

## "Grace beyond a curled lock:" Further Thoughts on Henry Vaughan's "Isaac's Marriage"

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Such attention as Henry Vaughan's poem "Isaac's Marriage" has attracted has largely been due to the fact that it is the only poem from the 1650 edition of *Silex Scintillans* to have been revised on publication in the 1655 edition. It was gratifying, therefore, that the first sustained discussion of the poem should have been so assured—and informed—a piece as that by Alan Rudrum in an earlier issue of *Connotations*. Professor Rudrum's discussion responds to earlier considerations of the poem by Barbara K. Lewalski, Donald R. Dickson and Philip West,<sup>1</sup> and proceeds to a very persuasive demonstration of some of the implications which Vaughan's poem would have had for alert readers amongst his contemporaries, pointing out that

In religio-political terms, Vaughan chose the marriage which was held to typify the marriage of Christ and the Church: a marriage which was later held by the Roman Catholics to impart to all Christian marriages the nature of a sacrament. It is evident throughout his religious writings that Vaughan made little effort to distance himself from the imputation of crypto-Catholicism frequently levelled at Laudian Anglicans during this period; not because he was a crypto-Catholic but because he saw himself as a member of the historic Church to whom the early Fathers were as important as post-Reformation divines. [...] The flaunting of banners his opponents thought Papistical was a kind of defiance likely to encourage readers whose sympathies were with the faithful remnant of Laudian Anglicans.<sup>2</sup>

Rudrum's characteristically learned piece makes very clear the range of ways in which Isaac was understood as a type of Christ and his marriage interpreted as a type of the marriage of Christ to his Church.

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<sup>1</sup>Reference: Alan Rudrum, "Narrative, Typology and Politics in Henry Vaughan's 'Isaac's Marriage,'" *Connotations* 11.1 (2001/2002): 78-90.

<sup>2</sup>For the original article as well as all contributions to this debate, please check the Connotations website at <<http://www.connotations.de/debrudrum01101.htm>>. is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 International License.

Rudrum is particularly helpful on what Vaughan has used, and what he has ignored, from the biblical account of Isaac's marriage. Building on traditional typologies, Rudrum provides an astute analysis of the poem's religio-political significance. What he doesn't do—since it is not to his purpose—is fully engage with how "Isaac's Marriage" actually functions *as a poem*. In what follows I have chosen, rather than relating the text to the different traditions, of biblical commentary and exegesis, of Reformation meditational theory and practice, to concentrate on workings of the language within the poem itself. Where I relate it to other texts it is to other poems that I try to establish links.

One of the most remarkable things about the poem seems to me its assured control of tone, the way in which Vaughan effects transitions between very different registers of language in an entirely seamless way while maintaining and developing an altogether convincing sense of a controlling voice and sensibility. The fluctuations and alternations of register are, of course, part of a conscious rhetorical strategy, a sophisticated exploitation of the inherited resources of the rhetorical tradition. The poem's moments of simplicity and seeming naiveté are as intricately constructed as any of its more obviously sophisticated passages. It is on these terms that the poem finds room for the delightful colloquial rhythms and ironies of the opening's simulated air of surprise:

Praying! And to be married! It was rare,  
But now 'tis monstrous;

Or lines 13-16:

Hadst ne'er an oath, nor compliment? thou wert  
An odd dull suitor; hadst thou but the art  
Of these our days, thou couldst have coined thee twenty  
New several oaths, and compliments (too) plenty;

But also, very differently, for the complex and beautiful imagery of what is, in effect, an epic simile embedded in a lyric, occupying lines 53-62:

So from *Lahai-roi's* well some spicy cloud  
Wooded by the Sun swells up to be his shroud,  
And from his moist womb weeps a fragrant shower,  
Which, scattered in a thousand pearls, each flower  
And herb partakes, where having stood awhile  
And something cooled the parched, and thirsty isle,  
The thankful Earth unlocks her self, and blends,  
A thousand odours, which (all mixed,) she sends  
Up in one cloud, and so returns the skies  
That dew they lent, a breathing sacrifice.

These contrasts of language are part of a larger structure of complementary antitheses that underpins the whole poem: between Heaven and Earth, Past and Present, Innocence and Experience, Naturalness and Artificiality—to mention just a few.

As Vaughan's editors have pointed out, the poet has made a significant choice in the epigraph affixed to the poem, from Genesis Chapter 24, Verse 63:

And Isaac went out to pray in the field at the even-tide, and he lift up his eyes, and behold the camels are coming.

Vaughan's text is taken, it seems, from the Authorised Version, save that he substitutes the word "pray" (which is found in the Geneva translation) for the word "meditate" which appears in the Authorised Version text. And it is this substituted word that provides the opening word for Vaughan's poem. These opening lines tempt one to imagine two possible speakers for them—so heavily ironic are they:

Praying! And to be married? It was rare,  
But now 'tis monstrous; and that pious care  
Though of our selves, is so much out of date,  
That to renew't were to degenerate.

We might imagine a putatively unironic speaker amazed at the mental picture presented to him. Such a speaker finds it inconceivable that praying and marrying should be regarded as activities between which there could be any possible connection. His astonishment is, in part, due to his sense of the great difference between then and now, be-

tween his own time and Old Testament times of Isaac and Rebekah. The ironies grow complex in the use of the word "degenerate" in line 4. We are faced with the paradox that renewal would be degeneration; as Alan Rudrum points out in his edition of Vaughan's poems,<sup>3</sup> there was a rare sense of the verb that simply meant "to show an alteration *from* a normal type, without implying debasement." Yet, read unironically, the statement suggests that a return to such acts of "pious care, though of our selves" would involve a loss of the kind of sophistication which characterises the implicitly un-pious and selfish society in which the unironic speaker, as I have called him, lives and with which he seems to be quite happy. Such attitudes, and such a speaker are, of course, being judged by the poet's irony. And so, too, is the society in which the poet, like the speaker, lives. In a passage beginning at line 11, the contrasts between then and now are made more explicit:

But being for a bride, prayer was such  
 A decried course, sure it prevailed not much.  
 Hadst ne'er an oath, nor compliment? thou wert  
 An odd dull suitor; hadst thou but the art  
 Of these our days, thou couldst have coined thee twenty  
 New several oaths, and compliments (too) plenty;  
 O sad, and wild excess! And happy those  
 White days, that durst no impious mirth expose!  
 When Conscience by lewd use had not lost sense,  
 Nor bold faced custom banished Innocence[.]

The language used here to intensify the contrast is interesting. Isaac is said to lack "the art / Of these our days," to lack oaths and compliments, which nowadays are easily "coined." The speaker recognises and acknowledges (in a familiar rhetorical trope), the "sad, and wild excess" of modern times, longing himself for "those / White days [...] / When Conscience by lewd use had not lost sense, / Nor bold-faced custom banished Innocence." I have drawn attention to these last lines in particular, because I find in them reminders of another poem of Vaughan's, "The Retreat," and because the connections seem to me to throw interesting light on "Isaac's Marriage." "The Retreat" opens thus:

Happy those early days! when I  
Shined in my Angel-Infancy.  
Before I understood this place  
Appointed for my second race,  
Or taught my soul to fancy aught  
But a white, celestial thought [...]

A later passage (lines 15 to 18) reads as follows:

Before I taught my tongue to wound  
My conscience with a sinful sound,  
Or had the black art to dispense  
A several sin to every sense.

It may be worth noting that line 19 of "Isaac's Marriage" originally read, in the 1650 printing of *Silex Scintillans*, "When sin, by sinning oft, had not lost sense." "The Retreat" is, to put it over-simply, about how (to quote once more from "Isaac's Marriage") "bold-faced custom banished Innocence." The speaker of "The Retreat" longs to return, "to travel back / And tread again that ancient track," a longing which must remain unfulfilled. What I have called the unironic speaker of "Isaac's Marriage" seems, without perhaps being fully conscious of them, to have similar longings. In Isaac he finds an enduring emblem of the happiness of those "[w]hite days," a young man who remains unmarked, one might say unstained, by experience. If the subject matter of "The Retreat" is paradise lost, that of "Isaac's Marriage" is paradise retained. Isaac's enduring innocence is attributed to the way in which, as a child, he was offered as a sacrifice (lines 5-10):

[...] thou a chosen sacrifice wert given,  
And offered up so early unto heaven  
Thy flames could not be out; Religion was  
Rayed into thee, like beams into a glass,  
Where, as thou grew'st, it multiplied and shined  
The sacred constellation of thy mind.

("Shined" is again an arresting choice of word). The use of "[r]ayed" is especially striking, in its emphatic position at the beginning of line

8—an emphasis perhaps increased by its admittedly distant but very definite rhyme with “[p]raying” in its similarly emphatic position at the beginning of line 1 (in both cases beginning an iambic pentameter with a heavy trochaic foot). This seems to be the only use of ‘ray’ as a verb in Vaughan’s poetry. The verb is a rare one generally, but employed with *relative* frequency, on the evidence of the *OED*, by some of the religious poets of the seventeenth century, such as Henry More and Francis Quarles. Vaughan may have borrowed its use from Owen Felltham. Here it forms part of a wonderful and beautiful image of divine energy intensely focused, “like beams into a glass.” This powerful image of energy and light descending, effectively balances the upward movement that will dominate the second part of the poem.

For Isaac, retaining innocence means avoiding entrance into a world of pretence and deception, a world demarcated by much of the vocabulary Vaughan uses to evoke the seventeenth century world that stands in contrast to that of Isaac. Here and now, courtship is a matter of lewdness (19) and “impious mirth” (18). Now the suitor presents himself with a “pompous train,” with an “*antic* crowd / Of young, gay swearers, with their needless, loud / Retinue” (21-23).<sup>4</sup> (There is, surely, another echo in that last phrase: against this “needless, loud Retinue” we might poise the “liquid, loose retinue” of Vaughan’s “The Water-fall,” emblematic of the waters of baptism.) Courtship now is a matter of the “[s]pruce, supple cringe, or studied look put on” (23). Isaac, whose bride is chosen by his father’s servant and the choice sanctioned by God, has neither desire nor need to indulge in such artificialities or pretences. His bride, Rebekah is also characterised by Vaughan in terms of her naturalness and innocence (lines 33-38):

[...] nor did she come  
 In *rolls* and *curls*, mincing and stately dumb,  
 But in a virgin’s native blush and fears  
 Fresh as those roses, which the day-spring wears.  
 O sweet divine simplicity! O grace  
 Beyond a curled lock, or painted face!

Those last two lines are particularly interesting. One clear echo is of the kind of language which informs such poems of George Herbert's as "A Wreath" and "Jordan (I)." In "A Wreath" (a beautiful example of the rhetorical figure of *reduplicatio* or *anadiplosis*) the speaker creates a complex affirmation of the virtues of simplicity, much as Vaughan here does. Both, in a sense, are playing particularly subtle games with those instincts (both aesthetic and moral) to which Cicero more than once addresses himself, as explaining choices both stylistic and ethical: "his initiis inducti omnia vera diligimus, id est fidelia, simplicia, constantia, tum vana, falsa, fallentia odimus, ut fraudem, periurium, malitiam, inuriam."<sup>5</sup> But the last two lines of Vaughan's poem set up another, less expected, allusion. No contemporary of Vaughan's, I suspect, could have failed to recognise the echo of one of Ben Jonson's most popular songs. (Vaughan, one might remember, had earlier praised Jonson in poems such as his commendatory verses to the collection of Fletcher's plays, published in 1647, or "To my Ingenuous Friend, R.W." where visitors to the Elysian fields are promised that

First, in the shade of his own bays ,  
Great BEN they'll see, whose sacred lays,  
The learned ghosts admire, and throng,  
To catch the subject of his song. [29-32]

The particular lines echoed by Vaughan, as noted by Alan Rudrum in his edition, run as follows:

Give me a look, give me a face,  
That makes simplicity a grace. (93-94)

But this is more than just a matter of verbal borrowing. This is made clear if one puts Jonson's lines back into context. The song from which the lines come is sung in Act One Scene One of Jonson's play *Epicœne: or the Silent Woman*. Two fashionable gentlemen, Truewit and Clerimont (the name an echo of French *clairement*, plainly or clearly), are talking and Truewit reports on the existence of "a new foundation [...] of ladies [...] that live from their husbands and give entertain-

ment to all the Wits and Braveries o' the time, as they call 'em, cry down or up what they like or dislike in a brain or a fashion, with most masculine or rather hermaphroditical authority, and every day gain to their college some new probationer." "Who is the president?" asks Clerimont. "The grave and youthful matron, the Lady Haughty" replies Truewit. Clerimont strongly disapproves of that lady's employment of precisely the kind of fashionable arts which are of no interest to Rebekah. His disapproval, indeed, is such that he has written a poem, a song, about it.

## CLERIMONT

A pox on her autumnal, her pieced beauty! There's no man can be admitted till she be ready nowadays, till she has painted and perfumed and washed and scoured, but the boy here, and him she wipes her oiled lips upon like a sponge. I have made a song. I pray thee hear it, o' the subject.

[BOY *sings*]

## SONG

Still to be neat, still to be dressed,  
As you were going to a feast;  
Still to be powdered, still perfumed:  
Lady, it is to be presumed,  
Though art's hid causes are not found,  
All is not sweet, all is not sound.

Give me a look, give me a face,  
That makes simplicity a grace;  
Robes loosely flowing, hair as free:  
Such sweet neglect more taketh me  
Than all th' adulteries of art:  
They strike mine eyes, but not my heart. (81-98)<sup>6</sup>

Clerimont's song takes Lady Haughty as its subject; when the song appeared, divorced from its dramatic context, in the songbooks of the period it carried titles such as "On a Proud Lady" or "On a Gentlewoman that used to trick up her selfe over-curiously."<sup>7</sup> It is, that is to say, addressed to and about precisely the sort of lady that Rebekah is not. Rebekah cultivates no "sweet neglect" nor are her robes in any



sense "loosely" flowing. Rebekah's hair is not elaborately coiffeured, the colour on her cheeks is the product of "a virgin's native blush" not make-up; she is free from "all th' adulteries of art." Above all she is neither "Lady Haughty" nor "A Proud Lady." Indeed, it is precisely her humility that Vaughan emphasises in the lines that immediately follow his allusion to Jonson's play:

*A pitcher* too she had, nor thought it much  
To carry that, which some would scorn to touch;  
With which in mild, chaste language she did woo  
To draw him drink, and for his camels too. (39-42)

The reference is to the episode later in that same chapter of Genesis from which Vaughan has taken the epigraph of his poem. It is the very moment at which Abraham's servant Eliezer recognises Rebekah as the bride intended for Isaac by God (verses 42-46). It is Eliezer speaking:

And I came this day unto the well, and said, O Lord God of my master Abraham, if now thou do prosper my way which I go:  
Behold, I stand by the well of water; and it shall come to pass, that when the virgin cometh forth to draw water, and I say to her, Give me, I pray thee, a little water of thy pitcher to drink:  
And she say to me, Both drink thou, and I will also draw for thy camels: let the same be the woman whom the Lord hath appointed out for my master's son.  
And before I had done speaking in my heart, behold, Rebekah came forth with her pitcher on her shoulder; and she went down unto the well, and drew water: and I said unto her, let me drink, I pray thee.  
And she made haste, and let down her pitcher from her shoulder; and said, Drink, and I will give thy camels drink also: so I drank, and she made the camels drink also.

Vaughan's lines are more by way of allusion than paraphrase and, for all his omissions, he makes one significant addition—one that draws attention precisely to Rebekah's lack of pride:

*A pitcher* too she had, nor thought it much  
To carry that, which some would scorn to touch[.]

The last line and a half have no source in Genesis. The introduction of the rhyme on "touch," in such close proximity to the word "pitcher," perhaps activates an almost submerged pun on those well known words in the Apocrypha "He that touches pitch shall be defiled therewith."<sup>8</sup> She touches, carries, her pitcher, but is not defiled or debased by doing so. That is perhaps fanciful. But it is not, I think, fanciful to see an altogether more serious and important piece of wordplay in the passage. Those lines of Vaughan's which so clearly echo Jonson, so clearly echo, that is, one of the well known secular lyrics of Vaughan's own time:

O sweet divine simplicity! O grace  
Beyond a curled lock, or painted face! (37-38)

transcend the claims, the aesthetic claims, as it were, of Jonson's lines by the addition of the word "divine" and by the serious pun on "grace." In Jonson's "Give me a look, give me a face, / That makes simplicity a grace" the word signifies beauty and charm, the possession of the kind of qualities bestowed by the Three Graces. In Vaughan's lines it means that, but it also registers the fact that for Isaac the arrival of Rebekah is, to quote from the *OED* "[a]n instance or manifesto of favour," "[t]he free favour of God," a pledge of "[t]he divine influence which operates in men to regenerate and sanctify, [...] and to impart strength to endure trial and resist temptation."<sup>9</sup> Elsewhere Vaughan uses the word separately in both its secular and its theological senses. One of the early love poems ("An Elegy") ends thus:

I borrowed from the winds, the gentler wing  
Of *Zephrus*, and soft souls of the spring:  
And made (to air those cheeks with fresher grace)  
The warm inspirers dwell upon thy face. (21-24)

As part of the language of complement (and as an oblique tribute to art), this *grace* (as the mention of *Zephrus* makes clear) is that for which Euphrosyne and her sisters stand as delightful emblems. On the other hand, in the closing lines of "The Sap," in which the meta-

phorical sap of the poem's title is celebrated, the word has its purely theological sense:

[...] humbly take  
This balm for souls that ache,  
And one who drank it thus, assures that you  
Shall find a joy so true,  
Such perfect ease, and such a lively sense  
Of grace against all sins,  
That you'll confess the comfort such, as even  
Brings to, and comes from Heaven.

In "Isaac's Marriage," it seems to me, both senses of the word are realised. Not for the only time in his work, Vaughan takes the language of love and compliment and restores it to a greater weight of meaning. Rebekah does indeed embody a "grace / Beyond a curled lock, or painted face." Such serious puns on grace activate concerns very close to the heart of Vaughan's intellectual, aesthetic and theological position—though such a topic cannot be explored here, it is perhaps apposite to quote from Vaughan's older contemporary Francis Quarles (1592-1644), from his very popular and much reprinted *Divine Fancies*, the first edition of which appeared in 1632:

*On the three Christian Graces*

*Faith*

It is a Grace, that teacheth to deprave not  
The goods we have; to have the goods we have not.

*Hope*

It is a Grace that keeps the Almighty blameless  
In long delay: And Men (in begging) shameless.

*Charity.*

It is a *Grace*, or Art to get a Living,  
By selling Land; and to grow rich, by giving.<sup>10</sup>

In the verse from Genesis that Vaughan employs as his epigraph, there is perhaps some ambiguity as to cause and effect, but a simple reading would see Rebekah's arrival as the consequence of Isaac's prayer. In Vaughan's poem, while Isaac may be at his prayers as early as the first word of the poem, it is only after Rebekah's arrival that his prayer takes flight, to use his own metaphor:

And now thou knewest her coming, it was time  
To get thee wings on, and devoutly climb  
Unto thy God, for marriage of all states  
Makes most unhappy or most fortunates;  
This brought thee forth, where now thou didst undress  
Thy soul, and with new pinions refresh  
Her wearied wings, which so restored did fly  
Above the stars [...]. (43-50)

Like most of Vaughan's best poems, "Isaac's Marriage" is full of implied movement. Tracing all the movement is rather like working out the directions for the eye's movements that are signalled by the compositional techniques of the great painters. In part one of the poem, the arrival of Rebekah effects a kind of horizontal movement, a movement along the surface of the earth; but since she is a "grace," a gift from God, she also marks a downward movement. Vaughan's retrospective allusion to the intended sacrifice of Isaac, on the mountain top, evokes an upward movement, more than balanced by the downward impulse of that marvellous image of "divinity [...] rayed" into Isaac, "like beams into a glass." In part two of the poem, the implied movements fulfil a neater pattern. The artificial "rolls and curls" alluded to in the first part are superseded by a more perfect circularity (already hinted at by the fact that the angels "wind" about Isaac), which, it should be noted, is presented as a completed act of sacrifice, unlike the interrupted, displaced sacrifice of the first part. The whole of this second part of the poem defines Isaac's prayer and does so, at greatest length, by seeing the upward movement of his soul as part of a kind of circulatory pattern of ascent and descent. What I earlier described as the epic simile of lines 53-62 is the key

passage:

So from *Lahai-roi's* well some spicy cloud  
Wooed by the Sun swells up to be his shroud,  
And from his moist womb weeps a fragrant shower,  
Which, scattered in a thousand pearls, each flower  
And herb partakes, where having stood awhile  
And something cooled the parched, and thirsty isle,  
The thankful Earth unlocks her self, and blends,  
A thousand odours, which (all mixed,) she sends  
Up in one cloud, and so returns the skies  
That dew they lent, a breathing sacrifice.

The density of image and meaning in these lines is quite remarkable—such as to defy any brief explication here. Vaughan draws, with a kind of inspired syncretism, on biblical and other traditions of symbolism in his network of references to, for example, the well and the womb, pearls, flowers and herbs, the Sun and the clouds, the Earth and the skies. Here it must suffice to point out how perfectly the schema of this extended simile, of interdependent ascents and descents, brings to perfection of meaning the seemingly disparate movements of part one, resolving all into the language of return and "breathing sacrifice." One might also point to the presence of a sequence of delicately sexual words and images that look forward, as it were, to the consummation of the marriage. The whole passage is a perfect exemplum of the kind of "rings, / And *hymning circulations*" of which Vaughan writes in "The Morning-Watch" or of the process which Vaughan presents rather more plainly in "The Charnel-House" when he writes of how "the elements by circulation pass / From one to the other, and that which first was / Is so again."

"Thus soared thy soul" begins the final part of the poem. "Thus" presumably functions both as a means to say that the immediately preceding lines have given an account of how Isaac's soul "soared," and also to say that the whole of the poem to this point has provided an account of *why* it "soared." All the way through the poem there has been a tension between the poem's espousal of simplicity as a revered value—its praise of "plain, modest truth" (33) and its suspicion of

"the art / Of these our days" (14-15) on the one hand and—on the other—its employment of sophisticated poetic techniques. This is not so much art concealing art as art decrying art, art ostensibly suspicious of art. It is the paradox and the dilemma which underlies poems such as "Jordan (I)" by Vaughan's master Herbert, another poem which very artfully extols the virtues of artless simplicity. Given Vaughan's inevitable awareness of such paradoxes, it is perhaps not surprising that the final movement of the poem brings in, for the first time, the terminology of a specific art, insofar as it relates to the problems of representation:

Others were timed and trained up to't but thou  
 Didst thy swift years in piety out-grow,  
 Age made them reverend, and a snowy head,  
 But thou wert so, ere time his snow could shed;  
 Then, who would truly limn thee out, must paint  
 First, a *young Patriarch*, then a married *Saint*. (67-72)

We may remember that the Lady Haughty of Jonson's *Epicoene* was a "youthful matron." Truewit applied the paradoxical term to her because she sought by art to disguise the reality of her advancing age. Vaughan's "*young Patriarch*," on the other hand, is not a product of art's deceptions, rather is he a paradox difficult for art to represent, as well as a kind of sacred parody of Jonson's secular original. In him youth and age actually do co-exist, he is not simply one nor the other. Vaughan began his poem as if visualising Isaac at prayer; he ends it by considering how a painter might represent that scene.

Professor Rudrum explicates the poem primarily by reference to non-poetic traditions, especially those of biblical commentary (it depends, of course, on what you mean by "poetic"). I have sought, not to contradict anything that Rudrum has to say, but to supplement it by a more detailed examination of the poem's language (or, at any rate, some aspects of it) than he undertakes. Through that process "Isaac's Marriage" emerges as a subtle, allusive, occasionally elusive piece of writing; as a richly imaginative piece, as a poem with much to say about those questions of simplicity and art that necessarily posed

themselves to a seventeenth century writer of religious verse; as a text that meditates on the survival of innocence, in complement to Vaughan's poetic meditations elsewhere on its loss. As is so often the case with Vaughan, the more closely one looks at one of his poems the more one finds oneself admiring the poetic craftsmanship that has gone into its making.

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## NOTES

<sup>1</sup>Barbara K. Lewalski, *Protestant Poetics and the Seventeenth-Century Religious Lyric* (Princeton: PUP, 1979) 336-37; Donald R. Dickson, *The Fountain of Living Waters: The Typology of the Waters of Life in Herbert, Vaughan and Traherne* (Columbia: U of Missouri P, 1987) 151-52; Philip West, *Henry Vaughan's Silex Scintillans* (Oxford: OUP, 2001) 53-54.

<sup>2</sup>Rudrum 86-87.

<sup>3</sup>Henry Vaughan, *The Complete Poems* (London: Penguin, 1983) 541. All quotations from Vaughan are taken from this edition. *OED* sense 3: "To become or be altered in nature or character (without implying debasement); to change in kind; to show an alteration *from* a normal type." The illustrative quotations provided range in date from 1548 to 1600.

<sup>4</sup>Given the poem's clear echoing of the work of Jonson (as discussed later in this essay) it may not be irrelevant here to think, prompted by this phraseology, of the gatherings of wedding feasts in such plays as *Every Man in His Humour* and *Epicoene* as exemplars of the kind of thing the speaker has in mind.

<sup>5</sup>*De Finibus Bonorum et Malorum*, II.46. "This primary instinct leads us on to love all truth as such, that is, all that is trustworthy, simple and consistent, and to hate things insincere, false and deceptive, such as cheating, perjury, malice and injustice." Marcus Tullius Cicero, *De Finibus Bonorum et Malorum*, Loeb Classical Library, 40, trans. H. Rackham (Harvard: Harvard UP, 1994) 134-35.

<sup>6</sup>Text from Ben Jonson, *Epicoene*, ed. R. V. Holdsworth (London: Benn, 1979) 14-15.

<sup>7</sup>The poem appears under a variety of titles in verse miscellanies and songbooks of the period, e.g.: "On a spruce lady" (Bodleian Library, Oxford, MS Ashmole 38, and Leeds Archives Department, MS 237); "To a curious lady" (Chetham's Library, Manchester, Mun. A4.15); "On a Gentlewoman that used to trick up her selfe over-curiously" (University of Nottingham, Portland MS PW V. 37); "On a Proud Lady" (Henry Lawes, *The Treasury of Musick*, 1669).

<sup>8</sup>Ecclesiasticus 13:1 (Authorised Version).

<sup>9</sup>OED "grace" n. 8., 11., 11.b.

<sup>10</sup>Francis Quarles, *Divine Fancies*, 8th ed. (London, 1687) 7.