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Herrick's "Julia" Poems

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The poems inspired by Herrick's "mistresses" are the prettiest in *Hesperides*. Among these 158 poems are some of Herrick's greatest achievements, such as "Corinna's going a Maying" and "Upon Julia's Clothes." A number of the mistress poems, on the other hand, are very slight—graceful evocations of a smile or a tear, as easily forgotten as their subjects. There are fourteen mistresses in *Hesperides*, some appearing only once, some as often as a dozen times throughout the volume. Standing clearly apart from the other mistresses, however, is Julia, about whom Herrick wrote seventy-seven of the poems in *Hesperides*. Herrick calls Julia "prime of all" his mistresses and her poems are marked as significant in *Hesperides* not only by their number, but by their patterns of imagery and by the gradually changing relationship between Julia and the poet.[1] In the very disparate mix of poems that make up *Hesperides* there are few themes or structures that recur consistently across the 1130 poems. Julia's constant presence therefore makes her an important structural device and signals her centrality.

There has been little critical consideration of the "mistress" poems as a group or of the "Julia" poems, articles by John T. Shawcross and Heather Asals being interesting exceptions.[2] Shawcross has pointed out the onomastic value of the names Herrick chose for his mistresses, such as Irene, Biancha, and Perenna. This etymological approach works with varying degrees of success for the fourteen mistresses, but it is stretched the farthest and is least suggestive when applied to the four mistresses who are most often present in *Hesperides*—Julia (77 poems), Anthea (14 poems), Electra (12 poems), and Sappho (10 poems). Although an onomastic value may be placed on their names, it is only one aspect of their personalities rather than a summarizing epigraph. Shawcross argues, for example, that Julia is the feminine version of Julius which is "Probably . . . a contraction of Jovilios, meaning 'pertaining to' or 'descending from Jupiter' (as father-god)."[3] His reading of Julia therefore emphasizes the poems that portray Julia as a descendant of the gods

who acts as an intermediary to obtain pardon for Herrick's "sins." While associations with Jove are possible, the character of Julia is more complex than the etymology of her name can suggest. In fact, Julia's name is unusual among the mistresses since it is the least decorative and most realistic. Herrick gave the rest of "his girles" deliberately poetic, Latinate names, probably in order to mark them clearly apart from the very real women of the coarse epigrams like Joan, Blanche, and Sibb. Julia stands somewhere between these two worlds of *Hesperides*, neither entirely fanciful and one-dimensional, nor mired in the repulsive corruption and decay that Herrick saw with his naked eye. She becomes alive in a way that surpasses even the many real women enshrined in the epigrams of praise.

Heather Asals reads more complexity into *Hesperides* than perhaps any other critic. She believes that Julia develops in the course of *Hesperides* from "an angry Old Testament God of fear, Donne's *angry* she God, to a forgiving New Testament God of love.... Julia, as Love, is also Christ."[4] There is indeed a change in Julia's role as *Hesperides* progresses and Herrick pointedly states her redemptive function. Asals' reading, however, weighs too heavily the Christian element in Herrick's poetic balance. It is not until late in *Hesperides* that poems to Julia are couched in Christian terms. For most of the volume she is associated, if with any religion, with the pre-Christian or "classical" rites and ceremonies that stand, as in "Corinna's going a Maying," for the literal aspects of Herrick's imagination. And, most importantly, it is only as a pagan figure that she can be seen as Herrick's agent of redemption. In the Christian poems, she kneels next to him and prays as humbly as he does. The sacred and the profane mix freely in Herrick's poetry, but it is an oversimplificaion to identify Julia exclusively with Christ.

Even Asals and Shawcross only glance at the Julia poems in passing. It is revealing to look closely at the figure of Julia, however, as she and the poet change in their relationship through the course of *Hesperides*. She becomes something more than a figure of mythology and something less than a type of Christ. She becomes a metaphor for language and for the limitations of language which finally impose an end upon the volume. She becomes, as well, a woman who is transformed in the course of *Hesperides* from virgin to mother and that change also imposes an end to Herrick's poetry.

Because of the large number of poems in *Hesperides*, one must divide the book into manageable parts in order to discuss it as whole. Generically, *Hesperides* most closely resembles the volumes of "Epigrams, Songs, and Sonnets" which were popular from the 1590s until the

middle of the seventeenth century.[5] Since these epigram collections were frequently divided into groups of a hundred, called centuries, it seems appropriate to divide *Hesperides* into centuries of one hundred poems, at least for the purpose of discussion. When *Hesperides* is divided into clearly marked parts, even if the division is temporary and artificial, it is possible to make specific observations about the change and development of themes and genres in Herrick's 1130 secular poems.

The seventy-seven "Julia" poems are arranged across the length of the volume with fairly even consistency except for concentrations of sixteen poems in the first century and eleven poems in the ninth. The cluster of sixteen "Julia" poems at the beginning of *Hesperides* creates the imagery that will surround her throughout much of the volume; appropriately, the first of the sixteen immediately follows the eight introductory poems that establish the themes of the entire volume and the guidelines for its interpretation. In the last of these introductory poems, Herrick advises his reader "When he would have his verses read" (H-8): the "holy incantation of a verse" is not to be heard in the sober morning but at the height of evening revelry when "the Rose raignes." This command leads naturally to "Upon Julia's Recovery" which begins:

> Droop, droop no more, or hang the head
> Ye *Roses* almost withered.

Her returning health is a "Resurrection" for all flowers, but especially the Rose with which Julia is closely associated throughout *Hesperides*. Two poems later, in fact, the poet dreams of "The Parliament of Roses" which meets in Julia's breast. "The Parliament" is an elegant conceit worked out as a compliment to Julia and it introduces a metaphor which remains central to her presence in *Hesperides*. The flowers nominate the Rose as the "Queen of flowers" but her regal duty will be to serve as "maide of Honour unto" Julia. The Queenship of Julia remains one of Herrick's primary conceptions of her character and roses remain an image of poetry itself, or at least of the lyric poetry of love and beauty. The first poems in *Hesperides* make the further connection that while Julia reigns as Queen of flowers, so may poetry survive and flourish in *Hesperides*.

In *Hesperides* poems to flowers often serve as emblems or meditations on the brevity of human life, especially on the fragile existence of a woman's youth and beauty.[6] The second stanza of the song "To Daffodills" (H-316), for example, makes clear the lesson we must learn from flowers:

2. We have short time to stay, as you,
We have as short a Spring;
As quick a growth to meet Decay,
As you, or any thing.
We die,
As your hours doe, and drie
Away,
Like to the Summers raine;
Or as the pearles of Mornings dew
Ne'r to be found againe.

Julia, however, although she is associated with flowers throughout the volume, is never chastened by the poet, never warned of life's brevity. She seems, at first, to be immune to time's passing and, beyond that, to be capable of sustaining the ephemeral life of flowers in the nurturing protection of her breasts.[7] Whereas Herrick seduces other mistresses with "carpe diem" poems or threatens them with grim warnings of their inevitable aging, he keeps Julia apart. She seems for much of *Hesperides* to be virtually immortal and therefore a being too elevated to be approached in the language of seduction.

Julia is mediator, redeemer, and giver of life to more than flowers in *Hesperides*. She assumes the same role of generation and salvation for the poet himself. Later in *Hesperides*, for example, he asks that she embalm him with a kiss on his dead lips or a breath in his casket because "That breath the *Balm*, the *myrrh*, the *Nard* shal be, / To give an *incorruption* unto me" (H-327). In several poems Herrick insists that Julia be present at his death so that she can perform a very special kind of last rite:

Julia, when thy *Herrick* dies,
Close thou up thy Poets eyes:
And his last breath, let it be
Taken in by none but Thee. (H-499)

Poet and woman have a curiously intertwined existence. Her breath will give him a kind of immortality; his is drawn back into her as if she had been the source of his life all along. "His sailing from Julia" (H-35) is an early instance of the close relationship between the two. "His sailing" may have been written on the occasion of Herrick's departure on the 1627 Isle of Rhe expedition. The persona asks Julia to pray to her "Closet-gods" and intercede with "Those Deities which circum-walk

the Seas" so that he may be "re-delivered," through her intercession. Should she, in his absence, kiss his "dead picture" with "one engendring kisse," he will live forever in her remembrance. His persistent concern with death is evident. Whereas death normally fascinates but does not frighten him, he is here and throughout *Hesperides* terrified at the thought of death by drowning. And his need for the assurance of immortality is also present, whereas his own poetry is usually the source of immortality for himself and for those whom he praises. But Julia is here and elsewhere a source of immortality which transcends his poetic voice.

Already in the first century of *Hesperides*, then, Julia is both Queen and source of life. She is also the source of language itself. In the elegantly witty poem "Upon Julia's Fall" (H-27), for example, the poet creates a small but complex poem out of the occasion when

> *Julia* was carelesse, and withall,
> She rather took, then got a fall.

"The wanton Ambler," presumably her horse, sees "Part of her leggs sinceritie" and is ravished. A factor in the humor of the poem, however, is the broad ambiguity of the identity of "the wanton Ambler." A possible and amusing reading is, obviously, the poet himself, so fond of a chance to see a skirt lifted momentarily. But the poem complicates the joke when:

> . . . ravish'd thus, It came to passe,
> The Nagge (like to the *Prophets Asse*)
> Began to speak, and would have been
> A telling what rare sights h'ad seen:
> And had told all; but did refraine,
> Because his Tongue was ty'd againe.

Like Balaam's ass, Julia's observer is enabled to speak because he has seen an angel. But because what he has seen is not to be spoken of by the vulgar, his power of speech is revoked. The comical scene of Julia falling off her horse thus becomes a revelation of her divinity and her power over language itself.

Her own voice is described repeatedly as being divine: as being the reason that angels are born (H-252), as being so sweet that the damned would fall silent if they could hear her "Melting melodious words, to Lutes of Amber" (H-67). Her voice, in turn, gives Herrick the power to

speak as a poet. Not only will it melt words into lutes of amber, it will "melt" him as well:

> Then melted down, there let me lye
> Entranc'd, and lost confusedly:
> And by thy Musique strucken mute,
> Die, and be turn'd into a Lute.
> "[Upon Julia's Voice] Againe" (H-68)

The conflux of the erotic and the power of poetry here (or of the erotic and divine elsewhere) is typical of all but the latest "Julia" poems.[8] Somehow her voice, her petticoats, or her smile can induce in him the "trance" necessary for him to be a poet. She can transform him into the instrument of poetry itself.

The second century of *Hesperides* affirms Julia as the source of poetry even more emphatically. When Julia is angry with the poet, for example, he is rendered speechless and is able to speak only with tears ("Teares are Tongues," H-150). Asals argues that in the several fanciful poems about a bee that comes to sip honey from the lips of Julia, the first of which is "The captiv'd Bee: or, The little Filcher" (H-182), Julia's lips represent the principles of a demanding poetics whose purpose is to admonish and counsel—Herrick is advocating biblical, moralistic messages in his poetry even when it appears to be light and song-like.[9] To the poems on Julia's lips, she applies the biblical quotation, "The mouth of the just bringeth forth wisdom.... The lips of the righteous know what is acceptable." But Asals' point is certainly misplaced here. Julia's lips are indeed a source of honey and the Bee may be the Poet who is frequently, like the insect, laughingly chastized and then rewarded by Julia in *Hesperides*. The honey, however, is not biblical wisdom but the voice of poetry, the ability to sing. The Bee is, indeed, the classical metaphor widely used in the Renaissance for the poet who gathers his material and inspiration from the "flowers" of other poets.[10] Ben Jonson, for example, explained in *Discoveries* that "the third requisite of our Poet, or Maker, is Imitation ... to draw forth out of the best, and choisest flowers, with the Bee, and turne all into Honey."[11] Julia, then, is reaffirmed as the source of poetry even more emphatically since her lips can replace the example of the classics. A later epigram specifically describes them:

> Sweet are my *Julia's* lips and cleane,
> As if or'e washt in Hippocrene.
> ("On Julias lips," H-857)

Indeed, when Herrick contemplates a name for "his Muse," it is Julia whose presence he conjures:

> Were I to give thee *Baptime*, I wo'd chuse
> To *Christen* thee, the *Bride*, the *Bashfull Muse*,
> Or *Muse* of *Roses*: since that name does fit
> Best with those *Virgin-Verses* thou hast writ:
> Which are so cleane, so chast, as none may feare
> *Cato* the *Censor*, sho'd he scan each here.
> ("To his Muse," H-84)

The image of the virgin Muse of poetry and roses trembling at the edge of sexual union but holding back, "so cleane, so chast," is the central image of the "Julia" poems early in *Hesperides*.

Herrick makes Julia the source of language most explicitly in a poem entitled simply "To Julia":

> If thou wilt say, that I shall live with thee:
> Here shall *my endless Tabernacle* be:
> If not, (as banisht) I will live alone
> There, *where no language ever yet was known*.
> (H-156, italics added)

Beyond her rulership of *Hesperides*, beyond her power to bestow life, is Julia's power over speech itself and the immortality, the "endless Tabernacle," it can bestow. This epigram encapsulates the connection in the early "Julia" poems between language and divinity; at this moment in *Hesperides*, Julia is Logos.

As the concept of the "endless Tabernacle" seems to operate in a mystical linguistic territory between orthodox religion and mere poetry, so what appears to be Christic imagery applied to Julia does not produce the narrow equation Julia = Christ. In the epigram "Upon her Almes" (H-350), Julia's effect on the world is compared to the New Testament account of the miracle of the loaves and fishes:

> See how the poore do waiting stand,
> For the expansion of thy hand.
> A wafer Dol'd by thee, will swell
> Thousands to feed by miracle.

But the series of "Julia" epigrams which precede "her Almes" (on her face [H-342], her picture [H-347], her bed [H-348], and her legs [H-349]) all surely work against Asals' hypothesis, which is both too daring and too reductive. At most, Julia can be seen in this poem as the very womanly figure of Charity, giving out sustenance with a mother's love.

Early in *Hesperides* Julia's priestly role seems to be little more than another flattering conceit, as in "The Perfume" (H-251):

> To morrow, *Julia*, I betimes must rise,
> For some small fault, to offer sacrifice:
> The Altar's ready; Fire to consume
> The fat; breathe thou, and there's the rich perfume.

Herrick plays frequently with the notion of the perfume and incense that exude from Julia's breath and person, and thus his association of her perfume with his priestly sacrifices appears to be simply a fanciful extension of a favorite image.

The poem "To Julia in the Temple" (H-445) is a more disturbing mix of the sacred and erotic:

> Besides us two, i'th'Temple here's not one
> To make up now a Congregation.
> Let's to the *Altar of perfumes* then go,
> And say short Prayers; and when we have done so,
> Then we shall see, how in a little space,
> *Saints* will come in to fill each Pew and Place.

Shawcross sees here the symbolism of the womb and of sexual intercourse and argues that Herrick imagines Julia's womb as a place both of death and of immortality.[12] On the other hand, the poem can be read without an erotic subtext and with an orthodox religious meaning: Herrick and Julia together before the altar can summon up an entire congregation since the prayers of two are sufficient for a community of worship. But between these two readings stands another, neither purely religious nor impurely erotic. Of special significance in the vocabulary of *Hesperides* is the term "saints." Many of the people immortalized in *Hesperides* are referred to as "Saints," and Herrick's saints inhabit a specifically imagined place—the "Calender" "of Saints," "this Poetick Liturgie," and the "white Temple of my Heroes" (H-545, H-510, H-496). "Julia in the Temple" can also be read, therefore, as another tribute to Julia's power to make Herrick a poet. Together they can create a world of linguistic sanctity and power.

In the sixth century of *Hesperides*, the pivotal center of the volume, Herrick placed a poem which makes explicit Julia's role as co-priest with himself.[13] In "To Julia, the Flaminica Dialis, or Queen-Priest" (H-539), the poet begins on the note of jesting lightness which marks the first half of the volume: "Thou know'st, my *Julia*, that it is thy turne / This Mornings Incense to prepare, and burne." In the course of the poem, however, Julia is raised to a special eminence. It is *only* she, clothed in white robes and a wreath of pomegranates, who can appease "Love for our very-many Trespasses." It is for a neglect of flowers, daily fires, and wine that Love's "wrath is gone forth to consume / Us all, unlesse preserv'd by thy Perfume." It is clear throughout the poem that Julia is the priestess of a pagan, classical deity even in the poet's expostulations at the end:

> O *Pious-Priestresse*! make a Peace for us.
> For our neglect, Love did our Death decree,
> That we escape. *Redemption comes by Thee.*

Although Julia becomes intercessor and redeemer at the center of *Hesperides*, she is not Asals' Christ, but the poet's living Muse who serves with him in the religion of pleasure and poetry. Five poems after the "Flaminica Dialis" is "An Ode to Sir Clipsebie Crew" (H-544) which repeats the "religious" ceremonies of flowers, fire, and wine which Julia rose to serve. Herrick invites Crew to:

> Come . . . and see the Cell
> Wherein I dwell;
> And my Enchantments too;
> Which Love and noble freedome is.

There they "keep eternal fires . . . and doe Divine / As Wine / And Rage inspires," praising Anacreon and raising a glass to Horace. There they live in the world of stasis that Julia's intercession obtained for them:

> Thus, thus, we live, and spend the houres
> In Wine and Flowers:
> And make the frollick yeere,
> The Month, the Week, the instant Day
> To stay
> The longer here.

Julia is, for much of *Hesperides*, the priestess of what Anthony Low has called Herrick's "religion of pleasure."[14] She is, also, as Queen of the Rose and Herrick's Muse, the priestess in the religion of poetry.

But in the center of *Hesperides* lies, as well, the first intimation that Julia will die. Before this she has seemed as timeless as the nights of revelry "when the Rose raignes," as timeless as the lyric poems which she inspired. At mid-volume, however, Herrick begins to acknowledge the end of his enchanted garden and the fragility of the illusion he has created. Julia, too, is brushed with mortality for the first time, although her ultimate fate in *Hesperides* will be radically different from the dissolution which will befall the rest of the garden.[15]

In "To Julia" (H-584) the tone of religious ceremony is solemn and as clearly Christian as any poem in Herrick's secular volume. Herrick addresses Julia as mortal for the first time and, for the first time, makes her the priestess of a very different religion:

> The Saints-bell calls; and, *Julia*, I must read
> The Proper Lessons for the Saints now dead:
> To grace which Service, *Julia*, there shall be
> One *Holy Collect*, said or sung for Thee.
> Dead when thou art, Deare *Julia*, thou shalt have
> A *Trentall* sung by Virgins o're thy Grave:
> Meane time we two will sing the Dirge of these;
> Who dead, deserve our best remembrances.

The possibility of Julia's death is certainly part of the crisis at mid-volume, since her fragrant immortality has been the enduring ideal of the first half of *Hesperides*. But it is also a measure of her reality that Herrick as a Christian priest will now include prayers for her in the ceremonies he celebrates as Anglican minister. "The Saints now dead" almost certainly refers, at least in part, to the friends and heroes whom Herrick immortalizes in the epigrams of praise. That Julia shall join the ranks of these actual people further testifies to her presence in both the imaginary and the temporal worlds of *Hesperides*. Until she dies, she is to combine her role as priest and Muse in the creation of the dirges that will keep their saints alive in memory.

At mid-volume, in this first poem about her death, it is significant that Julia is still a virgin.[16] Up to this point in *Hesperides* she is referred to as a virgin consistently and the poet never presses her for a physical union. Immediately after mid-volume, however, Herrick places the lovely song, "The Night-Piece to Julia" (H-619), the most explicitly erotic of all the

"Julia" poems. Here the poetic miniaturization that seems cloying in many other poems is used with flawless tact:

> Her Eyes the Glow-worme lend thee,
> The Shooting Starres attend thee;
> And the Elves also,
> Whose little eyes glow,
> Like the sparks of fire, befriend thee.

And the last verse celebrates Herrick's seduction of Julia, perfect even in its intermingling of the end-rhymed pronouns:

> Then *Julia* let me wooe thee,
> Thus, thus to come unto me:
> And when I shall meet
> Thy silv'ry feet,
> My soule Ile poure into thee.

"The Night-Piece" marks the culmination of the delicately erotic imagery of melting and fluidity which Herrick employs everywhere in his poetry.

The religious poem "To Julia" (H-584) and the erotic "Night-Piece" (H-619) together mark the beginning of a change in the poet's attitude toward Julia. With the recognition of her future death seems to come a more urgent sense of Julia as a physical woman. A balance is maintained throughout the first half of the volume between Julia's loveliness as a woman and her inaccessibility as an ideal and a Muse of poetry. At mid-volume, however, that balance begins to dissolve. Herrick's characteristically delicate amalgam of erotic and idealized love begins to separate.

That change can be mapped by reading in sequence some of the poems on Julia's clothing. "Julia's Petticoat" (H-175), for example, early in *Hesperides*, combines an appreciation of her sensual beauty with images of her as an emblem of divine love. Her blue petticoat is both the kind of artfully careless garment that Herrick praises elsewhere:

> Thy Azure Robe, I did behold,
> As ayrie as the leaves of gold;
> Which erring here, and wandring there,
> Pleas'd with transgression ev'ry where:

and a symbol of the heavens ("And pounc't with Stars, it shew'd to me / Like a *Celestiall Canopie*"). The movement of her skirt around her body as it clings close to her or swings away alternately suggests her physical attraction and her transcendence. Finally, the two opposing movements are united when the speaker "melts" with delight and, at the same time, sees the skirt as the cloud leading the Israelites across the desert:

> And all confus'd, I there did lie
> Drown'd in Delights; but co'd not die.
> That Leading Cloud, I follow'd still,
> Hoping t'ave seene of it my fill;
> But ah! I co'd not: sho'd it move
> To Life Eternal, I co'd love.

The two contradictory movements of Julia's skirt remain the polarities that define her until the final third of the volume. It is significant as well that, alluring as she is, she nevertheless does not provide any kind of sexual consummation.[17]

"Art above Nature, to Julia" (H-560), placed centrally in *Hesperides*, is another poem on the artifice of Julia's clothing. It catalogues the intricacies of her dress and hair, concluding:

> Next, when those Lawnie Filmes I see
> Play with a wild civility:
> And all those airie silks to flow,
> Alluring me, and tempting so:
> I must confesse, mine eye and heart
> Dotes less on Nature, then on Art.

There is the intriguing suggestion that Julia, with her headdress spread like a silken forest above her head, her flowers arranged elegantly, her lace climbing up her dress like the masts of a ship, and her tresses bound into geometric figures, is nothing less than Art itself.[18]

"Upon Julia's Clothes" (H-779), one of Herrick's best-known poems, is often simply praised for its phrase, "That liquefaction of her clothes." It is true that it draws no epigrammatic moral and comes to no summarizing conclusion. But "Upon Julia's Clothes" is a finely crafted expression of the power of a veil—of silk, of crystal, or of art—to create beauty by covering reality.

The ninth century includes the last two poems on Julia's clothes. By now all the polarities which had been kept in balance earlier begin to separate radically. The first of the two, "The Transfiguration" (H-819),

shows how much closer both Julia and Herrick have moved to "Life Eternal":

> Immortall clothing I put on,
> So soone as *Julia* I am gon
> To mine eternall Mansion.
>
> Thou, thou art here, to humane sight
> Cloth'd all with incorrupted light;
> But yet how more admir'dly bright
>
> Wilt thou appear, when thou art set
> In thy refulgent Thronelet,
> That shin'st thus in thy counterfeit?[19]

The "immortal clothing" of this poem suggests a cross-reference to the extraordinary poem, "His Winding-sheet" (H-515), which had appeared earlier in the volume, before the mid-point. It appears to be a variation on the "Come and live with me" theme, addressed not to a shepherdess but to his grave wrappings:

> Come thou, who art the Wine, and wit
> Of all I've writ:
> The Grace, the Glorie, and the best
> Piece of the rest.
> Thou art of what I did intend
> The All, and End. . . .
> Come then, and be to my chast side
> Both Bed, and Bride.

And in that poem Herrick proceeded to describe the winding-sheet as a refuge from emotional involvement and from injustice. So even grave-clothes (like Julia's fluid garments) obscure the reality of physical objects, thus making them more beautiful. But "The Transfiguration" is an explicitly Christian poem concerning the death not only of Herrick but of Julia as well. It is one of the few poems in *Hesperides* that anticipates *His Noble Numbers* and it is significant that Julia alone of all of his mistresses is to be carried forward into the realm of Herrick's "good Works."

"The Transfiguration" is, however, paired with a poem that exemplifies the "wanton Wit" Herrick abjures in the first poem of *His Noble Numbers*. In "To Julia, in her Dawn, or Day-breake" (H-824), Herrick

imagines her, for the first time in *Hesperides*, with no clothing at all. The four-stanza poem is divided into two distinct parts. The beginning of the poem is boldly erotic: he will come to her at dawn before she has dressed, before she can say her "Ave-Mary," when she is as naked as Eve, the "prime of Paradice." The poem does not sustain this aggressive stance, however. After all, she would blush at being so discovered and he will permit her, in his imagination, to cover herself with a "Lawn" so that:

> As Lillies shrin'd in Christall, so
> Do thou to me appeare:
> Or Damask Roses, when they grow
> To sweet acquaintance there.

Nevertheless, the poet has allowed himself to look at Julia for a moment with none of the veils of art.

In the ninth century, then, the tension between a sensual love for Julia and a religious reverence for her transcendence dissolves and the two impulses stand, for the first time, in opposition to one another. Intrinsic to Herrick's poetry is an unresolved tension between erotic and religious yearnings, between pagan and Christian, and between nature and art, a tension which his very finest poems, like "Corinna's going a Maying," interweave successfully. When, in the ninth century, the tensions are released, the contradiction seems to trigger changed imagery and a different direction for the rest of the volume.

The final poems to Julia are all exercises in guilt and contrition, a theme which is present at times earlier in *Hesperides* but which becomes central at the end and remains central in *His Noble Numbers*. Following "The Transfiguration" and "her Dawne," for example, are two poems on sacrifice. The first (H-856) reverses the imagery of sacrifice used until now; it is not Julia who provides the perfumes for Herrick's fire, but instead the poet suggests to her "I thinke" that the gods "require / Male perfumes, but Female fire." It is an indication of Julia's ascendance in her relationship with Herrick.

The second is the only poem in *Hesperides* in which Julia herself speaks: "The Sacrifice, by way of Discourse betwixt himselfe and Julia" (H-870). Herrick begins, speaking in the service of the "Old Religion" which "first commands / That we wash our hearts, and hands." All must be clean, the perfumes ready. Julia assures him that all is prepared, including the sacrificial beast and the wine, and so together they begin to burn the victim. This sacrifice to the "Old Religion" is as sacrilegious as any poem in *Hesperides*, going far beyond the harmless ceremonies to

Love and poetry which Julia celebrates as the "Flaminica Dialis." Fond little ceremonies to his household lars bear little relationship to a sacrificial blood offering made in union with his Muse of poetry. A dissolution parallel to the separation of erotic and idealized love is effected here in the radical severing of Herrick's balance of pagan and Christian.

Late in the ninth century is a cluster of poems on Candlemas day, February 2, the feast celebrating both the presentation of the Infant Christ in the temple and the ritual purification of the Virgin Mother after childbirth (H-892, H-893, H-894).[20] The last in the series, a brief epigram, seems to mark the end not only to a season but to the mood of festival and play which is a large part of *Hesperides* up to this point: "End now the White-loafe, and the Pye, / And let all sports with Christmas dye."[21]

Almost immediately after the Candlemas poems Herrick placed a poem which appears to be part of that series, "Julia's Churching, or Purification" (H-898).[22] Julia must come to the temple to be purified after the taint of childbirth so that she can return to her husband a bride again. She must come attended "By those who serve the Child-bed misteries," there to burn incense and present offerings to "the Pious Priest." The poem ends with a sententious epigram:

> *She who keeps chastly to her husbands side*
> *Is not for one, but every night his Bride:*
> *And stealing still with love, and feare to Bed,*
> *Brings him not one, but many a Maiden-head.*

In the context of all of the other "Julia" poems, the idea of Julia as a married woman and as a mother is unsettling, even shocking. It is as if the severing of the delicate balance between worship and seduction which occurred a few poems earlier has forced the poet either to recognize that Julia is indeed unapproachable or to make her unreachable in order to protect himself and his chastity. Yet the maturing of Julia necessitates the end to the ritual game that Herrick has played with her until this point in *Hesperides*; his relationship with her takes on the somber hues of Candlemas when "all sports with Christmas dye."

Whereas Julia has given birth to another life, is purified and dedicated anew to her spouse, the book of poetry with which she has been so closely associated is treated very differently.[23] "Julia's Churching" is paired with a poem "To his Book" (H-899) in which Herrick renounces his poetry in words that closely echo and parody the sentiments of "Julia's Churching":

> Before the Press scarce one co'd see
> A little-peeping-part of thee:
> *But since th'art Printed, thou dost call*
> To shew thy nakedness to all.
> My care for thee is now the less;
> (Having resign'd thy shamefac'tness:)
> Go with thy Faults and Fates; yet stay
> And take this sentence, then away;
> Whom one belov'd will not suffice,
> She'l runne to all adulteries.

Herrick finds his Book repugnant when it is metaphorically "unclothed" by being printed. But Julia, who has been the Muse, indeed the enabling source of the Book, has been ritually purified of any violation of her chastely cloaked virginity.[24]

"Julia's Churching" is the first in the final sequence of poems to Julia in *Hesperides*, each of which is built around the metaphor of washing or purification. The first in the series, however, "Upon Julia's washing her self in the river" (H-939), is very similar to "her Dawn" in that the poet sees Julia naked, or, significantly, partially naked for she is covered with "a Lawne of water," so that he sees her as "Lillies thorough Christall." The poet is aroused, throws himself into the stream, kisses her, and would have done more "Had not thy waves forbad the rest." But if the purifying water protects Julia, nevertheless the poet's physical desire for her is barely checked by the "Lawne" of art. At this late stage in *Hesperides* the disjunction of language and eroticism is clearly visible.

Closely following "Upon Julia's washing her self" is the epigram "Upon Blisse" (H-943) where intoxication, usually associated in *Hesperides* with poetic rage, releases different inhibitions:

> *Blisse* (last night drunk) did kisse his mothersknee:
> Where he will kisse (next drunk) conjecture ye.[25]

The idea of Julia as mother implicit in the imagery of her as the source of life and language and more explicit in "Julia's Churching" is now disturbingly associated with a joke about maternal incest.

Which brings us to the *other* Julia named in *Hesperides*. In "His tears to Thamasis" (H-1028), Herrick bids farewell to the river and its nymphs, lamenting the places where he can never travel again upon the Thames, including finally "the *Golden-cheap-side*, where the earth / Of *Julia Herrick* gave to me my Birth." The names Julia and Herrick have been placed together in a number of poems, moving closer and closer

together until in "The Sacrifice, by way of Discourse" (H-870) they alternated down the edge of the poem. Here they stand together side by side as the name of Herrick's mother, called Julian or Juliana Herrick in extant records, but called simply Julia here in the only surviving mention that Herrick made of her.[26] *Hesperides* must be one of the most intimately familial books in the seventeenth century. Herrick includes within it a moving poem to his father, long and important poems to his brothers, poems to his sisters, brothers-in-law, sisters-in-law, aunts and uncles, nephews, nieces, and friends, all of whom together make up a large number of his "Saints." It is only here, however, in the concluding century of *Hesperides*, in a poem written years before the 1648 publication but placed toward the end of the volume, that Herrick names his mother for the first and only time.[27]

That Julia, "prime of all," should bear the same name as Herrick's mother seems, at the least, worth noting. Yet the name has never been recognized by any critic of Herrick. The closest acknowledgement of the identical names is elliptical and framed as a warning; F. W. Moorman cautions, "of the poet's relations with [his mother] we know nothing, and speculation on such a matter is particularly undesirable."[28] The reluctance of critics to cite such an obvious fact as the poet's choice of his mother's name for his most important mistress demonstrates the curious resistance of readers to question or expand the traditional interpretations of Herrick's poetry. Herrick's reputation has been enhanced by the close readings some of his finest poems have received, but as few questions have been posed about the emotional structure of *Hesperides* as about its historical or political structure. Moorman's warning against a psychoanalytic inquiry into Herrick's relationship with his mother has never been challenged; yet Herrick's very reticence about his mother in so family-conscious a volume is itself an important piece of biographical or psychological evidence.[29]

Recently, in a notable exception to the avoidance of the psychological in Herrick criticism, Gordon Braden has addressed himself to the nature of sexuality in *Hesperides*.[30] In *The Classics and English Renaissance Poetry* (1978), Braden argues that Herrick's eroticism is "directed across a void" toward women who do not seem to recognize his existence, that repeatedly Herrick retreats from coition even in his fantasies, and that therefore Herrick's sexuality is at times "prepubescent," at times "senile," but never adult and genital (pp. 219-23). All of Braden's insights are corroborated by the "Julia" poems.

But the conclusion which Braden draws is unconvincingly literal; "the sexual world of the *Hesperides*," Braden argues, "is held in place by a choice that for the most part intentionally disguises itself as innocence or

incompetence or ignorance"; a way, in other words, of explaining away a clergyman's chastity (p. 231). First of all, of course, Herrick was not ordained until he was 32 and did not assume his living at Dean Prior until he was 39. Nor was it necessary for an Anglican clergyman to remain celibate; Herrick's closest friend, John Weeks, for example, with whom Herrick was ordained, was happily married. Further, it seems implausible that a man's lifework should be a game consciously played in order to avoid explaining his religiously motivated celibacy. It seems more tenable to place the thwarted sexuality of *Hesperides* in a broader psychological context.

Certainly, in reading the "Julia" poems themselves, the shadow of Herrick's mother must be considered. Once Julia is recognized, almost simultaneously, as both mother and object of erotic desire, all of the remaining poems in *Hesperides* are poems of purification and sacrifice, with no acknowledgement of her physical attraction. The poet insists over and over again that they must both cleanse themselves:

> Offer thy gift; but first the Law commands
> Thee *Julia*, first, to *sanctifie* thy hands:
> Doe that my *Julia* which the rites require. (H-957)

In another poem he asks her to "Help me, *Julia*, for to pray, / . . . Bring the Holy-water hither; / Let us wash, and pray together" so that "the Fiend" will be frightened away by their combined strength (H-1069). Again, he insists that they must both be doubly cleansed:

> Holy waters hither bring
> For the sacred sprinkling:
> Baptize me and thee, and so
> Let us to the Altar go.
> And (ere we our rites commence)
> Wash our hands in innocence.
> Then I'le be the *Rex Sacrorum*,
> Thou the Queen of *Peace and Quorum*.
> ("To Julia," H-974)

This obsessive concern with sacrificial cleansing seems symptomatic of a need to expiate for some kind of offense, and it is an expiation they must both make together. The imagery of purification reflects back on the erotic poems and their imagery of fluidity and also forward to the many poems of guilt and punishment in *Noble Numbers*.

The role that Herrick wishes to give himself and Julia in this poem is significant. She, the Queen of Roses early in *Hesperides*, and, at mid-volume, the "Queen-Priest" or "Flaminica Dialis," shall become here a figure of authority and wisdom, a "Queen of Peace and Quorum," that is a justice of eminent learning and ability, a figure grounded in solid reality. Julia shall thus be pushed back from the powerful religious place she has assumed in his book and Herrick shall again be priest alone, the "King of the Sacred Rites," a phrase borrowed from Ovid's *Fasti* where the "Rex Sacrorum" placates "the divinities by sacrificing the mate of a wooly ewe."[31] In his *Romanae Historiae* (1614), Thomas Godwin detailed the development of this religious figure; the "Rex Sacrorum" was created specifically to supersede the "Flamen Dialis" and to perform the religious duties of the king after kingship was abolished in Rome. Interestingly, according to Godwin, the "Flamen Dialis" could serve only if he were married; if his wife, the "Flaminica Dialis," were to die, he then had to resign his sacerdotal office.[32]

The last two poems to Julia clearly mark the end of the sequence. The penultimate poem, "His Covenant or Protestation to Julia" (H-1090), both bids her farewell and pledges his return. In the context of the surrounding poems, it is clear that the journey he is about to take is death. Unlike "His Sailing" at the beginning of *Hesperides*, it is the poet who is now calm and Julia who is distraught. He asks her:

> Why do'st thou wound, and break my heart?
> As if we sho'd for ever part?
> Hast thou not heard an Oath from me,
> After a day, or two, or three,
> I wo'd come back and live with thee?

Herrick implies that his return will be, like Christ's from the tomb, a resurrection into a new life where she will still have a place.[33] "His last request to Julia" (H-1095), which is not only the final poem to her in *Hesperides* but the final mistress poem as well, is a dignified and moving farewell. He asks first, as he has asked before, that she will serve as intercessor for "I Have been wanton, and too bold I feare, / To chafe o're much the Virgins cheek or eare." He asks at last that Julia mark the end both of his mortal life and of his poetry:

> . . . my *Julia*, dearest *Julia*, come,
> And go with me to chuse my Buriall roome:
> My Fates are ended; when thy *Herrick* dyes,
> Claspe thou his Book, then close thou up his Eyes.

Julia will close the book—since, in a way, she began it with her "Resurrection"—and, as life-giver, will end Herrick's poetic life as well. But, at the same time, Herrick's farewell poem ominously recalls "The Dreame" (H-399) in which he relates to Julia how the three Sisters of Fate appeared to him with a burning brand and predicted that when the log was completely burned, he would die. Herrick's dream is a version of the story of Meleager whose mother, when she heard the same prophecy of the Fates, snatched the log out of the fire and kept it locked in a chest. When she heard, however, that Meleager had killed her brother in a fight occasioned by Meleager's love for Atlantis, she removed the log, burned it, and her son died a painful death.

In order to sustain his poetic vision, Herrick had to be able to see art and nature in equipoise; the allurements of art had to veil, even disguise, the reality they sought to celebrate. Nor could love ever leave the realm of courtly adoration, but must remain poised in a moment of excitement and mystery. Even religion should consist primarily of the ritual, the art, that enhances belief. In the course of the "Julia" poems, each of these delicate balances is upset and the nexus of emotion which seems to trigger this unbalance is the recognition of Julia as both mortal and physical. If Julia is seen as the conscious or unconscious embodiment of both Muse and mother, then the agony and the guilt which the recognition of her physical reality precipitated help us to understand both the "Julia" poems and the volume.

Two poems in *His Noble Numbers* seem to form a coda to the "Julia" poems of *Hesperides*. These long poems to women act as companion poems, since their structure is remarkably similar (both are sung by a chorus of women, both are divided into numbered stanzas, and both are based on Biblical stories). The first, "The Dirge of Jephthahs Daughter: sung by the Virgins" (N-83), recalls the dirge that Herrick promised Julia he would compose to be "sung by Virgins" over her grave. It is a recitation of the ceremonies the virgins will perform for her and a lament for their own loss of joy in virginity since "our Maiden-pleasure be / Wrapt in the winding-sheet, with thee." Echoes of the "Julia" poems are numerous and the dirge can be read as a lament for *Hesperides'* opening phase of flowers and maiden ceremonies.

The second poem, "The Widdowes teares: or, Dirge of Dorcas" (N-123), is sung by a chorus of widows in mourning for the death of a charitable matron who is praised not so much for her beauty as for her alms, her spices, her weaving ability, and for the clothes she has made for the poor. Above all, she is praised for her modesty of dress.

On one level, the two poems dramatize the promises of the Old and New Testaments. Jephthah's daughter dies a virgin sacrifice for a vow her

father made to God; Dorcas dies in the fullness of time, no longer a virgin, but a matron, and, although the poem in no way indicates this, she is then restored to life by Saint Peter. But on another level, the two dirges speak instead (or as well) of the relationship between Herrick's two scriptures, of the two volumes of poetry, of the two Julias, virgin and matron, that dominated his imagination and represented its dichotomies. It is surely significant that Herrick does not include in *His Noble Numbers* the resurrection that Dorcas achieved in the biblical text. Herrick chose to end *Hesperides: or, The Works both Humane & Divine* on a note of doubt and sorrow. The poet is dead at the end of *Hesperides* and Christ's tomb wrenchingly empty at the end of *His Noble Numbers*; the virgins have renounced their ceremonies, and even the blessed matron seems to be irrevocably gone.[34] Herrick has recognized his Julia without the veils of art and he has renounced poetry.

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Notes

[1] "Upon the losse of his Mistresses" (H-39); all further parenthetical references will be to the poem numbers in *The Complete Poetry of Robert Herrick*, ed. J. Max Patrick (New York: New York Univ. Press, 1963).

[2] John T. Shawcross, "The Names of Herrick's Mistresses in *Hesperides*," in *"Trust to Good Verses": Herrick Tercentenary Essays*, ed. Roger Rollin and J. Max Patrick (Pittsburgh: Univ. of Pittsburgh Press, 1978), pp. 89-102 and Heather Asals, "King Solomon in the Land of the *Hesperides*," *TSLL* 17 (1976), 362-80.

[3] Shawcross, p. 96.

[4] Asals, p. 374.

[5] See, for example, John Heywood, *First Hundred of Epigrams* (1556) and his five succeeding volumes of a hundred poems; Thomas Bastard, *Chrestoleros. Seven Bookes of Epigrames* (1598); John Heath, *Two Centuries of epigrammes* (1616); Henry Peacham, *Thalia's Banquet: Furnished with one hundred and odde dishes of newly deuised Epigrammes* (1620). The best example of Herrick's precedents here is, as it always is, Ben Jonson. See his *Epigrammes. I. Booke* (1616), and his volumes of mixed forms, *The Forrest* (1616) and *Under-Wood* (1640-41). For a discussion of *Hesperides* as an epigram book and, therefore, as an entire, complex sequence, see Ann Baynes Coiro, *Robert Herrick's* Hesperides *and the Epigram Book Tradition* (forthcoming from Johns Hopkins University Press).

[6] See T. G. S. Cain, "'Times trans-shifting': Herrick in Meditation," in *"Trust to Good Verses": Herrick Tercentenary Essays*, pp. 103-23.

[7] See, for example, "Upon Roses" (H-78), "To Daisies, not to shut so soone" (H-441), and "To Roses in Julia's Bosome" (H-1070).

[8] Achsah Guibbory discusses the similarity in Herrick's poetry between sexual and poetic pleasure in "'No lust theres like to Poetry': Herrick's Passion for Poetry," in *"Trust to Good Verses": Herrick Tercentenary Essays*, pp. 79-87.

[9] Asals, pp. 368-69.

[10] See G. W. Pigman III, "Versions of Imitation in the Renaissance," *RQ* 33 (1980), 3-7.

[11] *Works*, ed. C. H. Herford and Philip and Evelyn Simpson (Oxford: Clarendon, 1947), VIII, 638-69.

[12] Shawcross, p. 99.

[13] On the crisis and change at mid-volume see John L. Kimmey, "Order and Form in Herrick's *Hesperides*," *JEGP* 70 (1971), 255-68; and Ann Baynes Coiro, "Herrick's *Hesperides*: The Name

and the Frame," *ELH* 52 (1985), 311-36, a slightly revised version of which will appear in *Robert Herrick's* Hesperides *and the Epigram Book Tradition.*

[14] "Robert Herrick: The Religion of Pleasure," in *Love's Architecture: Devotional Modes in the Seventeenth Century* (New York: New York Univ. Press, 1978), pp. 208-34.

[15] Symbolic of Julia's acknowledged mortality is a late poem, "Upon the Roses in Julias bosome" (H-734). While in other poems on this theme, the roses are imagined as flourishing forever, here Herrick congratulates the roses on their sepulchre; "Your Grave her Bosome is, the Lawne the Stone." At the very end of *Hesperides* when Julia has acquired a new kind of immortality, the metaphor of her life-giving bosom is restored (H-1070).

[16] As we shall see, however, the image of Julia as the "Flaminica Dialis" (H-539) earlier in this century of poems may carry the implication of a marriage between herself and her co-priest. That Herrick stepped back and let Julia perform the rites in that poem is an intriguing denial of his role.

[17] See Gordon Braden, "Robert Herrick and Classical Lyric Poetry," in *The Classics and English Renaissance Poetry* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1978), especially pp. 218-32.

[18] Similarly, Guibbory (p. 83) sees Julia here as "the perfect work of art" through whom Herrick woos art itself.

[19] A. B. Chambers ("Herrick and the Trans-shifting of Time," *SP* 72 [1975], 97-100) has read "The Transfiguration" in precisely the opposite way, as a secular, erotic poem in which Herrick substitutes Julia for Jesus, therefore extending the "religion of love" "to a manifestly absurd extreme." But Chambers' reading seems extreme, and especially so when one considers other "Julia" poems where Herrick is both seriously religious and seriously respectful of Julia's claim to moral goodness.

[20] There is also another late poem on Candlemas, "Ceremony upon Candlemas Eve" (H-980).

[21] On the importance of play and holiday celebration in *Hesperides*, see Leah Sinanoglou Marcus, "Herrick's *Hesperides* and the 'Proclamation made for May,'" *SP* 76 (1979), 49-74.

[22] Julia is associated here and elsewhere more closely with the Virgin Mary than she is with Christ.

[23] The image of the purified mother is doubly powerful when considered in light of Herrick's explicit image for the *Hesperides* poems as his children (see H-3, H-626, H-681 and Robert B. Shaw, "Farewells to Poetry," *Yale Review* 70 [1981], 187-205). But already in the first poem "To his Booke" (H-3), one of the crucial introductory poems, Herrick has renounced his "deerely . . . lov'd . . . first-borne child" because he had seen it "wantonly to roame / From house to house, and never stay at home."

[24] A brief sequence of poems early in *Hesperides*, "The Lilly in a Christal" (H-193), "To his Booke" (H-194), and "Upon some women" (H-195), demonstrates the same tension between art and reality, although the poet's attitude toward his book is very different. "The Lilly in a Christal" is the most thorough statement in *Hesperides* of Herrick's aesthetic of the enhancement of beauty by contrast and partial visibility. It is followed by a poem to his book as a bride, bedecked with jewels. But the next poem, "Upon some women," seems to call both of the preceding poems into question by revealing the harsh realism with which Herrick can counterpoint his lyrics in *Hesperides*. Women are, for example:

> Pieces, patches, ropes of haire;
> In-laid Garbage ev'ry where.
> Out-side silk, and out-side Lawne;
> Sceanes to cheat us neatly drawne.

[25] Blisse is, in itself, an unusual choice of name for one of Herrick's coarse epigrams. The targets of these epigrams are usually given ugly, discordant names such as Craw, Luggs, or Pimpe.

[26] Julian Stone Herrick was from a prosperous London family. Herrick's father fell from an upper-story window of their home in Cheapside and was killed, apparently a suicide, in 1592, the year after Herrick was born. His mother died in 1629, the year Herrick was appointed Vicar of Dean Prior.

[27] "His teares for Thamasis" was probably written about 1630 a year after his mother died and when Herrick left London for Dean Prior.

[28] *Robert Herrick: A Biographical & Critical Study* (New York: Russell & Russell, 1962; rpt. of 1910 edition), p. 86.

[29] Herrick never mentions, for example, his uncle Sir William Herrick who became the guardian of all the Herrick children upon their father's early death and who controlled their inheritance. Herrick was apprenticed as a goldsmith to his uncle from the age of 16 to 22. Extant letters show that Herrick then had to plead for extra money while at Cambridge. In this case, Herrick's excision of his uncle from the "Generation of [his] Just" (H-664) seems to stem from resentment.

[30] In recent years there have been a few tentative explorations of psychoanalytic applications to Herrick's poetry. In "Sweet Numbers and Sour Readers: Trends and Perspectives in Herrick Criticism," the introduction to *"Trust to Good Verses": Herrick Tercentenary Essays*, Roger Rollin suggested that a psychological approach to Herrick's poetry might prove fruitful (pp. 3-11). U. Milo Kaufman, "Herrick and the Search for Secure Space," in *Paradise in the Age of Milton*, English Literary Studies, 11 (Victoria, Canada: Univ. of Victoria Press, 1978), pp. 51-56, remarked briefly that the "womb-like sanctuary" in *His Noble Numbers* may be a symptom of Herrick's "strangely troubled conscience" (p. 52). Antoinette Dauber, "Herrick's Foul Epigrams," *Genre* 2 (1976), 87-102, discusses the anality of Herrick's epigrams and argues that Herrick "desublimates various adult pursuits to exhibit the infantile anality which underlies them." She believes this to be Herrick's *conscious* intention.

[31] *Fasti*, ed. Sir James George Frazer, 5 vols. (London: Macmillan, 1919), i, 333.

[32] *Romanae Historiae . . . An English Exposition of the Roman Antiquities* (Oxford: Henrie Cripps, 1625), pp. 34-56. I quote here from the third, revised edition. Between 1614 and 1696 there were sixteen editions of Godwin's textbook. Robert Deming's study, *Ceremony and Art: Robert Herrick's Poetry* (Paris: Mouton, 1974) demonstrated how profitable Godwin's work can be as a gloss on Herrick's classical borrowings.

[33] There are two poems at the very end of *Hesperides*, "The end of his worke" (H-1126) and "To Crowne it" (H-1127), that equate the imagery of sailing with poetry, as in: "Part of the worke remaines; one part is past: / And here my ship rides having Anchor cast."

[34] *His Noble Numbers* ends with "To his Saviours Sepulcher: his Devotion" (N-269), "His Offering, with the rest, at the Sepulcher" (N-270) and "His coming to the Sepulcher" (N-271).