Dead**

The doctrine of the resurrection is intermixed throughout the *Book of Common Prayer*. As I have shown in the previous chapter, in most cases these mentions of resurrection, surrounded by affirmations of the English King’s authority, would be understood as a transfer of the soul from the body and into heaven—a disembodied afterlife radically removed from the physical world. Compounding the constraints of sovereignty, the contemporary education of clergy favored a reading of the resurrection that obfuscated the doctrine’s physical, bodily
registers. However, complicating these disembodied readings of resurrection, the *Book of Common Prayer* itself contains significant support for the resurrection of the physical body, mostly located in the rites outlined for the burial of the dead. For example, the verses read or sung as the body is carried to the grave include phrases like “though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh I shall see God,”\(^\text{12}\) and “I am the resurrection and the life…whosoever liveth and believeth in me, shall never die.”\(^\text{13}\) Most significantly, the order for the burial of the dead includes a complete reading of I Corinthians 15.20-58, the famous “resurrection chapter” that served as the scriptural basis for belief in the general resurrection of the dead. Because the passage generated the vocabulary and idioms for the doctrine of the resurrection, I offer here a longer quotation:

> But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the first fruits of them that slept. For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. But every man in his own order: Christ the first fruits; afterward they that are Christ’s at his coming. Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power. For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death. …But some man will say, How are the dead raised up? and with what body do they come? Thou fool, that which thou sowest is not quickened, except it die: And that which thou sowest, thou sowest

\(^\text{12}\) “The Order for the Burial of the Dead,” *The Book of Common Prayer: Texts of 1549, 1552, 1662*, Ed. Brian Cummings (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 2013), 676. Here, the *BCP* quotes from Job 19.25-7: “I know that my Redeemer liveth and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth. And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh I shall see God: whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another.”

not that body that shall be, but bare grain, it may chance of wheat, or of some other grain:…So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption: It is sown in dishonour; it is raised in glory: it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power: It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body….For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?

The question is, then, as the resurrection of the physical body was elided in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century Church of England—as all other evidence points—what became of these particular discussion of the doctrine of the resurrection embedded in state-authorized English Christianity?

One solution may be to note the various interpretations of these verses in the period. For example, though I Corinthians 15 is the basis for the doctrine of the physical resurrection of the dead, it was also employed in Socinian apologetic tracts in the period to attack Trinitarian doctrine. It seems the passage was equally of use to condemn orthodoxy as to support it. One unexpected result of this historically peculiar use of the passage is that orthodox analyses of the Church’s fullest statement of the doctrine of the resurrection in scripture was redirected instead

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14 1 Cor. 15.20-26; 35-38; 42-50; 53-55. Unlike the processions hymns, the passage from 1 Corinthians had its own unique place in the Order for the Burial of the Dead, and would be spoken over the grave.

15 See, e.g., Robert Clayton’s tract An Essay on Spirit: wherein the Doctrine of the Trinity is considered in the Light of Nature and Reason (London, 1751), 28.
toward defending the deity of Christ, leaving no mention of the resurrection at all. That is, in Anglican theology in the period, the resurrection chapter became a statement of the Trinity. One notable example comes in William Jones of Nayland’s *The Catholic Doctrine of a Trinity*, where Jones redirects the Resurrection of Jesus to prove the hypostatic union. At the very least, this makes it clear that the ambiguities of the passage were not lost on readers of the period, and St. Paul’s rhetorical antithesis between the resurrection body and dead body—a seed “sown a natural body;…raised a spiritual body”—did not produce a clearly self-evident orthodox interpretation of the raised physical body.

However, I argue the explicit mentions of resurrection in the *Book of Common Prayer* would face a more significant and pervasive—and therefore, far more subtle—challenge through the actual process of burial in the period. From the Protestant Reformation leading up to the early nineteenth century, burial in England grew more secular, as the practices surrounding burial and the bodies of the dead themselves were pushed further into the margins. Tony Walter characterized burial at the turn of the nineteenth century as “an increasingly rational, medical, secular and bureaucratic approach which tends to depersonalize and hide death.” As the rites of Christian burial lost their theological significance, I argue the orders for the burial of the dead given in the *Book of Common Prayer* would ultimately be inconsequential in broader English

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17 These ambiguities are still debated. As a recent high-profile example, see James Ware, “Paul’s Understanding of the Resurrection in 1 Corinthians 15:36-54,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 133, no. 4 (2014): 809-835.


culture, thereby pushing not only death and burial further underground but the resurrection of the body as well.

The English State Church maintained a virtual monopoly on burial space until 1820. Tracing the history of English burial reform, Julie Rugg notes, “cemetery establishment in Britain had its origins in … the need for burial provision which was—most importantly—free from control of the Church of England.”\(^{20}\) At the start of the 19th century, Dissenting churches (including Jews and Catholics) had a few reserved plots for burial, of course, notably Bunhill Fields in London—but for those outside the city centers, or those too poor to secure burial elsewhere, the local parish churchyard was the only option. However, the dictates of the *Book of Common Prayer* and the *Constitutions and Canons of the Church* regulated burials according to the Anglican rites—and, by extension, to submission to the King. Regardless of a person’s professed beliefs in life, in death they became subject to the Anglican Church. Not only was the state—the King via the church—sovereign over life and death, it was also the arbiter of the body *after* death.

Burial—like many Christian beliefs—was caught up in the period’s political theology. The marriage between state and church rested on two beliefs: first, the power of King as the earthly sovereign; second, formal adherence to traditional Christianity. However, while the sovereignty of the king fit nicely in the language and structure of English Protestantism, once granted the King’s authority came into direct conflict with Christ’s authority. The English State Church’s *Constitutions and Cannons* prescribes a minimum of four church services per year dedicated to veneration of the king, in which clergy would remind parishioners that “the King’s

Power within His Realms of England, Scotland, and Ireland, and all other His Dominions and Countries, is the highest power under God; to whom all Men, as well and Inhabitants, as born within the same, do by God’s Law owe most Loyalty and Obedience, afore and above all other Powers and Potentates in the Earth.” 21 This is a strange statement arising from a system of belief that explicitly claims Jesus is “King of Kings, and Lord of Lords.” Unsurprisingly, Jesus’s royal title “King of Kings” only appears three times in the Book of Common Prayer; and unsurprisingly each instance is brought up in services relating to the continued power and strength of the King and State. If the King of England must be recognized “afore and above all other Powers and Potentates in the Earth,” then Jesus must be “King of Kings” someplace else—in heaven, not on earth. But even this eternal hereafter was molded on the Crown’s own sovereignty, re-cast in heaven as it had been on earth: it is not only that Jesus is the ruler of Heaven while George is the rule of earth; Jesus is the ruler of heaven just like the King of England is the ruler of earth. The language of bodily resurrection would be wrung through this “two-kingdoms” paradigm, with “resurrection” becoming a kind of graduation from the physical body into the spiritual body.

For the burial of the dead in particular, the result of the uneasy marriage between Christian theology and the state was two-fold. First, the orthodox Christian belief in the resurrection of the body became fossilized in the ritual practices of burial—practices established long before the genesis of modern political theology. For example, the orientation of the body in the grave, the taboo on cremation, or the rites prescribed in the Book of Common Prayer, all once

21 The Thirty-Nine Articles and the Constitutions and Canons, of the Church of England; together with several Acts of Parliament and Proclamations concerning Ecclesiastical Matters (Not in the former Editions,) Somewhere to be read in Churches: to which are added, His Majesty’s Directions for the Preserving of unity in the Church, and the Purity of the Christian Faith…. (London, 1773), 2.
designed around the image of a raised physical body were neutralized by a shift in emphasis toward a disembodied future “life in heaven.” Just as Christ’s kingship was pushed off into a discontinuous, disembodied heaven, so too was the soul after death. Second, regulation of the corpse after death remained a feature of English piety and under the control of state-authorized ecclesiastical law. According to Cannon LXVIII, “No minister shall refuse or delay…to bury any Corpse that is brought to the Church or Church-yard,… in such Manner and Form as is prescribed in the said Book of Common Prayer.” That is, the body—even the dead body—was regulated according to the prescribed order, in line with rites submitting to the King’s sovereignty. Therefore, burial rites would reflect the state-sanctioned afterlife, in which the soul would leave the Kingdom of Earth and advance into the Kingdom of Heaven, while the body decayed in the custody of the state.

Yet, in spite of the necessary association between State Church and burial, the association between “Christian burial” and Christian theology in the Church of England was not as clear as it may seem, even though the two were authorized together under the same State Church. Following the Reformation, the rituals surrounding death had undergone considerable evolution, as a number of historians have shown. Not surprisingly, the most significant set of changes followed the specifically English Reformation. The eradication of Catholic rituals and beliefs surrounding death and burial—the doctrine of purgatory, prayers for the dead, and the role of icons—had significant impact on the ways the English State authorized death and regulated

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22 The Thirty-Nine Articles and the Constitutions and Canons, 46 (emphasis added).

burial. The unprecedented control of the Crown over burial was both political and theological; the result was an increasingly secular perception of death and burial rituals. For one, the prohibition against purgatory reinforced the finality of death, as Protestants insisted that “it is appoint unto men once too die, but after this the judgment.” In broader Reformation thought, there was some flexibility as to the precise order of events between death and what comes “after this”—Luther, for example, (though not the Lutherans) adopted the idea of “soul sleep,” where souls are suspended between death and the resurrection. Far more popular was the idea of the “intermediary state” (adopted by Calvin and, eventually, the reformers in the Church of England) where the souls of the departed passed the time between life and death in a disembodied heavenly state, awaiting the final reunion between body and soul at the last judgment. As I’ve shown, it is the emphasis on the “intermediary state” that eventually overwhelms the physical resurrection of the body in the late eighteenth century Church of England; this shift in emphasis was likely influenced by the removal of Purgatory from authorized Christian belief in England. Regardless, Protestants were in agreement on this: once dead, the soul’s fate was sealed. There was no migration in the Kingdom of Heaven, and no trade held between Heaven and Hell.

Moreover, Protestant theology forbade prayers for the dead. What could such prayers bring about? God was not the sort to change His mind, and—as Jesus himself revealed—even Lazarus, once dead, could not traverse the gap between Paradise and Hell for even a moment to aid the suffering of the Rich Man. Compounded by the absence of final absolution or last rites (Extreme Unction was one of five catholic sacraments “not to be counted for Sacraments of the Gospel” under article XXV of the Articles of Religion) a nearly neurotic anxiety about death pervaded post-Reformation life. For example, William Sherlock’s immensely popular book A

24 Heb. 9.27.
*Practical Discourse Concerning Death* exhorts, “it must the Business of our whole Lives to prepare for Death: Our Accounts must always be ready, because we know not how soon we may be called to give an Account of our Stewardship; we must always be upon our Watch, as not knowing what Hour our Lord will come.”

The highest goal of Protestant life was to live in such a way that Catholic last rites would be superfluous; but the result was a fixation on death as if Atropos stood with her scissors on the thread of life, ready to cut at any moment.

Finally, Protestant theology resisted the use of icons and “graven images” in any liturgical function, including the remembrance of the dead. Further, because the veneration of Saints was tantamount to polytheistic idolatry, and the “priesthood of all believers” put all saints—venerated by the Church or otherwise—on equal footing, graves and memorials were devoid of religious iconography. As an unexpected result, *pagan* iconography increasingly played a role in Christian memorials, a trend exacerbated through Enlightenment neo-classicism.

For example, memorials would make use of the figure of Fame to commemorate a person’s worldly wealth and prestige, represented as a winged figure (often indistinguishable from an angel). Clare Gittings notes after the Reformation “with religious symbolism forbidden by the dictates of Protestantism, [memorials] concentrated on the worldly success and social standing of...”

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25 William Sherlock, *A Practical Discourse Concerning Death* (Preston: W. Sergeant, 1776), 207. Published in 1689, the book was perennially popular in the 18th century, seeing more than a thirty editions and numerous re-prints. Joseph Addison hyperbolically praised it as “one of the strongest Persuasives to a Religious Life that was ever written in any Language” (quoted in Houlbrooke, “The age of decency: 1660-1760” in *Death in England illustrated history*, 179). Ralph Houlbrooke relates Sherlock’s “main message” repeated through the 18th century that was “often reiterated and pithily expressed, ““This ought to be the Work and Business of our whole Lives, to prepare for Death, which comes but once, but that once is for Eternity. What unpardonable Folly is it, for any Man to be surprised by Death! To fall into the Grave without thinking of it!”” Houlbrooke “The age of decency: 1660-1760” in *Death in England: an Illustrated History*, eds. Peter C. Jupp and Clare Gittings (New Brunswick NJ: Rutgers Univ. Press, 2000), 174.

26 See, e.g. *The Unton Memorial Picture* (1596), commemorating Sir Henry Unton.
the deceased.”

The accouternents of burial were therefore, not surprisingly, dictated by class and wealth: the more wealthy, the more likely one would be to have an ornate and easily recognizable memorial, while the poor were buried under plain and unassuming gravestones. In addition, funeral etiquette dictated a good deal of fanfare—honorariums for a funeral sermon, furnishings for the wake, food and drink for attendees—that would further put the trappings of memorialization out of reach for all but the upper class.

As the 18th century progressed, the most significant change added to the secularized rituals of Protestant burial was the role of the doctor at the deathbed. As medical science developed, so too did pain-alleviating drugs. The moment of death came to be viewed as a negotiation between the Grim Reaper, pulling a patient towards death, and the Doctor, administering balms to ease the passage. The eighteenth century retained the Protestant virtue of dying the “good death,” but what counted as “good” shifted from bravely facing death in full composure to quietly slipping away into a prolonged sleep. Roy Porter summarizes the shift: for the English Protestants, “Death was fearful, courage essential, and victory was the prize. Increasingly, such a vision of Death’s torments seemed incompatible with a loving and even with a just God, and with humaneness towards the dying themselves. Under a benevolent Deity, surely death was not to be feared; it was, after all, only like a sleep.”

Representative of the shift, in 1769, Thomas Sheridan (godson of Jonathan Swift) quipped, “very few now die. Physicians take care to conceal people’s danger from them. So that they are carried off, properly speaking, without dying; that is to say, without being sensible of it.”

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at the fore of every thought as the Protestants had been counseled to do, the fashion of Enlightenment death was to keep it as far from the mind as possible, even when in the act of dying.

At the same time, burial in wooden coffins became ubiquitous, regardless of wealth or social station, as did gravestones. Houlbrooke writes “The provision of more durable gravestones in the churchyard, and grave slabs in the church, seems to have become much more common from the seventeenth century onwards.” 30 The increased visibility of burial plots and containment of the dead in coffins was precipitated by the quickly ebbing real estate available for the deceased. As the English population grew, the demographic of the dead quickly outpaced the designated spaces allotted in churchyards. Before the eighteenth century, it was not uncommon for a single plot to contain a number of bodies. In one particularly grisly account, George Alfred Walker’s *Gatherings from Graveyards* records the upper limit of English patience with such overcrowding, and shows the depth of the grave real estate crisis: “In making a grave, a body, partly decomposed, was dug up, and placed on the surface, at the side, slightly covered with earth; a mourner stepped on it,—the loosened skin peeled off, he slipped forward, and had nearly fallen into the grave.”31 Similarly, Houlbrooke argues, “Deep burial was a further precaution to which some people resorted. The solicitude which was one powerful motive for it emerges clearly from the way in Rev. Henry Newcome recorded the interment of his well loved father-in-law: ‘I caused him to be laid deeper than ordinary in the chancel there, that I believe his body

30 Ralph Haulbrooke, “Death, Church, and Family in England between the Late Fifteenth and the Early Eighteenth Centuries” in *Death, Ritual and Bereavement*, 39.

will scarcely be disturbed if others that come after make use of the grave.”

Clearly marked graves, deeper burial, and bodies contained in coffins all ensured there would be no accidental exhumation in increasingly overcrowded churchyards. The trend in the 18th century was to ensure the dead stayed buried, and death remained at arm’s length.

The result of these shifting beliefs surrounding burial was twofold. First, it divorced the practices surrounding care for the dead in England from their Christian origins. Following the Reformation “church reforms reduced the prominence and authority of the clergy” in their direct control over burial, as “[s]impler, shorter rites and less widespread reliance on sacramental help restricted the scope for clerical influence over the dying.”

Still, in spite of the fading theological significance surrounding burial, the English State Church itself retained what Julie Rugg has called a “near monopoly” on burial ground. The State Church’s control over burial, then, had little to do with religion, and nothing to do with theology. Burial therefore took on a social, rather than religious, orientation, so much so that by the early 20th century, Bertram S. Pickle could easily conclude “the very customs to which we cling so unreasonably, are for the most part unworthy remnants of superstitious rites, and not anything dictated by any form of Christian religion to which we may subscribe.”

Therefore, as Clare Gittings has shown, “From the Reformation onwards, the funeral ritual…simply served to dispose of the corpse, with no

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32 Houlbrooke, “Death, Church, and Family” in Death Ritual and Bereavement, 39.
33 This distancing certainly adds to the English revulsion at human dissection and the related grave-robbing of the resurrection men in the period, discussed in the previous chapter.
34 Houlbrooke, “Death, Church, and Family,” 40.
direct theological significance attached.\textsuperscript{37} The social expedience of burial worked in two ways: for one, a body simply had to be disposed of; for another, the pressing reminder of death could serve as a productive opportunity to discuss the continuing social duties of the living. As such, the second result was that the actual burial itself became increasingly inconsequential. After the Reformation, burial rites did not even require the presence of a priest, and internment (where, in the past, the rites of the liturgy would be read) gained even further distance from its theological trappings.

Therefore, the developing ideas surrounding death and burial from the Reformation to the early-nineteenth century progressed \textit{away} from the theological implications of death and \textit{toward} emphasis on keeping the dead marked, contained, and distanced. It may seem counter-intuitive, but these complimentary movements in English burial played remarkably well with the State Church’s control over burial, as religious rites became re-written as social norms better understood as “fashion” than “religion.” In the hands of the state-authorized church, burial became one more element of control—indeed the \textit{final} element of control—of English sovereignty over its subjects.

All of this, of course, has significant impact on how the doctrine of the resurrection would be understood in the period. The Enlightenment challenge to miracles, mirroring the expanding influence of secularism, made the historically orthodox idea of a raised physical body at the end of time difficult to maintain: the physical resurrection of the dead—just as the resurrected body of Jesus—could easily exist in a world built on divine intervention and room for mystery; as Protestant religious practice a-theologized burial, such miraculous expectations no longer had a foundation. At the same time, grave markings and containment of the dead—

\textsuperscript{37} Gittings, \textit{Death Burial and the Individual}, 40.
perhaps echoing the Protestant belief in an immediate and final transition of a soul into judgment at the dissolution of the doctrine of Purgatory—supported the idea that “resurrection” referred to the transfer of the soul to an eternal hereafter, leaving behind the physical body for good. As such, the physical resurrection of the dead was pushed out of mind, while the rites created to enshrine the doctrine in the *Book of Common Prayer* were mummified as mere empty ritual. With the theological ideas underwriting burial transformed into social mores, the quasi-spiritual approach to death and burial proved amenable to disembodied life in heaven. The resurrection of the physical body could therefore be contained in the resurrection of the *spiritual* body, leaving the buried dead to decompose well underground.

**Raising Cain**

The resurrection of the physical body had a difficult time arising in the setting of the State Church, where the secularization of burial rites had clouded over the theological implications of death, and burial itself collapsed into social practice. This new understanding of burial fit comfortably into the structure of English sovereignty in the period. As I argued in the previous chapter, bodily resurrection had been held by the earliest Christians to be the ground from which believers could resist the oppressive powers of the Roman State: because Jesus had been raised from the dead, no earthly King could control the bodies of his followers. As the relationship between church and state became increasingly entwined over the centuries, the revolutionary potential embedded in the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead faded—rising again only at times of political instability, and when tensions mounted between established systems and religious believers. By the late decades of the 18th century in England, international
conflict, increasingly polarized party politics, revolutions in philosophy, and the profusion of Dissenting religious beliefs opened the potential for the revival of belief in bodily resurrection; however, due to Anglicanism’s proximity to the throne, the State Church (and those aligned with traditional English Christianity) were unable to assert powerfully the orthodox doctrine, leaving it in the hands of those heterodox (and even heretical) systems outside the Church of England. In the State Church, if there is a resurrection, it is spiritual (not bodily), and it is in heaven (not earth). The doctrine of bodily resurrection designed to resist the state had become its servant—a change represented in shifting ideas about death and burial.

In response, I argue, the revolutionary potential of the raised body migrated from theological discourse to literary representation. In this way, the literary convention of an undead antagonist—a convention featured often in numerous Romantic Gothic texts—took up the mantle of resistance to the state’s restrictions on death. If death too had become subject to the King and State, the last act of resistance would be circumventing death altogether.

In particular, I argue the figures of Cain and Abel in Coleridge’s abandoned fragment “The Wanderings of Cain” draw from the orthodox Christian doctrine of the resurrection—absent from the conversations of the Church of England in the period—in order to assert a radical autonomy beyond state power. However, while political resistance can begin to return in Coleridge’s fragment, the text ultimately fails to revive the doctrine of the physical resurrection of the dead.

The fragments surrounding Cain in Coleridge’s notebooks kept during 1797 are remarkably sparse. The handful of entries are fragmentary quips, minor observations and partial commonplace entries, most only a few lines long. In one, Coleridge writes on Robert South’s 1727 sermon “The Certainty of our Saviour’s Resurrection,” an apologetic critique of skepticism
through the example of Doubting Thomas. In South’s sermon, Coleridge notes, “Hume’s argument against miracles is clearly stated & put in Thomas’ mouth—...‘Now surely things suitable to the stated course of nature should be believed before such are quite beside it and for a dead man to return to Life, is preternatural; but that those who report this may be mistaken, is very natural.’” The two concerns of Coleridge’s note—epistemological doubt in the objects of the senses, and bodily resurrection from the dead—circulate through the 1797 poems as well: Christabel, for example, is deceived by her senses to trust the evil spirit impersonating Geraldine; the Mariner, on the other hand, follows conventional expectations of the Gothic wanderer, living in a state of “life-in-death,” a parody of bodily resurrection. While both “Christabel” and “The Rime of the Ancient Mariner” have received a wealth of critical attention, “The Wanderings of Cain” has been largely ignored. The fragment, a mix of verse and prose, picks up the story of Cain well after the biblical narrative leaves off and imagines the now-aged fratricide and his young son, Enos, scavenging through the barren wastes beyond Eden. Despairing, Cain tells Enos of his desire to die—but also laments that even in death he will not be free of the ever-watching, ever-judging eye of God. His lament is interrupted when he and Enos stumble upon a mysterious figure who is by all appearances the murdered Abel. Described as a “shape” with skin “like the white sands beneath theirs feet” (“WC” 217), Abel is no disembodied spirit. Shocked that his righteous brother should not find rest in the afterlife, Cain, bewildered, asks, “Didst thou not find favor in the sight of the Lord thy God?” Abel enigmatically responds, “The Lord is God of the living only, the dead have another God” (217). Cain, already branded a murderer in the books of the “God of the Living,” desires to find this God of the dead, in the

hope that there might be a way of escape from his judgment. The 1828 fragment published in *Poetical Works* closes with Cain and Enos following the mysterious Abel in search of the God of the dead, “silent as the shadows” (217).

In spite of Coleridge’s legacy as imaginative Anglican thinker *par excellence*, there is a good deal in “The Wanderings of Cain” that runs counter to the accepted ideas of Anglican orthodoxy in the period. Coleridge’s “Cain” is a fragment—remains left like dry bones scattered across the valley of the poet’s corpus; but it is possible to anticipate the rest of the story. Scholarly reconstructions of “The Wanderings of Cain” from various unpublished journals have attempted to breathe new life into these dry bones, offering flashes of the narrative’s closing vision: the Shape of Abel is revealed to be an “evil spirit,” as the heavens open and Cain sees the true glorified spirit of his murdered brother “in his angelic appearance” (212 n.1); if only Cain had the presence of mind to see the Shape of Abel for its deception, he would have been able to resist its temptation. But the fragment Coleridge published in 1828 does not end with such final reassurance of the Anglican faith or the certitude of natural theology.

On the contrary, in what was left of Coleridge’s Cain, I believe there is enough to draw out a surprising conflict between the State Church and orthodox Christian theology—specifically between the Church of England’s prescribed burial rites and the orthodox doctrine of bodily resurrection. Critical attention to Coleridge’s theological ideas abounds; however, analyses of Coleridge’s relationship to the Anglican tradition and Christian theology skirt the issue of bodily resurrection. Likewise, criticism of “The Wanderings of Cain” is scarce.\(^40\) I hope to fill this gap

\(^{40}\) For example, Joel Harter’s *Coleridge’s Philosophy of Faith: Symbol Allegory and Hermeneutics* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011) addresses Coleridge’s careful dance between acknowledging the literal history of biblical miracles and a more Enlightenment-resistant emphasis on the “universal wisdom” miracles symbolize (77).
in scholarship by positioning “The Wanderings of Cain” within the context of the tension between the secularized burial of the dead and the doctrine of the resurrection in the period.

Lurking behind Coleridge’s Cain is the figure of the wanderer, a liminal figure beyond the reach of law and reason. The liminality of the Wander, I argue, creates the potential to circumvent the system of state authority that recognizes not even death as its limit. As a character that is unable to die, the wanderer opts out of burial; but, by living in a state of “life-in-death,” he is excluded from the circle of the living as well.

Cain’s wandering shows that transgression beyond the limits of society also reveals a potential to circumvent religious systems. He is both excluded from the realm of the living and unable to find the death he longs for. The fratricide tells his son, “I desire to die—yea, the things that never had life, neither move they upon the earth—behold! they seem precious to mine eyes” (“WC” 215). Already breaking ranks with the status quo, Cain does not push death out of mind; rather, he actively desires it. Furthermore, what Cain desires is not the “Christian” death, complete with rites of burial and disembodied clouds forever after; for him death is to cease from being—a state even he fears cannot exist, since there is no place free from the watchful eye of the sovereign God, the author of his exile. When the Shape of Abel later reveals the possibility of an unimagined god who “had power after this life, greater than Jehovah,” 42 Cain “rejoiced secretly in his heart,” reasoning “The curse of the Lord is on me; but who is the God of the Dead!” Cain’s hope for another God is structured antithetically, punctuated between “the curse


of the Lord” and its negation in “the God of the dead.” That is, if the Christian God was the author of Cain’s curse, perhaps this God of the dead could be his release. The statement here is not a question—it is a declaration, an exultation of the God of the dead’s character rather than just a question of his existence. At last, there is the possibility that the “curse of the Lord” (Cain’s life-in-death exile) might not be the final verdict.

Cain’s desire for this unknown God outside the laws of life and death is also shown through the fragment’s use of silence and language. Cain tells Enos of his agony, “the torrent that roareth far off hath a voice; … the mighty one who is against me speaketh in the wind of the cedar grove; and in silence I am dried up” (“WC” 215). The ever-present voice of God rings throughout nature; but because Cain is excluded from the realm of the living, the language that speaks through “torrents” and “cedar groves” is one he can hear but cannot speak. Therefore, rather than offering a response, he is “dried up” in silence. Conversely, Cain’s own physical appearance speaks a language of its own:

> the mighty limbs of Cain were wasted as by fire; his hair was as the matted curls on the Bison’s forehead, and so glared his fierce and sullen eye beneath: and the black abundant locks on either side, a rank and tangled mass, were stained and scorched, as though the grasp of a burning iron hand had striven to rend them, and his countenance told in a strange and terrible language of agonies that had been, and were, and were still to continue to be. (215)

Conspicuously missing from this description is the notorious “mark of Cain” given by God as a sign of his judgment. In its place—in the silence of God’s mark—is the “strange and terrible language” of Cain’s countenance, agony that “was and is and is to come,” a parody of the
description of God’s authority given in the Book of Revelation. This “language” of Cain tells his story in his own words (or his own absence of words)—through *agonies* rather than judgment. Yet, the text itself cannot speak the language of Cain, just as Cain cannot speak the language of God in nature: where we might expect to find the description of the mark—with his “sullen eye beneath” and his “tangled mass” of rent curls on either side—we find only an oddly placed colon. With the language of the poem controlled by the master of heaven and hell and life and death, Cain the wanderer opts for a language of his own.

The desire for a higher power beyond both the curse of life and the judgment of death is awakened in Cain through another wanderer, the Shape of Abel who evades life and death through what seems to be a kind of death-in-life: the mirror image of Cain, the murdered Abel has already experienced death, and now exists lamenting his lost life. But Abel’s death-in-life seems to promise no better than Cain’s curse. When Cain and Enos first come upon Abel, they hear him lament, “Wo, is me! wo, is me! I must never die again, and yet I am perishing with thirst and hunger” (216). Beyond death, Abel is both “perishing” and yet “must never again die,” trapped without life, and yet without the possibility of rest. Ultimately, however appealing the wanderer’s resistance to power might be, for “The Wanderings of Cain” this struggle is a failure: rather than circumventing the system of power that controls life and death, the wanderer proves to be victim of both death and life simultaneously.

The futility of Cain’s resistance is best shown in an unpublished fragment from Coleridge’s notebooks from 1807. The fragment finds Cain brooding over the body a young boy (presumably Enos—who, if we wish to imagine the spaces between fragments, may have been sacrificed by Cain to the false “God of the Dead”):

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43 Rev. 1.8.
Then full of enthusiastic faith kneels & prays, & in holy frenzy covers the child with sand. In the name of the Father &c &c / —Twas done / the infant died / the blessed Sand retired, each particle to itself, conglomerating, & shrinking from the profane sand / the Sands shrank away from it, & left a pit / still hardening & hardening, at length shot up a fountain large & mighty / How wide its Spray, the rain-bow plays upon the Stream & the Spray—but lo! another brighter, o far far more bright / it hangs over the head of a glorious Child like a floating veil (vide Raphael’s God)—the Soul arises they drink, & fill their Skins, & depart rejoicing.

(214, n.7)

The burial of the child is accompanied by Christian rites that blend deep religious feeling (“enthusiastic faith” and “holy frenzy”) with a superficial and dispensable formal prayer (“in the name of the Father &c &c”). What results seems at first to be the resurrection of the body of the child after burial. The body in the grave sinks and hardens before erupting into a fountain of water with a canopy of spray overhead, reminiscent of Paul’s description of the resurrection of the dead as a seed buried waiting to spring to new life (in a passage quoted above from the Book of Common Prayer’s burial rites). Then, with heaven opened and God waiting above, the soul of the child arises; but before the Child enters heaven, he “fills [his] Skin.” This may be a reference to Jesus’s parable of the wineskins in Matthew 9, but the repeated references to “Sands,” coupled with the numerous connections between “skin” and “sand” in the 1828 fragment, it may be that the “Skin” filled here is more literal. A resurrection of the same body of the child, its “Skin” refilled with a renewed spirit, is an image at home with historical orthodox teachings of the resurrection of the dead.
But these teachings, in the context of the two-kingdoms divided between earth and heaven had already been appropriated and transposed to fit the model of a disembodied heavenly afterlife. Moreover, in the fragment, whatever might have been gained in the child’s resurrection is immediately lost, as the now-glorified child enters into the discontiguous heavenly realm, “then an angel.” The body of the Child, even if raised, is changed again into something spiritual, no longer residing on earth but now in the custody of heaven. Abel’s death-in-life, Cain’s quest beyond life and death, and the child’s graduation into heaven, all in the end fall short of the power imagined by the physical resurrection.

Therefore, Coleridge’s fragment fails to represent the doctrine of bodily resurrection. The wandering Cain, it seems, could not wander far enough into the terrain of radical resistance to the State Church to retrieve what had been buried. On the contrary, the very label “wanderer” shows that the figure had already been circumscribed, albeit circumscribed as a transgressor. In “The Wanderings of Cain,” resistance to the State Church’s control over life and death proves futile. While Cain’s “strange and terrible language” of agony attempts to replace God’s judgment, the state of death in life that it promises cannot, in the end, operate outside of the prescribed boundaries imposed on life and death. Ultimately, what proves to be more radical than circumventing life and death is defeating death through life. But that possibility—however rich in Christian theological tradition through the doctrine the physical resurrection—is rendered impossible within the State Church. Rather, pushed to the edges of Christian thought, the doctrine faded from the church, while wandering figures rose to point yet beyond themselves in literary metaphors, horrifying narrative ruptures, uncontrollable antagonists wandering at the outskirts, “silent as the shadows.”
Coleridge was not the only Romantic author to see the potential in the biblical figure of Cain. In fact, Coleridge seems to have been prompted to publish his own fragment in response to another Romantic retelling of the world’s first fratricide, Byron’s far more popular *Cain: A Mystery*. Coleridge had sent Byron a few lines of his poem in a letter in October 1815; it would not be unreasonable to think that the publication of “The Wanderings of Cain” thirteen years later was a result of the success of Byron’s *Cain*—success, moreover, that partly built from the drama’s charges of blasphemy. It should go without saying, however, that Byron’s Cain is substantially different from Coleridge’s. Beyond the fact that Byron’s play is finished unlike the fragmentary narrative offered by Coleridge, Byron’s psychologically complex Cain draws heavily (and explicitly) from *Paradise Lost*. And, like *Paradise Lost*, *Cain* adds poetic flourishes in the rendering of its characters, and in particular in its sympathetic rendering of Satan. While both Coleridge and Byron found Cain a compelling figure, Byron’s drama takes the structure of its narrative directly from the account in Genesis 4—the rejected offering of Cain and consequent murder of Abel. But this well-known narrative only occupies half of the final act; the majority of the play dwells on the temptation of Cain—already dissatisfied with the post-Edenic world—at the hands of a morally ambiguous Lucifer. The question Lucifer poses to Cain (one he’s already considered) concerns the fulfillment of Adam’s curse at the fall that death would enter the world. The promise not yet fulfilled, Lucifer asks Cain to consider what this great mystery “Death” might be, a temptation that voices and intensifies Cain’s frustration at God and his commands. Trevor Hart sums up Cain’s frustration nicely: “If ‘Death’ (understood now as a synecdoche for all that opposes, pollutes and finally prevents human life and flourishing) is
indeed an evil (as it certainly seems to be), and if (as Lucifer’s guided tour of the history of creaturely suffering suggests) death has a stranglehold on life from first to last, then why the hell (as it were) does God grant us life in the first place? What is he playing at? Struggling with such grand issues, the play’s initial reception was mixed: Hobhouse thought it a failure, Thomas Moore considered it one of Byron’s greatest works, while Walter Scott thought Byron had “matched Milton on his own ground;” but Byron’s liberty taken with the biblical story was bound to ruffle pious feathers. The Bible was not to be fodder for the poetic imagination, but the basis of proper belief. Injecting fiction into the truth of scripture was cause for serious concern. Orthodox minds already caught between Enlightenment critical historiography and Dissenting re-interpretations of the faith would now have to contend with imaginative retellings of both Christianity and the Bible.

It is in this direct attention to orthodoxy that I find Byron’s *Cain: A Mystery* does its most productive work in approaching the doctrine of the physical resurrection. While Coleridge’s “The Wanderings of Cain” showed the failure of the wanderer to overcome the impositions placed by the state on burial, Byron’s *Cain* uses the image of the wanderer to highlight the State Church’s appropriation of Christian orthodoxy. That is, in *Cain* we find the possibility that Christian orthodoxy encompasses far more than the state-sanctioned Anglican tradition.

It is not surprising, then, that *Cain: A Mystery* was immediately labeled blasphemous after its publication by John Murray in late December of 1821. An unsigned review in the *Gentlemen’s Magazine* from the same month called it “neither more nor less than a series of

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wanton libels upon the Supreme Being and His attributes.”

Francis Jeffrey likewise criticized the play for its “argumentative blasphemy” of Cain’s temptation that makes up “the great staple of the piece—and occupies…not less than two-thirds of it;—so that it is really difficult to believe that it was for any other purpose than to inculcate these doctrines.”

As Peter Schock notes, charges of blasphemy were often more perilous for publishers than for authors: “the specific danger [publishers] faced was not fine or imprisonment but the failure to have their copyright protected, resulting in income lost to cheap pirated editions.”

This was to be fate of Cain; in 1822, Murray failed to convince Lord Eldon to protect his copyright on Byron’s drama (the Lord Chancellor was already thoroughly convinced of the play’s theological shortcomings). Paradoxically, however, the official suppression of the text made it far more accessible in unofficial—pirated—forms. Once Murray lost the copyright, other publishers were quick to reproduce their own volumes of the famous Lord Byron’s writings. And the more versions were made available, the more Byron’s fame spread: “For Byron, …the benefits of fame and visibility continued to accrue to him through the circulation of the printed texts even when these texts proliferated illegally.”

In regards to Cain particularly, Byron was of two minds: he challenged one pirated publication of the work as a theft of his own “private property;” meanwhile, he praised another American pirated edition printed “in a small form because in that way…nobody would be prevented from purchasing it.” It may be that while Byron was in favor of the increased share in the overall market his writings could generate through printed copies, he was not in


49 Clara Tuite, Lord Byron and Scandalous Celebrity (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2015), 220.
favor of costing his friend and publisher John Murray profits. Regardless of Byron’s own (inconsistent) feelings, the net result was more of *Cain*, even if less for Murray. To draw a parallel, therefore, the unauthorized proliferation of *Cain* that resulted from its suppression is analogous to the return of the repressed corpses of the English churchyard: as the fashion in burial favored a clearly demarcated containment of the dead (through increased secularization, privatization, coffins, and memorials), the “undead” rose in aberrant gothic forms to haunt the English imagination; in a similar way, the attempted suppression of Byron’s satanic blasphemies served to loosen constraint on the drama’s publication and dissemination through pirated—and now uncontrollable—editions.

In spite of the religious backlash the play generated, however, it is not clear Byron’s *Cain* is actually blasphemous at all. Byron defended his play as, at the very least, more orthodox than Milton’s *Paradise Lost*: “If *Cain* be ‘blasphemous,’” he wrote to Murray, “*Paradise Lost* is blasphemous; … I have even avoided introducing the Deity, as in Scripture (though Milton does, and not very wisely either.”\(^50\) Moreover, the play does recount the events of the biblical narrative, and leads to the same conclusion of the protagonist’s downfall, and for the same reason, pride: “Cain is proud man,” wrote Byron to Murray, “if Lucifer promised him kingdoms etc., it would *elate* him; the object of the Demon is to *depress* him still further in his own estimation than he was before…till he falls into the frame of mind that leads to the **Catastrophe**.”\(^51\) That is, Lucifer’s temptation of Cain hinges on the character’s fatal flaw—his sin (or *hamartia*). The Genesis story offers a similar idea: God warns Cain “sin leith at the door”


when in his offering “he had not respect.”\textsuperscript{52} The author of Hebrews repositions the story not as one of sin, but of faith and righteousness: “By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous.”\textsuperscript{53} The First epistle of John goes one step yet farther: “For this is the message that ye heard from the beginning, that we should love one another. Not as Cain, who was of that wicked one, and slew his brother. And wherefore slew he him? Because his own works were evil.”\textsuperscript{54} From disrespect to sin, to faithless unrighteousness, to evil—Byron’s Cain links these biblical reiterations in one overarching character flaw: Pride. In this way, we might read \textit{Cain} (following Harold Fish) not as an irreligious \textit{challenge} to the biblical text, but rather as “a response to a genuine though hidden dimension of the meaning in the text of the Bible itself. It is not to the overt narrative he is responding but to resonances…which are arguably present in the biblical record, constituting a kind of latent narrative, a subtext.”\textsuperscript{55} In this reading, \textit{Cain} becomes an exercise in biblical interpretation—albeit through the lens of a rather heterodox hermeneutics. What is certain is that Byron’s Cain is a \textit{tragic} figure: he falls. Even when readers sympathize with him, he no less becomes the fratricide destined by the biblical narrative. In spite of the drama’s Satanic tendencies, the biblical narrative wins out: “Cain and his prototype from the Book of Genesis share the mark and the cursed ground from which the blood cries out against the ‘fugitive’ and

\textsuperscript{52} Gen. 4.5-6.
\textsuperscript{53} Heb. 11.4.
\textsuperscript{54} I John 3.11-12.
‘vagabond,’ the perpetual exile … is still a murderer.”

In the words of Arturo Graf, “No matter what you say, you Cain have killed your brother.”

Readers of Byron’s drama, therefore, have engaged Cain through its relationship to Christianity, whether orthodox or blasphemous. It is quite possible, of course, that Byron’s “lapse into orthodoxy” (as Wolf Z. Hirst labeled it) is simply lip service meant to neutralize his moralizing detractors. After all, however “orthodox” the fall of Cain may be according to the biblical narrative, Byron’s added Manichean ruminations between Lucifer and the fratricide about catastrophic prehistories and the eradication of life on earth before God’s human image bearers work against accepted Christian belief. Regardless, even if Byron “does not write as an orthodox devotee, … he does write with full respect for the myth.”

The fulcrum that keeps Byron’s Cain oscillating between the Bible and blasphemy is the historically embedded content that counts as “orthodoxy”—a term that can at once refer to the continued implementation and interpretation of theological traditions as well as the mainline of accepted (or authorized) beliefs in any period. Of course, these two definitions of orthodoxy are neither univocal nor mutually exclusive: at times the mainline of belief intersects tradition, at other times it does not. More specifically, aspects of the complicated web of Christian belief (or any religious belief) can in any era be attached to the trans-historical (or at least historically transgressive) Christian tradition, while other elements might ignore or even eschew tradition. As

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56 Wolf Z. Hirst, “Byron’s Revisionary Struggle with the Bible,” in Byron, the Bible, and Religion, 90.
such, Byron’s psychologically complex, ironic, and subversive dramatization of Cain’s fall may repeat the biblical narrative, but as a whole it was certainly not “orthodox” in the eyes of the State Church, as Lord Eldon’s refusal to exonerate the drama demonstrates. Similarly, as long as the State Church held claim to the standard of “orthodoxy,” many historically orthodox beliefs had to be excluded. The most obvious exclusion would be the wholesale disregard for Catholicism—though, as I have argued, specific doctrines like the resurrection of the dead become significantly mutated as well. There is something more than irony then in Byron’s quip that Cain was “as orthodox as the 39 articles.”⁶⁰ In fact, the statement is quite true.

As I have argued throughout, one key element of Christian orthodoxy lost in the State Church’s dictation of “orthodox” beliefs was the resurrection of the physical body. The doctrine of the resurrection of the dead, having fallen silent in the English State Church, began to reappear outside the boundaries set by Anglican doctrine: detached from traditional Christian dialogues, the resurrection of the physical body could take on distinctively unorthodox registers. We might call the resurrection of the physical body a kind of “wandering orthodoxy”: forced out of acceptable religious discourse by a more enlightenment-resilient and politically amenable disembodied life in heaven, the resurrection of the physical body creeps in from the boundaries in blasphemous, “Satanic” forms. And yet, it is still no less a crucial aspect of Christianity, even when buried by the authorized beliefs of the State Church. The resurrection of the physical body was therefore an orthodox belief that could no longer be expressed in orthodox language. When read alongside the rise of the wanderer in Romantic literature, the physical resurrection becomes strangely perverse. The wanderer is a social discontent, transgressor of the laws of God and man, a dangerous seducer and tempter come to draw others away from the sanctuary of society—and

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as such, the wanderer is unconfined by the structures of life and death. He is unburied, even unburiable, and his deathless life-in-death results in the constant paranoia that he might at any moment return, a shadow in high castle window or a shape on the distant horizon, an unexpected wedding guest or a mysteriously seductive aristocrat. The resurrection of the physical body, cut from the leash trail of Christian orthodoxy, becomes a nightmare parody in the form of the wanderer.

However, in an important sense, Byron’s Cain is not a wanderer—or at least, not yet. He does exhibit some of the key traits—he is isolated, transgressive, charismatic; he skirts the judgment of death and burial; he is marginalized by society, yet his marginalization is precisely what gives his character its power. As Ricardo J. Quinones has said, “In Byron’s Cain …, there will persist something of the accursed outsider, the wanderer outside of the folds of civilization…. The new Cain, while abhorrent to creditable society, has nobility both in him and in his quest.”61 Yet all of this is nascent in Byron’s Cain—the story of his fall is something like a preamble to the wandering that Coleridge imagined. Harold Fisch notes, “with Cain the grand exit of the Faustian hero is denied us, instead we have an ongoing pilgrimage, the beginning of a new history.”62 Still, Cain highlights the wanderer’s own response to his isolation. The wanderer, as I have said, circumvents the system of life and death (the control over subjects, living and dead), and yet longs to know what death is: “Cain yearns for death because…he is overcome by a sense of the futility of life that but leads to death.”63 This same yearning for death is a key aspect in another of Byron’s wandering heroes—Manfred.

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61 Ricardo J. Quinones, “Byron’s Cain: Between History and Theology,” in Byron, the Bible and Religion, 47.
62 Harold Fisch, “Byron’s Cain as Sacred Executioner,” in Byron, the Bible and Religion, 25.
63 Hirst, “Byron’s Lapes into Orthodoxy,” 57.
In *Manfred* we are given a far more complete picture of the wanderer and his dealings with death, burial, and the refusal to be controlled by the limits set by orthodoxy. More specifically *Manfred* extends the wanderer’s ability to circumvent the system of sovereign control through death and burial (as seen in Coleridge’s Cain) to an ability to circumvent the systems of the disembodied afterlife as well. Cain wanders while he is alive, but Manfred, I will argue, is bound to wander even after death. As in *Cain: A Mystery*, in *Manfred* Byron engages in a skeptical criticism of orthodox ideas that repositions the final outcome of the soul’s place after death as an imaginative mystery. While Cain learns the mystery of death through murder and finds himself an outcast, Manfred’s esoteric knowledge enables him to resist the messengers of Hell though not the moment of physical death. That is, while *Cain: A Mystery* concludes with the tragic hero entering a state of “life-in-death,” *Manfred*, we might say, concludes with the tragic hero leaving life-in-death and entering a state of “death-in-death”—a disembodied “afterdeath” to parody the hoped-for disembodied afterlife of the State Church. Moreover, like Coleridge’s Cain, Manfred desires more than the eternal rest promised by the State Church for believers; rather, he wants “Oblivion, self-oblivion,”64 “Forgetfulness—… / Of that which is within me” (*M*, I.i.139-140). While much of the play demonstrates Manfred’s indifference to both human society and spiritual hierarchies, two moments most significantly outline the character’s path: first, the incongruous incantation that concludes Act 1 Scene 1 makes explicit Manfred’s curse to wander without rest; second, the closing act of the play implies that even death will be no escape from the wanderer’s curse.

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The Incantation spoken over the senseless Manfred at the end of the first scene is peculiar. It is spoken by a mysterious voice—the speaker unseen—that at times seems the mere harbinger of the curse, at other times the author of the curse; it is at times sympathetic with Manfred, and at times vindictive and vengeful. The Incantation was published a year before its inclusion in *Manfred*, accompanied by a head note that claimed the verse was part of “an unfinished Witch Drama, which was begun some years ago.” Initial reviews of the repurposed fragment were quick to draw biographical connections between the spurned speaker of the lines and the poet’s failed marriage to Lady Byron. Partly because of its previous life, the Incantation imported the same biographical interpretation with its unaltered inclusion in *Manfred*: an anonymous review criticized the conspicuous inclusion of the incantation, noting that “its introduction here will not repel that interpretation [that the lines are a poetic imprecation against Lady Byron], for the incantation is utterly unintelligible in its present connection.”

“Unintelligible” or not, it certainly seems (as Samuel Chew concluded over a century ago) that “it fits but imperfectly into the context in *Manfred*.” The conspicuous inclusion of the Incantation produces two important results. First, the lines draw attention to themselves as a poetic construction: they alert the reader to the staging apparatus of Byron’s “mental theatre,” in essence exposing the poet’s own creative process by pointing to the drama’s piecemeal construction, as if the playwright himself had wandered on to the stage with pen in hand. As such, the constructed nature of the lines reminds readers to think critically about the various images the poet invokes, and pinpoints the scene as one of particular narrative importance.


Similarly, even the wording of the stage directions shift emphasis toward the Incantation: “A Voice is heard in the Incantation which follows.” Ironically, the speaker of the lines never speaks but passively “is heard,” but only then “in the Incantation.” As such, the Incantation—rather than the passive Voice that is its medium—carries the action of the sentence, even though “the Incantation” is itself part of a syntactically superfluous prepositional phrase. With speaker rendered passive, the prepositional phrase, an ablative of means parenthetical to the structure of the sentence, becomes the focus of the stage direction. Second (and similarly), considering the lines’ previous reception as window into the scandalous life of the poet, the incantation blurs the boundary between the spirit-riddled dramatic narrative and real-life events: the seven spirits of the earth might be just as “real” as the poet’s own biography. Putting these points together, it may be that the “imperfect” placement of the Incantation is precisely calculated to inform the reader of its function as a narrative tipping point, as well as generate a reading that expands beyond the drama itself. For these reasons, the content of the incantation is of utmost importance.

The Incantation invokes images of live burial that erase the distinction between life and afterlife: Manfred, according to the curse, is condemned “Thyself to be thy proper Hell” (M, I.i.257), where “proper” can be considered both as suitable recompense befitting Manfred’s actions, as well as an adjective intensifying the distinct reality of Hell itself—not a metaphorical hell, but “proper Hell.” This proper Hell is the climax of a Manfred’s move from life-in-death wandering to death-after-life wandering. The opening lines characterize Manfred’s life as a momentary flicker of light amid enduring darkness:

When the moon is on the wave,
And the glow-worm in the grass,
And the meteor on the grave,

And the wisp on the morass; (I.i.191-194)

The points of light in darkness—all natural images that enjoy a history of use as spiritual metaphors—are not simply fading, they are dying: the meteor doesn’t burn out, it is “on the grave.” As the language of burial continues, an image of live burial emerges:

Thou art wrapt as with a shroud,

Thou art gathered in a cloud;

And for ever shalt though dwell

In the spirit of this spell. (I.i.208-211)

Though Manfred is still in the flare of life, he is “wrapt as with a shroud”—the common custom of English burial. At the same time, he is “gathered in a cloud,” as Jesus was at his ascension following his Resurrection. Taken together, the two lines invert the resurrection of the dead: Manfred, alive in his body, is wrapped for burial and prepared for ascension into heaven. Yet, no heaven follows for Manfred. Rather, he remains in a state between burial, resurrection, and ascension, as though raised from the dead only to remain entombed. Moreover, the curse states that not only will Manfred’s life be lived as if buried, his death will not be the end: “Though thy slumber may be deep, / Yet thy spirit shall not sleep” (I.i.202-203). Sleep, of course, implies waking, and as such was (indeed, still is) a common metonym to express the division between body and soul at death: Manfred may die, but his soul will not find rest. The language of English burial, enshrined in the Book of Common Prayer and etched on headstones and memorials, calcified resurrection long after belief in the raised body became unfashionable: death as sleep is one of the vestiges of the calcified doctrine. Combined with the “shroud, /…cloud” of lines 208-209, the sleep of the body and simultaneous restlessness of the soul adds the idea of a
disembodied afterlife to the parody of bodily resurrection. Reading “slumber” as a metonym for death helps smooth over a contradiction in the Incantation: here, the curse claims Manfred will “slumber…deep,” yet, the curse concludes, “Nor to slumber, nor to die, / Shall be in thy destiny.” If slumber is death, then it is Manfred’s “destiny” to both die and not die—that is, to live a death-in-life, a life indistinguishable from death itself. Or, said another way, death will not be a reprieve for Manfred’s soul.

Certainly, Manfred does die. If there were any doubt, the stage directions are unambiguous: “MANFRED expires.” But the manner of Manfred’s death reinforces the Incantation’s curse, rather than falsifying it. In the final scene, the Spirit of death—a messenger that bears “the immortality of hell,” with “His face wrapped in a mantle, and his form / Robed as with angry clouds”—comes “unbidden” to retrieve Manfred: “Mortal! Thine hour is come—Away! I say.” However, Manfred rejects the Spirit’s command:

…—Back to thy hell!

Thou hast no power upon me, that I feel;

Thou never shalt possess me, that I know:

What I have done is done; I bear within

A torture which could nothing gain from thine (III.iv.124-128)

Whatever “immortal hell” the Spirit emanates from, Manfred recognizes it is of less magnitude than his own “proper Hell.” The tortures designed by the Spirit’s hell would add nothing to the curse Manfred already carries—hell’s punishment could only be a reprieve. He continues,

I have not been thy dupe, nor am thy prey—

But was my own destroyer, and will be
My own hereafter.—Back, ye baffled fiends!

The hand of death is on me—but not yours! (III.iv.138-141)

Not in thrall to the messenger of hell, Manfred recognizes his own immanent death nonetheless. Manfred’s search for self-oblivion attested to in act 1 is therefore realized, though perhaps not the way the reader may have expected. Manfred’s oblivion is not from himself, but rather in himself. He has made himself his own hell, a hell from which not even death could be a release. However, since he has invalidated himself from heaven, and exceeded the punishment of hell, his soul—given the either-or of punishment or rest in the paradigm of a disembodied afterlife—has no where to go. In this way, the narrative work of Manfred may therefore serve as a kind of thought experiment to expose the limited logic of the disembodied afterlife. Regardless, Manfred’s resistance to the Spirit from hell reinforces the curse of the Incantation: the death-in-life “proper Hell” of Manfred’s own making carries on even after his physical death. The Abbot confirms, “his soul has taken its earthless flight; / Whither? I dread to think” (III.iv.198-199). Therefore, through his curse to wander, Manfred circumvents not only the system of burial wrung through the rites of the State Church, but also the system of heaven and hell such rites are predicated upon.

Rather than directly invoking the physical resurrection of the dead against the tepid spirits of heaven and hell, Manfred generates a parody of resurrection in the form of a wandering spirit, much in the same way as Coleridge’s “The Wanderings of Cain” fragment. Furthermore, Byron uses the wandering of Manfred to critique the orthodox limits placed on the afterlife, a critique that resonates with Cain’s ambivalent treatment of orthodoxy. Manfred imagines a greater Hell—a hell that depends upon the mind of man:
The mind which is immortal makes itself
Requital for its good or evil thoughts—
Its own origin of ill and end—
And its own place and time—its innate sense,
When stripp’d of this mortality, derives
No color from the fleeting things without,
But is absorb’d in sufferance or in joy,
Born from the knowledge of its own desert. (III.iv.129-136)

Manfred’s hell—and the implied counterpart, heaven—is wholly absent of bodies, undistracted by “the fleeting things without.” No external joys or suffering, only abstract things of the mind “born from the knowledge of its own desert,” from the expressed absence of physical sensation. In essence, then, Manfred “out-orthodoxes” Anglican orthodoxy: for a disembodied heaven to have joy, it could only be abstract joy produced from within the mind, not from any external source, like the presence of God, or streets of gold, or the twanging of harps. Byron’s parody, then, provides the extreme opposite of bodily resurrection, an opposite implied—though not expressed—by a truly disembodied afterlife.

**Deadbeat Wanderers, Women Married and Buried.**

The wanderer transgresses the systems of life and death by avoiding burial, and in the process produces a parody of bodily resurrection. He is neither living nor dead, and if by chance his physical death does come (as with Manfred), his transgression only expands to encompass the systems of heaven and hell as well. However, considering the wanderer as a lone figure
beyond the social order also encourages us to forget that before he can exceed social boundaries, he must break his familial and domestic ties. That is, the wanderer must transgress against the family before he can transgress against life and death. For example, in spite of its fragmentary narrative, we gain some idea that the wanderings of Coleridge’s Cain eventually lead to the murder of young Enos, Cain becoming a perverse Abraham sacrificing his fatherly responsibilities and his son at the command of an evil spirit. Byron’s more complex (and complete) *Cain: A Mystery* develops the wanderer’s domestic abandonment to a far greater degree. Cain must leave his wife Adah behind to follow the enticements of Lucifer, even though she pleads with him to stay. “Cain!” She implores, “Walk not with this Spirit. / Bear with what we have borne, and love me—I / Love thee.”67 And later, “as I love thee, my Cain! go not / Forth with this Spirit; he is not of ours.”68 Adah’s pleas posit love as the antidote for the knowledge offered by the Tempter, encouraging him—through language pregnant with domestic resonances—to “bear” the responsibilities of love. Moreover, she articulates a mutual and exclusive right of possession that arises from the love relationship: Cain belongs to her—she calls him “my Cain,” a title grounded in the preceding provision “as I love thee;” Lucifer, she contends, is “not of ours”—not only “not a human being,” and not only “not good,” but not involved in the domestic union of Cain and Adah. Adah’s plea begins from Cain’s domestic duty to his family, a plea he ignores—ultimately, not only to his own ruin, but to the ruin of them all. Cain’s temptation to become a wanderer requires the negation of his duty to his family: before the systems of life and death—the full measure of the social order—can be transgressed, the family must be transgressed against. The equitable marriage based on shared love and mutual right—where Cain and Adah are brought together in unity and freedom—is replaced by a

68 Ibid., I.i.375-376.
relationship of mastery and domination—where Cain dictates the future of his family based on his own desires, and in which they are subjected to his punishments. The first victim of Cain the wanderer then is not Abel, but Adah.

Manfred, too, demonstrates this same abrogation of domestic responsibility, though—as with his entrance into the socially transgressive life of wandering—his abandonment occurs as prelude to his estrangement from the world. As Jeffrey N. Cox writes, “Manfred makes the shocking revelation that the home is not a respite from the horrors unleashed in the gothic melodrama but their source, that the ties of the family themselves involve us in the very fears and desires from which the domestic is supposed to rescue us.” In Manfred’s case, the domestic transgression is doubled: the crime of incest impacts both the sibling and the sexual relationship, while simultaneously indicating his disregard for the social order. Again, as with Cain, Manfred’s sin against society manifests first as an imposition of his own will over and above the needs of Astarte. Before his estrangement from the world as a wanderer, Astarte was “the sole companion” of Manfred, “whom of all earthly things / That lived, the only thing he seem’d to love” (M, III.iii.51-53). However, after the death of Astarte, Manfred’s descent from knowledge to despair follows on the heels of his inability to retain mastery over the object of his sexual desire. His satanic search, likewise, is a search to retain that mastery even after the death of Astarte. When the image of Astarte appears among the sevenfold-spirits in Act 1 Scene 1, Manfred cries out, “I might yet be most happy. I will clasp thee” (198). Just as the sovereign maintained authority over its subjects partly through regulation of burial and partly through reconceptualizing heaven on the model of earth, so too Manfred demands Astarte submit to his beck and call even beyond the grave. And yet, when the phantom of Astarte finally is conjured—

and that only at the behest of the highest of infernal powers—there is the sense that she appears on her own terms. Nemesis recognizes Astarte is beyond his control, “She is not of our order, … / …. Mortal, thy quest is vain, / And we are baffled also” (M, II.iv.132-134). Like the Ghost of Samuel “summoned” by the Witch of Endor (a biblical episode alluded to just two scenes earlier in Manfred), Astarte brings only condemnation for Manfred. Further, her speech is not controlled by the demands of those who raise her: she remains silent until it is in her will to speak, and then only speaks her will, uttering a final verdict without forgiveness for Manfred. Still, Astarte is in no sense “free”—the disembodied spirit conjured before Manfred must first be released “from the grave which enthralled thee” by Nemesis. In death, she is bound by the grave just as in life she is bound by the lust of Manfred—she is overruled in life and contained by the grave in death. Reading Manfred in light of his desire to control Astarte in life and in death brings new meaning to the term “deadbeat.”

Therefore, before the wanderer can circumvent social (and theological) systems of order and control, they must first transgress against women. As such, the gothic use of the Romantic lone wanderer—autonomous, magnanimous, isolated—carries with it a subversive critique of patriarchy, and in particular a patriarchal idea of marriage predicted upon the myth that men do not have to be domestic, that men can skirt familial duties for social engagement, and that men retain mastery over their chattel wives. There is, then, an obvious gender disparity in the way the gothic treats transgressions of men and women: Transgressive men are mysterious and alluring—the wanderer is noble, grand, powerful, a “Count Manfred,” a princely son of Adam; transgressive women are caged, limited, and entrapped. Most commonly, this entrapment is represented by marriage, a sentence of life-in-death for gothic women.
The connections between wandering, marriage, death, and parodied resurrection are most memorably represented in Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein*. The appropriation of the text in early twentieth-century film and popular culture has secured the tale as the Romantic parody of bodily resurrection *par excellence*, in spite of the fact that there are no raised bodies in Shelley’s novel, and the text’s theological engagement with the doctrine is (like *Manfred* and the Cain texts discussed above) much more tangential than direct. Rather, the novel is far more preoccupied with the act of creation than resurrection or reanimation. The text again employs the figure of the wanderer, this time doubled in the mirror-image central characters of Victor and the Creature. Through the nested narrative, both become speakers of their own tales and are able to explain the narrative from their own perspectives. In this reflective relationship, the inverted aspects of each character become more apparent, particularly regarding women and marriage. As a whole, the novel engages with what Johanna M. Smith has called a “bifurcated domestic ideology”: “the home is to provide not only a moral education for involvement in the public world but also a shelter against this world.”

Marriage in *Frankenstein* intersects this domestic ideology, though the Monster and Victor take opposing views on the value of marriage and women. The Creature, for his part, desires a mate for the sake of pure companionship. He petitions Victor, “I swear to you, by the earth which I inhabit, and by you that made me, that with the companion you bestow I will quit the neighborhood of man, and dwell, as it may chance, in the most savage of places. My evil passions will have fled, for I shall meet with sympathy.” The Monster views marriage as an opportunity to be reconciled from his wandering and take his place within the created

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70 Johanna M. Smith, “‘Cooped Up’ with ‘Sad Trash’: Domesticity and the Sciences in *Frankenstein*,” in *Frankenstein: complete authoritative text with biographical and historical contexts, critical history, and essays from five contemporary critical perspectives*, ed. Smith (Boston: Bedford St Martin’s, 2000), 271.

order—not outside nature, but away from human society. While this does ultimately relegate his female counterpart to a domestic role, it highlights the humanizing potential domesticity might allow. He explains, “My vices are the children of a forced solitude that I abhor; and my virtues will necessarily arise when I live in communion with an equal” (150). The monster’s reasoning is structured as an antithesis divided by the semicolon—a common rhetorical feature in the lines spoken by both the Monster and Victor. The antithesis generates a balance between the “vices” produced by isolation and the “virtues” promised through companionship, a companionship—importantly—the Monster predicates upon “equality.” The two parts of the sentence, therefore, balance one another as two halves of a domestic partnership. For the Monster, marriage is not ownership, nor is it for the sole purpose of breeding; it is rather a place that harbors reconciled identities, where virtues can be crafted and practiced. For this reason, the only “children” the Monster imagines to come as the fruit of his marriage is a life without vice. Marriage is, in other words, the ideal home for the love Adah offers Cain in *Cain: A Mystery*.

It is quite telling of Victor’s character that he not only creates the woman for his Monster, but also subsequently destroys it, ripping it literally limb from limb. While the Monster imagines his bride as an equal companion reconciling him to the world in virtue, Victor cannot fathom marriage as anything but an empowerment to men, cannot imagine the woman he creates as anything but an incubation chamber for the children of the Monster through which “a race of devils would be propagated upon the earth” (171). Even the bearing of monster children is rendered passively—“would be propagated”—in Victor’s retelling of the event, showing a complete disregard for a woman’s active role in child bearing. The woman who bears—even the children that must *be* born—is elided in the general, detached, and impersonal propagation of the species. Of course, this is one of the major themes in *Frankenstein*: the overreach of Victor’s
experiments begins from the desire to create life without—or in spite of—the consenting bodies of women. Likewise, Shelley represents Victor’s chasing after the reproduction of life as a sexual violation of nature: discovering the secret “elixir of life,” Victor recalls “with unrelaxed and breathless eagerness, I pursued nature to her hiding-places…a resistless, and almost frantic impulse, urged me forward” (55). The purely carnal pursuit and ultimate violation of nature—always rendered feminine by Victor—underwrites his treatment of the women in the novel. Regarding the Monster’s request for a companion, the only recourse for Victor is to utterly destroy the woman. It is tragic—though should not be surprising—that Elizabeth, the parallel bride of Frankenstein, suffers a similar fate. The Monster’s ominous threat to Victor—“I will be with you on your wedding night”—makes literal the figurative death-in-life marriage that would come of Victor’s continued control over Elizabeth. For Elizabeth, to be married is to be destroyed. Yet Victor, true to character, thinks the Monster’s threat pertains only to himself: he recounts, “as if possessed by magic powers, the monster had blinded me to his real intentions; and when I thought that I had prepared only my own death, I hastened that of a far dearer victim” (195). Here, Victor represents the patriarchal substructure inherent to the gothic wanderer: Elizabeth never enters his mind—the only danger must be his danger, the only joy and peace his joy and peace.

Of course, the Monster’s desire for a companion borders on the same possessive selfishness. It is, after all, only for his own development that he desires a companion, with no thought as to whether the companion would desire any kind of relationship with him. In both cases, then, Frankenstein’s engagement with marriage shows a one-sided relationship. Smith concludes something similar: “it is clear that the novel’s women—who must not only create the
familial sanctuary and sacrifice themselves to maintain it but also be punished for its failures—take the heavier share of the [domestic] burden.”\textsuperscript{72}

Engaging the wanderer’s intersection with domesticity highlights another parody of physical resurrection: the fear of live burial—a mainstay in both contemporary analyses of burial and gothic texts. While “the English never went quite as far as the Europeans, with their public mortuaries and intricate devices allowing an interred ‘corpse’ to summon assistance should he or she wake up,” Julian Litten notes “one abiding fear during the early nineteenth century was that of being buried alive.”\textsuperscript{73} Walker’s 1833 \textit{Gatherings from Graveyards} (mentioned above) records several stories of premature burial in the period. The fear of live burial may rise from the same place as the archetype of the wanderer: the continued deferral of the body after burial. The dead, sequestered and buried deeper in the English cultural consciousness, were bound to return in aberrant (and not wholly rational) fears. In addition to manifesting explicitly in gothic fiction, live burial metaphorically maps on to the nested narrative structure common to the form. Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick admits “it is…tempting to use ‘live burial’ as a structural name for the Gothic salience of ‘within’—as an explanation, for instance, of the deep satisfaction readers get from describing [Gothic narratives] as a story within a story within a story within a story.”\textsuperscript{74} While this temptation threatens to stretch live burial beyond its most relevant uses, one could read the nested narrative of Frankenstein to argue for the “live burial” of Safie at the heart of the novel as well. However, such a stretch isn’t necessary—there are far more obvious instances of

\textsuperscript{72} Smith, “‘Cooped Up’ with ‘Sad Trash,’” 284.

\textsuperscript{73} Litten, \textit{The English Way of Death}, 166.

the Gothic bringing together taphophobia—the fear of being buried alive—with marriage, sitting just on the surface of the narrative.

For example, Eliza Parsons’s 1793 *The Castle of Wolfenbach*—one of *Northanger Abbey*’s seven “horrid novels”—weaves together live burial and marriage. Matilda, on the run from her incestuous uncle and caretaker, Weimar, meets the mysterious Victoria, Countess of Wolfenbach, secretly imprisoned by her abusive husband in the titular Castle of Wolfenbach. Hidden away and presumed dead for decades, the Countess is believed by locals to be a ghost haunting the Castle. After seeking refuge in the castle, Matilda discovers this “ghost” to be a living person—not dead, but trapped, contained, buried in the walls of her own home. Marital containment as live burial becomes more than a metaphor when the Countess tells her complete story. Forced into a marriage with the Count of Wolfenbach, Victoria continues correspondence with her true love, a Chevalier de Montreville; when this is discovered by her husband, the Count murders the Chevalier, and locks both the bloody corpse and the now-pregnant Victoria together in a closet. When she is induced into labor by the trauma, the Count is persuaded to let Victoria out of her shared tomb, but on the condition that she concede to the Count’s demand that she “live a life of horror, but dead to all the world.”

Victoria swears an oath to the Count in a ceremony that functions as a perverse Catholic marriage ritual that she will “never reveal the transactions of this night—never mention the Chavalier’s name, not ever presume to contradict the report [the Count] shall make of [her] death to the world.” Silenced by the marriage ritual, Victoria enters into her own “life-in-death”—one without the freedom enjoyed by her male gothic counterpart, the wanderer. In addition, the gothic use of a double invites readers to imagine the Countess as a mirror image of Matilda, revealing what the latter’s fate may be if she

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76 Ibid.
falls into the hands of Weimar. Weimar, who has recourse to the state apparatuses unavailable to
Matilda, colludes with the French and German ambassadors to England to contain his
niece/beloved in England, awaiting extradition into his care if her parentage cannot be found. In
the eyes of the state, if she belongs to no other man, she must belong to her Uncle. The novel
draws a tight parallel between the anticipated sufferings of Matilda and the remembered
sufferings of Victoria, connecting marriage to live burial both metaphorically and literally.

The Castle of Wolfenbach is not unique in its horrifying depiction of marriage—other
well-circulated Gothic texts of the period draw similar connections between marriage and live
burial. The English translation of Stephanie-Felicite de Genlis’s *The Affecting History of the
Duchess of C****, an excerpt from the much longer *Adele et Theodore* that took on a life of its
own with new editions published into the nineteenth century,⁷⁷ chronicles the harrowing tale of a
woman trapped by her husband “in a subterranean cave” beneath her home. In Genlis’s tale, the
domestic space becomes a tomb—an exaggerated image of bodily containment—overseen by a
husband who is free to come and go in the world as he wills. Likewise, Agnes in Lewis’s *The
Monk*—like Genlis’s Duchess—is confined underground, and—like Parsons’s Countess—gives
birth. Lewis takes peculiar glee in the description of her burial:

Though exhausted, faint, and weary, I trembled to profit by the approach of
Sleep: My slumbers were constantly interrupted by some obnoxious Insect
crawling over me.

Sometimes I felt the bloated Toad, hideous and pampered with the
poisonous vapours of the dungeon, dragging his loathsome length along my
bosom: Sometimes the quick cold Lizard rouzed me leaving his slimy track upon

⁷⁷ See Chris Roulston, *Narrating Marriage in Eighteenth-century England and France*
(Surrey: Ashgate, 2010), 171.
my face, and entangling itself in the tresses of my wild and matted hair: Often have I at waking found my fingers ringed with the long worms which bred in the corrupted flesh of my Infant. At such times I shrieked with terror and disgust, and while I shook off the reptile, trembled with all a Woman's weakness.\footnote{Matthew Lewis, \textit{The Monk} (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 2016), 318-319.}

Lewis’s description is tactile, richly embodied, and evokes at once images of decomposition ("bloated," "wild and matted," "corrupted flesh," "weakness") and physical touch ("crawling," "slimy," "fingers ringed with worms"). The live burial of Agnes gives a tangible sense of what it might \textit{feel} like to decay, giving the reader an opportunity to imagine anew what “death-in-life” might embody. However, it is not a jealous husband that confines her—it is the nuns of the convent of St. Clare. That the Catholic religion would be presented as overbearing, controlling, confining—patriarchal—is not surprising; but Lewis’s move from overbearing men to an overbearing Church adds a level of religious critique. It seems fitting that a parody of resurrection would take the home of Christian tradition as its locus. Lewis’s relocation of live burial from marriage to the Church brings the metaphor full circle back to theology and the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead.

After all, the two ideas—marriage and resurrection—were not isolated in Christian tradition. Jesus had said that in the resurrection, there would be “neither marriage nor giving in marriage.”\footnote{Matt. 22.30.} It was an answer that caught his interlocutors off guard, and would much later come support of slew of assumptions about the nature of the resurrected body—even the idea that the afterlife life is somehow “angelic” in nature (“they will be like the angels,” Jesus had said). Resurrected bodies would have no need for marriage; that is, the purpose of marriage would be swallowed up in reconciled, perfected individuals. If marriage—in its ideal sense in the two-
spheres domestic ideology—was to reconcile men to the natural, created world, then there would be no need for men to be married in the new creation for they would already be reconciled, all-in-all though Christ. Conversely, patriarchal control over marriage exposed the one-sided power dynamic fostered by the traditional domestic arrangement, the arrangement through which women were shrouded from public life and buried in the domestic sphere. However, if there is no marriage in the resurrection, then there are no abuses through marriage either. Of course, the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries saw significant critiques of the imbalance of power in marriage, and marriage itself became a topic of serious contention. But it would be shortsighted to read Jesus’s statement about the absence of marriage in the resurrection merely literally: rather than a denial of marriage, it is a pronouncement that both the purpose intended by marriage and the evils produced through it would have no place in the final restoration of human kind and the created order at the end of all things simply because they will have been outmoded. Therefore, the gothic parody of resurrection in live burial inverts Jesus’s optimistic vision of the end of marriage, using a raised body contained by death to show marriage as “life-in-death” for women. If Manfred represents the far extreme of disembodied life after death, and Cain represents the unburied transgressor that circumvents the system of burial through “life-in-death,” live burial represents those trapped in life by social systems, an inverse of “life-in-death.”

Conclusion

By way of conclusion, I would suggest the horror of the gothic raised body is theologically “uncanny.” It is, as Freud said, “that species of the frightening that goes back to
what was once well known and had long been familiar—in this case the physical resurrection of the dead. Repressed in the theological discourses of late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries, the resurrection of the body resurfaces in the gothic, but now in the form of horror, as a kind of “double” to what had become the sanitized and sequestered disembodied heavenly realm. The double features prominently in the gothic, and often applies to both wanderers and the women they betray. Similarly, Ricardo Quinones reads the enduring interest of the Cain and Abel story in modernity as a result of its compelling use of the double. To move one step further back, we might read the gothic itself—a form of literature that arises in the period—as a kind of “doubled” theology in regard to the doctrine of the resurrection. If that is the case, then, the gothic double directly serves to speak what cannot be spoken of. And because it cannot be spoken of, it must present itself in a distorted, mutated form. Only in this mutated form can the gothic speak—and the same time not speak—of the doctrine of the physical resurrection of the dead. In the gothic, we find a raised physical body, yet it resists doctrinal or theological registers; or perhaps it would be better to say that its doctrinal work is wholly negative: by presenting us with a raised body that resists the doctrine of the resurrection, it calls attention to what the doctrine of the resurrection is not. It is not simply a raised body; it is also not simply life in heaven after death. If it were the former, then there could be no substantial difference between a wanderer (or a vampire, or—in our contemporary contexts—a Zombie; even a resuscitated patient in the emergency room) and Christ; but, while Jesus’s Resurrection extends to all mankind, it is not something that can happen without him. He must be the “first-fruits of the resurrection,” as Paul had said. If, on the other hand, resurrection were disembodied heaven, then there would be nothing “repressed” to return, as the State Church was quite vocal with its

81 Ricardo Quinones, *The Changes of Cain*. 
instructions on how to enter the afterlife. Put into its historical context at the turn of the
nineteenth century, the horror of a raised body haunts a world that had silenced the doctrine of
the resurrection of the dead. Still, the State Church retained the language of resurrection—though
emptied of its connections to the raised body—like a dead letter turned marionette of political
power.

Therefore, the raised bodies of the Gothic do not directly uncover (or retrieve) the
doctrine of the physical resurrection of the dead; but they do begin to point out where we might
look instead to find the refuge to which physical bodily resurrection migrated. The doctrine of
the resurrection within the State Church could not house belief in a raised body; likewise, the
image of raised bodies themselves could not carry the Christian hope. We would do well to look,
then, not for spoken, didactic sermons, nor theological treatises, nor horrific raised bodies in
literature and art; instead, we should expect to find the sharpest representations of the raised
physical body in the period arise in ways that freely engage with Christian tradition either in
spite of Anglicanism’s claimed “orthodoxy,” or beyond it. Bodily resurrection might therefore
best arise in purposeful expressions of silence or in symbolic actions that understand themselves
as imperfect and shadowy representatives of their referent. If there would be a retrieval of the
resurrected body—if heaven and earth would ever come into contact again—it would not be in
speech, but in silence.
CHAPTER III.

SINGING THE SILENT LITURGY:
REMEMBERING THE RESURRECTION OF THE BODY

Tis the day of Resurrection: Earth! Tell it abroad!

The Passover of Gladness! The Passover of God!

From Death to Life Eternal—from earth unto the sky,

Our CHRIST hath brought us over, with Hymns of victory.

—John of Damascus, Canon Ode

Our noisy years seem moments in the being

Of eternal Silence, truths that wake,

To perish never;

—Wordsworth, “Ode”

Remembering his poem “Ode: intimations of Immortality,” Wordsworth confessed to Isabella Fenwick the difficulty he had accepting “the notion of death as a state applicable to my own being.” ¹ This difficulty underwrites the Ode’s tension between the experiences of nature and their remembrance; but, perhaps unexpectedly, it also generates a metaphor for immortality, a metaphor that reworks traditional notions of death and rebirth at a time when the sanctioned theology of the State Church had little to say on the doctrine of bodily resurrection. In his poem,

Wordsworth reproduces the structure of a Christian liturgy, wherein the sacrifice of Christ and the mystery of his bodily resurrection are made present in the function of communal worship—acts of “remembrance” where language is transcended in formal ritual, voicing (as the Ode famously concludes) “thoughts too deep for tears.”\(^2\) It is important to note that Wordsworth’s musings on nature and memory are not the only alternative literary liturgies to arise in the period but participate in a larger body of new modes of Christian religious expression—most notably in the Evangelical movement, evidenced in William Cowper’s contributions to the *Olney Hymns*. Wordsworth’s and Cowper’s liturgical recreations begin to demonstrate the ways in which literature is not only invested in historical religious and theological discourses, but also the ways it challenges and transforms the articulations of orthodoxy. Beyond simply offering a replacement for the State Church’s prescribed worship, these alternative liturgies deconstruct the boundaries placed on theological expression in the privileged Anglican Church in the period. Focusing on the reintegration of heaven and earth, they bring back to life the promise of Christ’s millennial reign to be experienced in the world of the here and now.

Following the concern for remembrance that prompts Wordsworth’s “Ode,” I argue the innovative liturgical expressions of Wordsworth and the evangelical Cowper are best understood in the context of a specific kind of “forgetting” of the doctrine of bodily resurrection in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century Church of England. To reiterate, the Christian doctrine of the resurrection was built on two related hopes: a disembodied rest in heaven was only a temporary state before the final reconciliation of a redeemed soul in her resurrected body. Christ’s resurrection was not only the sign of a future general resurrection of the dead, but also a

sign that the project of God’s new creation had already begun. For this reason, belief in bodily resurrection became the ground from which Christians could resist the power of the secular state, as the raised body of Jesus was the sign that the Kingdom of God had in fact come on earth as in Heaven. At the same time, Jesus’s physical resurrection vindicated his claims as God’s promised King, the Messiah: if the one who defeated death retuned again to life alive, no earthly power could master the bodies of his followers. The allegiance of Christians to Christ the King was validated through his physical resurrection, the promise by which they too would one day rise again. Belief in a raised physical body therefore made heaven and earth contiguous, brought the future hope to the present world, and gave Christians a compelling reason to resist the state.\(^3\)

However, when the church came under the aegis of the state (as was the case in eighteenth-century England), the revolutionary potential of the doctrine was lost as the “Christian Hope” shifted to mean belief in an eternal afterlife among ethereal clouds, a disembodied soul with spiritual wings forever. If Christ was the king of all creation (as he was believed to be), then the so-called kings of the earth (and by extension, George III, King of England) would have to answer to him; moreover, if the power of Christ was made manifest in his bodily resurrection, then the threat of death could hold no power over his followers. But what would become of the Kingdom of England if the Church—the last measure of social cohesion—turned against it? How could George III be king if Christ was king? The simplest solution was the relocation of Christ’s kingdom to the ethereal realm of the hereafter—another world,

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radically distinct from this one. Christ could have his throne in heaven where souls would worship him, but your body belonged to George.

In the previous chapter, I challenged the ways in the State Church laid exclusive claim to the Christian orthodoxy: as an extension of state, the Church of England had a difficult time finding space to articulate belief in the physical resurrection of the body; as a result, the term “resurrection” becomes synonymous with a disembodied life in heaven. This allowed for literary uses (particularly in the gothic) of resurrected bodies over and against the State Church’s decided upon “orthodoxy.” While not authorized by the Church of England, the alternative liturgies of Wordsworth and Cowper participate in a long-standing tradition of Christian orthodoxy not accounted for by the sanctioned practices of English worship. Insofar as both Wordsworth and Evangelical hymnists like Cowper recognized themselves as part of the authorized State Church of England, they remained subject to the limitations imposed on its theological discourse. However, by developing liturgical forms outside the prohibitions produced by the Church of England, Wordsworth and Cowper retrieve the doctrines silenced by the State Church—the doctrine of bodily resurrection in particular.

In this chapter, I will explore how both Wordsworth and Cowper produce a “silent liturgy” that retrieves the doctrine of the resurrection of the physical body. The silent liturgy subverts and supplants the functions of the State Church’s liturgy first by deconstructing the boundaries erected around theological discourse (a labor accomplished in the practice of public singing encouraged by the Evangelicals), and second by circumventing the language of the Church of England entirely through an experience of God predicated on silence (a substitute offered in Wordsworth’s explorations of nature). While nature is the catalyst that motivates Wordsworth’s apophaticism, my argument puts the poet’s mysticism squarely in the context of
the Christian tradition. Critics have long recognized Wordsworth’s use of nature as a pathway to transcendence, a consistent feature in the poet’s corpus that Geoffrey Hartman notably called the “via naturaliter negativa”—nature’s negative way. Hartman writes, “Nature, for Wordsworth, is not an ‘object’ but a presence and a power; a motion and a spirit; not something to be worshiped and consumed, but always a guide leading beyond itself.”

For Hartman, Wordsworth’s “via naturaliter negativa” operates as a self-deconstructing dialectic that propels the poet’s mind away “from its early dependence on immediate sensuous stimuli,” toward a kind of absolute Imagination, a determinate negation sublating the inner life of the mind with the external experience of nature. The mystical ascent, according to Hartman, cashes out at the level of imagination, the synthesis of innocence and experience. Drawing from Hartman, I argue that the imaginative synthesis reached in Wordsworth’s via naturaliter negativa might be recognized as a kind of mystical imagination; that is, the imagination reaching out for an experience at the frontiers of understanding and into the unspeakable beyond, an ascent that culminates not in union with Nature alone, but with the God that created Nature.

Likewise, I will show how Cowper’s hymns (and by extension, Evangelical hymns more broadly considered) circumvent the impositions placed on the doctrine of the resurrection through both their form and their content. In these hymns, the boundaries built between heaven and earth disintegrate; the Christian hope, recast in the ruling theology of the day as an intangible future in heaven, is brought back to the present, lived out bodily in the Church through corporate worship. Cowper’s hymns then operate as a kind of transfigured or perhaps reenacted bodily resurrection. It is no surprise, then, that the public singing of hymns generated an inordinate

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5 Ibid.
amount of controversy in the English Church: Cowper's grammar—as with many Evangelical hymns—shifts the locus of worship from a corporate body to the individual worshipper (Anglicanism had no qualms with hymns, provided they were not practiced as part of the liturgy), while the images produced by the hymns deconstruct the very boundaries that divide public from private spaces, and thus potentially between the power of the established church and the non-establishment views of individuals.

Therefore, regarding my main thesis, this chapter will explore two ways in which orthodox voices can fill the silence surrounding the physical resurrection of the dead, even when confined within the State Church of England: first, in Evangelical hymns and, second, in Wordsworth’s turn to a sacralized nature. While Wordsworth’s “Ode: Intimations of Immortality” deals with anamnesis, I argue the long poem The Excursion employs the via naturaliter negativa to produce a more fully realized traditional (though non-Anglican) mystical Christian liturgy. As with Evangelical hymns, Wordsworth’s “silent liturgy” blends the boundaries between heaven and earth and not only calls into the present the past resurrection of Jesus, but also calls forward to the apocalyptic resurrection of the dead. Again like the Evangelicals, however, Wordsworth’s own position within the English Church limits his ability to articulate the silenced doctrine he retrieves. The practice of the silent liturgy calls from heaven “unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter;” leaving Wordsworth, subject of the English Church, unable to express his retrieval except as an articulated silence.
Anamnesis and Amnesia

In practice, liturgy is any regulated public ritual in which intentionally symbolic actions orient participants toward some overriding absolute—a kind of “master signifier” that James K.A. Smith has characterized as “practices of ultimate concern.”

They are “regulated” as to the when and how often a rite is performed, as well as the boundaries that hedge and define appropriate from inappropriate actions; they are “public” in the sense that they are designed for communal participation en mass, distinguished from private or personal devotion; they “orient participants” by directing the intended aims of practitioners to a greater purpose outside (though not always independent of) themselves—that is, toward worship. Hence, the “ultimate concern” of liturgy locks the relationship between a symbolic action and its meaning.

Dom Gregory Dix, speaking specifically of the Anglican liturgy, writes, “The Liturgy’ is the term which covers generally all that worship which is officially organized by the church, and which is open to and

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7 Rather than Habermas’ instance that public acts are those “open to all, in contrast to closed or exclusive affairs” the public nature of the liturgy functions as an act by which those who are included become identified. The all-inclusive foundation for Habermas’ public sphere might itself be indicative of a liturgical formation, in that a private individual engages in a public conversation, an act by which an identity is formed in relation to an absolute aim (for Habermas, criticism of the State). The potential challenge to public authorities carried with Habermas’ understanding of the public sphere could be useful for understanding how religious institutions might resist state power, but would misrepresent the relationship between liturgical subjects and liturgical authorities.

8 Liturgy is not solely a religious rite—at least, not in any identifiable shape that could maintain a distinction between secular and sacred. Recently, Smith’s work in the vast Cultural Liturgies project demonstrates the ways in which self-professed secular societies implement alternative liturgical forms, creating the same regularized public rituals based on analogous symbols. See Smith, Desiring the Kingdom, esp. chap. 1.
offered by, or in the name of, all who are members of the church.”9 Or, to use Frank Senn’s somewhat self-referential definition, “Liturgy (leitourgia) is the public work performed by a particular group under the leadership of its liturgists (leitourgoi) to enact its view of reality and commitments.”10 Because of the public nature of these orientating rites, liturgies form and are formed by communal identities: borrowing Augustine’s language from The City of God, liturgies reveal loves—the things a group values, and the ends their actions intend to achieve.11

It is in this sense that I read Wordsworth’s religiously tempered poetry as “liturgical”: that, through his effusions on the experience of transcendence in nature poetically rendered through the “wise passiveness” of contemplation, Wordsworth makes public the means by which Nature orients the loves of its lovers toward God. In other words, Nature in Wordsworth’s poetry becomes a liturgical symbol, a symbol that intends to apprehend the experience of God as its “issue of ultimate concern.” Like the Book of Common Prayer itself, Wordsworth’s liturgy arises in response to unique historical conditions: specifically, the English Church’s impotency in articulating the doctrine of the resurrection—the birth of God’s new creation initiated by Jesus’s raised body and culminated in the apocalypse—and the primary means by which human beings can apprehend the renewed world.

Liturgies are fundamentally semiotic rituals, in which practices become symbols reaching for a larger, undisclosed truth. The symbol’s referent can never be mistaken for the symbol itself (such an error would be called “idolatry”); rather, the liturgical rite always points beyond itself,

turning the worshipping body into a medium for a religious, theological, or even mystical belief. Senn clarifies, “symbols expand rather than limit meaning”: “The Christian liturgy … makes ample use of symbolic and metaphorical language simply because sacred reality can only be expressed in images and symbols.”\(^{12}\) Moreover, “Reality is expressed in symbolic language.”\(^{13}\) Senn’s inherently structuralist description of the liturgical sign borrows directly from Ricoeur’s “symbol”—a signifier that opens a reader to larger world of signification, in fact “any structure of signification in which a direct, primary, literal meaning designates, in addition, another meaning which is indirect, secondary, and figurative and which can be comprehended only through the first.”\(^{14}\) This is certainly lurking somewhere quite near the surface of Coleridge’s distinction between symbol and allegory: “a Symbol is characterized by … the translucence of the Eternal through and in the Temporal. It always partakes of the Reality it renders intelligible; and while it enunciates the whole, abides itself as a living part in that Unity, of which it is the representative.”\(^{15}\) The symbol, then, is the window to “the Eternal,” Ricoeur’s “secondary and figurative” referent and Senn’s “sacred reality.” As a series of symbols produced by ritual acts, liturgy finds immediate corollary in linguistic semiotic structures; like structuralism, it seeks to apprehend a specific version of reality through its symbols.

Ultimately, the reality Christian liturgy intends is Christ himself, the link between God and man. Liturgical rites strive to refine and attune the desires of a worshipping body in unison, together drawing them into relationship with the object of their worship, summoning the present

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\(^{12}\) Senn, *Christian Liturgy*, 5.

\(^{13}\) Ibid.


experience of the living God, accessed through the symbolic actions of the church. J.D. Crichton writes,

Christ makes God present to us with all his redeeming power and love and this he did principally in his passion, death, and resurrection. … Christ, then, makes effective among human beings the self-giving of God, who calls and urges them to respond to him in self-giving of faith and love through the word and sacrament of the liturgy. In the dialogue that is set up, in the exchange that takes place, we meet God and are able to enter into union with him; which is the end-purpose of all worship.¹⁶

So, Christ—particularly through his actions on the cross—is the representation of the link between the liturgical subject and the absolute, the union between God and man. However, the way in which the Christian accesses Christ—the symbol of her access to God—is through another symbol, taking the bread and wine of the Eucharist. The Word becomes symbol in sacrament. For this reason, “the Eucharist becomes the culmination and center of Christian worship.”¹⁷

As such, the primary aim of the Eucharistic ritual is to bring Christ before the worshipping body in the very moment of the sacrament. This is explicit even in the rite’s first occurrence: Christ tells his disciples at the last supper, “Do this in remembrance of me.”¹⁸ St. Paul reminds the Corinthian church of the importance of this ritual, and warns against participating in the ritual in “an unworthy manner,” partaking of the bread and wine and leaving

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¹⁷ Ibid.
off the *remembrance* of Christ: “when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, ‘This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me.’” The Eucharist, then, from its earliest formulation in the church, is about *anamnesis*—more than just remembering, but unforgetting—an anamnesis of the life, death, and, importantly, the resurrection of Jesus. Crichton notes, “when Christians celebrate the liturgy, they encounter Christ in his passion, death, and resurrection and are renewed by it. … By the liturgical mystery we are actualizing the past event, making it present so that the saving power of Christ can be made available to the worshipper in the here and now.”

Senn, too, links liturgy to anamnesis: he writes, “the sacramental celebrations connect us with the memory of the past (*anamnesis*=reactualization).” In liturgy, then, anamnesis is more than just a mental activity, but is the means by which present brings the past back to life, through the bodily action of ritual worship. Anamnesis is then itself suggestive of resurrection—the body of Christ called forth in the body of the believer, as the body of believers together consumes the sacramental symbol. Hence, “anamnesis” is equal to “reactualization,” the means by which the present retrieves the past as a reminder for the eschatological hope in the future. Crichton concludes, “when we are talking about the liturgy as mystery making present the reality of the past events of Christ’s redeeming work, we are talking about anamnesis.”

Christian liturgy is, then, formalized worship through which the founding events and theological concepts of the Christian religion are recalled through the acts of the body, with

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19 1 Cor. 11.24.
22 Paul himself uses his call for worthy anamnesis amongst the Corinthians as preface to his admonitions to present life, culminating in his formative teaching on the resurrection of the dead in 1 Corinthians 15.
special attention placed on resurrection. That is, the “un-forgetting” aim of liturgy provides the opportunity for the resurrection of Christ—and hope for the eschatological resurrection of human beings—to rise again before our very eyes.

If the purpose of Christian liturgy is in fact to effect anamnesis, the story of the English liturgy in the eighteenth century is a story of amnesia—where the call to “unforget” is itself forgotten. In the eighteenth century, a number of historical factors converge in the English Church, creating the conditions that effectively silence the doctrine of the resurrection. First, pressure from political radicalism and reactionary conservatism put the state-sanctioned church (historically a conservative institution) in a peculiar place: both radicalism and conservatism find resonance in Christian doctrine and theology so that, to avoid being seized upon by political partisans, the Church fell relatively silent on some key issues, even when those issues were enshrined in its liturgical rubrics. Simultaneously, trends in philosophy (and the backlash they created) found their way into the formalized ritual practices of the English Church. According to Bryan Spinks, increased influence from Newtonian and Lockean theologians “led to a sub-trinitarian doctrine and near-memorialist understanding of the Eucharist.”

Further, Nonjuroring Jacobites in the High Church and enthusiastic evangelicals in the Low Church both sought to reform the Anglican liturgy to match better their own ends. The result was that liturgy in England—especially during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries—was tossed about in a whirl of changing trends and fashions, and has since become “an example of what happens when culture too aggressively dictates worship.” The tension from these competing factions was compounded by the rising tide of Dissenting traditions, some recognizably orthodox, others

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25 Ibid., 252.
openly heretical—none committed to the *Book of Common Prayer* or the sanctioned forms of English worship. Finally, in spite of these difficulties, the Christian religion remained through Anglicanism a pillar of English society. Amid the various controversies and conflicts, Spinks notes, “the Georgian Church was in many ways alive and healthy, and responded well to the challenges it faced in a changing society.” Because of the Church’s place as a bulwark of English national identity, emphasis in worship was placed on comportment rather than theological content—as in all things, worship must be practiced with decorum. The confluence of political instability, liturgical variation, and religious ubiquity resulted in an ever-shrinking vocabulary available to Anglican expression, such that the language surrounding the physical resurrection of the dead was simply buried. The result was a reshaping of the doctrine of the resurrection that shifted the weight of the Christian hope squarely to the disembodied afterlife. Rather than including a raised physical body at the end of time, “resurrection” in this transfer became a term that referred to the process by which a soul leaves the physical world entirely and enters the radically discontiguous heavenly afterlife. Any mention of “resurrection” in the State Church’s documents or liturgy would be interpreted by this definition.

The amnesia suffered by the eighteenth-century English Church is, ironically, one of the major criticisms the Reformers levied against the Catholic Church some two centuries prior—a criticism that persisted in English anti-Catholic rhetoric as “superstition,” the repetitive practice of liturgical rituals performed without awareness of the larger reality they are designed to access. In essence, liturgical symbols are rendered empty signifiers when their movements are no longer recognized in relation to the objects they are created to call to mind; they become the “unworthy manner” of taking the Eucharist while neglecting the remembrance. Put differently, if the liturgy

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26 Spinks, *Liturgy in the Age of Reason*, 252.
depends upon the relation between a signifier and a signified, it is open to the kind of slippage we know from structuralist semiotics: the cohesion of the signifier/signified relationship slips, putting the meaning contained by the sign—and its primary function of apprehending reality—in jeopardy. The signs of the liturgy—the bread, the wine, the water of baptism—are supposed to point to the larger Sign of Christ the God-man, himself “the Word,” the divine logos; the meaning of the sign is therefore deferred. When Christ the Word himself is present in the Eucharist, the deferral stops; but when the Church is unable to speak of a Jesus alive bodily in the present moment, the dead body that rises in the Eucharist is deferred to another symbol, the sacrifice of Christ; to another, the need for repentance or atonement or forgiveness of sins, or any number of other symbols that unfurl infinitely, reality slipping further beyond our grasp.

However, that the resurrection of the physical body was forgotten did not mean the doctrine was lost. The language of the English Church could not express its meaning, and it was therefore unable to deploy powerfully the doctrine into the discursive space rendered in late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century England. The signifier of the Eucharist could no longer attain the reality of the resurrection; but, freed from its symbol, the doctrine haunted Christian praxis, surfacing as a silent and obvious absence—making its specter known by its inability to be spoken. In this way, bodily resurrection moves from the realm of spoken or “cataphatic” theology, to the realm of mystical or “apophatic” theology. Kieran Flanagan characterizes this transformation from spoken to silent as a hallmark of theological systems after modernity: “Vitalizing this negative experience, this sense of God’s absence, draws man back to the spirituality of the desert, except this time the void operates in the center of social relations.”

Left at the center of Anglican liturgy was a gaping absence that fostered in its place an apophatic—silent—engagement with mystery: “thoughts that lie too deep for tears.”

While the paradigm for Christian apophatic theology developed early in Christian history, it is not until Maximus Confessor, a seventh century Byzantine monk, that apophatic theology moved into liturgy. One of the few post-Nicene Eastern fathers recognized as an authority in both Easter and Western Christendom, Maximus acknowledged that while the content of the divine mystery can never be adequately articulated, “mystery” is not itself silent; and if it can be put into the inherently slippery structures of words (as in the writings of the Desert Fathers), it may also find voice in the more resilient structures of ritual. What better way to speak silence than in pantomime—an apophatic rite, a silent liturgy? Writing at a time of significant conflict in Christian theology, Maximus maintained a high view of the divine nature of Christ, just as the tides of Monothelitism threatened to sweep Chalcedonian Christology away, the initial charges that earned him the title “Confessor” were, tellingly, focused on his supposed treason to the state, rather than his theological views. For Maximus, the object of the Eucharist was indeed the resurrected Christ; however, the divine nature of Christ, the unfathomable otherness of the transcendent God invested in the flesh and blood of a human being (what Kierkegaard would much later term the paradox of the God-man), was well beyond the reach of human intellect. Still, this did not mean the mystery of Christ could not be known. Drawing from the already accepted (and increasingly influential) pseudonymous writings attributed to Dionysius the

28 The Monotheletist (and related Monoenergist) factions rested on a seemingly benign view of the incarnation—that Christ was empowered by two “energies,” one human, one divine. The belief has roots in gnostic versions of the God-man, a figure not brought in harmony in Christ, but as the spirit of God in the flesh of man. As such, the death of Christ was the death the human body; the resurrection the return of God that had been trapped within it. At its root, Monotheletism not only challenged the Chalcedonian doctrine of Christ, it also challenged the eschatological implications of the doctrine of the resurrection.

Areopagite, Maximus theorized that understanding at its most basic is a kind of open-ended potential based on the physical, biological life of a person. Appropriating Plotinus, Maximus begins at “active life”—the sort of understanding all living things share. Beyond this, humans share with higher animals a form of “intellect”—the active mental capability of processing data, and acting on the conclusions drawn. But one stage beyond intellect (a realm of understanding unique to human beings) is the divine life—the place where man embodies his original vocation at the dawn of creation, to be the image of God. Just as intellectual life moves beyond and sublates active life, so divine life moves beyond and sublates intellectual life.

For Maximus, the liturgy of the Christian Church is the means by which a human being can advance beyond the intellect into the realm of divine knowing, a process known to the Eastern Church as “divinization.” However, since language exists at the level of intellect, the dialectic ascent into divinization cannot be contained in speech or symbol. Any attempt to reduce the divine into the intellectual life is quickly out of its depth. In the Ambigua to Thomas, Maximus speaks of the failure of words to express the experience of divinization: “Faith alone can grasp” the mystery of Christ, “honoring in silence the Word, concerning whom the nature of created beings has not a word to say.” Jaroslav Pelikan further notes that Maximus’s mystical ascent produced “a genuine understanding, but one that appropriately expressed itself ‘in silence’ rather than in words.” While the intellect cannot grab hold of the divine life, the motions of

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30 The influence of Neo-Platonism in Christian Theology predates Maximus; but Maximus was to the first to reconcile the two in a harmonious Christology: Pelikan writes, “What Maximus achieved was nothing less than the restoration of the balance between Neo-Platonism and Christian orthodoxy in a Christocentric piety whose roots lie deep in the Cappadocian tradition.” Pelikan, Introduction to Maximus Confessor: Select Writings (New York: Paulist Press, 1985), 6.


liturgical rites, aware of their own perverse inadequacy to articulate (and at the same time oriented toward) the God who is “that than which nothing greater can be conceived,” can reproduce the steps by which worshippers themselves can enter into a first-hand experience of the divine. The rites of the liturgy produce quite literally a *via negativa*: these rites can only be expressed in silence—in absence, in negation. When collapsed into language, into the intellectual life, word and referent become a kind of shadowy analogue, prone to failure and idolatry.

Maximus writes, “In particular [the Christian liturgy] signifies, for the faithful, the theological rivalry with the angels in faith; for the active ones, it symbolizes the splendor of life equal to the angels, so far as this is possible for men, and the persistence in the theological hymnology; for those who have knowledge, endless thoughts, hymns, and movements concerning the Godhead which are equal to the angels, so far as humanly possible.”

The silent liturgy therefore functions as the means by which an experience of God is retrieved from systems of failed language. In the same way, having lost the resurrection in the English liturgy, a “silent” liturgy might arise to reconnect Christian worshippers to the raised body of their devotion. Of course, the state-endorsed Church of England would have a difficult time making room for an alternative ritual practice, much less a practice that fosters the return of the “crisis every human temporal thing” preempted by the resurrection. In fact, the English State Church would even go so far as actively to resist forms in which the subversive doctrine reared its head, holding the rock tight against the tomb.

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33 Maximus Confessor, “The Church’s Mystagogy: in which are explained the symbolism of certain rites performed in the Divine Synaxis,” in *Select Writings*, translated by George C. Berthold (New York: Paulist Press, 1985), 210.
O, Rend the Heavens

In 1819, Thomas Cotterill, the recently appointed curate of Saint Paul’s Church in Sheffield, submitted to his congregation a book he had written; the congregation, in response, was so offended they submitted an appeal to the Diocesan court at York for a violation of church rights. The book in question: Cotterill’s *Selections of Psalms and Hymns for Public Worship.*

That the Cotterill case reached the Diocesan court at York is unusual; but the events at Saint Paul’s are emblematic of the national attitude surrounding the place of hymns in the English liturgy, in spite of—or perhaps because of—the growing popularity of hymn collections. On the surface of the controversy, the emotional expressions of personal piety vocalized in hymns affronted the eighteenth-century church’s sense of decorum in liturgical practice, as did the insistence that hymns be sung publicly by the whole congregation. As Evangelical hymnody became ever more ubiquitous, the tension mounted between what had been sanctioned by the state-authorized church as the official liturgy and the lived practice of a vastly growing number of English Christians.

It is at the level of practice that the hymn is able to do its most significant work, where the written word is transposed onto singing flesh. In performance, the hymn is comprised of two distinct parts, both of which are needed to account for the range of its possible meanings: first, the written word, its content, grammar, syntax, and poetic form; and second, the congregational

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singing of the church body. It is not surprising that these elements also made up the core of the hymnody controversy of the period.

The practice of Evangelical hymnody in the late-eighteenth century carried a great deal of potential to subvert structures of power. This subversion, I claim, surfaces in the collision between the subjective, introspective lyrical content and the public congregational singing performance. These two elements make up the primary resistance to the inclusion of hymns into the liturgy of the Church of England and are the points most often cited in both defenses and critiques of hymnody during the period.\textsuperscript{36} The lyrical content of Evangelical hymns makes use of accepted religious concepts and expectations prevalent during the period; but through the act of congregational singing, the hymns begin to imbue those concepts with new meaning. The hymn’s capacity for first-person grammar puts emphasis on the individual worshipper (complying with the official State Church position that hymn singing should be restricted to private practice only), while many of the images produced by the hymns deconstruct the very boundaries that divide public from private spaces. Therefore, Evangelical hymns make use of eighteenth-century restrictions on worship to eclipse those very restrictions.

Spanning roughly one hundred years of unsanctioned production, Evangelical hymns have a relatively standard structure. Therefore, William Cowper’s contributions to the \textit{Olney Hymns} may serve as paradigmatic hymnological texts that exemplify the limits of orthodox theological expression in the period. Cowper’s \textit{Olney Hymns} subvert the limits placed on theological expression by deconstructing the boundaries between king and subject, differing social classes, and heaven and earth.

\textsuperscript{36} See McKart, \textit{The Matter and Manner of Praise}, chap. 1.
The shift from written poetry to sung hymn imbues Cowper’s first person singular grammar with a subversive quality, able to undermine both civil and ecclesiastic structures. Cowper’s hymns most often utilize a first person singular lyric voice—and not without reason: one of the expressed purposes of evangelical hymnody was to capture moments of personal experiences with God and to translate those experiences to the congregation. That is, hymns were designed to affect anamnesis, the reactualization of a past (though intensely personal) experience of God. Uniquely, Evangelical hymnody attempts to expand the intensely personal and singular experience into a rite of public corporate worship, transforming the hymnographer’s quiet trail carved walking with God into a highway any number of pilgrims might follow. That is, hymnological anamnesis translates the private and personal experience of a hymn writer into public and congregational embodied worship. The unidentifiable speaker of the hymn—the “I” assumed by the singing congregation—effectively dislodges the hymnographic text from its submission to the author, and simultaneously distributes itself on the congregation as a whole.

J.R. Watson, in the most significant analysis of the English Hymn, writes, “The voice of a hymn is an example of Foucault’s idea that ‘all discourses endowed with the author-function’ possess a ‘plurality of self.’ And with the plurality of self, there is inevitably a plurality of interpretation. Hymns combine a strict discipline of form with a surprisingly open discourse.”

But the deconstruction of self and other can occur in a hymn even when the “I” of the text does not figure prominently, as with “Jehovah-Shalem—the Lord Send Peace.” The hymn begins,

Jesus, whose blood so freely stream’d
To satisfy the law’s demand;

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By thee from guilt and wrath redeem’d,

Before the Father’s face I stand. 38

Here, the hymn begins with Jesus as its subject; but the syntax is immediately interrupted by a parenthetical qualifier that reminds the singer first of the sacrifice of Christ and then of the need of his atonement “to satisfy the law’s demand.” The parenthetical statement acts as a reminder to the singers of the theological ground on which they stand, but also delays the introduction of the speaker until the end of the stanza. This delay transforms what in the first line appeared to be an active sentence with Jesus as its subject, to an inverted construction with the speaker’s “I” as the subject, enabling a transference of emphasis—from Jesus to the singer—without undermining the agency of Christ (it is still he who “redeem’d” “from guilt and wrath”). As “Jesus” in line 1 is replaced by the passive speaker of line 4, Jesus and the speaker become locked in a cross-shaped chiasmus. Importantly, as the hymn progresses, the speaker fades even more from the lyrical content, which focuses instead on both the sacrifice of Christ and the conflict his reign must bring about for believers on earth. The distinction between self and other is eroded as the passive “I” of stanza one is eclipsed by the anticipated suffering of all saints redeemed only in the hope that the crucified (but surprisingly unrisen) Jesus will triumph in peace:

To reconcile offending man,

Make Justice drop her angry rod;

What creature could have form’d the plan,

Or who fulfill it but a God? (“JS” 5-8)

In this second stanza, the speaker fades from the text almost entirely, replaced by “offending man” awaiting unification through reconciliation, and the ineffectual “creature” unable to anticipate the scope of the atonement. In the performance of congregational song, the singular “I” of the hymn is assumed by the plurality of singers, just before being jettisoned altogether in the vision of Christ’s suffering and sovereignty: “Peace, by his injured Sovereign wrought, / His Sovereign fastened to a tree” (15-16). The hymn concludes with the re-emergence of the speaker, and the bold pronouncement that the “horrid league” (21) of those who “hate the soul that hates his sin” (20) “cannot quench thy love to me, / Nor rob me of the Lord my peace” (23-24). As the congregation sings and the plurality of voices attribute to themselves the same “me” and “my,” the distinction between oneself and another no longer holds.

By extension, the practice of hymn singing decomposes the division between higher and lower classes. Part of the resistance to congregational singing in the 18th century English church stemmed from the emphasis on “decorum” in liturgical affairs. An abstract term, decorum was in fact often employed to restrict church music to either expensive organs or well-trained boys choirs—to the decorous, the howling of the congregated rabble was by no means a suitable expression of religiosity. Wealthier urban congregations could easily acquire expensive organs and the musicians trained to play them, as well as experienced choirmasters to train young singers; the lace-makers at Olney, on the other hand, had no access to these extravagances. The liturgical rule of decorum was therefore mediated by wealth, effectively excluding poorer rural parishes—like Olney—from participation. With the move toward hymns, the Evangelicals did not seek to overthrow the need for decorous worship, but simply to change what counted as “decorum.” By removing the need for expensive organs, Evangelical worship was not dependent

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upon wealth or regional influence. The practice of congregational singing represented in Cowper’s hymns challenged the social hierarchy of class and affluence by rewriting the underlying and often unspoken assumptions of liturgical conventions without denying the need or accepted truth of those assumptions. Decorum would remain the guiding principle of liturgy, but would no longer be dependent upon class or wealth; rather decorum was the orderly engagement of each individual churchgoer, and to be decorous was to be personally involved in the worship of God. As such, the hymnologic form and its emphasis on congregational singing had the potential to un-write the class distinctions erected in the Church of England.

Similarly, Cowper’s hymns collapse the hierarchical structures of authority built on the opposition between a weak self and a powerful other. The hymn “Jehovah Jesus” in book 2 of the Olney Hymns directly connects the Christian believer with the sovereign Christ through salvation. The hymn contains a number of references to the reign of Christ, attributing to him kingly epithets such as “The great Supreme” (“JJ” 4) and “Almighty ruler” (10). However, stanza four shifts from praise of the divine attributes of Jesus to the acknowledgement of his greatest claim to authority, “Salvation.” Cowper writes, “Of all the crowns Jehovah bears, / Salvation is his dearest claim” (13-14). Whatever claims to regal authority belong to Jesus by virtue of his divine nature are eclipsed by “the crown” of Salvation. This authority does not simply ascend into heaven, but remains on earth as the followers of Jesus continue to undergo suffering. In the final stanza, the body together sings, “He will not fail, he cannot faint, / Salvation’s sure, and must be mine” (23-24). Salvation, the symbol of Jehovah-Jesus’s claim to regal authority, “must be” (the hymn concludes) awarded to his followers on earth. Therefore, all who suffer and are saved—all who sing—have a share in the unassailable sovereignty of Christ

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40 Cowper, “Jehovah Jesus,” in Olney Hymns: 189. Hereafter cited in text with line numbers as “JJ.”
the King. The co-rulership of the singing congregation is likewise explicitly brought up in the prophetically voiced “Lovest Thou Me?” where the speaker channels the very voice of Christ himself: “Thou shalt see my glory soon, / When all the work is done; / Partner of my throne shalt be.”41 In singing hymns, the lace-makers at Olney claim the authority of Christ the King: just as the distinction between self and other disappears, the recognition of one man ruling another disappears as well.

But Cowper’s hymns go beyond subverting political constructs, and push even further to challenge ecclesiastic authority as well. One of Cowper’s hymns “on occasional subjects” in book 2, “On Opening a Place for Social Prayer” puts the boundaries of church authority under scrutiny by showing the expanding presence of God on earth. The hymn begins,

Jesus, where’er thy people meet,
There they behold thy mercy-seat;
Where’er they seek thee thou art found,
And ev’ry place is hallow’d ground. 42

Here, the “hallow’d ground” where the presence of God resides expands from the cover of the Ark of the Covenant in the Holiest of Holies in the tabernacle (the “mercy-seat”), to the places where God is actively sought after, to literally “ev’ry place.” The excessive use of elision in these lines is uncharacteristic for Cowper: the compression of syllables in “wherever,” “every,” and “hallowed” forces the lyrics into the rigorous metrical pattern of the eight-beat (long meter) hymn. The restriction of the lyrics to a determined meter collides with the lyrical content that plays on the breaking of ecclesiastic boundaries: just as the church body is not bound by the

walls of the church building, so too the meaning of the words of the hymn are not bound by their elided formal restrictions. The hymn goes on to offer a glimpse of heaven in the act of worship: “teach our faint desires to rise; / And bring all heav’n before our eyes” (“SP” 15-16). Having expanded the prospect from which one gains a clear view of heaven, the singing congregation is able to “rise” to receive a vision of the afterlife in the present—“heav’n” in the here and now “before our eyes.” The expansion makes one final move in the hymn’s conclusion: Cowper writes, “Oh rend the heav’ns, come quickly down” (23). At last, the hymn recognizes the singers do not ascend to heaven through their unified praise, but rather heaven itself descends to earth. The image of the veil of the sky torn asunder and the abode of God resting on earth echoes the great apocalyptic scene in Revelation 21, in which the New Jerusalem—the City of God that has no boundaries—descends from above. The curtain that once confined the presence of God in the Holiest of Holies splits from top to bottom, and the singing church now beholds the presence of Heaven in their midst, without regard for the divisions of society into civil or sacred. Written for the occasion of “Opening a Place for Social Prayer,” the expanding motion of the song shows that any place—indeed all places—are potential sites for the invasion of heaven on earth. The hymn posits that the presence of God is not confined to a church structure; even more so, it represents the rending of the division between heaven and earth.

Cowper’s hymns are paradigmatic examples of the silent liturgy’s subversive work. Through the tension produced by congregational singing within the established church, Evangelical hymnody found room for reclaiming unauthorized—though not unorthodox—theological ideas, demonstrating that the radical potential within Christian doctrine could be turned against the church itself. Subverting the social, political, and spiritual divisions imposed by the Church of England, the singing of hymns generated conditions conducive to a more
mystical expression of Christian religion, one less susceptible to the historical limitations within English Christianity. Since the Eucharist could no longer symbolize belief in bodily resurrection in the Church of England, the public corporate singing of hymns became an apt practice to carry its liturgical mantle. Like traditional Christian liturgy, hymns require a physical act of the body that at once looks backward (either to the life and work of Christ or to the hymn writer’s experience of Christ) and forward (toward final salvation and reconciliation), opening a breach where the Kingdom of Heaven could establish itself in the here and now. In the late eighteenth century Church of England, the appropriated language of resurrection (where “resurrection” meant “a disembodied soul’s life in heaven”) interrupted the worshippers’ bodily actions in the liturgy; the Evangelical practice of hymnody had no need to make use of those appropriated signifiers. Therefore, the use of hymns in corporate worship carves a space for the silent liturgy to arise by uprooting the hedges built against the union of heaven and earth within the State Church, a space primed for the return of bodily resurrection through the embodied ritual of singing.

The Faith that Looks Through Death

Much like the theology of the Evangelical hymnists, Wordsworth’s theology is best understood in an orthodox Christian tradition that extends beyond the borders of the Anglican rubric. While Wordsworth certainly saw himself as a part of Church of England, the structure of his theological beliefs was colored by the various discrete and multiform traditions swirling in
the atmosphere of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century England. More directly, Wordsworth’s poetry—and in particular the *via negativa* found in the experience of nature—sounds the orthodox practices of Christian mysticism, and does so by sending out a call to remembrance.

Certainly, Wordsworth’s most direct statement on anamnesis comes in “Ode: intimations of Immortality.” Modern criticism on the poem stresses the historical context of the ode, which allows the specific religious surroundings of the poem to surface. William Ulmer, for example, reads the poem as an expression of Wordsworth’s early Christian orthodoxy, while Stuart Curran, from a different perspective, notes the religious roots of both the hymn and ode structures, certainly something known to Wordsworth. However, critics have been loath to put the themes of recollection and religion in dialogue with the Church of England, an institution the poet himself both belonged to and was critical of.

As it is in Christian liturgy, remembrance is a central motif of the Ode: the speaker begins,

There was a time when meadow, grove, and stream,

The earth, and every common sight,

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46 Wordsworth was baptized, married, and buried in the church, and adhered to a number of its fundamental precepts (hence, e.g., the *Ecclesiastical Sonnets*); but was also openly critical of its structure and leadership (hence, e.g., the “Letter to the Bishop of Llandaff). For more on Wordsworth’s place in the church, see Laura Dabundo, *The Marriage of Faith: Christianity in Jane Austen and William Wordsworth* (Macon, GA: Mercer Univ. Press, 2012), chaps. 1 and 4; for more on Wordsworth’s resistance to the Church of England, see Heidi J. Snow, *William Wordsworth and the Theology of Poverty,* chap. 5.
To me did seem
Apparel’d in celestial light,
The glory and the freshness of a dream.
It is not now as it has been of yore;
Turn whereso’er I may,
by night or day,
The things which I have seen I now can see no more. (“O[II],” 1-9)

Following the syntactic break in line 5, the stanza turns with a negation in line 6, where the “glory and the freshness of a dream” is “not now.” Yet, as the line continues, the recollection of the former “glory” returns as the grammatical formation shifts to the present perfect tense, “as it has been of yore.” For the purposes of the metric line, the past perfect “had been” would have sufficed; but the present perfect tense “has been” conveys the sense that the “celestial light” of “every common sight” persists even now, though inaccessible to the poet. The shift from past perfect to a negated present reverses at the stanza’s close, delaying the negation until the end of line 9: “The things which I have seen I now can see no more.” The grammatical transfer establishes the Ode’s theme that the magnificence of nature endures, even when it is no longer accessible to the speaker. However, in the void of the present “what has been” returns in the poem as an expression of loss, an unspeakable absence.

The closing lines of the poem repeat this same tension between remembrance and silence. Though the speaker moves toward reconciliation with the world through the faculty of the imagination, the reunion is never reached in the text itself. Rather, reconciliation is pushed back,
deferred beyond the poem’s end, just out of reach of both speaker and reader: the poem ends, “To me the meanest flower that blows can give / Thoughts that do often lie too deep for tears” (205-206). Recalling nature, the speaker encounters something that can be known, but not articulated, leaving him only with “thoughts...too deep” to resolve in any kind of expression, even “tears.” By maintaining recognition of a lost sense of grandeur in the world, the poem performs what amounts to an unspoken—indeed, unspeakable—retrieval. While there is not a return to childhood, the immediate connection with nature is revivified—made new with life again—precisely in the present awareness of its absence. Drawing on Wordsworth’s note to Isabella Fenwick, the poem ties the problem of “death as a state applicable to one’s own being” to an act of remembrance.

Initially, critics contemporary to Wordsworth read in the poem anamnesis of a different sort, aligning the famous turn at stanza five with Plato’s statements on the preexistence of the soul: “Our birth is but a sleep and a forgett / The Soul that rises with us, our life’s Star, / Hath had elsewhere its setting” (“O[II],” 58-60). James Montgomery, as a prime example, famously attacked the poem for its profession of “the doctrine of pre-existence, (a doctrine which religion knows not, and the philosophy of the mind abjures).” Early criticism from the


likes of Montgomery prompted Wordsworth to be more vocal about the poem’s meaning. His assessment of the Ode to Isabella Fenwick (mentioned earlier) notes:

> To that dreamlike vividness & splendour which invest objects of sight in childhood every one, I believe, if he would look back, could bear testimony…but having in the Poem regarded it as presumptive evidence of a prior state of existence, I think it right to protest against a conclusion which has given pain to some good & pious person that I meant to include such a belief.

While preexistence does figure into the poem, Wordsworth claims its purpose is metaphorical: “I took hold of the notion of preexistence as having sufficient foundation in humanity for authorizing me to make for my purpose the best use of it I could as a poet.” Earlier, in a January 1815 letter to Catherine Clarkson, he writes, “This poem rests entirely upon two recollections of childhood, one that of splendour in the objects of sense which is passing away, and the other an indisposition to bend to the law of death as applying to our own particular…"

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50 Peter Manning, drawing on Lionel Trilling’s observation that the biographical “simulacra” of the poem should “dictate at least [criticism’s] opening moves,” emphasizes the ubiquity of Wordsworth’s commentaries: “Who now can read the poem without an intervening consciousness of the poet’s own glosses on his work, those later simulacra of its meaning: the Isabella Fenwick note of 1842-3, with its invocation of Enoch, Elijah, and Platonic myth, … or the 1815 letter to Catherine Clarkson explaining the poem?” Manning, “Wordsworth’s Intimations Ode and Its Epigraphs,” in *Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 82, no. 4, (1983): 526.


52 Ibid. Coleridge, too, dismissed the idea the Ode propounds preexistence—going so far as to question Plato’s belief in the theory as anything other than a metaphor. In *Biographia Literaria*, he writes that readers of his old friend’s poem “will be as little disposed to charge Mr. Wordsworth with believing the platonic pre-existence in the ordinary interpretation of the words, as I am to believe, that Plato himself ever meant or taught it,” Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria*, (London, 1817), 2: 120-121.
Wordsworth found in preexistence a metaphor for immortality based on the remembrance of a “dreamlike vividness & splendour” with a universal “foundation in humanity”—a metaphor that would serve as a response to his own apprehensions about the “law of death.” He would later recall the feelings that prompted the poem were rooted in a refusal to “believe that I should lie down quietly in the grave, and that my body would moulder into dust.” His own assessment of the poem, then, metaphorically links immortality with remembrance—anamnesis—taking recollection of the past as hope for the future.

Still, the future hope (retrieved through anamnesis) lies beyond the scope of what can be spoken in the poem. While “nothing can bring back the hour / Of splendour in the grass, of glory in the flower” (“O[II],” 180-181), the speaker consoles himself in “what remains behind”:

In the primal sympathy
Which having been must ever be,
In the soothing thoughts that spring
Out of human suffering,
In the faith that looks through death

In years that bring the philosophic mind. (184-189)

The “faith that looks through death” functions as both the source of religious action as well as religion itself—it is both “faith” in power of belief, and belief in the power of “the faith.” Faith (or “the faith”) renders death transparent, enabling the speaker to see “through,” into the future reconciliation of the mature “philosophic mind” and “the splendour of the grass, of glory in the


flower” enjoyed in youthful innocence, but only by looking back to the “primal sympathy” between man and nature—a future hope produced in remembrance of the past. Yet, the poem itself is a product of the “philosophic mind,” that which sees the world “through death;” it is the living spirit written in the dead letter. At the same time, however, death becomes the lens “through” which reconciliation must be mediated. Therefore, the “philosophic mind” finds consolation in “the faith that looks through death,” and—paradoxically—the “Immortality Ode” uses death to recall in the present world of the speaker an image of man and nature reunited after death.

Wordsworth’s “faith that looks through death” in the “Intimations Ode” anticipates many of the themes of silence and resurrection in his long poem, *The Excursion*. By virtue of its length, *The Excursion* offers an even more robust liturgical turn derived from the experience of Nature, a worship that uncovers the doctrine of the resurrection outside the confines of the established church: literally, in nature, one can find at work the glories of heaven, an experience uncovered through Wordsworth’s explicit use of “silence.” This turn to silence (and to the faith that fills it) also links the poem strongly to Cowper. In the poem, the experience of nature generates a new liturgical rite, one that attempts to fill in the holes worn in the liturgy of the Church of England. As with Evangelical hymns, this liturgy revives the subversive challenge to political authority that arises with the physical resurrection of the dead, and reshapes a non-dualistic marriage between earth and heaven, aspects of the earliest forms of the doctrine.

First published in 1814, Wordsworth began the poem as early as 1798, and continued revisions until its final republication during his lifetime in 1843. The poem, celebrated by the Victorians as the prime example of Wordsworth’s religious poetry, demonstrates the role of Nature in worship. Part of the sprawling project *The Recluse*, *The Excursion* was designed as a
“philosophical poem, containing views of Man, Nature, and Society.” The poem’s narrative establishes a clear expectation for resurrection to appear at the end, though this expectation is never explicitly fulfilled. The narrative follows the countryside meanderings and nature-infused musings of a traveling merchant called “The Wanderer,” and his companion “The Poet.” The main thrust of the poem deals with the efforts of the Wanderer to redeem a reclusive hermit, The Solitary, a character who has lost faith in both God and Man. In the poem, The Solitary stands in for the disillusioned set of early nineteenth-century English radicals, who had been disappointed by France’s failed Revolutionary promise, a failure made far more acute by the still fresh Napoleonic Wars. On one level, the poem is about reconciling the injurious effects the French Revolution had levied on a number of English subjects, who had been looking to France a few decades earlier as a beacon of Enlightened government and human freedom. The Wanderer and the Poet find the disappointed Solitary in self-imposed exile from human society, hiding away in a remote valley. Here, Wordsworth goes to some lengths to represent the valley of The Solitary as an allegory for death—the land is “a tumultuous waste,” a “savage region” (TE II.345-346), “So placed,— to be shut out from all the world! / Urn-like it was in shape, deep as an Urn” (II.352-353). The narrative further works toward an expected resurrection, as the Solitary joins the Wanderer and Poet on their journey, soon coming to a country churchyard, where another of the Wanderer’s friends (“The Pastor”) recounts the various sorrowful stories that lie beneath the grassy graves in the churchyard. The majority of the narrative is occupied by these stories of loss and death, ironically offered in an attempt to revive the Solitary’s hopes and end his despair.

Yet, in spite of all the poem’s heart-wrenching stories of personal tragedy, the subtle-interweaving of burial metaphors, and extensive graveyard musings, the text explicitly resists resolution, reconciliation, and especially resurrection. Though the poem points toward resurrection through both its themes and narrative, by the conclusion of the poem, no resurrection has taken place—the promise proffered by the text seems never to materialize. It is perplexing that a poem so preoccupied with departed saints, Christian piety, and transcendent, eternal beauty would not include any direct discussion of the central doctrine that draws them all together—bodily resurrection. Rather, the poem ends with emphasis placed on its own silence, as the characters leave the beauty of nature “In mute composure” (IX.756). Silence pervades The Excursion; but what is remarkable about silence in the poem are the contexts in which it arises. While meandering through the graveyard, the Poet, Wanderer, Pastor, and most often the Solitary let their discourse resolve in silent moments of calm reflection or intense emotion, but then strive to collapse those moments back into articulated speech, “to the silent language giving voice” (V.187). In the churchyard, silence always falls into language, though never into the language of resurrection and the Christian hope (disembodied or otherwise). Yet, when the troupe goes outside the confines of the churchyard and into the unconfined space of nature, they experience silence of a different kind—a silence that resists articulation—as they “gazed, in silence hushed, with eyes intent / On the refulgent spectacle, diffused / Through earth, sky, water, and all visible space” (IX.610-612). Within the walls of the churchyard, silence rushes into language; in the context of nature, the thoughts that language would proclaim can only be articulated as expressed silence. As with the English liturgy, the doctrine of the resurrection lies just beneath the surface of The Excursion, pushing language to its limit as if waiting to break out upon the world like a body from a tomb.
Both the English liturgy and *The Excursion* find themselves silenced on the same point—the resurrection of the body. And yet, it is here that *The Excursion* takes the opportunity to raise the doctrine to the surface through expressly articulating its silence. In the poem’s final book, the characters travel with the Pastor and his family off the church grounds to experience the beauty of nature. Here, as in the “Ode,” Nature becomes the direct medium through which one can experience God, though only as “the faint reflection of [his] face” (IX.626). Nature is not the object of worship; rather, it is the means by which God reveals himself to man. The Wanderer describes the revelation of God’s transcendent power in and through nature as an “Active Principle”:

“To every form of being is assigned,"

Thus calmly spake the venerable Sage,

“An active Principle:—howe’er removed

From sense and observation, it subsists

In all things, in all natures, in the stars

Of azure heaven, the unenduring clouds,

In flower and tree, in every pebbly stone

That paves the brooks, the stationary rocks,

The moving waters, and invisible air. (IX.1-9)

Recalling the Apostle Paul’s message to the philosophers at the Areopagus that in God “we live and move and have our being,” the Wanderer’s “active principle” infuses all things, both eternal as the “stars of azure heaven” and fleeting as the “unenduring clouds.” It moves from unreachable heights to the lowly “flower and tree,” encompassing both “the stationary rocks”

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56 Acts 17.28.
and “moving waters.” This image draws together the unlikely juxtaposition of Jesus’s parable of the wise and foolish builders and the philosophy of Heraclitus. In Matthew’s Gospel, Jesus concludes his Sermon on the Mount by proclaiming that the one who builds upon the foundation of his teaching is like a “wise man who built upon the rock,” a foundation unmoved by the flowing flood waters; Heraclitus, on the contrary, used the image of a flowing river to show the transience of all things: “all things [are] perpetually flowing, and…nothing [has] any permanent subsistence.” The Active Principle is involved in both the historically transcendent object of religious knowledge—the rock—and the historically contingent modes of expressing that knowledge—the river. It is present in both the unchanging foundation of Christ’s teaching and the ever-flowing dictates of history.

Still, the Active Principle is said to be “reverenced least, / And least respected in the human Mind” (TE IV.18-19). While it imbues and animates all things, it is obscured by the pressing constructions of modern life (regulated constructions like, for example, the authorized liturgy of the State Church). Only in the unconfined open spaces of nature is this Active Principle revealed. Just as epistemological and political constructions fetter the free expression of theology, the freedom afforded in nature allows for the direct apprehension of the Active Principle, a kind of “resurrection” from sub-discursive silence.

Importantly then, the experience of the Active Principle is not one that can translate into language. Trapped by the constraints placed on articulation, the Poet laments,

—Ah! that such beauty, varying in the light

Of living nature, cannot be portrayed

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By words, nor by the pencil’s silent skill;
But is the property of him alone
Who hath beheld it, noted it with care,
And in his mind recorded it with love! (IV.513-518)

The beauty of nature and the experience of God it affords cannot be grasped by language; and yet it is through language that Wordsworth calls out to the reader to go experience unfettered nature for her or himself. Language, then, is only a partial failure—it fails to carry the message, but succeeds to sending the call. Making a similar point, theologian Karl Barth a century later would write discussing the resurrection of dead, “Theology really signifies an enterprise that is impossible to man.... Let us prepare for partial failure from the start.”

Finally, and most directly related to the bodily resurrection of the dead, the last scene of the poem finds the group of characters high on a mountain prospect, the sun setting behind them illuminating the valley below, turning even the church spire above the treetops blood red. The apocalyptic imagery of the scene leads the Pastor “in holy transport” (TE IV.613) to offer a closing prayer: “That paradise, the lost abode of man, / Was raised again: and to a happy few, / In its original beauty, here restored” (IV.714-716). The resurrection—unable to be spoken in the confines of the churchyard—finds its closest approximation in the rapturous moment of sunset, the eschaton of day. Therefore, while the doctrine of the bodily resurrection is not explicitly present in The Excursion—indeed, cannot be represented in the form of the poem—it is accessible to those “happy few” who wander into nature, the pure and unrefined expression of God himself. Here, where there are no churchyard walls or carved memorial stones to mediate the meanings of life and death, we find the characters basking in the transforming glow of the

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58 Karl Barth, The Resurrection of the Dead (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2003), 118.
setting sun, not a heavenly life after death, but the transformation of physical bodies and a restoration of the earthly Garden of Eden. A far cry from the disembodied hope of “the future life” in a far off heaven that was endorsed by the State, Wordsworth’s poem draws the “lost abode of man” into the present moment, “here restored” and “raised again” to new life—the past remembered and reactualized in the present. This is an experience apprehended by the bodies wandering through Nature, a marriage of heaven with earth. The resurrection offered by The Excursion—however indirect—is one that does not forget the physical body.

Therefore, The Excursion does not reflect the failure of bodily resurrection or restoration, but the failure of language to articulate the silenced doctrine. Still, the poem offers a negative statement of the doctrine, where silence expresses what can’t be spoken. However, because of the limitations placed on religious expression by the English State, even this via negativa must happen outside the confines of the official church walls and property—it must happen in nature. Finally, the Pastor concludes his prayer, “though in whispers speaking, the full heart / Will find a vent; and Thought is praise to Him, / audible praise, to Thee, Omniscient Mind” (IV.749-751).

Even when it cannot be spoken, Wordsworth’s silent liturgy speaks “in whispers” what could not be mentioned in the State Church. Unable to voice the doctrine of the resurrection in the language of the English liturgy, The Excursion makes use of its own inability to speak as the grounds from which the buried forms of Christian belief can again rise.

**Conclusion: Retrieving the Resurrection**

The doctrine of the resurrection had always been polysemic. Resurrection referred to Christ’s risen body after crucifixion, referred to the hope for a future general bodily resurrection,
and referred to an intermediary disembodiment that spanned the moment of physical death to the future return to a renewed physical life. That is, the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead was so positioned as to look forward by looking backward, already inaugurated in the Resurrection of Jesus though not yet consummated in the resurrection of all humanity, quilting what had been and what will be together in the fabric of a believer’s present hope. The present affirmation of both the past and future resurrections contained in the doctrine generated the potential for resistance to all other systems of power (systems always situated in the historical present).

Moreover, not coincidentally, bridging past and future in the present was also the function of the Eucharist, and the aim of the liturgical rites built to encase it. The English State Church in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century did not deny the doctrine of the resurrection any more than it denied the practice of taking the Eucharist (indeed, it could not retain its claim to orthodoxy if it did); rather, it was forced by the historical parapets raised during the tumultuous period to affirm only one aspect of the resurrection’s polysemia—the heavenly rest of the disembodied soul.  

In response, I have argued, the aspects of the resurrection rooted in the physical body (and therefore the aspects most pertinent to the here and now) are redirected in Anglicanism into apophatic registers—mystical expressions of silence and absence. The most evident site of this redirection occurs in the liturgy, and the alternative “silent” liturgies that arise in the period. Cowper and the Evangelicals write hymns—public corporate singing—to supplement (and subvert) the limited language of the State Church, deconstructing the barriers

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that limited the Church of England; while Wordsworth employs the experience of God in Nature, spaces unfettered by the structures of the State Church.

Of course, much more could be said about the effects of the “silent liturgy” offered by Wordsworth and evangelicals like Cowper, not to mention the far-reaching implications of such a significant (though subtle) shift a central Christian doctrine. While I have focused my attention on the relationship between civil authority and theological expression, there are a number of other ways the subversive work of Evangelical hymnody could be of use to historians and literary scholars. For one, we need to explore the role hymns play in preparing the Evangelical community in England to stand behind abolition. Jeffrey Bilbro notes that while Evangelicals were slow to adopt antislavery reform, “the theology of the movement, which ‘emphasized man’s burden of personal responsibility, dramatized the dangers of moral complacency, and magnified the rewards for an authentic change of heart,’ contained the seeds of later anti-slavery rhetoric.”60 In what ways then does hymnody—with its deconstruction of self and other and movement away from social hierarchies—help to till the soil of the abolition movement? How might contemporary (or ancient) hymnody carry on (or anticipate) some aspect of this same “silent” subversion? Similarly, how might resistance to authority in hymnody collide with the rule of “decorum” in the emergence and acceptance of women preachers in the eighteenth-century Methodist movement, or contemporary religious debates on gender roles and identities? How might each of these religiously grounded causes tap into the revolutionary potential of the doctrine of physical resurrection? On the other hand, what might become of the doctrine in enthusiastic religious moments unmoored from the Anglican church? I have argued the Evangelicals who self-identify as members of the Church of England resort to a “silent liturgy”

in the face of the limited liturgical expressions available to them; but what of those who have no need (or desire) to remain loyal to the State Church, or any church at all for that matter?

As for Wordsworth, reading *The Excursion* as an alternative liturgy demonstrates that Christian orthodoxy is a wider world than can be attested to by the Anglican rubric. Indeed, Heidi J. Snow warns against “theological imprecision that reduces the diverse religious landscape [of Wordsworth’s England] into a single ‘Christianity’ and disregards the complexity of the theological landscape.”

Thinking broadly about Wordsworth’s theology puts the poet in dialogue with a number of religious practices inside and outside the English Church—most notably the burgeoning (and increasingly influential) production of Evangelical hymns. Richard Brantley has noted a parallel between Wordsworth’s poetry and Methodism, a key site of hymn production, examining the similar theological themes and religious practices. Wordsworth’s silent liturgy is not at odds with Christian tradition broadly considered, nor is it inconsistent with a number of alternative Christian liturgies forming contemporary to Wordsworth; however, it does reflect a growing concern during the period that the sanctioned liturgy of the Church of England had ceased to engage the hearts and minds of the worshipping people. We might think of Wordsworth in this regard as pursuing a path parallel with John Wesley. Like Wordsworth, John Wesley had a complex relationship with the English Church: while he certainly saw the need for widespread reform, he never considered himself apart from the Church of England.

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63 Wesley’s amendments to the 39 articles for the freshly-formed Methodist churches in American (and his appointment of Thomas Coke as an overseer, who had already been divested by the English Church authorities for his excessive “enthusiasm”) certainly complicate his relationship to the State Church. One possible conclusion would be to say that Wesley was submitted to the Church, but not to the Empire.
The formative adage of Christian doctrine holds true for Wordsworth as for the Evangelicals: “lex orandi lex credendi”—the rule of prayer is the rule of faith.

At the very least, expanding the notion of Christian orthodoxy beyond the Church of England highlights the friction produced by the collusion of state and church. As I have argued, English political theology after the Reformation was quick to fuse the terms “orthodox” with “Church of England;” recognizing these terms may not be synonymous begins to uncover the doctrines and practices silenced by the Church’s collusion with state power, and gives insight into the tangled web of signifiers left available—and those rendered unavailable— for the articulation of Christian belief. If the State Church lays claim to orthodox language while its very relationship to the state hinders its ability to speak, what becomes of orthodox Christian doctrines—especially the doctrines that resist state authority—like the resurrection of the dead? If language be destroyed, what can the poet do? The formation of a silent liturgy—acts of the body done with symbolic purposiveness oriented toward what is known to be unspeakable—voices indirectly what cannot be spoken. The body of believers singing songs together, the excursion into nature where wonder awakens a desire for reconciliation—the unique liturgical practices of the Evangelicals and of Wordsworth—circumvent the limitations placed on theological discourse, retrieving silenced doctrines, even when there is no language available to house their return. The silent liturgy—distinct from the sanctioned liturgy of Church of England—raises to life again the doctrine of the physical resurrection of the dead, a doctrine buried in, of all things, the church.
CHAPTER IV.

PROMETHEUS AND THE RESURRECTION

Christianity is now the established religion: he who attempts to impugn it, must be contented to behold murderers and traitors take precedence of him in public opinion; though, if his genius be equal to his courage, and assisted by a peculiar coalition of circumstances, future ages may exalt him to a divinity, and persecute others in his name, as he was persecuted in the name of his predecessors in the homage of the world.

—P.B. Shelley, “Letter to Lord Ellenborough”

William Godwin, in his pseudonymous children’s book of Greek Mythology *The Pantheon*, wrote of the “magic and enchanted” staff of the god Mercury and its power over life and death: “when it touched the dying, their souls gently parted from the mortal frame: and, when it was applied to the dead, the dead returned to life;” correspondingly, “it had also sovereign power in appeasing quarrels and controversies: if the God touched with it two mortal enemies, they instantly began to regard each other with eyes of affection.”¹ Mercury’s control over life and death and his “sovereign power” to resolve arguments both speak to the god’s authority over the written word: “quarrels and controversies” are always tangled up in symbolic representations and the misapprehension such representations facilitate. Disagreements are a function of language—and particularly problematic is language rooted in past traditions, where words once rich with resonant meaning decay into half-remembered rites and rote performances.

In this way, an awakening of language—“as from a resurrection,” as Shelley would phrase it in his *Defense of Poetry*—could reconcile even “mortal enemies.” For this reason, Godwin continues, “[Mercury] is said to be the inventor of letters; and his Greek name, Hermes, is derived from a word in that language which signifies ‘to interpret’ or ‘explain:’ in this quality Mercury is the God of eloquence.” Further, “the wings which this God annexed to his feet [are] emblematic of the wings which language gives to the thoughts of men.” The image of Hermes as hermeneut had been well known since the middle of the eighteenth century: James Harris titled his 1751 “philosophical inquiry into universal grammar” with uncharacteristic simplicity *Hermes*. The linguistic “universal system” under investigation in *Hermes* attempted to discover a kind of neo-platonic structure to language, giving primacy to general ideas over specific words. Harris’s most lasting contribution was to recognize “peculiarities specific to a given language reflected the historical experience of the people speaking it.”

Though Harris’s linguistic theory never caught on with the practitioners of biblical interpretation in the period, it nonetheless anticipates many of the developments in hermeneutics in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Schleiermacher, for example, first characterized the process of interpretation as a “hermeneutic circle,” wherein the text itself provides the keys to understanding its own symbols. Paul Ricoeur over a century later reinterpreted this hermeneutic circle to include a theory of action. For Ricoeur, the text itself expands beyond the written word and envelops the individual subjects that interpret it, subjects who themselves are understood

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4 Ibid.

through a symbolic network established by the world that surrounds them. A text needs a reader to read it, and a reader needs a community to be legible, leading Ricoeur ultimately to a hermeneutic approach to action. Therefore, the interpretation of the symbols in a text must always encroach on the world that surrounds it, as the context gives the key to reading the readers who read the text. As such, the promise of Mercury’s staff—that it would both reconcile “quarrels and controversies” and bring the dead letter to new life—are reconciled in Ricoeur’s hermeneutics of action: to understand the disputes between people, one must become immersed in their world.

However, Hermes (or Mercury) was not the only figure associated with the invention of writing. Bell’s New Pantheon, an encyclopedia of mythical figures published in 1790, cites the titan Prometheus as the father of language: Bell writes, “Having discovered a multitude of arts, Prometheus invented letters, as the means of perpetuating them, and as an assistant to Memory, the mother of the Muses…. The interpretation of dreams, all sorts of augury and divination, he is said to have been master of.” Famous for his insubordinate assistance to mankind against oppressive Olympian gods, Prometheus as the father of language sits comfortably with Prometheus as the bringer of fire: both writing and technology are given as a boon to mankind. The resurrecting power of Mercury’s staff can be read therefore as Prometheus’s “assistant to memory”—both draw up from the past things forgotten. Moreover, both Mercury and Prometheus use their life-raising gifts to better human kind. In this chapter, I will explore the relationship between resurrection and hermeneutics, focusing specifically on the relationship between P. B. Shelley’s drama Prometheus Unbound and the figure of Jesus Christ. In particular,

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I argue Shelley rewrites Jesus Christ outside the confines of the Christian Church, effectively reproducing Jesus as a mythological symbol for use in his arsenal of poetic expression geared toward reconstructing a more equitable, more peaceful world. That is, Shelley removes Christ from the web of symbolic context rendered by the interpretative world of the Church, thereby allowing the symbol to carry again the resonances lost within that context. Shelley brings about this re-writing of the Christian symbol by diving the figure of Jesus Christ in two: “Jesus,” the historical human being and moral teacher that was executed by the Roman government (with whom Shelley will align Prometheus the suffering titan); and “Christ,” the theologically fabricated “God-man” through which the Christian Church has perverted the moral teachings of Jesus (with whom Shelley will align Demogorgon, the shadowy god of the earth). By removing Jesus Christ from the controlling religious context of the State Church and relocating him in a different context, Shelley is able to retrieve the resurrection of the physical body, a key element of Christ lost in Anglican orthodoxy.

Of course, Christological discourse would be deeply implicated by the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead. As I have argued throughout, the main element of the symbol of Jesus Christ, the physical resurrection (and the eschatological implications it carries with it), was effectively silenced in the state authorized Church of England in the period, and better understanding the doctrines surrounding Christ may help us better grasp how Christian belief was shaped by this silence. By reading Christ outside the Christian paradigm in Shelley’s drama, the physical resurrection is free to reemerge with all its challenges to political hierarchies.
Christ and the Christian World

Defined by the Christian religious tradition, the symbol of Jesus Christ served a central purpose. In a Trinitarian framework, he was both fully God and fully man. The deity of Christ served as the ground for the effectiveness of his sacrifice—only one without sin could serve as a worthy payment for the sins of humanity, and only God could be without sin. At the same time, his humanity was a necessary precondition for the sacrifice of Christ to be effective for man. Similarly, Christ could not be the “first fruits” of the resurrection from the dead—really could not have died in the first place—without being fully human. These were the beliefs of the earliest church, enshrined in the creeds, elaborated upon at length in theological discourse, and implemented in English religious practice through the *Book of Common Prayer*. As part of the Eucharist services, churchgoers would repeat the Nicene Creed, which reads in part

> We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ,
> 
> the only Son of God,
> 
> eternally begotten of the Father,
> 
> God from God, Light from Light,
> 
> true God from true God,
> 
> begotten, not made,
> 
> of one Being with the Father.  

The hypostatic union—the complete merging of the two natures of Christ, divine and human, without mixture or confusion, yet contained in one person—was the distinguishing feature of

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Trinitarian Christology, and therefore was a central part of orthodox Christian belief. For the orthodox, the question of Christ’s divine nature was not open to debate.

Moreover, the figure of Christ in the Christian Church was the unifying link between Old and New Testaments. The primary mode of biblical hermeneutics in the period remained typology, wherein Old Testament figures were read as incomplete fragments foreshadowing the coming Messiah.9 As such, the figure of Christ stood at the very center of Christian belief: he was the means to salvation, the image of the invisible God, and the ultimate fulfillment of the Scriptures. Christ was therefore the keystone in a complex of symbols, texts, and beliefs. As I discussed in the previous chapter, Christ was the central symbol of the Christian liturgy; however, apprehending the significance of this symbol required a surrounding network of other symbols, which were themselves understood by their proximity to the central symbol, Jesus. There is here a threat of what Jacques Derrida called “différence”—where the meaning of a symbol is deferred to other symbols, that then rely on yet other symbols for meaning, and so on. While Wordsworth and Cowper (for example) might circumvent this infinite regression through a “silent liturgy” (where instead of pointing to other symbols to gain meaning, one falls purposefully silent), apophaticism is not the only way to ensure fixed meaning (or at least, to give a convincing illusion of fixed meaning). Rather, “Christ” could serve as what Jacques Lacan called a “master signifier” for the Christian religion, where the symbol becomes self-referential: according to the Nicene Creed (and the Trinitarian theology that followed from it), Christ was fully divine; and to know what “divinity” meant one simply had to look to Christ, in whom

“dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily.”\textsuperscript{10} Since the liturgy was designed to foster direct apprehension of the risen Christ, all subsequent “deference” ultimately circles back toward this quilting point.

However, in the eighteenth century, challenges to the divinity of Christ proliferated in influential areas both in and outside the church, calling back into question the meaning of the symbol “Christ.”\textsuperscript{11} New Dissenting Christian beliefs opened the door for a revival in Socinian Christology in the form of Unitarianism, citing biblical support for a fully human Jesus (or, more precisely, citing a lack of biblical evidence supporting orthodox claims). The rising tide of Unitarian Dissent was certainly bolstered by the long wave of Enlightenment philosophy that had already deeply influenced English religious belief, calling into question both the historical and supernatural aspects of traditional Christian faith. The deity of Christ would have faced insurmountable difficulties on both fronts: the impossibility of proving a hypostatic union of divine and human natures existing in one historical figure becomes far more difficult when his attested abilities to perform miracles is proven impossible. Put simply, the enlightened world demanding rational answers found it difficult to rest comfortably with the paradox of a God-man. As a significant example, Joseph Priestley’s scandalously popular series of works, \textit{Institutes of Natural and Revealed Religion} and in particular \textit{A History of the Corruptions of Christianity}, powerfully argued for a purely human Jesus, a man misunderstood and corrupted by the teachings of the Catholic Church. Priestley’s argument for a purely human Jesus was based on a

\textsuperscript{10} Col. 2.9.

\textsuperscript{11} One might say this is one inheritance bequeathed by the Reformation’s challenge to the Eucharistic symbol. Or, put another way, the Reformation rewriting of the quilting point “Christ” enabled others to rewrite Christ as well; with each change to the master signifier, the surrounding symbols of the Christian religion would have to shift as well.
hermeneutics that married rational argument with Scriptural interpretation, a hermeneutics that was by no means unheard of—the ecclesiastical justifications of the Anglican Church itself were likewise built from Richard Hooker’s use of the same principles. However, Priestly had so masterfully weaved the two together against orthodox doctrines that many came to find traditional Christology—with all its mystical resonances—untenable.

Compounding these challenges to Christology in England, on the continent a new form of biblical hermeneutics was taking shape, one that would eventually become the influential “Higher Criticism” that would so alter nineteenth-century Christianity. Rather than considering the Bible as an authoritative divine revelation, German Romantic critics such as Schelling, Herder, and later figures such as Schleiermacher and Feuerbach, engaged the Bible as a literary text. Addressing the problems of authorship and textual and editorial history, these scholars seriously undermined the Protestant image of the inerrant Bible. Rather than finding the immaculate inspired word ordered around the careful dictates of the Creator, the new school of German hermeneutics read the Bible through the smudged fingerprints of human authors, clumsy editors, and powerful clerics desperate to maintain their grasp on the masses. Even in its most charitable forms, the “Higher Criticism’s” most radical shift in understanding the Bible was to treat the language as primarily poetic, as made rather than inspired. The Bible was now subject to aesthetic tastes, and often recognized as ancient poetry par excellence. While an aesthetic approach to the Bible opened the door to new and productive readings of the text, it also challenged the traditional religious interpretations of the symbols; and, since those symbols served to structure and organize religious practice and theological discourse, recasting Christ as a poetic figure had far-reaching implications. As with the Unitarian threat to Christology in England, the new German hermeneutics became a way of absorbing Enlightenment skepticism:
Jesus would not need to be raised from the dead *literally* for the Bible to maintain its place of primacy in culture. Thus, interpreters of the Bible could be free of embarrassing claims about miracles or pesky complications from the historical archeological record: in spite of such objective difficulties, the Bible was a beautiful piece of poetry.

At the same time (though quite unrelated), Christology in England was being wrung through a completely different set of hermeneutical questions, as Christian apologetics grappled with the body of classical pagan myth that continued to influence English culture. Christian comparative approaches to pagan mythology after the seventeenth century became aligned with Christian apologetics, collapsing stories of gods and heroes into literary allegories that either veiled Christian truths or misunderstood natural phenomena. This tendency, of course, is not a product of period alone: allegorical and euhemeristic approaches to pagan mythology proliferated throughout Christian history. However, studies of classical mythology flourished in the artistic and intellectual landscape of the Enlightenment, an era rediscovering (and reinventing) its classical (and neoclassical) roots politically and aesthetically. The typological hermeneutics that placed Christ at the center of the Bible became the pathway for the appropriation of classical pagan mythology; here, instead of Christ as the central figure, the Bible itself was the antetype to which all pagan mythology was the type. In many cases, more than affirming a basic religious truth, pagan mythology was enlisted to prove the *historical* truth of the Bible, upon which many grounded the authority of the Christian religion. In this appropriation of myth, so long as biblical characters remained distinct, mythological gods and

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12 See, e.g., as bookends from antiquity to the late middle ages, Justin Martyr, Origin, and at the obverse end, Dante’s “Letter to Con Grande.”

heroes could be exchanged freely, traded in a network of typological allusions built on even the slightest resemblance: Jupiter could be Adam (the first man), or Abraham (the father of a nation) or Moses (the law-giver) and so. The treatment of Prometheus in this tradition accords with these concerns, authorizing the literary mythical tradition through the literal historical truth of the Bible. In such a reading, however, the unique aspects of the Christ of the Bible could be obscured by the numerous similarities between ancient mythology and contemporary religion. What was distinct to Christianity faced the danger of begin swallowed up by what was vaguely similar between all religions. As a result, the disembodied afterlife—a vision shared with many belief structures—was more amenable to such a hermeneutic structure than Christianity’s more unique claims of a general bodily resurrection. It is not surprising, then, that whenever the subject of the Christian hope was broached in these syncretic mythographies, it was addressed as the eternal heavenly hereafter.

This jumble of myth, doctrine, and hermeneutics come together in Shelley’s *Prometheus Unbound*. Appearing in the first act, Mercury—associated directly with Hermes the Hermeneut—was capable of raising the dead with the touch of his language-producing staff, though Prometheus, credited with the creation of written words, is not connected with resurrection in any classical or neoclassical source. Likewise, Christ—the key symbol of Christian apologetic mythography—is linked typologically with nearly every Old Testament hero, and in turn every Old Testament hero is made to correspond to some god or hero in the pagan pantheon; yet, no Christian syncretist would allow his hermeneutic to extend to the logical conclusion that pagan figures could typify Christ. Outside Christian discourses, however, critics of religion exploited and inverted these connections, noting instances in which the figure of Christ not only corresponded to pagan myths, but arguing such correspondence invalidated the
truth of Christianity. Richard Payne Knight’s *Discourse on the Worship of Priapus* approached blasphemous obscenity in its exploration of sexuality and religious worship, while French author Charles François Dupis’s *Origine de tous les Cultes, ou Réligion Universelle* gained notoriety in intellectual English circles by demonstrating that all religious rites (particularly those practiced by the Christians) originated in pagan sun worship. *Prometheus Unbound* pieces together each of these concerns, and draws to the surface the connections missing between them: in the drama, Prometheus becomes not only the God of Poetry, but also becomes the first-fruits of the resurrection, weaving the loose threads left hanging in Christian hermeneutics and syncretic mythology. In so doing, Shelley simultaneously weighs in on the relationship between the Christian tradition and classical myth.

One of the most audacious goals of the text, I argue, is to recast Christianity as a reservoir for poetic license, where poets could appropriate freely the powerful symbols of religion for their own ends. *Prometheus Unbound*, therefore, synchronizes Christian religious belief with pagan mythical figures, turning the tradition of Christian apologetic mythography on its head. Conversely, Shelley takes significant liberties with his classical source material to reconsider the biblical paradigm as itself a kind of literary allegory. The drama of the chained Titan re-works a key point of Christian belief, dividing the figure of Christ into two characters—Prometheus and the aniconic Demogorgon. Ironically, these figures together exemplify the destruction of vertical structures of authority, particularly structures that attempt to mirror the theological formation of God over and above all of creation, and the “great chain of being” that was believed to be an extension of that divine primacy.

Shelley’s atheism, as Martin Preistman has shown, is far more complex than simple incredulity at the existence of an omnipotent figure. In the period, “atheism” as a self-affirmed
positive identity (rather than a apologetic straw man or polemic epithet) was coming into being in public discourse. Priestman notes readers and writers of the Romantic period “were acutely aware of a positive, unapologetic atheism as a phenomenon of the time,” and reads atheism “as a topic, an issue, a concern of the period,”\textsuperscript{14} tangled up in religious, political, and literary texts. Further, “atheism” could still be understood as a synonym to irreligion and serve as a catch-all term that covered a range of theological positions, including Deism.\textsuperscript{15} Atheism, like many other theological positions in the period, was not cordoned off as a purely religious issue, but had important stakes for both political thought and aesthetic products. Shelley, of course, played a prominent role in the public representation of atheism in England. His juvenile \textit{The Necessity of Atheism} got him expelled from Oxford at age 19, a short tract heavily influenced by the “atheist bible” (as Priestley famously labeled it), Baron d’Holbach’s \textit{Systeme de la Nature}. I argue that Shelley’s atheism—beyond simply denying the existence of a “creative deity” (as the \textit{Necessity of Atheism} phrases it)—springs from a \textit{moral} argument against the existence of God. Put simply, the Christian God—regardless the status of his metaphysical being—is a very bad sort of person, and one that should be rejected, dethroned, and forgotten. As with a number of texts that bear the marks of Shelley’s irreligion, \textit{Prometheus Unbound} offers atheism through a critique of authority produced by the suffering of those who resist the tyrant God’s power. That suffering should be the motive force for systemic change was no new idea—Christians had been venerating the suffering of Christ for nearly two millennia.

\textit{Prometheus Unbound} rescripts Aeschylus’s lost sequel to the Prometheus myth, transforming the suffering titan into an image of resistance to vertical structures of authority—


any system that allows for the rulership of one person over another. The closet drama posits a redistribution of power from the few—a monarch, master, god—to the many, and validates individual people as lords over themselves. This shift in power is embedded the poem’s narrative as well as its formal details. As with Aeschylus’s source material, the play begins with Prometheus suffering the wrath of Jupiter, chained to a rock awaiting further torment. However, Shelley’s change to the Aeschylean tradition comes in Prometheus’s response to his suffering: when Mercury brings the chained titan a message from the King of Gods that he will be pardoned if he concedes to help the tyrant Jupiter, Shelley’s Prometheus refuses, taking the opportunity to denounce the entire system enthroned within Jupiter’s reign:

Let others flatter Crime where it sits throned
In brief Omnipotence; secure are they:
For Justice when triumphant will weep down
Pity not punishment on her own wrongs,
Too much avenged by those who err. 16

In prophetic fashion, Prometheus points toward the internal deconstruction of the system of punishment and violence embodied by the rulership of Jupiter, noting that the violence it engenders will ultimately devastate itself, overreaching the balanced scales of Justice. This prophetic reversal does in fact come later in the play; and, as hinted at in Act 1, comes without the torture and oppression typified by Jupiter’s modus operandi. Freed from the reign of the Tyrant God, the play closes with the final reconciliation of all creation, a new utopian world no longer bound by the oppression of systematic authority. The play, therefore, operates in dialectic

fashion: Prometheus opposes Jupiter’s reign (which itself was born of Prometheus’s own assistance), an opposition that results in the torture of Prometheus. But it is in this very suffering that the destruction of Jupiter eventually comes—not because Prometheus turns Jupiter’s torturer, but because the system of violence itself decomposes. The slave Prometheus is negated by the master Jupiter; but from that negation springs the seeds of Jupiter’s own destruction, a determinate negation that sublates both violence and suffering in a new harmony, a triumphant justice without punishment.

The suffering of Prometheus that leads to the end of human slavery runs parallel to the way Christian soteriology had understood Jesus’s suffering on the cross. However, Romanticists have long argued over the allegorical relationship between Prometheus and Christ. Stuart Curran in “The Political Prometheus” synthesizes both the contemporary reviews of Shelley’s play and the current literary critical milieu in Romantic studies. Scholarship on *Prometheus Unbound*, Curran argues, typically collapses the titular titan into an allegory, recasting Shelley’s character as “the titan of syncretic mythology:…Prometheus always stands for something else—character, principle, idea—never for himself.”17 Earl Wasserman’s seminal 1965 book *Shelley’s Prometheus Unbound: A Critical Reading* is certainly one of the works in Curran’s crosshairs. Wasserman’s analysis draws a compelling connection between Prometheus and Christ, noting “the primary function of the scriptural stratum of the play is that Shelley, building on the established tradition that made a Christ-figure of Prometheus, may draw out the identity of Prometheus’ story.”18 Curran, on the other hand, reads the “Romantic Prometheus” offered by Shelley (or Byron, or Goethe) as inherently political, drawing its appeal from the explicit

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rejection of traditional religious assumptions, making Prometheus “not an agent in God’s design for the earth but a revolutionary denier of all divine right to it.” The merit of reading Prometheus as Prometheus notwithstanding, Curran’s synthesis sets up what on closer inspection may be a false dichotomy: either Prometheus is an allegory (a Christ Figure, per Wasserman), or he represents himself. With the former, the myth becomes a religious argument, the latter a political one. Rather, I argue Prometheus can only represent himself when we read him alongside the syncretic analogues he conjures, or perhaps more specifically, in his failure to ever become any one of his syncretic analogues. Prometheus is not the Christ of the Christian religion; but it can only occur to us that Prometheus is not Christ because of Shelley’s poetic alignment of the two, because of the allegorical and typological resonances that bring both characters together and call into sharp relief their stark contrast. Shelley alludes to this difference through similarity in the preface to Prometheus Unbound. In his characteristic frank, inflammatory style, Shelley claims his hero’s antetype is neither Noah nor Jesus, but Satan: “The only imaginary being resembling in any way degree Prometheus, is Satan; and Prometheus is, in my judgment, a more poetical character.” Even this relationship is doomed to fail, however: because Satan has, through Milton, maintained his subservience to the authority of the Christian narrative, the tragic character’s flaws ultimately overwhelm his merits. Shelley concludes, “Prometheus is, as it were, the type of the highest perfection of moral and intellectual nature, impelled by the purest and the truest motives to the best and noblest ends” (207). Therefore, rather than a pale shadow in the margins of the biblical text and literary traditions beholden to the Christian faith, Shelley’s Prometheus signifies “the type of highest perfection” within the context of its own literary world.

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Both Prometheus and Christ, therefore, are types of something greater outside their literary representation, and serve analogous functions within their respective texts. As such, Shelley’s “more poetical” Prometheus could become a symbol in the world of his own text, just as Jesus was a symbol for the Bible-formed Christian world. That is, Prometheus is to Prometheus Unbound what Jesus Christ is to Christian belief.

However, it is in this contrast that Shelley’s contribution to the development of the doctrine of the resurrection becomes most powerful. As the controlling Anglican narrative in the period glossed over bodily resurrection (and a number of its implications, from liturgy to eschatology), the image of Christ in the English Christian world no longer carried its physically transformative power. When it included the notion of the physical resurrection, the historical orthodox Christian tradition imagined raised bodies of a new—though not discontinuous—nature, a nature not nonphysical, yet not wholly spiritual, what N.T. Wright has called “transphysical.”21 This “transphysical” body is part and parcel of a renewed creation, the fallen world struggling with Adam’s sin finally set to rights. This renewal is what St. Paul meant when he wrote to the church in Rome, “For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now. And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body.”22 However, as I have argued throughout, in the period the State Church’s emphasis on a disembodied heaven translated the transphysical to the superphysical, a body that retained little continuity—and certainly no contiguity—with its earthly, decaying counterpart. In this

21 To reiterate from Chapter 1, Wright defines the “transphysical” body as “a body which is still robustly physical but also significantly different from the present one. If anything…we might say not that it will be less physical, as though it were some kind of ghost or apparition, but more.” Wright, The Resurrection of the Son of God, vol. 3 of Christian Origins and the Question of God (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2003), 478.

22 Rom. 8.22-23.
paradigm, the travailing earth groans in vain, destined to die delivering its stillborn child: if there is a new creation at the end of the age, it is—like our spiritual bodies—unconcerned with what came before. The State Church—cornered by fealty to the King and occupied by its role as social glue—had no room for the resurrection of the physical body, regardless of its central place in wider Christian orthodoxy. With the term “resurrection” caught up by the Church of England’s disembodied heaven, the doctrine of the resurrection of the physical body could only have emerged in sites outside the prescribed barriers of the State Church. However, even outside the church, resurrection was subject to the definitions set by state sanctioned Anglican orthodoxy: “resurrection” had to mean “life in heaven,” and raised physical bodies did not count as “resurrections” in the theological sense. One option—the one taken by Wordsworth and Cowper—is to explicitly point to the silence left by the missing physically raised body in Anglican orthodoxy; another solution (perhaps a more difficult endeavor) would be to re-write the symbolic storehouse of the Christian religion. Having lost its physically transformative capabilities within the symbol-making world of the State Church, Shelley’s new “type of the highest perfection,” Prometheus as Jesus unbound from his Christian master narrative, is able to regain the earth-redeeming consequence of resurrection.

**Jesus, Christ, Prometheus, and Demogorgon**

The rejection of God pervades *Prometheus Unbound*; yet, while the play begins with the protagonist’s rage toward Jupiter (the stand-in for omnipotence in any other form), his resistance to the Almighty’s authority still acknowledges Jupiter’s power. Prometheus does not simply believe that there is no Jupiter—but rather that his authority is ill gotten, destructive, and
illegitimate. Ironically, drawing from the Aeschylus tradition, Shelley has Prometheus recognize his own role in establishing Jupiter’s reign to begin with. Recalling the curse the titan first hurled against the god, the phantasmal Shade of Jupiter echoes Prometheus’s words: “Thou art Omnipotent. / O’er all things but thyself I gave thee power” (I.172-173). Likewise, Prometheus recognizes his position of suffering is the direct result of his refusal to acknowledge the legitimacy of Jupiter’s authority. Mercury reminds the titan “Thou canst not count thy years to come of pain?” To which Prometheus responds, “They last while Jove must reign, nor more nor less / Do I desire or fear” (I. 414-416). Prometheus’s suffering is therefore the direct result of Jupiter’s reign, but Jupiter’s reign results from Prometheus. This irony parallels a tension in the language of the opening lines of the poem through what will become a characteristic of the titan’s tortured syntax. Shelley writes,

Monarch of Gods and daemons, and all Spirits
But One who throng those bright and rolling Worlds
Which Thou and I alone of living things
Behold with sleepless eyes! regard this Earth
Made multitudinous with thy slaves, whom thou
Requitest for knee-worship, prayer and praise,
And toil, and hecatombs of broken hearts,
With fear and self-contempt and barren hope; (I.1-8)

The invocation of the “Monarch of Gods and daemons, and all Spirits” is interrupted by a series of subordinate clauses, beginning with the “But One”—the mention of Prometheus himself—in line two. Rhetorically, line two beings with antithesis to the thesis of line one, and establishes Prometheus as the negation of Jupiter. Yet, while Prometheus and Jupiter are locked together in
this negative relation, they are united by what they “alone of living things / Behold with sleepless
eyes” (1.3-4). The tension between Prometheus and Jupiter—antithetical yet unified—speaks to
the complexity of Shelley’s criticism of divine omnipotence: rejecting God requires first
acknowledging a God to reject, as atheism proposes a “theos” in which to disbelieve. Throughout
Prometheus Unbound, the suffering titan acknowledges the power of the Almighty tyrant god,
while also denying the legitimacy of his authority. The atheistic argument of Shelley’s closet
drama then is not primarily metaphysical, but moral: the question is not simply whether or not
God exists (for Prometheus, the answer is a resounding yes), but whether this sort of God has
license for the authority he claims once shown to be an unjust king.

In a similar way, the interrupted invocation of line 1 subverts the classical tradition of an
opening call to the muse (or Mnemosyne—memory herself), demonstrating an important feature
of the way Prometheus Unbound engages with literary tradition. While the drama makes no
pretensions toward the epic genre, despite the critical tendency to link it to Blake’s epic poems,
the bait-and-switch from invocation to curse in the opening lines underscores the radical work of
the text by both establishing and immediately resisting literary traditions. Shelley’s preface
anticipates this disruption of literary tradition explicitly. Shelley writes,

The Greek tragic writers, in selecting as their subject any portion of their national
history or mythology, employed in their treatment of it a certain arbitrary
discretion. They by no means conceived themselves bound to adhere to the
common interpretation or to imitate in story as in title their rivals and
predecessors. Such a system would have amounted to a resignation of those
claims to preference over their competitors which incited the composition….

I have presumed to employ a similar license. (206)
Rather than religiously adhering to the classical source material of Aeschylus’s lost (and fragmentary) play, Shelley instead validates his re-telling of the myth through the same “arbitrary discretion” that enabled the production of the story in the first place. Shelley points to the “competition” between classical writers and their forebears a lying at the heart of mythopoeia, a “rivalry” that inspires writers to re-write the mythological traditions for their present uses. In *Prometheus Unbound* then, Shelley opts to follow the *spirit* of Greek mythography rather than the *letter* of its literary fragments. As the implied pun has it, strict imitation would leave the poet “bound” to repeat the past, certainly inappropriate for a drama that deals with the *unbinding* of its hero. Ironically, however, Shelley’s “presumed license” derived from the Greeks authorizes the complete reversal of the narrative in Aeschylus’s source. Where Aeschylus’s Prometheus tells Zeus how to avoid his looming destruction, Shelley’s Prometheus refuses. When threatened by Mercury in Book I, Prometheus responds with pity rather than subservience. The “license” Shelley employs, then, mirrors the very resistance of Prometheus against Jupiter: Shelley will not become guilty of “unsaying his high language” in the face of literary tradition any more than Prometheus before Mercury.²³

Further, the syntactic interruptions in the play’s opening lines result in a productive ambiguity. Prometheus’s invocation to Jupiter could end at line 4 in the imperative mood—“Monarch or Gods…regard this Earth!”—leaving the next four lines as an expanded description of what exactly Jupiter must “regard,” enslaved humanity. However, it may also be that the final dependent clause in line 8 modifies the imperative of line 4, such that Prometheus charges Jupiter to “regard this earth/…/With fear and self-contempt and barren hope.” On this reading, Jupiter’s reign bears the seeds of its own destruction, as his rulership over the Earth and its

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inhabitant slaves produces his own “fear and self-contempt and barren hope.” This modification of the charge to Jupiter recasts Prometheus’s initial invocation as a prophetic curse: from his own position of torment, he demands that Jupiter recognize the Earth in despair, as the very thing Jupiter rules over will bring his downfall. Of course, there’s no reason to believe that “fear and self-contempt and barren hope” cannot apply to both Jupiter and the knee-worshipping slaves of Earth. By disrupting the clear syntactic connections between independent clauses and their subordinate modifications, oppressor and oppressed become locked together, both victims of the tyrannical system of the “Monarch of Gods.”

The “barren hope” foisted on Jupiter conjures another aspect of the Prometheus cycle—the story of Pandora. In the complete Prometheus story, the fall of man precipitated by Prometheus’s failed fiery revolution is ameliorated (or exacerbated, depending on the source) by the gift of Pandora’s Box: as a punishment for their newly gained independence from the gods, Zeus sends Pandora—a unique creation endowed with various gifts from each god—with a mysterious jar; when the jar is opened, all the evils that plague mankind are released. At the last minute, Pandora closes the jar, retaining hope alone within. In Greek medicine, the jar was often an image of the female reproductive system: to have “closed the jar” was to become pregnant.

To the later Christian inheritors of the myth, the hope sealed in Pandora’s jar would be more liable to take on messianic overtones, in which the general hope of the myth became a specific

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hope for the birth of Jesus. As long as the Christian syncretist tradition saw the Pandora story as a corruption of the biblical truth of Adam and Eve, there would be room to insert an apologetic messianic significance within the hope humanity retains in the face all imaginable evil. By the Eighteenth century, mentions of Pandora’s hope had taken on otherworldly significance. Joseph Addison’s *The Evidences of the Christian Religion* employs the Pandora myth in its chapter on “The Immortality of the Soul, and a Future State”: Addison writes, “The old story of Pandora’s box (which many of the learned believe was formed among the Heathens upon the tradition of the fall of man) shews us how deplorable a state they thought the present life, without Hope.” Addison then concludes that—since life is never more happy than with hope, and hope is most full when applied to the “most complete happiness” found in religion—hope is never more profound than when it is hope for immortality. Pandora is therefore aligned with the hope for heaven. Likewise, Antoine Banier had earlier traced the migration from the divinization of Hope in the Pandora myth to hope for immortality specifically. He writes,

> as [Hope] alone remained in the Bottom of the fatal Box, I think it no Wonder that [the Pagans] made a Divinity of her. Cicero defines *Hope the Expectation of Good, Bonorum Expectatio*; a definition conformable to that of the Apostle, *Spes eat futuroram bonorum*; Good Things to come, whether in this Life or the next, are its Object;…This is one of those refined Sentiments which right Reason

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dictated to the Philosophers…. It was Virtue, according to Cicero, that sintered the Hope of Immortality, and that same Immortality animated Hope.”

However, in Shelley’s drama, the only hope destined for the Earth under the reign of Jupiter is “barren hope”—hope unable to be sealed up or retained in the jar. That is, even the pagan “refined Sentiments” that for Banier could conform to the Christian idea of hope “whether in this Life or the next” must remain absent from the world under the Almighty’s tyrannical reign. It is not without reason that Pandora and the Hope in her jar receive no mention in Shelley’s drama: there is no messiah from the line of Jupiter.

And yet, Prometheus Unbound is rife with messianic language. Prometheus’s first identification with Jesus comes in the opening monologue, as the titan recognizes his suffering results directly from his opposition to Jupiter. Prometheus reflects,

… torture and solitude,

Scorn and despair,—these are mine empire:—

More glorious far than that which thou surveyest

From thy unenvied throne, O Mighty God!

Almighty, had I deigned to share the shame

Of thine ill tyranny, and hung not here

Nailed to this wall of eagle-baffling mountain. (I.14-21)

That Prometheus is “hung” and “nailed” in suffering conjures an image of Jesus on the cross, another figure of suffering resulting from a refusal to validate the evil systems of the world. Even

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28 Antoine Banier, The Mythology and Fables of the Ancients, Explain’d from History (London, 1740), 5: 123-124. Feldman and Richardson note the impact Banier’s book had on Christian apologetic readings of mythology, and claim “Banier was probably the best known, most widely cited, and least controversial” in the period (The Rise of Modern Mythology, 86). It is uncertain whether Shelley read Banier directly, though Godwin mentions reading him 4 April 1833.
the “torture and solitude / Scorn and despair” of Prometheus is “more glorious” than the empire purchased through Jupiter’s tyranny. In the Greek tradition, Prometheus was chained to the rock; Shelley’s unfeasible invention of Prometheus “nailed” not only aligns the titan with Jesus, but brings Jesus into Shelley’s reconstructed classical world, syncretizing what many held as the fiction of Greek drama with the truth of the Christian religion. Like Prometheus, Jesus too—in the Christian tradition—found “torture and solitude” “more glorious” than power and prestige, clearly seen in both the temptation of Jesus in Matthew 4 and its literary inheritors (not least Milton’s Paradise Regained) as well as the biblical passion narratives. Prometheus’s preference to torture over rulership under Jupiter may echo Milton’s Satan, who found it “Better to reign in Hell, than serve in Heaven;”29 but it also corresponds to Paul’s claims of Jesus in Philippians, “Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.”30 Prometheus’s power in suffering, therefore, not only aligns the Titan with the Christian figurehead, but also repositions Jesus in a literary—rather than religious or theological—tradition. Rather than reading Jesus as the antetype that stands behind literary and mythological figures of suffering and salvation (as many syncretists of the 18th and nineteenth century would have it), Prometheus Unbound understands him as yet another instance of a greater universal archetype. That is, Jesus may just as well be considered a “Promethean” figure as a “Christ” figure.

The parallels between Prometheus and the literary representation of Jesus begin to take root after the biblical narrative is freed from its Christian religious moorings. In the drama, the

30 Phil. 2.6-8.
de-historicizing and re-mythologizing of Christianity—in particular the figure of Jesus Christ—is further reinforced through the syncretization of a range of influential Christian texts, including the Bible, Milton’s *Paradise Lost*, and Augustine’s *City of God* (among others). The echoes of these texts in particular reverberate through a key moment in Book 1, when the furies force Prometheus to see the corruption of the human race throughout history, the result for Jupiter’s reign and the ultimate sign, in their view, of the futility of resistance. Departing from the classical source, Shelley’s Prometheus refuses Jupiter’s request to discern the prophecy regarding Thetis; as a result, Mercury unleashes the Furies to torture the titan into submission. Mocking Prometheus’s efforts to bring knowledge to mankind, the Chorus of Furies show Prometheus a vision of Jesus’s teachings perverted by the Christian church:

One came forth, of gentle worth,
Smiling on the sanguine earth;
His words outlived him, like swift poison
   Withering up truth, peace and pity.
Look! where round the wide horizon
Many a million-peopled city
Vomits smoke in the bright air.—
Hark that outcry of despair!
’Tis his mild and gentle ghost
   Wailing for the faith he kindled. (I.546-555)

The life-giving message of love and hope offered by Jesus is “Withered up” by the Christian religion, represented by the furies as “a million-peopled city” that “Vomits smoke in the bright air.” This city is a direct inversion of the New Jerusalem described at the climax of the Book of
Revelation, where the City of God descends from Heaven signaling the culmination of God’s new-creative work in Jesus. Aside from an image of industrial pollution, that the city “vomits smoke in the bright air” echo’s Milton’s description of foundations of Pandemonium, from which “Belched fire and rowling smoke.” Finally, the city also calls to mind Augustine’s division of the history of the world in the competition between two “cities,” the “City of God” (the Christian Church) and the “earthly city.” Of these two cities, Augustine writes,

the first is holy, the second foul; the first is social, the second selfish; the first consults the common welfare for the sake of a celestial society, the second grasps at a selfish control of social affairs for the sake of arrogant domination; the first is submissive to God, the second tries to rival God; the first is quiet, the second restless; the first is peaceful, the second trouble-making; the first prefers truth to the praises of those who are in error, the second is greedy for praise, however it may be obtained; the first is friendly, the second envious; the first desires for its neighbor what it wishes for itself, the second desires to subjugate its neighbor.

In the Furies’ vision, the antagonism between heaven and earth is turned on its head: Christian theology (perverting the teachings of Jesus) is more aptly understood in Shelley’s drama as the “foul” “selfish” city, that enters into “social affairs for the sake or arrogant domination.” The simultaneous merging and inversion of these sources mirrors Shelley’s “license” taken for *Prometheus Unbound* explained in the drama’s introduction (as discussed above); however, by bringing non-classical, Christian myths into play, Shelley shows that these “religious truths” are

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equally available as Greek and Roman myths to the poet’s “arbitrary discretion.” Jesus can therefore be just as appropriate a symbol for poetic license as Prometheus.

Importantly, it is within this mythologized context that the Furies deny Jesus’s Resurrection from the dead. Only a truly dead Jesus could have “His words [outlive] him,” as a resurrected Christ could never be “outlived” by anything. Further, it is not the resurrected body of Jesus that laments the misuse of his message by the Church, it is his despairing “mild and gentle ghost,” a use that also undermines the Christian doctrine of the Holy Ghost, the Spirit Jesus promised would lead the church after his ascension. This denial of Jesus’s resurrection is part of the tyrant Jupiter’s program to force Prometheus into despair: in Christian theology, the Resurrection of Jesus was the ground for hope of eternal life; while Jupiter reigns, Prometheus—like Jesus—cannot hope to survive. As Shelley writes elsewhere of Jesus, “He was a man of pure life, who desired to rescue his countryman from the tyranny of their barbarous and degrading superstitions. The common fate of all who desire to benefit mankind awaited him.” Finally, the vision concludes, “the future is dark, and the present is spread / Like a pillow of thorns for thy slumber less head” (PU I.562-563). Prometheus, then, crowned with thorns and denied rest, is destined for the same fate as Jesus, and the two characters—each treated as mythological symbols—become aligned in the drama. And yet, Shelley here also establishes a precedent in the world of the text to make poetic use of resurrection for its symbolic power. The actual physical Resurrection of Jesus, denied by the Furies, becomes detached from the controlling dialogue of the Christian Church, and, more specifically, of the Church of England. Whatever theological

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33 Shelley, “Queen Mab,” in The Poems of Shelley, eds. Geoffrey Matthews and Kelvin Everest (London: Longman, 1989), 1: 396. The note includes the tract composed with Thomas Jefferson Hogg, The Necessity of Atheism, which got Shelley expelled from Oxford in 1811. Expanded to include lengthy quotes from d’Holbach’s Système de la Nature, the footnote would later be anthologized under the title The Necessity of Atheism, though Shelley never published the complete note outside of Queen Mab.
implications had been associated with resurrection in the eighteenth century could then be jettisoned within Shelley’s revised mythographic context.

Prometheus is aligned with Jesus both through the circumstances of his own suffering (that is, suffering produced by the refusal to acknowledge the legitimacy of the ruling authority), and through direct mentions of Jesus in the text. These registers are not isolated symptoms of the drama and link tightly with one another. While the Furies torment the titan, Ione and Panthea cower with their eyes shielded by their wings like the seraphim that flank the Holiest of Holies. At the approach of the Furies, Ione implores Panthea, “Dear sister, close thy plumes over thine eyes / Lest thou behold and die” (I.439-440). As the vision of Jesus fades, Ione and Panthea offer their own commentary. Ione asks,

Hark, sister! what a low yet dreadful groan
Quite unsuppressed is tearing up the heart
Of the good Titan—as storms tear up the deep
And beasts hear the Sea moan in inland caves.

Darest thou observe how the fiends torture him? (I.578-582)

Panthea, confessing to have “looked forth” during the vision, reports having seen “A woeful sight—a youth / With patient looks nailed to a cross.” (I. 584-585) That is, the sisters hear the groan of Prometheus, but see the crucified Jesus. John the Divine described his vision of the Risen Christ in a strikingly similar dual image in Revelation: often, John is told of the Lion of Judah, but turns to see a slain lamb. The marriage of Lion and Lamb in Revelation generates an image of Christ that accounts for both his Messianic kingship and his function as ritual sacrifice; likewise, the groaning Prometheus is stitched together with the crucified Jesus, weaving the two
figures together. The function served by the suffering of Jesus in the Christian tradition is served by the suffering of the Titan in *Prometheus Unbound*.

However, in spite of the many messianic registers applied to Prometheus in his suffering, Prometheus fails to bring about the ultimate messianic victory. It is the mysterious, chthonic Demogorgon that ultimately dethrones Jupiter—and that without much fanfare. For a drama never intended to be performed, it is strange to find such a pivotal moment in the text (if not the pivotal moment) happening between the lines. Confronted by Demogorgon, Jupiter blusters,

Even thus beneath the deep Titanian prisons

I trample thee! … Though lingerest?

Mercy! mercy!

No pity—no release, no respite! (III.ii.62-64)

The revolt against Jupiter—so long anticipated—is literally elided, passed over in the silence between the Almighty’s declarative “I trample thee!” and Demogorgon’s refusal to be trampled. The subsequent fall is even more veiled, coming in the division of line 63. Here, however, instead of elision, we read only blank space. John B. Pierce has recently argued that the fall of Jupiter participates in a bimodal rhetorical strategy of silence, with one type of silence in the text revealing “absence, nihilism and vacancy,” while the other provides “presence, potentiality and plenitude.”

Jupiter’s reign rests on the first (negative) type of silence, exemplified by the Earth’s refusal to recite Prometheus’s curse against the tyrant god: she tells the Titan,

“I dare not speak like life, lest Heaven’s fell King / Should hear, and link me to some well of pain” (I.140-141). While Earth’s silence in Act I is the result of Jupiter’s oppressive regime, Demogorgon’s silence marks a refusal to acknowledge the authority of “Heaven’s fell King,”

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anticipating Jupiter’s attempts to overpower him as merely “the destiny / Of trodden worms to writhe till they are dead” (III.i.59-60). Pierce writes, “Ultimately, the silence Jupiter imposes on his universe soon becomes the means of his defeat: in this silence lies the power which will bring about his downfall.” Just as Prometheus recognizes Jupiter’s despotism will eventually be the tyrant’s undoing, so too the silenced fall of Jupiter results from the silence imposed on his slaves.

The question remains, however, why is it Demogorgon that brings about the fall of Jupiter? Even Jupiter is surprised his fall comes from the mysterious “Awful Shape” rather than at the hands of Prometheus. He wails, Job-like,

That though wouldst make mine enemy my judge,

Even where he hangs, seared by my long revenge

On Caucasus—he would not doom me thus.—

Gentle and just and dreamless, is he not

The monarch of the world?—what then art thou?…

No refuge! no appeal—… (III.i.65-70)

Two things emerge from this lament. First, as Jupiter acknowledges the virtue of his self-professed “enemy” Prometheus, he also acknowledges the Titan’s position as “The monarch of the world.” This is not a title Prometheus would take for himself, and the rule he oversees functions very differently from the monarchy of Jupiter. Regardless, at the very least, the proclamation shows that Jupiter recognizes Prometheus as his anticipated inheritor—his heir, but also his destroyer. Certainly, if Prometheus had overthrown Jupiter by force, his place on the throne over earth would merely perpetuate the Jovian system of divine tyranny. In a way, then, Jupiter would survive himself. His attempt to drag Demogorgon down “on the wide waves of

35 Peirce, “‘Mont Blanc’ and Prometheus Unbound,” 117. Strangely, Pierce is silent on the fall of Jupiter at the hands of Demogorgon.
ruin” together with “This desolate world… / The conqueror and the conquered, and the wreck / Of that for which they combatted” (III.i.76-68) further demonstrates Jupiter’s failure to grasp the nature of his overthrow. It is not that he is being deposed, it is that his entire system of rule is being destroyed—and this destruction comes not from violent overthrow, but by non-violent resistance, a mere refusal of Demogorgon to acknowledge the legitimacy of the tyrant’s reign.

This refusal draws out the second aspect of Jupiter’s lament—the question certainly on everyone’s mind, “—what then are thou?” Why, after all, is it Demogorgon’s refusal to acknowledge Jupiter’s authority that destroys the tyrannical system? Asked another way, why was Prometheus unable to resist in the same way? Who—or what—is Demogorgon?

Shelley’s sources for the chthonic mystery god are numerous. Jeffrey N. Cox has shown that *Prometheus Unbound* draws from the masque and harlequinade dramatic forms—forms that fell outside of an established English literary canon—opportunities to subvert the stale dramatic forms of the day. Here, Demogorgon seems to function much like the Harlequin; or, perhaps, may come directly from lesser-known 17th century masques. However, Demogorgon also appears briefly in a number of late medieval and early modern texts—most conspicuously in both *The Fairy Queen* and *Paradise Lost*—though these mentions are cursory at best. The most immediate literary background is most likely Boccaccio. Discussing the influence of Boccaccio in English Literature, Herbert Wright claims, “Shelley develops Demogorgon into one


who knows not merely the secrets of the world before its creation, but also the supreme mystery of the future, and the grim figure of the earlier myth becomes the mouthpiece of the poet’s own visionary philosophy.”

Nearly a century ago, Henry G. Lotspeich connected Shelley’s Demogorgon to Boccaccio’s *Genealogia Deorum Gentilium*, a link Wasserman further expands upon. However, as Jon Solomon has recently clarified, while later literary uses of the mysterious god trace back to Boccaccio, Boccaccio’s Demogorgon is not an invention of the poet, but “a convergence of powerful and well established divine prototypes, [with Boccaccio] using an array of unconventional Greco-Roman sources while maintaining his Christian perspective.” That is, the literary Demogorgon is an amalgamation of various pagan theological ideas read through Christian religious imperatives. Boccaccio’s Demogorgon appears in the introduction to book 1 of the *Genealogia*, and serves as the progenitor of all other pagan gods. He writes,

> I think his Greek name, Demogorgon, means “god of the earth”: *daemon* means “god,” as Leontius says, and *gorgon* means “land,” or perhaps “wisdom of the land,” since *daemon* is often explained as “knowing” or “knowledge,” or, as others would have it, “terrible god,” since it is said about the true God who lives in heaven, “Holy and terrible is his name.” But he is terrible for another reason, for he is terrible in judgment by virtue of the integrity of his justice against those

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who are evil; Demogorgon is terrible for those believing in him out of ignorance.\footnote{Boccaccio, \textit{Genealogy of the Pagan Gods}, trans. Jon Solomon (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Univ. Press, 2014), 1: 39. The Latin and Italian translations do not render the final sentence nearly as clearly as Solomon’s modern translation: the Latin reads “Verum iste aliam ob causam terribili est, nam alle ob integriate iustitie male agentibus in giudizio est terribilis, viste vero stolide existimantibus;” and the Italian, “Ma questo per altra cagione è terribile; perciocché quello per l’integrità della giustitia ai malfattori nel giudicio è terribile, questo poi a quei c’hanno creduto pazzamente.” While Solomon’s translation clarifies Boccaccio’s more Christian intention, the ambiguity of the Latin and Italian allows for more confluence—and less difference—between Demogorgon and the Christian God. Given this ambiguity, it could be possible to read Demogorgon as the one “terrible” for his “judgment” and “his justice against those who are evil.” It is uncertain whether Shelley read Boccaccio in Latin or Italian, though either translation available to him would afford the same ambiguity. He tells Hunt in a letter on September 27 of 1821 (the same letter that contained the “very herioic” poem “Peter Bell the Third”) that he is again reading Boccaccio, who “often expresses things lightly…which have serious meanings of a very beautiful kind.” Quoted in Nancy Moore Goslee, Introduction to \textit{The Bodleian Shelley Manuscripts}, ed. Donald H. Reiman, vol. 18: \textit{The Homeric Hymns and Prometheus Drafts Notebook: Bodleian Ms. Shelley Adds. E., 12}, ed. Goslee (New York: Garland, 1996), xxxv.}

Demogorgon’s origin, according to Boccaccio, comes from misunderstood natural phenomena—earthquakes, volcanoes, droughts, floods—that are eventually granted a divine intentionality by foolish primitive pagans. As such, Demogorgon’s home is beneath the earth, supporting Boccaccio’s etymology as “wisdom of the land.” This etiological explanation also serves to justify Demogorgon’s place as patriarch of the pagan pantheon. Preempting a scene in \textit{Prometheus Unbound}, Boccaccio writes, “the subterranean leader of all the gods, and that when called upon he can compel the shades to do the bidding of mortals even if they are unwilling.”\footnote{Boccaccio, \textit{Genealogy of the Pagan Gods}, 37.}

The etymological roots of Boccaccio’s Demogorgon help establish how and why the god becomes useful for Shelley. The god represents the earth not in a spiritual sense, but in a physical, material sense. Added to the chaotic violence that erupts from the senseless earth is a “wisdom”—a \textit{daemon}—radically different from moral demands descended from the
disembodied, disconnected Heaven of the Christian God. That the earth itself testifies to the falseness of Christianity is a mainstay in Shelley’s poetry. Six years before *Prometheus Unbound*, Shelley explained in his extensive footnotes to *Queen Mab*,

> Beyond our atmosphere the sun would appear a rayless orb of fire in the midst of a black concave. The equal diffusion of its light on earth is owing to the refraction of the rays by the atmosphere, and their reflection from other bodies. Light consists either of vibrations propagated through a subtle medium, or of numerous minute particles repelled in all directions from the luminous body. Its velocity greatly exceeds that of any substance with which we are acquainted: observations on the eclipses of Jupiter's satellites have demonstrated that light takes up no more than 8' 7" in passing from the sun to the earth, a distance of 95,000,000 miles.--

Some idea may be gained of the immense distance of the fixed stars when it is computed that many years would elapse before light could reach this earth from the nearest of them; yet in one year light travels 5,422,400,000,000 miles, which is a distance 5,707,600 times greater than that of the sun from the earth.\(^45\)

Shelley’s readers almost certainly would (and quite possibly still do) find such technical information regarding the scale of the physical world humbling. The barrage of bare fact listed in the note establishes a formal—almost juridical—style, common in Christian apologetic discourses.\(^46\) However, while Christian apologetics would redirect the grander of the universe into a reflection of the glory of God *per Romans 1*, Shelley turns the physical world *against* the revealed God. In the subsequent note, he continues:

\(^{45}\) Shelley, “*Queen Mab,*” in *The Poems of Shelley*, 1: 360.

\(^{46}\) See, e.g. Joseph Butler’s *Analogy of Religion*, which Shelley would have encountered in his first year at Oxford.
The plurality of worlds,—the indefinite immensity of the universe, is a most awful subject of contemplation. He who rightly feels its mystery and grandeur is in no danger of seduction from the falsehoods of religious systems, or of deifying the principle of the universe. It is impossible to believe that the Spirit that pervades this infinite machine begat a son upon the body of a Jewish woman; or is angered at the consequences of that necessity, which is a synonym of itself. All that miserable tale of the Devil, and Eve, and an Intercessor, with the childish mummeries of the God of the Jews, is irreconcilable with the knowledge of the stars. The works of His fingers have borne witness against Him. 47

The narrative of *Queen Mab* corresponds to these notes: the Fairy Mab escorts the soul of Ianthe beyond the limits of the world; there she can freely and blankly assert, “There is no God! / Nature confirms the faith his death-groan sealed.”48 In the absence of God, the “great chain of being” built upon his divine model of mastery too disintegrates, while the poem continues on to denounce kings and masters of all kinds. In fact, staring at the immensity of the physical world does not only reveal to us the absence of God, it also shows itself yet more beautiful for God’s lack. Once Mab’s bold proclamation is clear to the soul of Ianthe, the speaker narrates, “Joy to the Spirit came, / … / Hope was seen beaming through the mists of fear: / Earth was no longer hell.”49 In *Prometheus Unbound*, Demogorgon—from the depths of the earth—serves the same purpose. As Asia and Panthea go in search of Demogorgon, a chorus of spirits arises from the sea mist and sing,

47 Shelley, “Queen Mab,” in *The Poems of Shelley*, 1: 360.
49 Ibid., VIII.11; 13-14.
Through the shade of Sleep
Through the cloudy strife
Of Death and Life;
Through the veil and bar
Of things which seem and are,

Even to the steps of the remotest Throne,

Down, down! (II.iii. 56-61)

The langue of the spirit’s song is telling: going down to Demogorgon is not merely descending into hell; it requires moving “Through the cloudy strife / Of Death and Life” itself. That is, to find Demogorgon, one must go through death and come out the other side—an image not of disembodied heaven, but of physical resurrection. Demogorgon is therefore the god that represents the physical universe; but as such, he is for Shelley a god that resists the very idea of gods. The way to find him, Asia and Panthea learn (as Mab teaches Ianthe), is neither to ascend into heaven (where God has his ethereal throne) nor descend into hell (where the Devil, too, reigns over souls without bodies), but to move deeper and deeper into the earth itself, until “Death and Life”—part and parcel of “the veil…/ Of things which seem and are”—are superseded.

Further complicating Shelley’s use of the enigmatic god-destroyer, there is a strong reading that suggests the chthonic Demogorgon had his birth not in the chaos of nature as Boccaccio suggests, but from a more mundane typographical error. In 1819—about the same time Shelley composed Book III of Prometheus Unbound—translator Thomas Taylor postulated that Demogorgon arose as a corruption of Plato’s demiurge, particularly in Lucan’s De Bello
While there is no direct evidence Shelley had read Taylor’s argument about Demogorgon and the Demiurge (Shelley was familiar with Taylor’s work more broadly), it’s quite possible Taylor’s assertion was already common knowledge; Voltaire’s short story “Plato’s Dream” published in 1756 plays on the relationship between Demogorgon and the Demiurge, implicating one with the other as regressive representations of inept deities: for Voltaire, Demogorgon is the imperfect reflection of the similarly imperfect Demiurge. Therefore, in spite of the pre-eminence Boccaccio assigned Demogorgon, (as C.S. Lewis quipped) “this is perhaps the only time a scribal blunder underwent an apotheosis.” For Shelley’s use in *Prometheus Unbound*, a typographical theogony is certainly an appropriate origin for the god that destroys the system of gods. If—as Boccaccio suggests—Demogorgon is the father of gods, and—as Taylor suggests—Demogorgon is also the figment of sloppy scholarship, what then becomes of all gods that descend from him? Demogorgon, then, does not need to do anything to dethrone Jupiter: his very presence as both Jupiter’s primate and a “scribal blunder” shows the entire system of gods is grounded on an error. One might say, in Demogorgon Jupiter is confronted with the fictionality of his own being.

So, it is Demogorgon that rightly fells the King of the Gods: for Shelley, he represents “the wisdom of the earth;” from Boccaccio, he is the primate of all gods; from Taylor, he is an unintended scribal error. Taken together, these sources generate rich ground for the destroyer of

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50 Thomas Taylor, “Corruption of Demiurgus” *The Classical Journal* 39 (1819): 101-103. Taylor particular directs his argument against Thomas Gale’s discussion of Demogorgon in his reading of Farnby’s 1618 edition of Lucan. The error, then, is just as likely to be Farnby’s. See Boccaccio, *Genealogy of the Pagan Gods*, 44 n.64.


the system of gods to emerge. Yet, there remains another question, particularly given the parallel
drawn between the sufferings of Jesus and Prometheus. Specifically, what role does
Demogorgon play in the larger motif of mythologized Christianity in *Prometheus Unbound*? If
Prometheus is a parallel to Jesus, of whom is Demogorgon the antetype? It may simply be that
the text wishes to show the impotency of Jesus to affect the truly universal change needed in the
world. That is, Jesus in his suffering—no matter how great—cannot bring about redemption.
This concept is not foreign to Christian theology, however: it is not the *crucifixion* of Jesus that
sets God’s fallen creation to rights, but his *Resurrection*. It is after all the Resurrection of Jesus
that vindicates his title, Christ. The skeptical Shelley, however, would have rejected the
Resurrection of Jesus, as with all other miraculous claims represented in the Bible: “Our reason
could never admit the testimony of men, who … declare that they were eye-witnesses of
miracles.”53 On the other hand, it may be that Demogorgon shows the failure of typological
readings of classical mythology—though I find it unlikely a character as central as Demogorgon
would do nothing to engage Shelley’s re-mythologization of the Christian religion or the Bible in
*Prometheus Unbound*.

On the contrary, I argue that Demogorgon—like the titan Prometheus—represents a
mythologized version of the Christian savior, though, strangely, he does not represent Jesus, but
Christ. Writing of the Christian figurehead, Shelley concludes,

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53 Shelley, “Queen Mab” in *The Poems of Shelley*, 1: 400. Inflammatory as Shelley could
be, he is also careful in his dance between expressing his disbelief and avoiding blasphemy laws.
The closest he comes to directly denying the Resurrection of Jesus is in the 1812 pamphlet
“Letter to Lord Ellenborough” defending deist Daniel Isaac Eaton: he writes, “I hesitate not that
the opinions which Mr. Eaton sustained…appear to me more true and good than his accusers…. Mr. Eaton asserted that the scriptures were, from beginning to end, a fable and imposture, that
the Apostles were liars and deceivers He denied the miracle, the resurrection, and ascension of
It is of importance, therefore, to distinguish between the pretended character of this being as the Son of God and the Saviour of the world, and His real character as a man, who, for a vain attempt to reform the world, paid the forfeit of his life to that overbearing tyranny which has since so long desolated the universe in his name. Whilst the one is a hypocritical Daemon, who announces Himself as the God of compassion and peace, even whilst He stretches forth His blood-red hand with the sword of discord to waste the earth, having confessedly devised this scheme of desolation from eternity; the other stands in the foremost list of those true heroes who have died in the glorious martyrdom of liberty, and have braved torture, contempt, and poverty in the cause of suffering humanity.\footnote{Shelley, “Queen Mab” in \textit{The Poems of Shelley}, 1: 397}

That is, the man Jesus who lived and taught and was executed in the outskirts of the Roman Empire 2,000 years ago is a different figure than the God-man rendered by the Christian faith: the former, like Prometheus, is a character doomed to suffer for his resistance to the dehumanizing powers of the world; the latter, like Demogorgon, is the slip of a pen and an invention of the pious. Moreover, inverting Boccaccio’s theogony for Demogorgon as the etymological “Daemon” of the earth, Shelley labels Christ a “hypocritical Daemon” sent from God in heaven. Shelley’s distinction between the Jesus of history and the Christ of religion receives fullest treatment in his “Essay on Christianity,” a fragment composed mostly in 1815, though unpublished until 1859’s posthumous \textit{Shelley Memorials}. In the essay, Shelley offers a prolonged argument of the historical perversion of Jesus’s teaching by the Christian church, establishing an image of Jesus as a socially transforming radical—an image that would be later adopted by strains of liberal theology in the twentieth century. David Fuller has argued the “main
elements of Shelley’s view of Jesus” are “admiration of Jesus the man; separation of the man from aspects of Judaic myth and history which Shelley deplored; and separation from the Church, which for much of its history—and then still in its political allegiances—was antithetical to its nominal founder.” I would add to Fuller’s assessment the pivotal role the poetry of the Bible played in Shelley’s writing. Of course, as Brian Shelley has quite thoroughly shown, Shelley’s poetry often employs biblical allusions, overtones, and direct quotes. Thomas Medwin—Shelley’s cousin and first biographer—recorded the poet’s own acknowledgement of his most significant influences: “I’ll give you my list—catalogue it can’t be called:—The Greek Plays, Plato, Lord Bacon’s Works, Shakespeare, The Old Dramatists, Milton, Göthe and Schiller, Dante, Petrarch and Boccacio, and Machiavelli and Guicciardini,—not forgetting Calderon; and last, yet first, the Bible.” In spite of Shelley’s clear distaste for the historical, philosophical, theological systems of Christianity, he maintained a respect for its literary prowess. As such, the biblical figure of Christ should not be confused with the Historical person of Jesus, just as Shelley’s distain for the Christian religion cannot overshadow his regard for the Christian scriptures. All this puts the figure of Demogorgon in an unusual place: he is a figure of Christ— not an allegorical representation of the historical Jesus—in a work specifically set against the systems of Christianity. In this sense, the origin of the god as a scribal error is of utmost importance. He is a pure fabrication, but no less for that the father of all gods.

Demogorgon’s connection to Christ is reinforced by Shelley’s most pronounced change to the Prometheus Unbound myth—namely, making Demogorgon the child of Jupiter and Thetis. In Aeschylus’s missing source, Prometheus is freed when he concedes to warn Zeus of the

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inevitable fall he will undergo if the King of the Gods marries Thetis: the child of Thetis, it is prophesied, would become greater than his father. Shelley’s Prometheus, however, refuses to provide this potentially devastating information to Jupiter: the result of the union of Jupiter and Thetis—the child that will be greater than his father—is Demogorgon. Ironically, however, Jupiter believes the child of he and Thetis would be the final end of human resistance to his rule. Before Demogorgon arrives, Jupiter provides some rare expository dialogue: reminiscing about the rape of Thetis, he says,

Two mighty spirits, mingling, made a third

 Mightier than either—which unbodied now

 Between us floats, felt although unbeheld,

 Waiting the incarnation, which ascends (PU III.ii.43-46)

A caricature of religious sentimentality, Jupiter perceives his child “felt although unbeheld.” Appropriating specifically Christological language, Demogorgon is “the incarnation” of one-third of the supreme divine triad. Stranger still, rewriting Demogorgon as the child of Jupiter while simultaneously retaining the god’s sense of primacy in Boccaccio, Shelley parodies the well-known Christian apologetic attempts to synchronize classical myth with the Bible. Particularly notable in Christian analyses of the Prometheus cycle is a standard move to euhemerize the Titan as both a half-understood pagan Noah while retaining the linguistic connection between the son of Noah—Japheth—and the father of Prometheus—Iapetus. Edward Stillingfleet’s Origins Sacrae—an early though influential text for long-eighteenth century Christian mythographers—demonstrates the kind of interpretive fluidity needed for such a

57 For this reason, in classical mythology, Zeus pawns Thetis off on the mortal Peleus: that the son of a simple farmer should supersede his father should pose no challenge to the king of the gods. On the contrary, Achilles gives the Olympians some good entertainment.
genealogy: “Under Prometheus… was Noah’s memory preserved…. Prometheus implies one that hath Forecast and Wisdom, such as Noah had, where by he foretold the Flood…. And no wonder if Prometheus were Noah, that the forming of Mankind was attributed to him, when the World was peopled from him;” Stillingfleet continues in the following paragraph to unite Prometheus with the biblical mention of Magog, “That the memory of Magog was preserved under Prometheus, these things make it probable, that Magog was the Son of Japheth, and Prometheus of Iapetus.”58 In this standard syncretic reading, Prometheus (Magog) is the son of Japheth (Iapetus), who is the son of Prometheus (Noah). Just as Stillingfleet had turned Prometheus into his own grandfather by euhemerizing him in both Noah and Magog, so too Shelley makes Demogorgon his own ancestor: Demogorgon (per Boccaccio) is the father of all gods, including Jupiter; but Jupiter (by Thetis) is the father of Demogorgon. Moreover, the genealogical gymnastics performed by the Christian mythographers à la Stillingfleet were corroborated by older traditions of Christological typology: more than the true image of the mis-remembered Prometheus, Noah was a shadow of the coming Christ. Prometheus, for the Christian apologists, could at best only be a shadow of a shadow of the real savior of the world, and in that shadowy linage his own genealogy was turned from a line into a circle, a transformation Shelley exploits to demonstrate the self-referential system of theology. In Prometheus Unbound, Demogorgon ends up with the same circular genealogy; but—importantly—is also made the agent of salvation. It is therefore Demogorgon—not Prometheus—who represents Christ, though this Christ is only one recognized in the context of the study of pagan mythology.

Myth and Resurrection

The precarious position Demogorgon holds—the Christ of an anti-Christian work—is therefore mitigated by the poetic and symbolic work the drama effects. Christ, for Shelley, was a fiction, a fabrication of the Church desiring to justify its own power; but that does not mean the symbol of Christ is useless as a poetic devise. Just as Prometheus or Jupiter could serve the poet’s needs without having to be historical figures, so too could the Christian God-man be made a metaphorical, though not literal, savior. And if Shelley could take poetic license with the classical myths, why not the Christian myth as well? As a result, Demogorgon’s connection to Christ recreates a mythological Christ figure, wrestled from the religious grasp of the church, a re-mythologization of Christ rent from the lived religious experience of eighteenth-century English Christianity and dropped into a new literary context. In this new context—a distinctly pagan, mythological context—the symbol “Christ” could finally be re-interpreted outside the constraints of the interpretive community of the Church.

Ironically—though, given Shelley’s knowledge of the Bible, not surprisingly—what is free to emerge in this new mythologized Christ is the apocalyptic power of the physical resurrection. The physical Resurrection of Jesus—for the earliest Christians—was the sign of God’s promise to redeem his creation. Rather than abandoning what had become of the created order after the fall, the New Testament writers looked forward to a time when God would again call his creation “good.” This was not a hope for discarded and forgotten physical creation; but for a renewed and perfected world built from the old. Shelley’s intervention was to turn this millenarian hope into a metaphor for the kind of just utopia that would emerge once hierarchal structures of authority—God and King—were discarded. The poem concludes with the final
collapse of “Heaven’s Despotism,” as “Conquest is dragged captive through the deep,” an image Wasserman aligns with the binding of Satan in Revelation 20.\(^59\) After the fall of Jupiter, the world can at last be made new, the pantheon of gods reformed from monarchical court to a “great Republic” (\(PU\) IV.533), the earth and moon brought together in harmony, an image of “Heaven and Earth united now” through love (IV.273). This renewal is more than Harold Bloom’s so-called “urbane apocalypse”—what makes the renewal of the world an image of physical resurrection is the return of Prometheus. Once “nailed” as the victim of a tyrant God’s wrath, Prometheus is freed in Act III, Scene iii. Upon his release, he desires to retreat to an edenic garden cave, where together with the long-suffering nymphs they will “make / Strange combinations out of common things / Like human babes in their brief innocence” (III.iii.31-34). This return is not simply paradise regained—rather it is the fulfillment of God’s first command to human beings to “be fruitful and multiply.”\(^60\) However, as with all things in \(Prometheus Unbound\), the religious (and therefore patriarchal, tyrannical, domineering) command to produce children is re-written as a commission to produce art. The children of Prometheus and Asia will be made from “Strange combinations…of common things,” a promise of poetry that echoes Wordsworth’s preface to \(Lyrical Ballads\), where a poet endeavors “to choose incidents and situations from \(common life\), and to relate or describe them, throughout, as far as was possible in a selection of language really used by men, and, at the same time, to throw over them a certain coloring of imagination, whereby ordinary things should be presented to the mind in an \(unusual aspect\).”\(^61\) Poetry then is the transforming medium thought which the world is remade.

\(^59\) Wasserman, \(Shelley\), 373.

\(^60\) Gen. 1.23.

Therefore, it is not at the fall of Jupiter that the renewed world is born; rather, the fall of Jupiter is a necessary precondition for the release of Prometheus, at whose command the Spirit of the Hours is sent to awaken the world. As the spirit rushes off to spread the news of Prometheus’s return, the spirit of Earth reflects on the deep change already beginning, describing the new world as the place where death itself is re-written not as the end but rather as the climactic goal of life. Earth says

\[
\text{death shall be the last embrace of her} \\
\text{Who takes the life she gave, even as a mother} \\
\text{Filing her child says, ‘Leave me not again!’} \\
\]

Death is the veil which those who live call life:

\[
\text{They sleep—and it is lifted; (PU III.iii.105-107; 113-114)} \\
\]

Death itself is now no more than a return to the earth. Death is not separation, therefore, but reunion. Bryan Shelley has shown the influence the gnostic interpretations of Jesus Christ had on Shelley’s use of the Bible;\(^\text{62}\) here, however, the gnostic idea of the lifting of the “veil which those who live call life” is redressed in physicality. It is a kind of afterlife given material objects. There is no hint of a disembodied afterlife awaiting human souls. Rather, bodies continue to exist, though changed—remade into pan-physical (if not entirely trans-physical) bodies in harmony with the earth.

Correspondingly, while Demogorgon’s resistance results in the fall of Jupiter, it is Prometheus—the figure most like Shelley’s historical Jesus—that becomes the new paradigm for

human action. Finding repose in the renewed world, Panthea and Ione witness a chorus of
“Spirits of the human mind / Wrapt in sweet sounds, as in bright veils, approach” (PU VI.81-82).
These glorified human spirits, no longer held in the slavery of worship to Jupiter, rejoice,
“Death, Chaos and Night, / From the sounds of our flight / Shall flee, like mist from a Tempest’s
might” (VI.144-146). In an image resurrection built on Revelation’s promise that “there shall be
no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying,” the spirits of the human mind live beyond the reach of
death. They continue,

And our singing shall build,

In the Void’s loose field,

A world for the Spirit of Wisdom to wield;

We will take our plan

From the new world of man

And our work shall be called the Promethean. (IV.153-158)

The action that enables the spirits of the human mind to overcome death is not attributed to
Demogorgon, the god-destroyer, but rather to Prometheus: it is a “work…called the Promethean”
and it is primarily artistic—a song. Just as Prometheus desired to return to his edenic cave and
while away eternity making poetry, the human beings who act in his name “build, / In the Void’s
loose field” through their own artistic endeavors. As the Christians believed they were called to
live in the image of the Resurrected Christ, the spirits of the human mind carry on the work of
the risen Prometheus.

Finally, Demogorgon returns to speak the poem’s final lines. Now heard but not seen,
Demogorgon manifests as a “mighty peace, which is as Darkness, / …rising out of the earth,”

63 Rev. 21.4.
(IV.510-11). The return of Demogorgon at the end of the drama shows a final harmony between the mythical world of gods and the physical universe. The poetic Promethean work brings with it a reconciliation between mythological gods and the creative agents of the world, humans. Similarly, in *A Defense of Poetry*, Shelley writes, “all original religions are allegorical, or susceptible of allegory, and, like Janus, have a double face of false and true. Poets, according to the circumstances of the age and nation in which they appeared, were called, in the earlier epochs of the world, legislators, or prophets: a poet essentially comprises and unites both these characters.”

Rather than simply denying the power of the Gods of Greece, Rome, Jerusalem, and England, *Prometheus Unbound* ends by recognizing the place of religious belief in service to—rather than in mastery over—the human mind. Calling the representatives of all realms—earth, moon, mythical gods and spirits, animals and humans—Demogorgon gives his own great commission, entreatning them

> To suffer woes which Hope thinks infinite;
> To forgive wrongs darker than Death or Night;
> To defy Power that seems Omnipotent;
> To love, and bear; to hope, till Hope creates
> From its own wreck the thing it contemplates;
> Neither to change nor falter nor repent:
> This, like thy glory, Titan! is to be
> Good, great and joyous, beautiful and free;
> This is alone Life, Joy, Empire, and Victory. (IV.570-578)

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As with the Promethean work of spirits of the human mind, Demogorgon’s commission connects the redemptive work carried out in the new creation to Prometheus himself.

**Conclusion**

In *Prometheus Unbound*, the apocalyptic vision of renewed physical creation comes from the actions of two figures, working in tandem—the chained titan Prometheus, and the mysterious chthonic god Demogorgon. That is, rather than a one-to-one correspondence (such as allegorical Christian readings would favor), the salvific restorative work of the Christ figure is divided between two mythological figures. This division corresponds to Shelley’s distinction between the historical Jesus—an actual social reformer executed in the first century—and Christ—the perverted memory of Jesus wrung through the powerful superstitions of the Church. Demogorgon, for his part, corresponds to Christ: he is divine, through perversely represents the end of divine authority. Obversely, Prometheus corresponds to Jesus: his suffering results from his refusal to acknowledge the legitimacy of the ruling authority, but he also serves as the paradigm for human action in the renewed physical creation. Prometheus, therefore, embodies the human nature of Jesus, Demogorgon the divine. Together, both make a case for the reintegration of Christianity into the mythological arsenal of the poet. Drawing from *A Defense of Poetry*, Bryan Shelley notes the scriptural function of poetry: “Shelley calls it [poetry] ‘a sword of lightning, ever unsheathed, which consumes the scabbard that would contain it, As a ‘sword of lightning,’ poetry becomes the ‘word of God’ in Shelley’s religion, a word that’s ‘quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of should and spirit” (Heb. 4:12). Poetry, then, is a kind of revealed scripture—Shelley’s
equivalent of the Logos. Correspondingly, there is a messianic dimension to the way that it affects self and society." I have argued this “messianic dimension” of poetry manifests in Prometheus Unbound in the suffering of Prometheus and the resistance of Demogorgon—the drama’s dual figures of Jesus Christ. Drawing upon the Christian Bible, Shelley recreates the supreme object of religious veneration as objects of poetic imagination and renewal.

Most importantly, however, is the way this mythographical re-writing of the Christian religion deals with resurrection. The moment the suffering hero returns he becomes the fulcrum of the new world. However, resurrection does not happen all at once, nor is it brought about by the sole actions of a single individual: neither Demogorgon nor Prometheus fashion the world themselves. Rather, the work of transforming the world is bequeathed to the rest of humanity, though empowered or authorized by the “first fruits” of the resurrection, Prometheus. This same model is reflected in The Mask of Anarchy, Shelley’s call to revolution written only a few months after the completion of Prometheus Unbound. The allegorical representations of Murder, Fraud, Hypocrisy, and Anarchy—an adaptation of the four-horsemen of Revelation—trample the people in the name of “God, and King, and Law!” When the enigmatic figure of Hope lies down at their feet to be trampled, she springs to new life again resulting in the equally unexpected and catastrophic obliteration of the four marauders. In the midst of this overthrow, Hope herself undergoes a significant change. When first introduced, she is described as a “maniac maid” (86), looking “more like Despair” (88); however, after laying herself “down in the street, / Before the horses feet” (98-99), she arises again as “A mist, a light” (103) that eventually appears “a Shape arrayed in mail / Brighter than the Viper’s scale” (110-111).

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65 Bryon Shelley, Shelley and Scripture, 127.
the mature hope arises in a metaphor of spring, “As flowers beneath May’s footstep waken” (122), an image at home with traditional metaphors for the physical resurrection of the dead. Hope demonstrates the final words of Demogorgon in *Prometheus Unbound*, embodying the call “To love, and bear; to hope, till Hope creates / From its own wreck the thing it contemplates.” The first fruits of the resurrection, Hope then calls out to the rest of humanity, urging them to “Shake your chains to Earth” (153) and aid in recreating the world. Recreation is not a passive enterprise—it is not merely something that happens to human beings, but also something that happens through human beings. Hope calls all to join in “a great Assembly” from all corners, including

the workhouse and the prison

Where pale as corpses newly risen,

Women, children, young and old

Groan for pain, and weep for cold— (275-279)

Just as in *Prometheus Unbound*, the tyrant powers that held humanity in check have already fallen, but the work of renewal has just begun.

Therefore, rather than collapsing resurrection into a single historical moment, the poetic, mythographical resurrection in both *Prometheus Unbound* and *The Mask of Anarchy* parley the initial resurrection as the first part of an on-going process of renewal, a renewal that is not completed by the Christ figure her- or him-self, but rather by those who act in the name of the Christ Figure—human beings acting in their full capacity to create freely new paradigms of equality, justice, art, and poetry. In an earlier age, theologians would have simply called these
imitators of Christ “the Church;”\textsuperscript{67} however, Shelley’s scathing condemnation of the Christian religion as divorced from the teachings of its nominal founder shows such an identification could no longer stand. Here again, as with Shelley’s humanized version of Jesus, we might find the seeds of what would become the so-called “social gospel” of the twentieth century: Christ is risen, therefore the Church must now engage in the project of reconciling the world. The Bible itself is certainly open to such an interpretation—the Great Commission of Jesus is not at odds with the great commission of Prometheus—as is the inaugurated eschatology of the Reformers, the “already/not yet” of the redeemed world.

But Shelley’s contribution—beyond simply retrieving a well-worn doctrine of the Church—is to reconsider resurrection itself a metaphor for the transformative work of poetry. It is not the supernatural erupting into the physical (as Karl Barth would have it), but the physical and mythological brought together in harmony by the poetic imagination. That is, the function of poetry is to re-write the physical world, redeeming it from the tombs of myth and religion by recasting these structures of belief as life-giving metaphors in the here and now. In A Defense of Poetry Shelley writes,

\begin{quote}
But mark how beautiful an order has sprung from the dust and blood of this fierce chaos! how the world, as from a resurrection, balancing itself on the golden wings of Knowledge and of Hope, has reassumed its yet unwearied flight into the heaven of time. Listen to the music, unheard by outward ears, which is as a
\end{quote}

ceaseless and invisible wind, nourishing its everlasting course with strength and
swiftness.⁶⁸

Resurrection, therefore, for Shelley, is a poetic action: it is the work of poetry to being about the
resurrection of the world. This is quite at odds with the picture of eternal life rendered in the
ruling theology of the day—there is no disconnection in Shelley’s utopian vision of renewal
between the world and its resurrection. There is no escape from earth, no flight into the hereafter.
No heaven, no harps, no spiritual wings; but heaven-on-earth, music, the unfettered flight of
human imagination—all the things the dead letters of church may once have aimed for, but had
become mummified in the religious practices of the day. Just as Hermes, with the touch of his
staff, would awaken the dead to life again, poetry, with the power of words made living flesh,
could awaken the dead letter of religion, of mythology, and the world-changing potential that
such systems of belief entombed.

CONCLUSION

In this project I have been tracking a migration as the resurrected body disappeared from the public discourse of the Church of England and reappeared in Romantic literature. It would be difficult to prove this correlation is also causation: it is not entirely clear that the State Church’s silence on the resurrected body somehow produces these literary representations, nor is it likely that literary representations by themselves transform the expression of the doctrine. Regardless, as the risen body disappears in the State Church, it reappears outside of it in a variety of literary texts, characters, and symbols. The reasons for this migration are multiple, and I am sure there are more than I have noted here. However, the structure of English sovereignty—where the role of the King as “deathless sovereign” coupled with the place of the King as head of the Church—significantly constricts the limits of theological discussion in the period, at times explicitly so. Strict adherence not only to the Thirty-Nine Articles of Religion but also to their established and officially sanctioned interpretations of the Church of England’s foundational texts meant that only meanings in accord with the Crown’s interests could be propagated by the State Church;¹ and specifically in regard to the term “resurrection,” the interpretation was locked into the notion of a disembodied life in a disconnected heaven. This kind of restriction and regulation significantly limited the language available in the period to articulate the traditional doctrine fully. These limitations are further reinforced by additional historical conditions unique to the

¹ As I discussed fully in Chapter 1, the Crown insisted that no official associated with the state or its church could “affix any new Sense to any Article, or …publickly read, determine, or hold any publick Disputation, or suffer any such to be held either way, in either the Universities or Colleges respectively; or of nay Divine in the Universities shall preach or print any thing either way, other than is already established in Convocation with Our Royal Assent.” The Thirty-Nine Articles and the Constitutions and Canons, of the Church of England (London, 1773), 2.
period—revolutionary upheaval, reactionary politics, powerful philosophical frameworks, and proliferating orthodox, heterodox, and heretical religious ideas that circulated through the rich religious environment in England at the end of the eighteenth century. These influences together make it such that the literary representation of the risen body that was lost in the State Church’s authorized interpretation of “resurrection” was largely unchallenged by the theology of the period.

But this is all at heart a problem of words—of definitions that no longer carry the sense they once did. This is not an unusual phenomenon: the definitions of words change all the time. As a word is employed in different ways and contexts, it generates new meanings and signifies new ideas and new things. Whatever was once contained by those words can expand to include these new ideas, or transfer into something else, or become lost altogether. However, when a word is canonized as doctrine the process is more complex. Christian doctrines as the codification of orthodox theological beliefs have to do double duty—they must represent the beliefs of the past with fidelity (that is, they must be true to tradition), while maintaining the relationship to the beliefs they signify (that is, they must also be true to their ideas about God and religion in the present). Doctrines are supposed to navigate the absurd connection between the transcendent God and human beings, and communicate the divine economy that stitched together the infinite with the finite, as if trying to catch and hold the light. Because of this, doctrines are always caught up in a dangerous process of re-articulation. On the one hand, the truths that doctrines codify are from the eternal God—for him, they are unchanging; on the other hand, the humans beings to whom they communicate are caught up in the ever changing whirl of historical movement, always struggling to say again their believed truths in the new words (and their new definitions) available. That is, doctrines must move according to the transformations and
mutations of language—words and their definitions—through history; but they must also strive to retain their continuity (as far as can be believed or known) with what came before. In analogy to the growth of a child and the problems of personal identity, doctrines might be said to mature, but they cannot become something they never were before. Reflecting on this difficult relationship between Christian doctrine and historically bound language, Karl Barth reminded us, “theology really signifies an enterprise which is impossible to man…. Whether all the obvious misunderstandings can still perchance be avoided, whether it is possible, despite all the difficulties, not only to understand… but, and upon this everything depends, to follow the movement…from afar…all this we [the theologians] must now show. Let us be prepared for partial failure from the start.”

Even more so, the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead is not just any doctrine, it is the central doctrine of the Christian faith: the root from which the Christian religion sprang and the heart of its distinct theology. Christianity’s doctrines of man, of creation, of redemption, of salvation are all implicated in the physical Resurrection of Jesus; it’s eschatological hope for the future and, often times, the Christian way of being-in-the-world that springs out of this hope are likewise bound up in the physical resurrection of the followers of Jesus. Shifts in this doctrine to account for the changing definitions of words can have serious consequences for the religion as a whole. In this case, it is not just that a word changes definitions, or even that the power of the state has a hand in this change; it is that the central doctrine of Christianity needs to accurately account for a new historical setting, but cannot find the language to do so.

In the face of all of these challenges, literature might therefore provide a productive tool for understanding doctrinal development. Because theological articulation was constrained in the

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period, it makes sense to explore literature in particular for the ways definitions might be challenged through the imaginative repurposing of language—the “resurrection” of language Shelley calls for in the Defense of Poetry.\(^3\) Likewise, Wordsworth’s 1800 “Preface” to the Lyrical Ballads explicitly announces that the poet’s literary project is to capture the “real language of men in a state of vivid sensation.” Wordsworth’s poetry is meant to bring new life to the language tied to his own historical moment; in so doing, Wordsworth hoped to cultivate in his readers “that sort of pleasure…which a Poet might rationally endeavor to impart.”\(^4\) That is, by engaging in the creative process of vivifying the “real language of men,” poetry also has an effect on the bodies of its readers. In this way, such a poetic project would be an ideal place to engage the doctrine of the resurrected body. A revitalized language aims to revitalize the body. In a similar way, Evangelical hymnody relied on the physical bodies of the singing congregation to offer praise to God. It is not simply that the language of the hymns represents worship, but that hymns are meant to be sung, to be brought into the mouths, the lungs, and the minds of individual worshippers. Hymns require bodies. Not all literature sought the same effect: gothic literature in the period was designed to elicit another response in the bodies of its readers. Rather than Wordsworth’s “pleasure,” the gothic was to produce “terror”: in Anne Radcliffe’s dialogue “On the Supernatural in Poetry,” Mr. Simpson (the “representative of Philistine common sense”) notes, “[Terror] expands the soul and awakens the facilities to higher degree of life,” recognizing terror “as a source of the sublime.”\(^5\) Therefore, the literature of the period and its use of


contemporary language (the “real language of men” or “Philistine common sense”) to produce embodied responses makes it a fitting vehicle for the doctrine of the resurrection of the body. It is not surprising, therefore, that the resurrection of the dead makes noteworthy appearances in the literature of the period, as I have discussed in this project.

However, the migration represented in these literary reappearances is not a straightforward relocation of the doctrine. Rather, in the transfer the doctrine of the resurrection gets broken apart, with fragments emerging in various places and with various mutations. The risen physical body of the wanderer, for example, retains many features of the transphysical body, and, insofar as he circumvents the social boundaries of life and death, he imitates the resurrected body’s ability to transcend the limits imposed by the physical world: Manfred walks in to the Hall of Arimenes with the same swagger as Jesus when he surprised his disciples behind the locked doors of the Upper Room. However, as I have argued, the wanderer does not retain some of the distinctive marks of the orthodox Christian doctrine of the resurrection of the dead—most notably, his resurrection does not signal the reconciliation of mankind with the created order or with God. On the contrary, often he is an image of utmost estrangement (estrangement that is often represented as domestic estrangement in particular). On the other hand, Wordsworth’s *via naturaliter negativa* and Cowper’s evangelical hymns do not explicitly speak of raised physical bodies. Rather, these texts reestablish the marriage of heaven and earth, the subversion of the Kingdom of Earth that pretends to Christ’s throne, and the solution to the problem of death that had always been theological implications of the resurrection of the physical body. Likewise, Shelley’s literary demythologizing of the Christian religion ironically enables the idea of resurrection to revive a sense of the “crisis of every human temporal thing,”

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while the role of the poet to write (and rewrite) the blank spaces of the material world mirrors the work of the Church in an inaugurated eschatological framework (an ecclesiology that gains new momentum in, for example, the liberation theology of the twentieth century). Still, in *Prometheus Unbound*, there is not literal death and no literal physical resurrection—Prometheus is an immortal, after all. Strangely, it seems that when the theological or doctrinal elements of the resurrection of the body are present, no raised physical body appears with it; at the same time, when a raised physical body appears in a text, it rarely carries with it the richness of the orthodox Christian doctrine of the resurrection. Therefore, when the doctrine of the resurrection is read through the State Church, it undergoes kind of split: if doctrine is present, the raised body is not; if the raised body is present, doctrine is not. Such a division would make it exceptionally difficult to articulate the “doctrine” of the “resurrection of the body.”

As a result, the central elements of the doctrine often return in fragmentary shards, divided amongst the various iterations of resurrection. It is the job of the historian—or, better yet, the literary critic—to parse out where these fragments emerge, why they take the shape they do, and how they all fit together.

I began this project by sketching out a literary question: what accounts for the proliferation of raised bodies in British Romantic literature? I have argued that in order to answer this question, we must understand the theological context of the period, in particular the powerful Church of England and its silence on the resurrection of the body. In this brief conclusions, I have tried to show that the inverse is also true: to understand the effects and results of the Church of England’s silence on the resurrection of the physical body, we must turn to the literature of the period. If the literature of the period is shaped by changes in the Church, we can best map the consequences of those changes by exploring the literature of the day.
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