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A Caroline Fancy: Carew on Representation

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In the second, 1642, edition of Carew's *Poems*, there appears a slender lyric entitled "A Fancy."[1] Nothing is known of its provenance; and, ironically, given its title, its manuscript history is both obscure and unstable. It has received very little critical attention—almost none, in fact, with the exception of some subtle and suggestive commentary by Reid Barbour in an essay published some years ago in the *John Donne Journal*.[2] Yet it is a strikingly thoughtful poem, one which, while it moves very comfortably in one of Carew's usual poetic domains—the urgent and rationalizing discourse of erotic persuasion—also introduces, or allows the intrusion of, a note of immanent self-awareness and self-acknowledgment unusual in his lyrics. In a mode almost epistolary in its feigned immediacy, it is a poem about the writing of a poem about writing. That is interesting enough in itself; but it goes on to talk (or write) about the part or aspect of the poem—perhaps all poems—that exists within it but cannot be identified with the signifying marks that the poet is making—the marks he is observing simultaneously as he thinks and talks about how the poem he is writing will create its own communicative aura of meaning, one that somehow goes beyond the powers of signification that he commands as he writes.

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[1]*The Poems of Thomas Carew, with his Masque of Coelum Britannicum*, ed. Rhodes Dunlap (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1957), p. 117. All citations to Carew's poetry will be from this edition, hereinafter referred to as Dunlap; line numbers will be given in the text.

[2]Reid Barbour, "'Wee, of th'adult'rate mixture not complaine' Thomas Carew and Poetic Hybridity," *John Donne Journal* 7 (1988): 91-113.

Carew's lines raise unusually expansive questions about the force, validity, effect, and the nature of comprehension of an artifact which exists, for his culture, primarily to influence an actual or putative reader in particular ways. In a rhetorical age, it is fairly uncommon to encounter a skilled rhetorician musing aloud to himself about the perceived capacities of written utterances to generate effects and understandings beyond the poet's control, beyond the resources of the language he commands, and demonstrably beyond the conventions of signification that govern the material act of writing that he must abide by in order to be understood at all.

For a twentieth-century reader, "A Fancy" also produces intriguing questions about reader response and the kind of reception-theory analysis appropriate to a Renaissance text, as well as a variety of considerations of gender and gendered roles in both social and literary intercourse. My more limited focus here, however, is on his thinking about the act of writing and the afterlife of meaning that it generates; and I hope ultimately to show the implications for contemporaneous political thought of such an interrogation of the bases of signification and representation.

Carew died in March, 1639 (Old Style), a few years before Charles raised his standard against the Parliament, but in the year which witnessed the convening of both the Short and the Long Parliaments. If we are to credit the arguments of not only "revisionist" historians of recent years, the origins of the wars cannot be discovered with any assurance in what Carew describes as the "halcyon days" of the 1630s. But I believe that speculation about the relationship between conventional signs and the understandings they create in other minds is related to other contemporary forms of thinking and acting about language and politics, and so with the kind of disagreement about the authorization of meaning that eventuated in armed conflict.

From his earliest essays, the work of J.G.A. Pocock on the structures of political discourse has taught students of history and literature to attend to the ways in which instruments of expression from metaphors to logical arguments reveal both the conscious and unexamined assumptions that govern a society's conduct of its affairs.[3]

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[3]Pocock's interest in the significance of contemporary discourses is evident in his writing from *The Ancient Constitution and the Feudal Law*

Both Pocock and many of those who have profited from his instruction in the study of seventeenth-century political culture have noted that one source of friction in the events that led to the Civil Wars was the inadequately differentiated use of traditional terminology by disputants in the numerous contentions in and around the parliaments of James I and Charles I. That is, disagreements were intensified because both "parties" to the disputes over, e.g., taxes and rights believed they were employing a common language whose referents were commonly understood. When parliamentary debate demonstrated this not to be the case, both sides proved unable to devise a political vocabulary adequate to clarify the disagreement or to codify opposing positions. Trapped within a discourse that had no effective terms for the issues that divided them, both courtiers and parliamentarians (and there were many who were both, of course) found themselves eventually at war over the control of the meaning of political discourse. Carew's slight lyric seems prescient in its musing on the slippage between intention, signifier, and effect; longer, and perhaps later, poems extend these thoughts to matters more obviously social and political.

We might begin by recalling the connotative aura that surrounded the word "fancy" itself in Carew's time, a range of meaning that contained the kinds and degree of nuance and contrapposto that suit with the poet's frequently-assumed pose of aristocratic, ironic skepticism. The word's fundamental ambivalence is rooted in the faculty psychology—and even more anciently, in the *Problemata* of a Pseudo-Aristotle. In those traditions, the idea of fancy is always balanced precariously on the cusp between the intellectual powers of imagination and the delusory enticements of—well, fantasy. That uncertainty troubles Bacon, Hobbes, and others, and perhaps also the fact that the word oscillates between the discourse of appetite—mainly but not exclusively sexual—and the often allegorized mechanics of perception, the image-making capacity that provides the

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(Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1957), through the *magnum opus*, *The Machiavellian Moment* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1975) and beyond. A concise statement of his argument can be found in the Introduction to the collection of essays, *Virtue, Commerce, and History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985).

material of rational thought and informed judgment. "A fancy" can be: the faculty that creates attractive images; the affection that impels that faculty; or the alluring object itself that is produced. In the parlance of the early seventeenth century, it can even be the ornament that helped to hold up men's hose[4] or a trinket given as a gift to a not impossible she. More particularly, "fancy" can refer to the mental image of a thing or to the thing itself, or to the desire that attaches to either or both. And to focus on the fancy before us, it seems that whoever gave the poem its title in the 1642 edition is likely to have realized that while the poem may have been intended as such a gift of fancy, the thoughts that overtake the act of writing it are also the product of the fancy and constitute in themselves a fancy. They are about what the verbal trinket in the process of being created may convey to its recipient (visually, aurally, actually) and what it contains, not within its material boundaries but in the more elusive world of circulating meanings, the understandings that, literally in this case, "go without saying." The self-deprecatory title is thus part of its larger enterprise—to question the efficacy of its own mode of production while asserting its overdetermined communicative force. Carew fixes for us the curious reciprocity of that notion in his concluding conceit—the paper that "at first was only fit / To fold up silks" may now be understood to be able to "wrap up wit." Moreover, the wit of wrapping up wit with the last lines of the poem consists not only in translating the burden of the poem, which is the strange capacity of signs to mean more than they say, into a figure of enclosing intellect and imagination in a material form (which is indeed the work of poetry), but also to transmute Jonson's pie-plate linings (not to mention Catullus's wrappers for mackerels)[5] into a fit container for the silks of erotic exchange and the "sence that can enforme the mind" (16).

Rather different assumptions have governed two previous, considerable commentaries on "A Fancy." The first formed part of a splendidly and archivally enriched Chatterton lecture to the British Academy in 1988 by John Kerrigan, who was there much concerned with regarding Carew as a poet primarily engaged in the production

[4]*OED*, s.v. "Fancy," sense 5.c.

[5]*Carmina* 95.8.

and circulation of manuscript literature.[6] Kerrigan's emphasis on manuscript tradition—if such it can be called, given the unruly state of extant versions—is subtended by his attention to Carew's handwriting itself. Noting that P.J. Croft in a volume of facsimile autograph poetry describes it as an "accomplished italic,"[7] and speculating that Carew's experiences as a connoisseur of, among others, Titian and Van Dyck would have schooled him in an art of refining expressive surfaces, Kerrigan imagines the poet actually presenting the autograph of his poem entitled "To the King" to Charles as an "ornate fair copy," to the effect that the poem's beautiful "writtenness" would say something more than, or supplementary to, the mere words of which the poem was composed.[8] The artifact itself, then, is seen as a complex of languages, but primarily as an element of social (and to that extent political) exchange within a coded system of patronage.

The study by Reid Barbour appeared in the same year, 1988; and it, too, treats "A Fancy" largely in its dimension as a social act. More precisely, he reads it as an internalized debate over the moral scope of the Caroline love lyric, in which Carew is caught between the

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[6]John Kerrigan, "Thomas Carew," The Chatterton Lecture on Poetry, *Proceedings of the British Academy* LXXIV (1988): 311-50. Although some poems were added to the 1642 and 1651 editions that followed the first in 1640, only ten of his poems were published during Carew's lifetime, almost all of them commendatory verses printed in the works they were written to celebrate. In some instances, the versions printed thus proved to be more "correct" or "better" than the ones that appeared in the volumes devoted solely to Carew's works. It also appears that the editor—or perhaps it might be more accurate to call the licensee, Thomas Walkley, simply the collector and publisher of the 1640 Poems—either through haste or ignorance printed not only corrupt texts but also a number of poems not Carew's.

[7]P.J. Croft, *Autograph Poetry in the English Language: Facsimiles of Original Manuscripts from the Fourteenth to the Twentieth Century*, 2 vols. (London, 1973), I 36; cited in Kerrigan, p. 323.

[8]We know Carew's hand from three surviving letters written to Sir Dudley Carleton, and from a holograph example of "To BEN. JOHNSON." The latter is, however, a fair copy, made presumably for presentation to one of Carew's circle. While it may, therefore, register as an illustration of Kerrigan's hypothesis, it can't be considered as the kind of "original" that "A Fancy" purports to be.

magnetisms of an epideictic poetry of order and stability and what Barbour calls the forces of "dispersion," which he identifies with the quality of pleasure, with the potentialities of mixed literary genres, and, I believe, with the liberties of skeptical and parodic criticisms. Thus, he argues that "A Fancy" moves uneasily but purposefully from a consideration of writing as a matter of "poetic surface and its coterie readers," in which "The inky ornaments connecting writing and amours are fancied as a lover's language which must function under the duress of social rules and fickle privilege," to an earnest but inept grasping at another kind of poetry, one with "something beneath its surface."[9] But the reliance on a coterie of initiates in love's language is, in this reading, central to Carew's concerns.

I think Carew's meditation on the power of signs to communicate, or evoke, or elicit—his subject is as labile as the signifying capacity he is thinking about—is, for all its knowing, courtly gesturing, in search of a rhetorical phenomenon of wider implication. For one thing, the marks that Carew is making as he writes are said to be "like" the beauty spots that "Ladies use to place / Mysteriously about [the] face" (7-8). That is, the two kinds of marks are compared in a seemingly playful but ultimately incisive and telling analogy, rather than identified or elided. The point of his intent scrutiny of these "spots" is to mark his realization that what might have been blots appear, instead, as ornaments. Because the paper, that "polisht Eastern sheet" which he is inscribing at the moment, "receives, and bears the inke" rather than sinking under the weight of his impression, the surface of the poem—its component, contrasting marks—has been transformed, or has transformed itself by its union with that underlying medium, into an aesthetic supplement. It is that supplement that teases him into thought, because experience leads him to acknowledge its existence and yet his conscious act forces upon him the awareness that he doesn't know its source, or, so to speak, its authorship. There's little doubt that Carew finds it convenient to pretend delight at this discovery; but over this poem, as over others we will notice, hovers a troubling question: with what authority does a text speak when its putative author can write with such directness about the power of his

[9]Barbour, pp. 93-95.

"characters" to affect both the understanding and the will by means he does not control?

Within the analogy, of course, Carew's scripting colleagues are "you Ladies" who are wont to "place" "these spots" about the face in a manner he can only call "mysterious," a word that at once preserves the decorum of courtly compliment and underlines it with a gesture of professional recognition, as from one master to another. What particularly bemuses and delights Carew is the indeterminacy of the sign system he's examining; in the case of the beauty spot or patch that draws attention to the face by blemishing its assumed attractiveness, they are employed,

> Not only to set off and breake
> Shaddowes and Eye beames, but to speake
> To the skild Lover, and relate
> Unheard, his sad or happy Fate. (9-12)

The equivoques contained in those lines merit consideration: to "set off" is either—or perhaps both—to highlight by contrast and therefore focus the eye on, the object, and to repel the unwanted intrusion of the gaze. It can also, clearly, suggest solicitation and an erotic stimulus. Similarly, to "breake / Shaddowes and Eye beames" is either to deflect and discourage them, or to enter into a seductive competition with the lover's appetitive glances (as in the phrase, "to break a lance"). Carew' s words here seem to revel in their back-and-forthness—to adopt a term from the masquing dances he knew very well. He may also have anticipated Keats in paying homage to the powers of the speech unheard, figured here as the speaking images of courtly adornment and artful placement of meaning-laden black spots.

But he is not, finally, aiming at a philosophy of the *œillade*; rather, as the disjunctive "Nor" and "But" (in ll. 13 and 15) make clear, his concern is to seek a definition of what it is, precisely, that breaks through the shapes of what is written and yet is inescapably contained *and* set free by the received significances of those shapes. The delight they cause, Carew insists (and presumably he is not referring to the lovers who read a "sad" fate in the mistress's facial text), is universal. It is "you"—that is, all of us—who are enchanted by the discovery that the signs we read are not "careless"; that is, neither the sloughs of negligence nor the fripperies of a shallow art. Even more particularly,

they are not "workes of black and white"; that is to say, they do not draw their expressiveness merely from the bluntness of intense contrast—they do not, in short, work their effects by the force of exaggerated oversimplification. Mystery, for Carew, as it is for us, is a gray area; we both know that things that matter are never "black and white."

The cause of our delight, then, is the discovery that, as the next two couplets tell us, we may find "underneath" "A sence that can enforme the mind." How one finds a sense of things "underneath" the inky characters inscribed on the "smooth soft brow" of a "polisht Easterne sheet" is a question not to be asked, apparently; but Carew can point with assurance to the shared intuitive knowledge that there *is*, in fact, a cause of this phenomenon. Despite the guardedly concessive "may" and "can," he urges us toward the thing he wants us (or the "Ladies" who may have received fair copies of his fancy) to see "underneath" the surface of this (or any other) poem and/or to hear as "Unheard" speech with our mind's ear. This evanescent but effectual subject is "A sence that can enforme the mind," a phrase and a concept that, in Marvellian fashion, pretend to explain the pragmatic relation between sign and signified by having sense give intellectual form to the rational soul. It's an idea that, even taken as a serious joke, threatens smilingly to overturn the moral and divine hierarchies Carew goes on to invoke, and to toy with a mode of philosophic materialism that Carew on occasion allows himself to share with Donne and which seems almost prescient of some Miltonic experiments in conceptualizing divine substance.

In a gesture toward restoring the balance he has just upset, Carew enumerates the forms that sense might create in the mind, and arranges them in reassuring order: "Divine, or moral rules," or even "Raptures of Poetick Art." That may be intended as a descending scale, but its sober propriety is rippled by the humor of "Raptures of Poetick Art." For the notorious author of "A Rapture," this play on the respectable tradition of poetic *furor* serves to exalt while it mocks, and even to suggest that the scale of value works upward toward the perfection of erotic lyric. Thus to "wrap up wit" remains to the end a project of open possibilities.

In this superficially unlikely context, it is nevertheless Donne who is present to Carew as he thinks about these hierarchies—especially

the Donne of the Pauline pulpit, whose monarchic rule over "darke truths" taught "deep knowledge" week after week so that "sense might judge, what phansie could not reach."[10] By his imitative critique of Donne he suggests, as he does in the comparable address to Ben Jonson, that true criticism must rest on an understanding of its subject that goes beyond—or beneath—the fully—or merely—articulable. In other words, to read with the only kind of understanding that good writing deserves and demands, we must be able to read what isn't there as well as what is.[11]

Carew may also allude here to the great turn of the argument in Donne's "The Extasie," the call to free the "great Prince" from the prison of fleshly impotence:

> So must pure lovers soules descend
> T'affections and to faculties
> That sense may reach and apprehend.[12]

What so bothered Dame Helen Gardner about these lines that she declared, in one of the few truly astonishing editorial footnotes in the literature, against the evidence of all printed editions and *all* the dozens of Donne manuscripts that that "That" was a "which"—what bothered her was that Donne seemed to be subverting the order of things laid down not only by Galenic psychology but also by Judaeo-Christian moral traditions. The senses, she said, reach out to the world

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[10]"An Elegie upon the death of the Deane of Pauls, Dr. Iohn Donne," ll. 19-20), in *Poems*, ed. Dunlap, pp. 71-74.

[11]Carew' s genius for sympathetic mimicry is not limited to his several excursions into literary criticism, among which I would include not only the well-known poems to and on Jonson and Donne, but also his familiar addresses to Davenant, the (mockingly?) self-critical praise of Sandys's Psalm translations, and, in a different register, the speeches of Momus in *Coelum Britannicum* that parody with cunning precision the diction of royal proclamations. The mimic is a kind of ventriloquist, speaking with his own voice from within an adopted character whose voice the audience accepts as other. The relations among what is said, who says it, and what the hearer believes is being said, are comparable to the idea Carew explores in "a Fancy."

[12]"The Extasie," ll. 65-67, in *The Poems of John Donne*, ed. H.J.C. Grierson 2 vols. (London: Oxford University Press, 1912), I, 51-53.

of physical reality *through* the faculties; Donne could not have meant, she argued implicitly, that the senses possessed agency, and could communicate with the internal wits in a manner suggesting self-sufficiency and a kind of psychic egalitarianism.[13]

To me it seems that even if Dame Helen was right about the grammatical ineptness of everyone who copied or printed Donne's poem, Carew, at least, understood Donne to be saying exactly what she found so displeasing—that the power of an artistic intelligence such as Donne's was capable of making sense rational, of teaching or inculcating or indoctrinating the mind by converting the senses to conduits of cognition—and such cognition as went beyond the capabilities of the imagination. Note that in Carew's account of Donne's preaching, "sense" is said to be enabled as the "judge" of "deepe knowledge of darke truths," not merely the passive recipient of inspired or revealed truth. And as if to underscore the ambition of his intent in this passage, Carew backs this assertion by making a praise of Donne's "holy Rapes upon our Will." To be sure, this is also a knowing glance at those passages in the sermons that are themselves reminiscent of some of the Holy Sonnets; but it is also a statement about Donne's ability to overmaster the recalcitrant human will by submitting the rational soul to the wisdom of inspired sense. Carew reminds his audience, too, that the preacher worked "through the eye," thus combining reference to Donne's well-known pulpit histrionics and, possibly, to those sermons published prior to the first collected volume of 1640, that preserved for the initiate reader the image of the Dean alight with the "flame / Of [his] brave soul." Carew goes against the grain again by emphasizing, rather than the auricular efficacy of preaching the Word, motions of the spirit elicited by the sight of "the trumpet of the Lord" and by *his* printed words. The famous passage in which Carew honors Donne's muscular domination of "Our stubborn language" in language as muscular as that which it honors begins, nevertheless, by singling out the one threat to Donne's immortality: "the blind fate of language." Its weakness is that it "charmes the outward sense" by its "tun'd chime," rather than

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[13]John Donne, *The Elegies and the Songs and Sonnets*, ed. Helen Gardner (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1965), p. 187; and see Appendix D, pp. 259-65.

committing "holy Rapes upon our Will" by the force of its spiritual ardor, or by its "imperious" command of the resources of poetry. Here again Carew attempts to speak the ineffable, trying to *write out* that which in Donne cannot be contained within the lines of his verse or the words of those lines.

This preoccupation with the relative importance of different means of access to the understanding appears in several guises in Carew's works. He was, of course, alert to guises themselves and the parts they played at court, in the masquing-hall, in the chamber (whether the Privy Chamber, the Star Chamber, or the Lady's chamber), and in the theory of allegory. Sometimes these realms blurred their boundaries, as in his poem threatening "Ingratefull beauty,"[14] where he revises the "immortality trope" in the direction of Jonson's insinuating praises that point out the poet's hold over the patron's reputation. Carew raises that gambit to a creation myth: as he says, "Lest what I made, I uncreate" (14). As for him, he knows better than to mistake "sweets and graces" for what lies "underneath" them—not the ugliness of anti-Petrarchan satire, but, surprisingly, reality:

> Let fooles thy mystique formes adore,
> I'le know thee in thy mortal state:
> Wise Poets that wrap't Truth in tales,
> Knew her themselves, through all her vailes. (15-18)

Now this is a pointedly worldly utterance; but it attempts to deal with the awkward fact that those "mystique forms," however much they are the currency of a court society committed to the meanings of surfaces, are the work of the poet who now must reveal their falseness as he lays claim to their power. Thus the appeal to "Wise Poets," and to the carnality of their hold on "Truth" *tout court*, "wrap't" like the silent, speaking "characters" of "A Fancy."

It would be wrong—or partial—to suggest that a thematic interest in the veils of truth was peculiar to Carew. It is one of the distinctive marks of the Stuart era, as we find in Bacon's indictment of the senses in *The New Organon*, not on the conventional grounds that they are corrupt and deceptive, but rather because they are incapable of seeing

[14]Dunlap, pp. 17-18.

into the hidden parts of things.[15] From Baconian frustration to Herrick's passionate contemplation of the lily in crystal, or the power of "Lawns & Silks" to "Raise greater fires in men" than pure "nakedness,"[16] the age seems fascinated by the power of integuments[17] to reveal as they frustrate vision.

Although in attitude—that is, in inclination or aptness—toward the uses of integument Carew and Herrick differ in evident ways, they are both equally evidently fascinated by the power of a covering to intensify perception by engaging the imagination in a simultaneously invited and obstructed act of perception. Herrick repeats the figure we may specify generically as "the lily in crystal" in half a dozen poems in *Hesperides*;[18] and although the preponderance of them rework Elizabethan erotic motifs of nipples-as-strawberries-in-cream, the archetype is the comparatively lengthy meditation titled "The Lilly in a Christal." There Herrick explores the experiential phenomenon in which sensory experience is heightened by an artful imitation of nature's wisdom in veiling, encapsulating, or protecting its beauties from direct apprehension. The lily is "More faire in this transparent case, / Then when it grew alone"; and the "paler hieu" of creame "draws the sight" more effectively when a "Strawberrie" or "some fine tincture" wantons with it. Donne knew about the generative energy of doubling;[19] and the power of contrast to vivify and direct attention is a recurrent theme in Bacon's *Essays*.[20] But Herrick is driving at a different point: the poem goes on to insist that naked beauty is

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[15]In Aphorism L, Book I, Bacon inveighs against the "dulness, incompetency, and deceptions of the senses," complaining particularly that "speculation commonly ceases where sight ceases; insomuch that of things invisible there is little or no observation."

[16]Robert Herrick, "The Lilly in a Christal," in *The Poetical Works of Robert Herrick*, ed. L.C. Martin (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1956), pp. 75-76.

[17]See Barbour, p. 35 and note, for comments on integuments.

[18]Page numbers are in Martin: "To Anthea lying in bed," p. 34; "The Lawne," p. 158; "Upon the Nipples of Julia's Breast," p. 164; "To Julia, in her Dawn, or Day-breake," p. 271; "Upon Julia's washing her self in the river," p. 294.

[19]See "The Exstasie," *passim*, in Gardner, pp. 59-61.

[20]See particularly "Of Truth" and "Of Adversity."

weaker in its effect than when it is adorned or disguised or in some way mediated to the senses:

> Thus Lillie, Rose, Grape, Cherry, Creame,
> And Straw-berry do stir
> More love, when they transfer
> A weak, a soft, a broken beame:
> Then if they sho'd discover
> At full their proper excellence;
> Without some Scean cast over,
> To juggle with the sense. (ll. 33-40)

Ultimately, the lessons of "The Lillie in a Christal" are aimed at the miniature *ars amatoria* of the last stanza, where Herrick urges that the beauty's

> white cloud divide
> Into a doubtful Twi-light; then,
> Then will your hidden Pride
> Raise greater fires in men. (53-56)

This may represent a late stage of evolution of the theory of allegory, with its husk-and-kernel analysis of ways of revealing truths to the initiate while concealing them from the infidel; but it has shifted its focus significantly toward the technique of arousing response by embedding the object of desire in a transparent but nonetheless distorting medium. Even if Carew had not used similar language in referring to and describing instances of such lucid embodiment,[21] we might understand the figure itself as metonymic for the poetics of the masque, where symbolic disguise or open (mis)representation is understood as a way to reveal a truth already acknowledged by presenting it in discrepant form. In some senses this is the obverse of Carew's musing on the power of the surface marking to construct otherwise unavailable meaning; but the two notions are as closely

[21]Cf. "In answer of an Elegiacall Letter upon the death of the King of Sweden from Aurelian Townsend, inviting me to write on that subject," (Dunlap, pp. 74-77), ll. 64-70; and *Coelum Britannicum*, (Dunlap, p. 182), ll. 1060-62.

related as two sides of a coin, and they suggest a web of cultural connection.

I would compare Carew's attraction to verbal imitation as a mode of inquiry and critique to his frequent resort to motifs of reflection and doubling as keys to the "sence that can enforme the mind." As an instance: the "T.H." of "To T.H., a Lady resembling my Mistresse,"[22] is unidentified (as is the mistress, for that matter); but given Carew's fascination with mirror-images and images in mirrors, it is at least possible that the genesis of the poem lay in its invention rather than in the putative but unlikely resemblance of two actual women. Like many other of Carew's poems, it conforms to the most familiar conventions of erotic compliment; but like many of them, too, it suavely questions and delicately revises those conventions.[23] Its initiating trope is that his soul has flown to the "Fayre copie," leaving him with a "divided heart"; his excuse is that he has not abandoned his true love, but merely "mistook" her double.

Needing to prove that resemblance does not diminish the worth (or beauty) of either, and that his "flames arise" out of the "sympathise" each holds for the other, he calls upon the Donnean figure of the coined image. But here, too, he extends its metaphoric range by considering the base metal that receives the value—adding impression of the king's or the lover's face.

> To Lead, or Brasse, or some such bad
> Mettall, a Princes stamp may adde
> That valew, which it never had. (16-18)

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[22]Dunlap, pp. 26-27.

[23]A.J. Smith, in *The Metaphysics of Love* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), p. 238, observes that "Carew's best lyrics invoke familiar attitudes only to confound them totally." See also the seminal article by Ada Long and Hugh Maclean, "'Deare Ben,' 'Great Donne,' and 'my Celia': The Wit of Carew's Poetry," *Studies in English Literature* 18 (1978): 75-91, where they remark that "the break from formal tradition is in each poem matched by an expression of Carew's disenchantment with a variety of orthodox attitudes which for his society have the force of established truths. Striking through the mask of literary decorum, Carew is thereby enabled to speak his mind in larger social contexts" (p. 87). The pertinence of this view to the argument of the present essay will, I hope, become clear as it develops.

But to the "pure refined Ore" of the beloved "The stamp of Kings imparts no more / Worth, then the mettall held before." For "Subjects," it is the impressed image alone that "gives the rate"; but in "a forraine State" the worth of the coin is determined solely by the intrinsic value of the substance itself.

This miniature disquisition on the economics of desire depends for its suasive logic on the perception that evaluative perceptions are embedded in social and cultural norms and expectations, and, further, that only the free speculative mind can recognize the value of "pure refined Ore." No "Subject," although the master of courtly compliment, Carew here goes beyond Donne's arch distinction between "the king's real, or his stamped face"[24] to speculate on the relation between a conventional sign and the nature of the material that provides its necessary embodiment. The poem, and the lover's stance it announces, insist on the importance of detachment from a predetermined social hermeneutic. As in "A Rapture," the argument is poised on an imagined state of unimplication in rules of behavior and interpretation.

Reading a face in a mirror is analogized to construing a printed page in a poem that remembers one of Carew's poetic mentors. Ben Jonson told Lady Aubigny[25] to turn aside from her mirror and look instead into his poem, "this truest glass," which is itself also the true subject of the poem. In "To A.D. unreasonable distrustfull of her owne beauty,"[26] Carew orders "*Doris*" to break her glass because "it hath perplext / With a darke Comment, beauties clearest Text." He offers, of course, as a "true mirrour" his "love-sick heart"; but the time-worn Petrarchan motif is treated as an entry to a revised epistemology of love.

If in that mirror Doris sees smoke arising from "Loves Altars," and if, therefore, "Love flow from Beautie as the'effect / How canst thou the resistless cause suspect?" Doris, uncertain of her beauty, is instructed to judge it by the passion it arouses; like Ulysses in *Troilus and Cressida* discussing intrinsic value with Achilles, Carew's reception-

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[24]See "The Canonization," in Gardner, pp. 73-75.

[25]See *The Forest*, Epistle XIII: "To Katherine, Lady Aubigny," in *Ben Jonson. The Complete Poems* ed. G. Parfitt (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1988), pp. 113-17.

[26]Dunlap, pp. 84-86.

theory attributes the ground of meaning (or value, or beauty) to the validation of its perceiver or understander. Otherwise, he argues, "Distrust is worse then scorne, not to believe . . . / is greater wrong then not to grieve." More to the point of the poem, it is only such "trust" in the unseen or unseeable that allows for mutual recognition and a shared sense of what value is;

> It not endeares your bountie that I doe
> Esteeme your gift, unlesse you doe so too. (69-70)

In other words, while a central tenet of idealizing poetry of desire—the discourse of fancy, as differentiated from the prose of truth—has been that the lover's heart is the true reflection of the image of the mistress's beauty, Carew revitalizes the trope by insisting on the cooperative, social action of granting validity to another's perception of value. The faith of each establishes the reality of the other; the middle term that disappears from this equation of mutuality is the self-consistent, meaning-full symbol or icon. Signification has become the product of a negotiation between sympathetic minds, rather than a fixed relationship between a sign and a communally-established reading of that sign. We are reminded that Doris is first commanded to break her mirror because it has disfigured the "text" of her image by "darke Comment," as if Carew were mounting an attack on literary interpretation, on scriptural scholia, and perhaps on all intrusive hermeneutic modes.

What I have called Carew's materialism appears in another manifestation in an elegiac poem that, characteristically, bases its structure on rejection of conventional generic devices, and summons a ground of valuation from social testimony. "Obsequies to the Lady Anne Hay,"[27] a distant cousin of Carew's, draws from him at the outset an unusual form of the time-worn elegiac excuses and apologies: he claims that he has never known sorrow other than what some "froward Mistresse" has caused him to write about. As for "publike woe," he admits, even more oddly, that his "dull sense" has been "So sear'd with ever adverse influence" that the wounds of war had failed to pain his "dead bosome." What stirs him from his apathy is the sight of "reall

[27]Dunlap, pp. 67-68.

teares" shed by young women and "polisht Courtiers"—as well as "Griefe's strong instinct" which moves him intuitively.

Rather than moving on from the expected stance of unpreparedness or inadequacy, however, the poem refuses, at length, to perform its assumed task. Where Donne found no bar to elegizing Elizabeth Drury in the fact that he had never known her, Carew balks at the prospect of praising "beauties, which I never saw." He characterizes the work of the elegist in such circumstances as a kind of theft, or the deliberate creation of legend, devices by which "base pens, for hire, / Dawbe glorious vice, and from *Apollo's* quire, / Steale holy Dittyes, which prophanely they / Upon the herse of every strumpet lay."

His alternative is to call upon Lady Anne's "Peeres" to memorialize her virtues, to "draw" them with the accuracy commanded only by those who can mirror her life in their own. She is, he asserts, "the Theame of Truth, not Poetrie," justifying his argument by predicting that only this testimony can assure her fame to posterity, because neither "bribed pens, nor partiall rimes / Of engag'd kindred, but the sacred truth" of her social equals can supply the appropriate commemoration of her worth.

Carew reveals an increasingly corrosive skepticism about the ability of any representational medium either to create an accurate image or, if that were possible, to find the means to convey that image and its meaning, intact, to another mind. No such suspicion of the medium seems to trouble Marvell, or other post-Restoration satirists who issued "instructions" to painters, except perhaps in the hyperbolic expression of unrenderably gross vices. Nevertheless, the idea that shapes "To the Painter"[28] bears a family resemblance to those poems, where the discrepancy between an imagined ideal and the circumstances of Charles II's court suited the energies and rhetorical strategies of satire. Carew used it mainly to examine, once again, the teasing question of what any art can and cannot represent, and where true representation can be sought, if not finally found. The initial challenge is not unexpected:

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[28]Dunlap, pp. 106-107.

canst thou,
(Great Master though thou be) tell how
To paint a vertue? (11—13)

But the language of art—or, as the poet has it, "Artifice"—is not merely inadequate to this purpose, but is charged with being "counterfeite," a *mis*representation; and the reason is that it is by its nature a language of fixed iconicity. What it cannot do, inherently, is create an image of growth, or development, or, in short, change of any kind. Note that Carew is not concerned merely with the problem of representing abstractions, for allegorical and mythographical modes were certainly familiar to him; indeed, Caroline court culture rested upon such forms of representation in as complex and multifarious ways as had the Tudors and medieval monarchs.

His point of attack, rather, is that all such visualized abstractions are subverted by at least two aspects of their construction: they cannot register degrees of moral distinction or, as Carew says,

. . . can you colour just the same,
When vertue blushes or when shame? (21-22)

and they falsify reality by fusing the valences of moral behavior into "one tablet," and thus encourage a kind of idolatry, which Carew does not hesitate to associate with Roman Catholic "superstition." Beneath his concluding assertion that the painter cannot equal the accuracy of "This *Picture* in her lovers eyes" is the implicit argument that images—by which is meant any iconic representation—cannot express the understanding accessible only to experience and the experienced observer. There is even a more radical suggestion, that the perception or discovery of the "truth" of an object or subject requires an antecedent *sympathy*, an inclination toward the object of contemplation, what Carew in various poems calls "trust" or "faith."

The correlative of "reading" a sign by virtue of sympathetic intuition is the process by which signs are charged with meaning by the unrepresented (and perhaps unrepresentable) intent of the creator of the sign. Carew's investigation of the extra-literal signifying powers of conventional characters is paralleled by his frequent musings, sometimes playful but always purposeful, on the meanings of icons and emblems. Donne's "bracelet of bright haire about the

bone,"[29] for in stance, is transformed[30] into a "silken wreath" that "circles in mine arme" and is understood as only an inadequate "Emblem of that mystique charme / Wherewith the magique of your beauties binds / My captive soule." Even though the "ribband" is qualified as a "holy relique," its strength, paradoxically, operates on "flesh alone," while beauty's magic is equated to "Stong chaines of brasse" that have "empalde" the lover's mind.

The key to all tropes in the poem is the deliberate reversal of numinous and corporeal realms, their agents and effects. Thus the worship of the concrete "relique" is idolatry, a "superstitious kiss"; but the "whole frame" of the poet, as "Loves Priest," is bound by the "knot [her] vertue tide." Like his friend Suckling, Carew has reconstructed the ancient language of intertwined religious and erotic discourses on the model of reformed worship; he is, so to speak, "love's Protestant,"[31] and a spokesman for iconoclasm in the service of true faith. In the process, he reinforces a doctrine of the intrinsic connection between symbols and fleshly apprehension, and asserts the consonance between the ineffable—beauty and virtue—and their ability to confirm faith in that which cannot be seen but only known.

That Carew was not alone in sensing and meditating on the growing tension, in his time, between rhetorical acts and their reception is suggested by an odd poem by Andrew Marvell, written long after Carew's death and out of a markedly different political perspective. At some point in his career (Legouis thinks during his stay in France in 1676)[32] Marvell composed an odd poem in Latin to the graphologist Lord Lancelot Joseph de Maniban ("To a Gentleman that only upon the sight of the Author's writing, had given a Character of his Person and Judgment of his Fortune"). Although what Elizabeth

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[29]Cf. "The Relique," in Gardner, pp. 89-90.

[30]In "Upon a Ribband," Dunlap, p. 29.

[31]Cf. Herrick's "To Anthea, who may command him anything," "Bid me to live, and I will live / Thy Protestant to be" (ll.1-2) from *Hesperides*, pp. 108-109. Here, "Protestant" may also mean "suitor;" i.e., one who protests his devotion.

[32]See the note on p. 227 of *The Poems and Letters of Andrew Marvell*, ed. H.M. Margoliouth, 2 vols., (3rd ed., rev. P. Legouis) (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971) with E.E. Duncan-Jones, where Margoliouth accepts Legouis' conjecture about the date of the poem, which appears on pp. 52-53.

Story Donno[33] calls its "hyperbolical tone" is indeed characteristically ironic, and although its extensive canvass of haruspical and astrological prophecy displays both the poet's learning and his skepticism, the opening lines are directly concerned with the potential of graphology for penetrating secrets that writing is meant to conceal, or for revealing the writer behind the act of inscription.

However dubious Marvell may be about meanings to be found in the celestial bodies, the notion of writing *itself* being a means of communication, apart from its investment in controllably meaningful words, is one that seems to pique his notoriously secretive, not to say suspicious, nature. The script examined by Maniban is characterized as capable of revealing secrets (*Conscia . . . Scribentis . . . litera*), writings as *Bellerophonteas . . . Tabellas*, deadly in their self-destructive capacities. The marks of the pen "read" themselves spontanously (*Flexibus in calami tamen omnia sponte leguntur*), and what he writes has innards (*exta*), entrails like the auguries the haruspex interprets, analogous to inwardness of his mind (*animi . . . recessus*) that Maniban *explicat*. The treacherous medium itself becomes anthropomorphic, moving the hand that shapes it with purposes of its own, but which are unknown to the mind that guides the hand (*Ignaramque Manum Spiritus intus agit*). In consequence, the poet acknowledges a division between the words that constitute the inscription and the shapes of the letters that constitute the words; in Marvell's formulation, those shapes, in the eyes of someone like Maniban, mean more than the meaning-charged words they form: (*Quod non significant Verba, Figura notat*).

For all its mock-pedantic jocularity, the poem on Maniban derives from the pretensions of pseudo-mystical science (or pseudo-scientific mysticism) a thought-sketch of hidden lives of language, the possibility that signs supposedly under the command of that transcendental signifier, the poet, have a linguistic valence of their own—and one, moreover, that can speak immediately to the fit audience of the poet's inmost thoughts, feelings, and motives, while escaping not only his control but his awareness.

While Marvell seems (or pretends) to have been perturbed by his discovery that more can be read than meets the eye, Carew is teased

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[33]*Andrew Marvell, The Complete Poems*, ed. E. S. Donno (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1972), p. 302.

into thought by the same realization; and that thought seems to grow perceptibly darker as the court he served in the last decade of his life became, for all its ostensible political successes, more embattled, and particularly as the "private rule" of 1629-1640 was subjected to increasing fiscal pressures and the threat of having to summon Parliament for relief.

Although most of Carew's poems cannot be dated confidently, his recognizably conventional poems of seduction and erotic admiration share with his demonstrably political poems a growing disillusion with the validity of external signs and symbols, and consequently seem to conduct a search for grounds of epistemological certainty no longer to be found in the common signs of his times.

Another way to characterize the apparent progression of his thinking about problems of representation would be to say that a perspective of double focus turns up at important moments in some of Carew's most substantial poems—by that I mean both longer poems and those in which his unmistakable powers of thought are addressed to unmistakably public issues. For example, the lines in the poem to Aurelian Townsend, declining his invitation to write an heroic elegy on Gustavus Adolphus, in which Carew urges Townsend himself to return to the mode of pastoral allegory, sum up his vision of a transformation in *Tempe Restored*, when Henrietta Maria came down in the machine, "in a garment of watchet Sattine with Stars of silver imbrodered and imbost from the ground, and on her head a Crowne of Stars."[34] In Carew's terms, Townsend,

> brought us from above
> A patterne of their own celestiall love,
> [they being "A troope of Deities"]
> Nor lay it in darke sullen precepts drown'd
> But with rich fancie, and cleare Action crown'd
> Through a misterious fable (that was drawne
> Like a transparant veyle of purest Lawne
> Before their dazelling beauties) the divine
> *Venus*, did with her heavenly Cupid shine. (63-70)

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[34]"In answer of an Elegicall Letter upon the death of the King of Sweden from Aurelian Townsend, inviting me to write on that subject," in Dunlap, pp. 74-77. The passage from *Tempe Restored* is quoted on p. 252.

We should remember that this paean to mystery and transparent veils is situated in the very place of allegorical mystification; but also that it follows, as a note of release and self-exculpation, Carew's protest that the deeds of the dead Protestant hero were "too mighty to be rais'd / Higher by Verse, let him in prose be prays'd, / In modest faithfull story" (15-17). Prose is advanced as the medium for history, verse being reserved not only for the smooth lyric feet of the love poem, but even more particularly for the political and cultural purposes of the masquing-hall, which require the shrouding of ideal truth in a covering which is perspicuous and yet pierceable only by what Jonson wished for, "understanders."

Within the same year, in *Coelum Britannicum*, the same suggestive figure appears, first when a "pleasant Cloud" (179)[35] stops by to pick up "a young man in a white embroidered robe" (176), who represents "the Genius of these kingdomes." As he disappears, ascending "past the Airy Region" (179), Carew is careful to note that because the cloud is "bright and transparent," "through it all his body is seene." More tellingly, in the climactic scene that follows the Revels, Jones's stage was covered with clouds. From one of them emerged Religion, Truth, and Wisdome; from the other Concord, Government, and Reputation. "Part of [Religion's] face was covered with a light vaile" (182); and although Truth is there described as having a "Sunne upon her fore-head and bearing in her hand a Palme," when she sings in the character of Alethia, her single couplet assures the "Royail Payre" seated "under the State" before her,

> *My Truths, from human eyes conceal'd,*
> *Are naked to their sight reveal'd.* (1099-1100)

Although this was Carew's first—and only—masque, he seems to have grasped intuitively its inherent tendency toward paradox, its neoplatonic enterprise of attempting or pretending to make the ideal visible. He exploits that basic figure of thought to "present" to the monarchs a speaking emblem which declares that its significance is accessible only to them, in defiance of its patent visibility to the entire audience. To declare that what you see is not what you get, except in

[35]The masque appears in Dunlap, pp. 151-85; page numbers are given with citations in the text.

a "mysterious" sense, is the peculiar aim of the masque; and I suggest that Carew could direct it so skillfully in part because it resolved, for the moment, the dilemma he could not otherwise ignore—the widening distance between the images of art and the meanings they both contained and released.

When, as we have seen (in "To the Painter"), he asks whether virtue can be rendered iconically, the answer he returns to his own question in this instance is indicative of the larger debate about signs and meanings that goes on throughout Carew's career. It turns out, not unexpectedly, that the only true draughtsman is the lover, whose "eyes the pencills are which limbe / Her truly," as is "His heart the Tablet which alone, / Is for that porctraite the tru'st stone" (45-48).

But the aesthetic turn seems to maintain a firm hold only in the case of the love poem; the search for a ground of judgment that can stabilize the fluencies of meaning extends well beyond Carew's seemingly most congenial genre, the courtly love poem. When his friend Davenant's play, *The Witts*, met with various objections in 1636, Carew wrote in his defense, chiding the audience in terms that differed from Ben Jonson's execrations after the failure of *The New Inn* in 1629 only in their austere hauteur. Carew attacks the notion that an audience must be allowed its tastes; unfortunately, he points out, "Wit allowes not this large Priviledge," because,

> Things are distinct, and must the same appeare
> To every piercing Eye, or well-tun'd Eare. (11-12)[36]

One shouldn't press to hard on the logic of that *sententia*, since what it seems to say is that taste should not be taken as the ground of judgment except in those who have the very *best* taste. But he also insists that "Things are distinct," a sentence whose indistinctness is strong evidence of how much Carew would have liked to find a way to demonstrate its validity.

It can be argued, however, that when Carew undertook a political subject, he more willingly relinquished the subtle evasions of which he was a conscious master. In the response to Townsend about Gustavus, it is clear that his attitude toward the Protestant wars against the

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[36]"To the Reader of Master William Davenant's Play," in Dunlap, p. 97.

Hapsburgs is complicated,[37] as we may infer from the tone of the lines, supposedly in praise of the Swedish general:

> let him have
> For his owne ashes now no narrower Grave
> Then the whole *German* Continents vast wombe,
> Whilst all her Cities doe but make his Tombe. (31-34)

Even his pretense that the hero's deeds were "too mighty" for the delicate vessels of celebratory verse is colored by the two-edged compliment: "his deedes / Shall turne to Poems," as "the next Age" will "thinke his Acts things rather feign'd then done / Like our Romances of the Knight o'th' Sun"(17-18, 23-24). In contradistinction to this realm of "modest faithfull" prose, in which fact becomes feigning apparently through its brute reality, Carew summons the "sweet Ayres of our tun'd Violins," which effectively drown out the noise of the bellowing "German Drum" and the "the thunder of their Carabins"(100, 96, 99). Joanne Altieri[38] refers to the "casuistry" of Carew's argument in the poem, noting that the "thunder" of war is "indubitably" louder than the airs of a courtly consort of viols.[39]

Much has been made—again, and understandably, by several historians and critics who march under the banner of revisionism—of

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[37]Michael P. Parker, in "Carew's Politic Pastoral: Virgilian Pretexts in the 'Answer to Aurelian Townsend,'" *The John Donne Journal* 1 (1982): 101-116, finds that the basis of Carew's characterization of the Caroline era is an implicit argument that "pastoral, not epic, . . . encompasses and summarizes all the other kinds of literature; it is the pastoral moment, not the epic, that represents the culmination of human existence" (111). Nevertheless, he also points out that in demurring from any advocacy of a more aggressive foreign policy on the king's part, Carew is also avoiding "the danger of infringing upon the royal prerogative."

[38]In "Responses to a Waning Mythology in Carew's Political Poetry," *Studies in English Literature 1500—1900* 26 (1986): 107-24.

[39]My own response to Carew's assertion is modeled on that of the Duke of Wellington, who is alleged to have said to a woman who believed him to be a Mr. Smith, "Madam, if you can believe that, you will believe anything." Altieri puts the matter more elegantly in the article cited in the previous footnote when she describes the Caroline court as presented in the poem as "the poetically necessary unreal, the place of feigning" (p. 116).

the sincerity of Carew's singing of Charles's "*Halcyon* dayes"; there is no reason to doubt that others beside supporters of the monarch were thankful for England's freedom from entanglement in the horrors of European dynastic and religious conflicts in the years before the outbreak of its own civil wars. But it should be reasonably clear that sincerity, in its root meaning of being without protective or deceptive covering—being simply the thing itself—is not often easily assumed in Carew's work. What are we to make, for example, of *Coelum Britannicum*, in which the classical gods are feigned to have been so chastened by the moral example of *CARLOMARIA*, the living emblem of androgynous perfection, that they volunteer to have themselves replaced by asterisms of British knightly virtue? What are we to make of the fact, that is, that its fable is taken whole from the work of Giordano Bruno, a Catholic magus burnt by the Inquisition for heresy, and, more importantly, known for his republican sympathies as much as for his radical notions of cosmology and morals.[40] Moreover, what are

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[40]Cf. Stephen Kogan, *The Hieroglyphic King. Wisdom and Idolatry in the Seventeenth-Century Masque* (Rutherford: Fairleigh Dickinson Press, 1986), p. 177; and Annabel Patterson, *Censorship and Interpretation The Conditions of Writing and Reading in Early Modern England* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1984), pp. 108-109. Both the purpose and the effect of Momus's parodic mockery of the language of royal policy are contested issues; in "Politics and the Masque: *The Triumph of Peace*," *The Seventeenth Century* II, 2 (1987): 117-141, for example, Martin Butler concludes that Momus is merely "affectionately guying the inflated fable in which the whole enterprise is wrapped" (p. 134); but Joanne Altieri, in "Carew's Momus: A Caroline Response to Platonic Politics," *Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 88 (1989): 332-343, and in Chapter 3 of *The Theatre of Praise* (Newark: University of Delaware Press / London: Associated University Presses, 1986) finds a more grounded and serious critique of Caroline government. His exaggerations are described as "examples of Carew's skill at minimizing the intensity of response generated by the spurious legality of [the powers granted to patent holders] at the same time that legality itself is being attacked as a self-sustaining principle" ("Carew's Momus," 338). A full and persuasive account of the relations between Carew's masque and Bruno's work is given by Hilary Gatti in "Giordano Bruno and the Stuart Court Masque," *Renaissance Quarterly* 48 (1995): 809-842. Gatti believes that Momus speaks for Bruno's skepticism and an evolving "recognition of the necessary limits of human action within the overwhelming vistas of infinite space and

we to infer from the structure of the masque, much the longest and wordiest of all Caroline masques because it includes an endless series of antimasques, most of them devoted to ranging discussions of mythographic and philosophic abstractions? And further, how should we assess Carew's intent in building this presentation to the king and queen?

Coelum Britannicum begins with a celestial embassy from Mercury and ends with choruses of praise from the new, responsible deities and from Eternity himself. But between these fairly conventional, if imaginative, movements, Carew's "smooth lyric feet" are interrupted and disrupted by the speeches of Momus, the tutelary deity, so to speak, of criticism, mockery, satire, nay-saying and clear-seeing. When Mercury greets him upon his entrance with, "Peace Rayler, bridle your licentious tongue, / And and let this Presence teach you modesty," Momus modestly replies, "Let it if it can" (156). This is not a Jonsonian antimasquer, but a voice that demonstrates its independence and trenchant perception by an accomplished parody of official Crown proclamations. The parody goes beyond skilled mimicry, in fact, because Momus turns the masque's theme of moral reformation on its head by mocking recent policies of Charles's government which had been promoted as political reforms. It is far from clear that the royal Presence can control the spirit of Momus, although it has always been one of the cardinal tasks of the masque to do precisely that.

Of course, Momus speaks in prose; and one of the competitions being played out is that between the formal shapes and aesthetic appeal of smooth-footed Mercurial verse, and the pungent, colloquial, sharp-toothed sentences of Momus.[41] It would seem that Carew has

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eternal time" (p. 827), and that his influence "made itself felt above all in those masques that were posing in increasingly problematical terms the political statement of absolute monarchy that the form was presumed to assert" (p. 838). In this reading, *Coelum Britannicum* is such a masque.

[41]J.S.A. Adamson makes the intriguing observation that Momus is wearing a hat with a porcupine crest, strongly reminiscent of Sir Philip Sidney's heraldic crest; and of course, Sidney was associated with Bruno during the latter's stay in England. Cf. "Chivalry and Political Culture in Caroline England," in *Culture and Politics in Early Stuart England*, eds. Kevin Sharpe and

not so much risked as invited the possibility that a resident spirit of skeptical criticism may strip the veils of lawn from the spectacular wonders of the masque. And indeed it turns out that Momus is not disabled or dismissed—perhaps cannot be. He offers to depart as abruptly as he arrived, "without taking leave, and bid no bodie farewell"—and does so. But not before the last of the personifications has appeared and led an antimasque—the only one who does not have a parallel in Bruno's text. She is Hedone—Pleasure. Mercury excoriates her "guilded rottennesse" and bids her fly; Momus simply says he has "growne weary of . . . these tedious pleadings," and exits. But Hedone conjures the final antimasque with these words:

> Come forth my subtle Organs of delight,
> With changing figures please the curious eye,
> And charme the eare with moving Harmonie. (805-07)

If this is "guilded rottennesse," then what has become of Carew's invocation of the spirit of the masque which, in his poem to Aurelian Townsend, he set against the realities of political and religious conflict? As he remembers the descent of Venus in *Tempe Restored*, he sees again that,

> Time and sleepe . . .
> Pinnion'd and charm'd they stood to gaze upon
> Th'Angellike formes, gestures, and motion,
> To heare those ravishing sounds that did dispence
> Knowledge and pleasure, to the soule, and sense. (72-76)

In *Coelum*, Mercury simply turns to assure Charles that his

> Actions plead,
> And with a silent importunity
> Awake the drousy Justice of the gods
> To Crowne your deeds with immortality. (844-47)

The text does not tell us that either Hedone or Momus has left the floor; but it is fairly clear that their influence has not been altogether

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Peter Lake (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993) pp. 161-97; the remark on Momus's headgear is on p. 172.

exorcised, just as verse has not clearly triumphed over prose. The matter is left to be settled by Inigo Jones's machines, as cloud after cloud opens to reveal the kingdoms of Britain and their monarch. Whether those images, pleading in their "silent importunity," are strong enough to erase the sound and sight of Momus is a difficult question.

Carew himself experienced the most direct confrontation of idealization with contingent reality that the times could provide when he participated—or so we infer—in the first Bishops' War in 1639. A winter stay in the Scottish border country may have had something to do with his death not long after; it certainly gave him a topos for "To my friend G.N. from Wrest,"[42] perhaps the last poem he wrote. Once again he sets up a dialectic between the "raging stormes" (2) and the "memory of . . . Armes" and the delights of "the temperate ayre" of an English country retreat, figured as a "teeming wombe" of native "sweets," hospitality, and peaceful bounty. Wrest is illuminated by the aura of Penshurst; its architect is as unpretentious, its hospitality as generous, if slightly less democratic. But Carew goes further in the uses of mythology. Where Jonson marks the place where "Pan, and Bacchus their high feasts have made,"[43] Carew brings the gods before us as they live—or, more precisely, he writes as if the fruit and shade adorning the banks of the waters that circle the house are visibly embodied in *Vertumnus*, *Pomona*, and *Flora*, the gods that inhabit the estate, dwellers in its benevolence and the creators of it at the same time.[44]

This trope is carried further with special audacity when Carew, varying the theme of architectural simplicity and the rejection of emblematic adornment, boasts that,

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[42]Dunlap, pp. 86-89.

[43]"To Penshurst," in Parfitt, pp. 95-98.

[44]John Dixon Hunt, *Garden and Grove.The Italian Renaissance Garden in the English Imagination 1600-1750* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1996), p. 50, quotes from John Raymond's *Il Mercurio Italico. An Itinerary contayning a Voyage made through Italy in the yeare 1646, and 1647* (1648) on the presence of gods in the villa gardens of Frascati, and notes (p. 234) the disapproval of Marvell's Mower of garden statuary. The tradition continues undiluted in Pope's vilification of Timon in the *Epistle to Bathurst*.

Amalthea's Horne
Of plentie is not in Effigie worne
Without the gate, but she within the dore
Empties her free and unexhausted store.
Nor, croun'd with wheaten wreathes, doth *Ceres* stand
In stone, with a crook'd sickle in her hand;
Nor, on a Marble Tunne, his face besmear'd
With grapes, is curl'd uncizard *Bacchus* rear'd.
We offer not in Emblemes to the eyes,
But to the taste those usefull Deities.
Wee presse the juycie God, and quaffe his blood,
And grinde the Yeallow Goddesse into food. (57-68)

The conceit manages to be both Catholic and Protestant at the same time, and risks blasphemy by reducing the eucharist to an easeful banquet. The surface irony is obvious enough, but it would seem that Carew is at work on something more serious here than criticizing extravagance in representation. He is certainly being more serious than Marvell's Mower, whose dismay at the proliferation of garden statuary in "A dead and standing pool of air" is counterbalanced by his hopeful belief that "The gods themselves with us do dwell."[45]

Carew appears to be unmaking some of the most ancient and powerful symbols his culture conserves, and in the service of the sentient body and its needs. It may be excessive to suggest that he means to interpret the Real Presence as essentially a site of nourishment and pleasure; but something of the inclination toward materialist thought we observed earlier is alive in this late poem. And it is striking that it occurs in a text whose rhetorical task is to celebrate the withdrawal of political power and agency into the illusion of safe haven in the country. The "everlasting Winter" on the "bankes of Tweed" is the place of political and religious strife, wars over doctrines and sovereignties. At Wrest the effort to hold in relation the idea of a just monarchy and the events that have overtaken it is unnecessary. At Wrest there is no role for "Emblemes to the eyes," for the senses are indulged by substantial reality. Further, the long tradition of mythographic interpretation, with which Carew would have been entirely familiar, if only from his acquaintance with Jonson

[45]See "The Mower against Gardens," Margoliouth, pp. 40-41.

(and through Jonson with Cartari), is here disabled as Carew severs significance from the action of the eye; the emblem becomes an empty icon, signifying nothing but the name of its eponymic deity. In short, there seems to be no longer a filiation of meaning between the visual symbol and the world of experience and meaning it once evoked and represented. Bacchus no longer "stands for" the enthusiasms of wine and poetry; rather, he becomes a "usefull" god only when his blood-as-wine allows his worshippers to consume his essence, when, in fact, the significance of the idea of a god of wine is absorbed into wine itself, which now holds and releases all the meaning that the name, "Bacchus," once contained. The process of reifying the elements of the Eucharist, in Carew's language, is rigorous and (over)determined; the very accents of the line, "And grinde the Yeallow Goddesse into food," mime the harsh, necessitarian reduction of abstraction into bodily nourishment—precisely the opposite of the spiritual actions of transubstantiation. The ironic compliment to Wrest cannot quite conceal Carew's having, apparently, given up the work of trying to connect sign and signification by the main force of his imagination and his skill in inscribing characters.

I want to suggest that in this complicated response to the experience of the opening stages of armed conflict Carew's sensibility anticipated a mood that affected many loyalists within a few years. Marvell wrote, after the Civil Wars were over, that "the cause was too good to have been fought for." And Lucius Cary, Lord Falkland, Carew's friend, rode for the king in battle, but without conviction, until he found the death he sought at Newbury in 1643. It is perhaps as well that Carew died before the intestine battles began; they would have posed a terribly murky choice for someone who had failed to sustain his faith in the meaning of the sign.

One plausible account of the failure of politics during the Long Parliament might be that, given the inherited definitions and conceptual syntax of the common law and the royal prerogative, when these came into conflict neither side could discover or persuade the other of the existence of a guarantor of validity that transcended the areas of power in dispute between them; the needed *tertium quid* could not be found or agreed to. Something of the same dilemma seems to mark Carew's poetry, whether in hortatory addresses to his mistresses, in skeptical compliments to friends and colleagues, or in writings more

explicitly political in their concerns. They register his intuition—or perhaps his perception—that what modern theory designates a "transcendental signifier" was losing its connection with language, both of poets and statesmen. This intuition was sharpened by his experience of politics in the service of the crown; *Coelum Britannicum* is, in one sense, an act of courage mixed with despair, like Falkland's sacrificial cavalry charge. In the masque, Carew "spoke truth to power," in another of our modern phrases; but in this instance it took on an immediate and dangerous reality our phrase doesn't imagine, for Carew turned Charles's diction back upon the King himself, in his presence. The powers of mimicry that evidence the ability to understand from within the generative source of a cultural rhetoric, in Carew's late writing, revealed his discovery of an absence at the core of the signifying system he was sworn to speak for and celebrate—the language of monarchic rule and its traditional justifications. The Scotch war was the personal confirmation of the state of affairs he had come to see as the veils of compliment, hyperbole, and political metaphor fell away from the figure they were meant to reveal by disguising. Carew's naturally ironic temperament,[46] coupled with his unillusioned intelligence, led him to question the fundamental materials of his craft, the ways of making words signify. "A Fancy" is a deceptively slight element in the casually, but purposefully, constructed canon of philosophical investigation disguised as the masque-like dances of "smooth lyric feet."

Lest we assume that these are matters solely of antiquarian interest, we should look to the contemporary British political scene, and consider the continuing debate over the need for a statutory Bill of Rights in the United Kingdom. It is, whatever else may be its motivations, a sign of the continuing search for a guarantor of meaning somewhere above the fray of actual political conflict. They, as we, are

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[46]Noted long ago by Louis Martz in *The Wit of Love* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1969), p. 78, where he finds this quality particularly in "To Aurelian Townsend," but widely characteristic of Carew's poetry. This essay was reprinted, "extensively revised, and updated," under the title, "The Masks of Mannerism: Thomas Carew," in *From Renaissance to Baroque* (University of Missouri Press, 1991), pp. 174-193.

still trying to create, if they cannot discover, the truth beneath the veils of history and appearance.

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