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> How well her name an *Army* doth present,
> In whom the *Lord of hosts* did pitch his tent!
> —George Herbert, "Ana-{MARY/ARMY}gram"[1]

What is the use of a poem so stubbornly punning as this, so unpoetic, so tied to a simple coincidence of spelling? Since Joseph H. Summers's groundbreaking reading, it has been conventional to characterize a group of George Herbert's wordplay-heavy poems, including the above "Ana-{Mary/Army}gram," as "hieroglyphic": structural or orthographic features of their language seem to unveil some deeper meaning about the world.[2] Martin Elsky expands this reading to argue that these poems tap into humanist, Neo-Platonic, and cabalistic linguistic theories, portraying the "material condition of written language" as a shadow of the spiritual meaning of words.[3] However, these poems are concerned also with the literal literality, as it were, of the language itself— the fact that language is made up of letters that must be placed one by one, copied down in a certain order for meaning. Herbert experiments with the destruction and reconstitution of language not only to access mystical language but also as a compositional tool in its own right. I argue that the wordplay of these poems is Herbert's response to a particular danger that threatens poets: the sinfulness of invention. His punning games with words afford him a way to create new things in poetry, while still insisting that he is merely discovering truths about God already embedded in

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language, instead of usurping God's prerogative of creation. By portraying his writing as physically copying preexisting writing, Herbert insists that his acrobatic wordplay is a discovery rather than a creation of truth.

Where previous Renaissance theorists had defined invention either as imitating the best models for writing or as creating a better and more virtuous world, Herbert redefines poetic invention as a usurpation of God's creative power. In order to avoid such presumption in his own poetry, he insists that the task of the godly poet must be imitation—but imitation in its most literal, letter-by-letter sense. Copying is the substitute for sinful invention. The physical act of copying words and letters becomes Herbert's image of his own writing process; by copying how language itself declares God's truth, Herbert can praise God with God's own words. This metaphor, while explicit in poems about writing such as "Love (I)" and "Jordan (II)" is most fully exemplified by Herbert's hieroglyph or wordplay poems (pp. 45–6, 95). Where Elsky sees the materiality of language as signaling the manmade, constructed nature of these poems, I argue that Herbert's image of himself as physically copying God's words in fact refuses to claim language as manmade.[4] Copying God's words avoids the dangers of invention by allowing the poet language that he does not create.

In Protestant Reformation theology, God is present not only in the Word-made-flesh of the Eucharist, but also in the Word-once-spoken in the Bible. Thus, Herbert is influenced by Reformation biblical theology: the Bible is the very word of God, no matter how many times translated, and so language maintains a radical ability to convey truth. This hopeful view of language stands alongside doubts about the efficacy of language caused by some strands of Reformation sacramental theology: the bread and the wine can only be signs of Christ's body, not the real thing, and so the linguistic connection between sign and signified is also tenuous.[5] Biblical theology's insistence on God's presence through language provides a key context for Herbert's use of wordplay.

Protestant arguments for the value of liturgy, against the Puritan insistence on extemporaneous prayer, also center on the danger of using new, untried language, rather than drawing on language already crafted. From the Act of Uniformity that established the Book of Common Prayer, the uniform liturgy was meant to prevent innovation—that is, just the kind of dangerous creation indicated by the derogatory uses of "invention."[6] Looking back at the causes of the English Civil War, which were just beginning to boil at the time of Herbert's death, Thomas Hobbes

blames Puritan failure to use the set forms of prayer of the Book of Common Prayer. He writes, "before their Sermons, their Prayer was, or seemed to be, *ex tempore*, which they pretended to be dictated by the Spirit of God within them … they did not take care before-hand what they should say in their Prayers."[7] Key here is Hobbes's insistence that such preachers only "pretended" to be dictated to by the Spirit; their presumption in claiming God's name for their own language is as dangerous as any flaws in their prayers themselves.

The key to Herbert's refashioning of God's language into his own while disavowing this kind of presumption, I argue, is his use of the overlapping significance of invention, imitation, and moral value in Renaissance poetic theory. "Invention" could mean, on one hand, writing by discovering (from the Latin *invenio*) the best material to imitate. On the other hand, it could mean writing by creating—invention in the modern sense. Roland Greene traces the overlapping meanings of invention as "discovery" and as "conception" to argue that the two senses of the words were never fully disentangled.[8] Whereas the concurrence of these two definitions of invention in the Renaissance encouraged some poets to view all kinds of invention as inherently virtuous, Herbert makes a radical split between the two definitions, associating invention with a sinful usurpation of God's creative powers. The solution to this potential threat to his own poetic art is to recast the action of writing not only as imitating, but as scribally copying—in his case, copying God's language itself.

The oldest definition of "invention" comes from its etymological sense of discovering—it means to find and to imitate good models in extant writing.[9] In rhetorical and pedagogical manuals that Herbert, as university orator and preacher, would have been familiar with, the imitation inherent in this invention-as-discovery is the difference between God's creation and the poet's creation. While the poet must imitate in order to create, God can create ex nihilo. In this split between the poet's process of making or inventing through imitation and God's process of making without imitation lie the seeds of the new definition of invention: invention as creation, which links the poet's action with God's.[10]

Philip Sidney takes this more radical stance in *An Apologie for Poetrie.* In a discussion of the benefits of poetry over other kinds of human writing, Sidney explains that poetry is the highest kind of composition because it is a second creation, and can make a better world than that of nature. Gone is any sense that poets should adhere to a pattern that God has already put in place:

> [O]nely the Poet, disdayning to be tied to any such subiec-
> tion, lifted vp with the vigor of his owne inuention, dooth
> growe in effect, another nature, in making things either
> better then Nature bringeth forth, or quite a newe forms
> such as neuer were in Nature … not inclosed within the
> narrow warrant of her guifts, but freely ranging onely
> within the Zodiack of his owne wit.
>
>   Nature neuer set forth the earth in so rich tapistry, as
> diuers Poets have done, neither with plesant riuers, fruit-
> ful trees, sweet smelling flowers: nor whatsoeuer els may
> make the too much loued earth more louely. Her world is
> brasen, the Poets only deliuer a golden.[11]

Sidney sets poetry apart from bare nature for three reasons:
the poet's "inuention" or creative faculty devises a new world that
is better than what is in nature; his "wit" provides a broader scope
for this creation; and the new world so devised is more beautiful
than the old. Invention, wit, and beauty all unite to allow the poet
to create a new world set apart from nature—and this, Sidney
goes on to claim, is a powerful moral force. Virtuous poetic char-
acters can form their readers into being as moral as themselves,
because the beauty and vividness of poetic creations draws the
love and emulation of readers.[12] The new world created by the
poet's invention is not only more beautiful than nature but also
has more power to draw men to virtue by inspiring them to imitate
it. The danger of all of this, of course, is that it presents the poet
as God—or, perhaps, as even better than God. If the world the
poet makes is not only more beautiful than the one God made
but also has more power to compel virtue, what is to prevent the
poet from placing himself in God's role?
      Sidney does, indeed, see this objection and attempt to answer
it. He insists that it is a "right honor to the heauenly Maker of
that maker" to compare the fruit of man's wit with nature itself,
because man is made in the image of the Creator.[13] Moreover,
Sidney brings himself firmly back into orthodoxy by insisting that
the ability of a poet to create "with the force of a diuine breath"
in fact confirms the Fall of Man: it shows that "our erected wit,
maketh vs know what perfection is, and yet our infected will,
keepeth vs from reaching unto it."[14] In other words, we can see,
know, and even imaginatively create perfection, even if our fallen
wills cannot let us achieve that perfection ourselves. However, this
argument rests on two contestable propositions: first, that the
human wit is "erected," raised from the Fall and not irrevocably

marred by it; and second, that the desire to create something better than nature is a good imitation of God's role, and not an echo of the original sin of pride. Sidney's discussion is too short to put either of these claims on firm ground.

Thus, although Sidney means this definition of the poet's role to be a moral defense of poetry, it is easy to see how Herbert, as an alert reader, could be alarmed by the implied usurpation of God's role as creator.[15] And indeed, where Sidney shows the pinnacle of the humanist tradition's enthusiasm for the potential of invention, defined as creation, to be used for good, Herbert is pessimistic. Like Sidney, he defines invention as a poet's secondary creation, but unlike him, Herbert stresses the dangers of this act. "Love (I)," early in *The Temple*, expresses some of the doubts Herbert's speaker has about the value of poetry. It shows Herbert's frustration with the tendency of poetry to be used for secular and particularly erotic purposes, but it also implies that writing poetry in itself is an activity likely to draw its participants away from God:

> Immortall Love, authour of this great frame,
>> Sprung from that beautie which can never fade,
>> How hath man parcel'd out thy glorious name,
> And thrown it on that dust which thou hast made,
>
> While mortall love doth all the title gain!
>> Which siding with invention, they together
>> Bear all the sway, possessing heart and brain,
> (Thy workmanship) and give thee share in neither.
>
> Wit fancies beautie, beautie raiseth wit:
>> The world is theirs; they two play out the game,
>> Thou standing by: and though thy glorious name
> Wrought our deliverance from th'infernall pit,
>
>> Who sings thy praise? onely a skarf or glove
>> Doth warm our hands, and make them write of love.
>>   (pp. 45–6)

The poem shows the drama in miniature of a codependent romance, "mortall love" alluring "invention" and "beautie" tempting "wit" in a disastrous usurpation of God's proper praise. In "Love (I)," unlike contemporary rhetorical manuals, invention is not a

neutral term, a rhetorical tool to be used impartially for good or ill. Instead, Herbert describes it as "possessing heart and brain" in the manner of a usurper, stealing both the emotions and the intellect away from service to their creator. Wit, too, is a false idol here, taking over the territory of the true God: "beautie raiseth wit" to a place it does not deserve. Beauty "raiseth" wit by goading it on, emboldening it both to form witty poetry and to claim all the world for its own province. In addition, an obvious sexual pun is joined to "raising" in the sense of endowing a person to a higher rank or status, as a person is raised to knighthood.[16] Beauty not only goads wit on, seduces it, but also elevates it to a higher status—one that ought to be filled by the creator. Beauty, love, wit, and invention, key markers of poetic excellence, are imagined as arrayed against God in the service of profane love.

In true Herbertian fashion, beauty and love are reclaimed for God—in fact, they are revealed to be God. Christ is the "Immortall Love" that is "Sprung from that beautie which can never fade." This image of love "Sprung from" beauty, so familiar to readers of Renaissance sonnets, is instead mapped onto two persons of the Trinity: Christ, immortal love, is the one through whom all things were created (John 1:3 [AV]), and who in turn was begotten by God, "that beautie which can never fade."[17] God the Father and God the Son, then, are true love and true beauty, contrasted with "mortall love" and fading beauty. The poem underlines the ephemerality of mortal beauty by calling creation "dust." This harkens back to Genesis: dust is the material from which man was made and the substance to which he will return in death. The mortal beauty that takes over the "heart and brain" is implied not to be lasting beauty, but instead a weak parody.

Herbert thus reclaims beauty and love for godly poetry; real beauty and love, unlike their profane shadows, can be justly used as the subject of divine poetry. This is enough to baptize poetry itself—indeed, the very form of the poem makes clear that, despite the speaker's frustrations with poets as a class, even love poetry can be written for God. "Love (I)" is written as a sonnet, the quintessential form of love poetry since Petrarch, and yet is redirected toward a holy love. Even as Herbert portrays invention as marred, he has discovered and imitated a poetic form that fits the message of love for God that he is trying to convey. However, no such redemption is offered for wit and invention. They are presented solely as negatives, and not given the same truer echo that love and beauty receive. Sinful human invention is dangerous not only because it directs human ingenuity at unworthy objects,

but also because it makes believe that it can create what it has only discovered. Human invention can only exist in response to God's original creation. Although poetry as a discipline can be redeemed by a focus on true love and true beauty, the human creative faculty is presented as a failing usurpation of God's creative prerogative. What is the poet to do?

Herbert makes this quandary more explicit in poems in which he calls attention to his own role as a sacred poet. While "Love (I)" is a lament that other poets have failed God by not writing poetry to him, "Jordan (II)" is a complaint that the speaker himself, even when writing religious poetry, has failed in his desire truly to serve God. It is not only secular or lascivious poets who write unworthy poetry; even poems purportedly written to God's glory are tainted by the presence of invention:

> When first my lines of heav'nly joyes made mention,
> Such was their lustre, they did so excell,
> That I sought out quaint words, and trim invention;
> My thoughts began to burnish, sprout, and swell,
> Curling with metaphors a plain intention,
> Decking the sense, as if it were to sell.
> . . . .
> As flames do work and winde, when they ascend,
> So did I weave my self into the sense.
> But while I bustled, I might heare a friend
> Whisper, *How wide is all this long pretence!*
> *There is in love a sweetnesse readie penn'd:*
> *Copie out onely that, and save expense.*
>
> (p. 95, lines 1–18)

Here Herbert once again casts "invention" as a sinful thing in itself. The way that he describes his own writing imports hidden metaphors of profane love that echo the more explicit linking of "Love (I)." Herbert describes his lines in procreative terms: his thoughts "began to burnish, sprout, and swell," implying vegetal growth or pregnancy, but also perhaps an interior emptiness, a puffing up of vanity masquerading as fertility.[18] Original plainness is decorated out of existence, covered over with vanity and excess. Moreover, the last line of the first stanza, "as if it were to sell," shifts a potentially venial surfeit into a more malicious vein. The image of "sense" or meaning being prepared for sale imports both the fear of duplicity and the shadow of prostitution into the poem. The "trim invention" of the poet's mind becomes

a means for turning his apparently pure intention into a cheaply decorated commodity.

Love, on the other hand, has a "sweetnesse readie penn'd" that only needs to be copied. The labor of invention is replaced by the easy action of scribal copying. In contrast to the "bustling" of the poet is the simplicity of the friend's whisper; in contrast to the overabundant verbs describing the process of writing poetry—"curling" and "decking"—there is the simple verb: "*there is in love a sweetnesse.*" An essential, substantial sweetness replaces an ornamental and, importantly, external beauty (to "deck" is to add something to a surface). Herbert turns the economic metaphor on its head, as well: while the first scene of writing implies an anxious desire for profit, the friend assures the poet that copying out the messages of love will "save expense"—that is, remove the threat of wasteful expenditure. Like the wasteful would-be courtiers of "The Church Porch," Herbert's speaker had been extravagantly "Decking the sense" of his words to make them look presentable; his friend reminds him that there is no need for such waste. Moreover, the poem ends not with the anxious words of the poet, but with the kind whisper of the friend. The last lines are themselves a copy of the sweet simplicity of another's words.

The basic issue at stake here is not that Herbert is uncomfortable with writing poetry because it is a prideful display of skill that makes impossible a properly Christian humility. It is not general pride that is the problem, but specifically pride in invention, which is dangerous because it takes over God's authorial function. Herbert's conception of invention is a correction of Sidney's: while Sidney's poet can create a world better than the world of nature, Herbert's poet sees the sinful folly of assuming that one's own creative powers could create an appropriate offering for God.[19] Instead, the poem ends with the assertion that copying another's words is the way to write sweet poetry that is worthy of God.

This contrast is complicated, however, because, like "Love (I)," "Jordan (II)" in fact imitates one of Sidney's own poems that pictures writing as copying. Sonnet 3 of *Astrophel and Stella* ends, "in *Stellas* face I reede / What loue and beautie be, then all my deede / But coppying is, what in her nature writes."[20] As in "Jordan (II)," the poet finds the love he wished to convey already written in the person of the beloved. The difference here must rest, for Herbert, on what kind of "love" is in view. Although Stella herself is all virtue, Astrophel's love for her can never be other than profane.[21] From the perspective of "Jordan (II)," the copying of

Astrophel and Stella is not virtuous because the love to be copied in Stella is not true love.[22] On a deeper level, however, Herbert's disavowal of invention is more complete precisely because his poem is an imitation of another's. The echo of Sidney in Herbert's poem allows Herbert not only to correct the earlier poet's flawed view of love and reclaim the device for himself but also to make an even stronger claim for the benefits of copying above creation. On one hand, the action that Herbert takes toward Sidney's words is different from that he takes toward God's; while he imitates but corrects Sidney, he imagines himself copying God verbatim, and in so doing being corrected by him. On the other hand, with both these kinds of imitation Herbert is able to shed the taint of human invention. By imitating someone else, the poet refuses to take full credit for the creation of a new, better world in his poetry. Instead, even in his most inventive refashioning of others' words, whether Sidney's or God's, Herbert can present himself as playing with language that he did not create in joyful humility.

"Jordan (II)" also imitates sonnet 1 of *Astrophel and Stella* in its depiction of a struggling poet directed by an outside voice where to look for inspiration. Achsah Guibbory points out that the contrast between Sidney turning to his own heart for inspiration and Herbert turning to something outside himself shows the "idolatrous invention" of Sidney's secular love poetry.[23] However, Herbert is not turning away from poetry altogether.[24] Instead, this poem is the beginning of an attempt to divide out various portions of the writing process, to separate all that is good about poetry from the dangerous aspects of invention. Herbert creatively refashions Sidney's conceit in order to illustrate how little his words are his own. He agrees with Sidney that poetry is a fundamentally good thing because it allows the poet to praise the beauty of the beloved publicly. The problem only comes when the wrong beloved is praised, or when the words become more the poet's own than God's. Copying God's own words becomes the way out of the poet's paradoxical desire to praise God in beautiful words without sinful invention.

"Jordan (II)" makes clear that, for Herbert, human invention, defined as creation, is in itself sinful, but writing is not sinful. Language as such is not sinful—after all, the anti-invention message is embedded in a poem. The way Herbert preserves the writing of poetry from the taint that seems to stick to invention is by eliminating invention-as-creation from the poet's task altogether, and instead turning back to the older definition of invention-as-discovery. The poet's task becomes not creating decorative

conceits, but rather discovering and copying out the messages of love. We might liken this to Susan Stewart's paradoxical concept of "willed possession," the speaker's desire to be disassociated from his own voice.[25] Herbert figures writing poetry as a scribal task—the creative energy all God's, the imitative action all the poet's—even when the poem in question features acrobatic games with God's text. Copying God's language becomes the right metaphor for writing truly virtuous poetry because it removes the taint of usurping invention and allows the poet's skill to be an imitation of God's primary creative power.

Herbert's attempts to "copy" God's messages in his poetry are broader than a mere plain recitation of the events of scripture or the effects of grace, however. In Christian thought, God is not just the author of the world; he is the ultimate author of the Bible. And this, in turn, means that the messages of the love that the poet ought to copy out can be found not only in the natural world, but in language itself. The specifically linguistic skill of the poet can be used not in adding unnecessary decoration to an already plain truth, but in uncovering the truth already inherent in human language. In this way, Herbert's wit and creativity can be used without usurping God's creation. Herbert dramatizes the feeling of divine revelation by allowing his readers to discover felicities of language that point to God along with him. All language can bear the traces of God, but only the inspired poet can see where. This discovery—that is, this mode of invention—takes place in two distinct ways. First, the words of the Bible in English can be copied verbatim within a poem to allow the poet to use God's language; second, language itself, as part of a good creation, carries truth that can be discovered and copied by the poet who, in Herbert's account, is guided where to look by God's grace.

Many critics make no distinction between Herbert's use of scripture as a verbal and as a written act. I propose that it is absolutely essential that the image that Herbert uses to describe his writing process is not vague imitation, or even verbal echoing, but rather copying—the physical, material action of tracing another's words. Handwriting, the somatic and personal tracing of the letters, is one of Herbert's fundamental metaphors for religious writing because it places his invention in the right relationship to God's: Herbert's invention is pure discovery, while God's is pure creation. Herbert's copying is not an empty metaphor of the writing process, but rather a vivid picture that insists on both the personal and the communal nature of encounter with God's words.[26]

Copying by hand was connected to a variety of social activities in the Renaissance—most visibly networks of social exchange through poetic coteries, but also the collective labor of copying that went on within a household. Both of these valences are present in Herbert's image of his own writing process, and it is of supreme importance that they point to copying both as a personal and as collective activity. On one hand, handwriting was "associated with intimacy, authenticity, cultured tastes, good government, and the immediacy of a social exchange of gifts."[27] Copying is related to the practice of note-taking; theorists insisted that for scholars to copy down their notes themselves, rather than hire a notetaker, aided the memory by making the mind dwell on the material and wholly assimilate it.[28] Copying thus affords Herbert the opportunity to make God's words wholly his own. On the other hand, copying was a standard part of the early modern household, and a task that was carried out by literate household servants at several different levels of service.[29] Copying, even copying poetry into literary anthologies, could be a task shared by servants and masters. This collaborative labor could turn even the most personal texts into public offerings—and then back again, into personal commonplace books—more easily and more naturally than a jump to print.[30] Copying a text by hand could be intimate and familial, but it could also be relatively anonymous, a shared task that did not depend on the individual identity of the writer but rather on his or her identity within a group. This is why so often, in his wordplay poems, Herbert introduces another figure into his poetry who points him toward the godly truths to be discovered in language. The fact that it is a friend who tells the speaker of "Jordan (II)" to copy the sweetness of love does emphasize the personal aspect of copying, but the fact that the friend who reappears all over *The Temple* so often corrects Herbert points to his disavowal of absolutely autonomous poetic creation.

Herbert's image of himself copying God's words drew on contemporary Protestant thought. His insistence on the meaningfulness of language enacts the logical endpoint of the Christian doctrine of the divine inspiration of scripture, given particular importance by the Reformers. As Nandra Perry outlines, Protestant culture was caught up in a broad conversation about whether "human words [could] imitate, perhaps even participate, in the miracle of signification made present in the living Word."[31] The translators of the Authorized Version insisted that scripture was the way to eternal life: "The originall thereof being from heauen, not from earth; the authour being God, not man; the enditer, the

holy spirit, not the wit of the Apostles or Prophets; the Pen-men such as were sanctified from the wombe, and endewed with a principall portion of Gods spirit."[32] The image here is that God is the author of the Bible; the prophets and apostles who wrote the various books are merely "Pen-men," scribes tasked with taking the dictation of the Holy Spirit. As in "Jordan (II)," the physical act of writing is separated from any sense of originality or authorship. Moreover, God's authorship is not limited to the specific words of the original Hebrew and Greek text. The translators go on to argue that "the very meanest translation of the Bible in English … containeth the word of God, nay, is the word of God."[33] The precise words of the original, or even of one prized translation, are not what convey God's presence in the text; instead, a variety of different configurations of words all potentially convey divine meaning.

Herbert's poetry fleshes out this scribal picture of the divine inspiration of scripture; he positions himself as a "Pen-m[a]n" set to reduplicate the manuscripts dictated to the prophets and apostles. His language is full of echoes, allusions, and references to biblical language.[34] Chana Bloch, in an exploration of the places in which Herbert uses direct quotation from scripture to refute the mocking or painful words of the world, rightly points out that this strategy of refutation is itself scriptural: Christ, tempted in the desert, answers Satan with quotations from the prophets.[35] However, the power of Herbert's use of scripture is even greater when we realize that the echoes of scripture do not only in themselves point to biblical directives, as Bloch suggests, but in fact insert the presence of God himself into the text. In "The Quip," the speaker's repeated rejoinder to the temptations of the world is "But thou shalt answer, Lord, for me"—a quotation from Psalm 38:15 (AV) (p. 103, line 8). This is not simply a quotation from the psalms, however; the reference in itself is the answer that the speaker seeks. The Lord has already provided the words that will refute the world; they are the words of the psalm itself, divinely inspired, that provide the perfect answer to "Beautie," "Money," and the rest of the troupe of worldly temptations (p. 103, lines 5 and 9). The very presence of the psalm within the poem is the answer for which the speaker asks. Herbert's words are already infused with the presence of God for which his speaker longs through the divinely inspired, copied words of scripture.

Since Stanley E. Fish's *Self-Consuming Artifacts*, one key critical question has been to what extent God's language supplants Herbert's own in the poems—to what extent authorial agency is

preserved from an imputation of sinfulness. Fish describes the experience of reading Herbert's poetry as the gradual realization that the words of the poems are God's alone.[36] The paradigm of copying, however, obviates the need to choose between the words being the poet's or God's. God is a verbal God who provides language for the poet to pick up; but this does not mean, as Fish suggests, that the poems of *The Temple* vanish under the weight of the realization of God's agency. Instead, the poet's language is doubly solid and durable because it is a copy of what God has already written. I draw on Douglas Trevor's resistance to readings that attempt to prove that either the speaker or God has agency in writing particular poems. He points to the multiple modes of agency implied in Renaissance writing—"the blurring of self-identity brought about by the shared production of a text."[37] The common material modes of production of Renaissance texts in themselves allow us to preserve the agency of both man and God. However, I argue that it is this very textuality of language that creates moments of intimacy with God. For Herbert, God is a linguistic god. As in "The Quip" above, a request for God's presence in the words of the Bible itself makes clear that God is there. Quotations from the Bible draw God into the text and serve as markers that the poet is relying on God's creative making, rather than his own. When Herbert copies out the "sweetnesse" of love by using the language of scripture in his own text, he can take his own lack of invention, in the dangerous sense I have discussed above, as proof that God is with him.

Herbert shapes his poems, then, to imply that he has no special poetic skill that can convey God's truth to his readers; instead, scriptural language itself carries the truth of God's presence. However, the textual indications of God are not limited to direct quotations from the Bible. From an acknowledgment of divine immanence in the words of the Bible, it is a small step for Herbert to insist on the potential to discover divine presence in all language. This goes beyond the linguistic links between the Bible and poetry grounded on the fact that the "same symbolic system of meaning" was used for both, and thus that God and Herbert shared words.[38] Instead, Herbert recuperates language and the physical act of writing itself as ways to uncover truth. In Herbert's wordplay, even words and phrases not taken directly from the Bible can carry with them God's presence. Herbert's wordplay poems turn on the foregrounding of the seemingly miraculous ability of language itself—even a language as far from the Hebrew or Greek of the Bible as English—to disclose truth about

God. He casts his witty play with language as a joyful discovery of meaning, rather than a prideful creation.

Poems that manipulate language to seemingly miraculously produce truth about God are scattered throughout *The Temple.* These poems can be figured as copying because they rely on a model of invention that is not creation, but rather discovery—the discovery of God's truth within the physical letters of a word or phrase. As we have seen above, in "Ana-{MARY/ARMY}gram," the letters of Mary's name in themselves present her as she really is: "How well her name an *Army* doth present, / In whom the *Lord of hosts* did pitch his tent!" "The Sonne" meditates on how apt it is that in English "sunne" and "sonne" are homophones, since Christ himself is the truest representation of both (p. 163, lines 6 and 7). "Jesu" breaks apart the letters of Christ's name to find "I" "ES" "V" or "*I ease you*," thus showing how the name itself carries Christ's function within it (p. 105, lines 5–6 and 9). The contrast between these last two poems is instructive; while "The Sonne" emphasizes that the English language tells the truth about God, "Jesu" relies on the Latin form of the name for its multilingual pun. It is not one specific language that is particularly well-suited to reveal truth, but language itself. Nor is it names and titles alone that carry this excess of meaning. "Paradise" lops off the first letter of the last word of each line to gain a new word. The central metaphor of the poem is that God "prune[s]" with strengthening affliction, but it is the pruning of the words themselves that unveils this new sense (p. 126, line 11). The poetic conceit lays bare God's action through the miraculous inclusion of, for example, "end" and "rend" in the word "fr[i]end" (lines 15, 14, and 13). Similarly, "Heaven" is a poem filled with questions about the afterlife in which the "*Echo*" of the last word of each question is itself the answer (p. 182, line 2). In "Coloss. 3. 3., Our life is hid with Christ in God," the content of the poem is about the double life humans have: one life that is apparent in daily actions and one that is "*Hid*, and doth obliquely bend" toward God (p. 77, line 4). Within this poem there is hidden, and yet marked out with italics, the message "*My Life Is Hid in Him That Is My Treasure*" (lines 1–10). The poem, no less than the Christian, has a hidden life that miraculously appears within the words of the outer message.

This cursory list highlights the sheer number of poems that hinge on the discovery of truth within the typographic and sonic rather than the semantic spheres of language. When words or sentences are broken into letters by the copier's pen, they reveal

not nonsense, but truth. These poems are staged as discoveries of meaning, not constructions of meaning by the poet, who is often just as startled as the reader by what emerges from a poem's words. For Herbert, language can be the site of true encounter with God because the words themselves carry truth in them that is in excess of the meaning that any human poet can bring.[39]

Some argue that Herbert's plays on words separate meaning from structure and concretize his words so as to make them barely linguistic at all. This might be called the hieroglyphic mode of reading Herbert's wordplay poems—the words become objects, rather than words. Kimberly Johnson makes one such argument in her study of Herbert's "Eucharistic Poetics."[40] Johnson traces the insistent nonabsorptive poetics of devotional poetry—the "structural and representational tactics that emphasize the objecthood of language, both as material artifact on the page and as representational surface."[41] In a world in which the precise mode of signification of the sacrament was endlessly debated, this attention to modes of poetic representation, and especially to signs that resist being supplanted by their referents, is a way to attend to the resistance of the elements of the Eucharist to be confined to mere signs of an absent presence.

As perceptive as this study is, however, it does not deal with the implications of the presence of God not only as the incarnated Word, but as the Word of God in scripture. In Johnson's discussion of Herbert's poems that rely on typographic features of the language itself, this leads to an overly pessimistic view of the representational power of language. For example, the subject of "Love-joy" is a bunch of grapes with "*J* and *C* / Anneal'd on every bunch" (p. 109, lines 2–3). An interlocutor asks the narrator of the poem what these letters mean. When the narrator of "Love-joy" interprets J and C to be "the bodie and the letters both / Of *Joy* and *Charitie*," his interlocutor replies, "Sir, you have not miss'd, … It figures *JESUS CHRIST*." In her discussion of "Love-joy," Johnson reads the emphasis on the interpretive problem of how to combine the two definitions of *JC*—joy and charity? Jesus Christ?—as forcing "a confrontation with the Logos as a sign, one whose presence is ever more reified in the diminishing certainty of its signifieds."[42] It is my argument, however, that uncertainty is precisely what this poem forbids. The point of the interlocutor's "Sir, you have not miss'd" is to remove the need for choosing between the alternatives. Good theology tells us that, since God is love, the signification of "*Joy* and *Charitie*" and "*JESUS CHRIST*" is the same, despite the different words.

Moreover, the fact that Jesus Christ and joy and charity do, in fact, begin with the same letters already points to the identity between the two proffered meanings. This felicity of orthography points to—almost predetermines—the identity of meaning. Christ as Word is not contingent on this word being an "opaque set of signs" perceptible to the senses but unintelligible to the mind; rather, the very clarity of meaning (Christ means charity) points to language for which there need be no uncertainty about the relationship between sign and signified, for which meaning is miraculously already immanent in the very details of orthography.[43]

It is significant, however, that the speaker's process of coming to understand the identity between "*JESUS CHRIST*" and "*Joy and Charitie*" rests on the existence of another reader to help him make the necessary connection. The shadowy "One standing by" is the necessary precondition for the speaker to understand what is going on (line 3). Just as in "Jordan (II)" the friend must point out love's sweetness that stands ready to be copied, here the stranger must be the one to bring up the second possible meaning of "*J* and *C*." The reason is clear: the poem's speaker in passing confesses that he is "never loth / To spend [his] judgment," thus marking himself as prideful and vainglorious (lines 4–5). Without help from the divine friend, his own certainty would blind him to true knowledge. With the help of the divine friend, however, the narrator's stumbling guesses are redeemed. The stranger can reassure him, "Sir, you have not miss'd." With God's help, the poet can correctly read truth out of the structure of language; the multiple mediations of language and explanation do not obscure truth, but rather reveal it.

In Herbert's world, then, the skill of the poet can be used, not in inventing or making another world of human pride and vainglory, but in inventing or discovering the world as it is, and then copying that truth in his own poetry. The constructive faculty is transferred from the poet—always, in Herbert's works, a rather unworthy figure—to the fabric of language itself. In his poetry, Herbert shows himself as a representative Christian, a model of both good and bad responses to God—but not specifically as a poet set apart from his readers. Rather, he portrays himself simply as a reader. The action he takes in copying out the goodness he sees in creation mirrors the action his readers might take in copying out his poems for their own use.

NOTES

[1] Herbert, "Ana-{MARY/ARMY}gram," in *The Temple. Sacred Poems and Private Ejaculations* (Cambridge: Thomas Buck and Roger Daniel, 1633), p. 69; EEBO STC (2d edn.) 13184. Subsequent references to Herbert's poetry are to this edition and will be cited parenthetically in the text by page and line number. The 1633 edition of *The Temple* places the "MARY' in "Ana-{MARY/ ARMY}gram" above "ARMY" in between braces, creating a visual wordplay that could not be reproduced in this article.

[2] Joseph H. Summers, *George Herbert: His Religion and Art* (Cambridge MA: Harvard Univ. Press, 1954), p. 123.

[3] Martin Elsky, "George Herbert's Pattern Poems and the Materiality of Language: A New Approach to Renaissance Hieroglyphics," *ELH* 50, 2 (Summer 1983): 245–60, 251. For Herbert's hieroglyphic poetry, see Random Cloud, "FIAT fLUX," in *Crisis in Editing: Texts of the English Renaissance*, ed. Randall M. Leod (New York: AMS Press, 1994), pp. 61–172; Charles A. Huttar, "Herbert and the Emblem: Herbert and Emblematic Tradition," in *Like Season'd Timber: New Essays on George Herbert*, ed. Edmund Miller and Robert DiYanni, Seventeenth-Century Texts and Studies 1, gen. ed. Anthony Low (New York: Peter Lang, 1987), pp. 59–100; and Harriet Kramer Linkin, "Herbert's Reciprocal Writing: Poetry as Sacred Pun," in *Traditions and Innovations: Essays on British Literature of the Middle Ages and Renaissance*, ed. David G. Allen and Robert A. White (Newark: Univ. of Delaware Press, 1990), pp. 214–22.

[4] Elsky, p. 253.

[5] The most extreme version of this sacramental semiotics does not characterize the whole spectrum of Protestant belief—Lutheran theology, among others, insisted on the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist—but the debate itself raised doubts about the relation of sign and signified. For recent explorations of Herbert's sacramental devotion, see Kimberly Johnson, *Made Flesh: Sacrament and Poetics in Post-Reformation England* (Philadelphia: Univ. of Pennsylvania Press, 2014); Gary Kuchar, *Divine Subjection: The Rhetoric of Sacramental Devotion in Early Modern England* (Pittsburgh PA: Duquesne Univ. Press, 2005); Ryan Netzley, *Reading, Desire, and the Eucharist in Early Modern Religious Poetry* (Toronto: Univ. of Toronto Press, 2011); Sophie Read, *Eucharist and the Poetic Imagination in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2013); and Regina Schwartz, *Sacramental Poetics at the Dawn of Secularism: When God Left the World* (Stanford: Stanford Univ. Press, 2008).

[6] Timothy Rosendale, *Liturgy and Literature in the Making of Protestant England* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2007), p. 32.

[7] Thomas Hobbes, *Behemoth, or, An Epitome of the Civil Wars of England, from 1640 to 1660* (London, 1679), p. 24; EEBO Wing H2213.

[8] Roland Greene, *Five Words: Critical Semantics in the Age of Shakespeare and Cervantes* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 2013), p. 20.

[9] See Thomas Wilson, "An English Rhetoric (1569)," in *English Renaissance Literary Criticism*, ed. Brian Vickers (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1999), pp. 73–124, 80; and Roger Ascham, "On Imitation (1570)," in *English Renaissance Literary Criticism*, pp. 140–61, 141. It is this sense of invention that Lorna Hutson follows through forensic manuals to drama in *The Invention of Suspicion: Law and Mimesis in Shakespeare and Renaissance Drama* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 2007).

[10] See George Puttenham, *The Arte of English Poesie*, ed. Gladys Doidge Willcock and Alice Walker (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1936), p. 3.

[11] Philip Sidney, *An Apologie for Poetrie* (London: Henry Olney, 1595), C1v; EEBO STC (2d edn.) 22534.

[12] Sidney, *An Apologie*, C2r. See also Debra K. Shuger, *Sacred Rhetoric: The Christian Grand Style in the English Renaissance* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1988), p. 138.

[13] Sidney, *An Apologie*, C2r.

[14] Sidney, *An Apologie*, C2r–2v.

[15] Herbert was certainly familiar with Sidney's *Astrophel and Stella*, as shown by verbal echoes I discuss later in this article; the similarity of vocabulary and imagery, as well as his close familial and poetic connections, strongly suggests that he was familiar with *Apologie* as well.

[16] See *OED*, 3d edn., s.v. "raise, *v.*1": "to inspire (a person); to encourage, embolden," and "to promote or advance (a person or thing) to a higher rank, status, or position; to exalt (a person, a family, etc.) in dignity or power" (7b and 17a).

[17] For the image of love sprung from beauty, compare the third sonnet of Spenser's "Amoretti." Spenser, "Amoretti and Epithalamion," in *The Yale Edition of the Shorter Poems of Edmund Spenser*, ed. William A. Oram, Einar Biorvanol, Ronald Bond, Thomas H. Cain, Alexander Dunlop, and Richard Schell (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1989), p. 602. The idea of Christ sprung from the Father is, of course, also an old one; John of Damascus writes, "Think of the Father as a spring of life begetting the Son like a river and the Holy Ghost like a sea, for the spring and the river and the sea are all one nature" (Saint John of Damascus, *Writings*, trans. Frederic H. Chase Jr., Fathers of the Church 37 [New York: Fathers of the Church, 1958], p. 162).

[18] See *OED*, 3d edn., s.v. "burnish, *v.*2," "a. *intransitive*. Of the human frame: To grow plump, or stout, to spread out; to increase in breadth."

[19] Richard Strier points out, in another context, that Herbert often connects invention and thinking itself with sinister deception, but attributes this to the fallenness of the speaker rather than the process of invention (*Love Known: Theology and Experience in George Herbert's Poetry* [Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1983], p. 37).

[20] Sidney, *Syr P.S. His Astrophel and Stella. Wherein the Excellence of Sweete Poesie Is Concluded* (London: [John Charlewood] printed for Thomas Newman, 1591), p. 2; EEBO STC (2d edn.) 22536.

[21] See, for example, the intractable lust of sonnet 52 of *Astrophel and Stella*: "VVell Loue, since this Demurre our sute doth staie, / Let Vertue haue that *Stellas* selfe, yet thus, / That Vertue but that body graunt to us" (p. 22).

[22] As John N. Wall suggests, to turn from Herbert back to Sidney is to realize that Astrophel is "using the appropriate language of love but using it

to address the wrong beloved" (*Transformations of the Word: Spenser, Herbert, Vaughan* [Athens: Univ. of Georgia Press, 1988], p. 230).

[23] Achsah Guibbory, *Ceremony and Community from Herbert to Milton: Literature, Religion, and Cultural Conflict in Seventeenth-Century England* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1998), p. 61.

[24] Guibbory, p. 62.

[25] Susan Stewart, "Lyric Possession," *CritI* 22, 1 (Autumn 1995): 34–63, 36.

[26] For a related model of composition in Herbert's poetry, see Adam Smyth, "'Shreds of holinesse': George Herbert, Little Gidding, and Cutting Up Texts in Early Modern England," *ELR* 42, 3 (Autumn 2012): 452–81. Smyth suggests "cutting and pasting" in the mode of the Little Gidding harmonies as an analog for Herbert's work—*inventio* in the sense of finding rather than creating as a kind of writing (p. 464).

[27] Marcy L. North, "Household Scribes and the Production of Literary Manuscripts in Early Modern England," *JnlEMS* 4 (2015): 133–57, 148.

[28] Ann Blair, "Early Modern Attitudes toward the Delegation of Copying and Note-Taking," in *Forgetting Machines: Knowledge Management Evolution in Early Modern Europe*, ed. Alberto Cevolini, Library of the Written Word 53 (Boston: Brill, 2016), pp. 265–85, 276.

[29] North, p. 138.

[30] James Daybell, *The Material Letter in Early Modern England: Manuscript Letters and the Culture and Practices of Letter-Writing, 1512–1635*, Early Modern Literature in History (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), p. 212.

[31] Nandra Perry, *Imitatio Christi: The Poetics of Piety in Early Modern England* (Notre Dame: Univ. of Notre Dame Press, 2014), p. 21.

[32] "The Translators to the Reader," *The Holy Bible. Conteyning the Old Testament, and the New* (London: Robert Barker, 1611), A4v; EEBO STC (2d edn.) 2216.

[33] "The Translators to the Reader," A6v.

[34] Chana Bloch, *Spelling the Word: George Herbert and the Bible* (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1985), p. 1.

[35] Bloch, p. 17.

[36] Stanley E. Fish, *Self-Consuming Artifacts: The Experience of Seventeenth-Century Literature* (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1972), p. 215.

[37] Douglas Trevor, "George Herbert and the Scene of Writing," in *Historicism, Psychoanalysis, and Early Modern Culture*, ed. Carla Mazzio and Douglas Trevor (New York: Routledge, 2000), p. 241.

[38] Janis Lull, *The Poem in Time: Reading George Herbert's Revisions of "The Church"* (Newark: Univ. of Delaware Press, 1990), p. 16.

[39] Contrast this with Martin Luther's view of material text itself—"books, paper, ink"—as innately fallen (James Kearney, *The Incarnate Text: Imagining the Book in Reformation England* [Philadelphia: Univ. of Pennsylvania Press, 2009], p. 24).

[40] Johnson, p. 1.

[41] Johnson, p. 27.

[42] Johnson, p. 49.

[43] Johnson, p. 52.