Poets are not alone in being prepared to see new places in settled ways and describe them in received images. When Henry VII commissioned John Cabot and his sons as representatives to new western lands, he imagined his deputies primarily imposing a transplanted order rather than discovering a new one. The attitude is more important than any specific transplants he had in mind in this westward march of empire: “We have granted to them, and also to every of them, the heires of them, and every of them, and their deputies, and have given them licence to set up our banners and ensignes in every village, towne, castle, isle, or maine land of them newly found.”¹ This grandly presumptuous conquest that expects castles in a wilderness and the perpetuity of English law until the end of time aims to encompass all contingencies in its legalistic framework. Outer regions will be assimilated into dynasties, never mind the hostility of natives. In a similar manner, the ancient deserts of the Mediterranean and certain biblical expectations of what burning bushes, what gods, or what shepherds shall exist everywhere encroach upon the deserts of Utah and California: those who travel see these and other new landscapes in terms of old myths of place and descriptive topoi. Their perceptions take on the structure, tonality, and nomenclature of the past; their language becomes as much recollection as greeting.

Modern cultural carryalongs continue to operate much like Henry’s, but with perhaps less obvious imperiousness and more bureaucratic efficiency. The motel one arrives at after a long drive, as Richard Wilbur observes, has the usual parking lot “hacked out of
a stand of trees" and the usual swimming pool. The uniformity that
Henry's agents sought to impose on the wilderness modern tech­
nology achieves by erasing traces of locality. As Wilbur speculates,
"We Americans might be becoming a race which, for all its restless
motion, moves by preference through a repetitive labyrinth of
highway, ramp, lobby, snack bar, escalator, and concourse—an
anaesthetic modular world in which we are at home only because
things are everywhere the same."²

When colonizers bring their cargo of cultural expectations to a
new time and place, however, they never achieve an unequivocal
victory, any more than the Old Testament was ever able to dom­
inate the New; they usually settle for assimilating one thing to
another and in the journey of cultural forms end up leaving behind
a trail of discards. We tend to forget that much of any given culture
was once marginal and had to be nurtured on foreign soil. More
often than not, an old empire fails until it changes, as the Cabots
failed.

The concern of the literary historian is in part that ever-renewed
past being introduced under the new conditions that poets con­
front and thus the parallel movement of literary and social history
Literature is inseparable from the rest of discourse, as the study of
signs the past decade has made clearer; but it also remains distinct
from social history, since poets look less to common discourse than
to specific literary predecessors as their models. Like explorers and
colonizers, they are often careful observers of place, but if they
stake claims, they do so not in order to "subdue, occupy, and poss­
sess" or to seize "rule, title, and jurisdiction,"³ but to bring what is
distinct and valuable within some sort of verbal compass and rela­
tionship with the speaker. They know that muses tend to favor
genii loci and that to address the objects of a place they cannot be
too arbitrary with them.

It is also true that they bring formulas and loyalty to a cultural
heritage with them, which complicates the nature of the lyric ad­
dress. T. S. Eliot, for instance, would have us apply Latin poetry
generally as a standard for the various Western poetries that fol­
lowed it and measure Milton's provincial eccentricity by its depart­
ure from that norm. Renaissance writers as a rule would have
agreed. They saw their own localities and historical moments in the
figures and kinds of Homer, Theocritus, Virgil, and the Bible.
Those who worked their way from pastoral to epic were taking
what they understood to be a Virgilian course; others followed
Martial or Horace or Ovid as a given genre and decorum suggested. However, any imaginative excursion or new insight carries the poet away from such points of departure. He cannot know ahead of time what he will find salvageable, any more than wagon trains going westward knew what the terrain and the weather would force them to discard. He can only predict with some certainty that the collisions of received topoi and new conditions will be unsettling.

My more specific concern is not poetry's encounters with new places in general but those of major seventeenth-century poets "on the margin," deciding what to discard as they learn to be new regionalists. I emphasize the displacement and the new because of the remoteness of so many of their lyric sites. A restlessness similar to that of westward exploration is detectable in the wandering of lyric personas and in their new terms of address. If the chronological story of literature in English has been generally one of abandoned centers and styles, abandoned neoclassicism, romanticism, modernism, it was dramatically so in Donne, Herbert, Marvell, Vaughan, and Milton. Literary history as they enacted it was not smoothly evolving but highly reactive, albeit with important retrenchments. The first major shift in the Renaissance was led by Donne and cuts lyric more or less in half at a divide that fell roughly at the death of Queen Elizabeth, the Renaissance being not a single period but a group of overlapping movements. In the earlier Renaissance, courtly poetry broke loose from the comparative anonymity of lyric and took up an acquaintance with continental love poetry. Its commitment to secular affairs and to the educational reforms of humanism placed a good many constraints on the poet. The mid-Renaissance change came as a discarding or modifying of those constrictions, especially their courtly and social obligations, antagonism to which Donne dramatized again and again. George Herbert could not have become the poet he did had he ignored Donne's challenges to courtly love poetry or tried to carry forward Spenser's or Sidney's version of the poetic vocation. Neither could he pretend to be a medievalist, of course, although he took up many of the types, iconic commonplaces, and symbolic uses of sacraments and doctrines from medieval poetry. Instead, he generated a new set of complaints about service (new from a courtly perspective) and a different concept of the obligations of love, to cite just two matters. The service he chose in lieu of service to a patron or Petrarchan lady not only tested his patience and disci-
pline quite differently from the way Wyatt and Sidney were tested but encouraged self-consciousness about the location and the nature of poetry itself.

Sidney and Spenser among the earlier group devote the most attention in poetry itself to the ins and outs of a poetic career, thanks in part to their own on-again, off-again relations to the court. The difference between them and Donne or Herbert is that they either try to remain "in" or explain why it is impossible to do so. Spenser regards fairyland as an equivalent to a new world and departs from predecessors; but he also tends to think of English institutions as renewals of something like a Roman tradition carried through the earlier Renaissance. Seventeenth-century poets for the most part move quite literally outside—into solitary meadows, woodlands, and gardens—or inside to enclosures such as private chambers or the temple. Some of them take leave of the residue of Tudor absolutism they find in James and Charles—the sort of absolutism that commissioned the explorations (and raids) not only of the Cabots but Hawkins, Raleigh, Drake, and others, and subordinated commerce, the church, the educational system, and the arts to its sovereignty. If for explorers, breaking loose began when they discovered the attractions and perils of new places, for Donne it began when he discovered new relations-of-two, not only outside the court but openly distrustful of it. A network of new access roads back to society then had to be constructed and new forms of address worked out that could position the lovers with respect to it and publish them to it.

In the matter of reformation, the seventeenth-century sometimes considered its radicalism a conservative return to origins, as Milton in breaking with kings and prelates believes himself to be returning to scriptural authority and an earlier church. But of course it was a scripture interpreted by the individual reader largely without sanctions other than the ones he found in the better authorities and in his own reason and inner light. That sort of departure also demanded new routes of access, in this case between an audience and the poet deploying scriptural types or framing his own versions of scriptural topics. Such departures from what poets perceived to be the poetic orthodoxies are indeed provincial, not just in Eliot's sense of their requiring deviations from Latin traditions but in the poet's identification with places not at a cultural center. Milton subsequently became something of an establishment himself, but initially his imaginative commitment to Eden and else-
where was a sign of independence. In his way he voyaged as intrepidly as Satan and ventured as ambitiously as Eve.

I assume in these remarks that such changes in setting help the literary historian assess the poet's relations to predecessors and to what the poet has perceived to be reigning practice. Cutting across such generic divisions as cavalier, metaphysical, devotional, amorous, and odic kinds, the representation of "places" conducts us along the path that lyric and other forms took from Wyatt to Marvell and Milton. Although an examination of actual social institutions and the office-holding situations of poets and their patrons and associates would help us appreciate more fully the connections between history, biography, and symbolic landscape, it would also force extensive digressions. Hence I plan to pursue only the accepted canonical literature, not to explore pictorial traditions, emblem literature, typology, or other features of renaissance imagery. These have received a fair amount of attention, as have the history of ideas, renaissance training in rhetoric and humanism generally, and such matters of intellectual history as Platonism and Hermeticism. My concern is also restricted primarily to lyric address rather than description, together with its implications for the career-mindedness of poets seeking new terrain.

Although I have concentrated on these limited aspects of familiar texts, I have had to make some difficult choices even so to stay within decent compass. One might argue, for instance, for Crashaw and some of the lesser cavaliers and metaphysicals if Herrick is to be here. But I require a follow-up to Jonson and a contrast to the metaphysicals, and the intrinsic worth of the poems argues for Herrick; I've not been convinced of a comparable worth in the several others who might be considered on strictly historical grounds. In Marvell's case something beyond "Upon Appleton House" and the Horatian Ode could easily be justified, but I have not wanted to duplicate an already extensive commentary on the other poems, and these particular ones make the main point. One could also justify a good deal more on such predecessors as Spenser, Sidney, and Shakespeare. But the current scholarship on Spenser and Sidney seems essentially correct, fairly full, and relevant to my purpose in its demonstrations of the poet's laureate functions and courtly orientation. For Shakespeare the terms need to be set up a little differently and developed extensively. To avoid fattening an already bulky study, I've decided on a separate project devoted to the later plays and to getting a run at Milton. Hence
though the passage from those plays to "L'Allegro," "Il Penseroso," and "Comus" suggests a good deal about the renaissance literary "story" and about the relation of dramatic and lyric kinds, I've not tried to do more with these here than is absolutely necessary.

The selection of framing theorists and modern lyricists in the opening chapter is more open to the charge of capriciousness. Though poststructuralism has been on my mind as on everyone else's, I've detoured around the main skirmishes in order to keep theory within limits. Had I been more hospitable toward a number of modern poets, too, they would have taken over. The result would have been far less commentary on the main body of poems I wanted to consider, in a book that submarined into that great sea of discourse on postmodernism still unbottomed after several decades of soundings. The case for "substance" in the seventeenth-century lyricists could only be made finally by prolonged stays in their company. The practical matter too is that one who reads "To Penshurst" or "Lycidas" is not for the moment conscious of much not cited in some way by Jonson or Milton, the unavoidable questions of genre and influence being complication enough.

If this suggests one of those drivers who leave a wake of honking motorists in their wake as they run obliviously through one red light after another, I counter with an alternative figure: finding the main routes clogged, one goes around. And so, for instance, by way of general definition-making, I've drawn upon a small piece of Heidegger and ignored now more traveled routes. That such a bypass is legitimate is suggested by Heidegger's service as a connecting route between seventeenth-century ontology and twentieth-century perspectives. But such choices are no more than convenient, obviously not inevitable, like the selection of one of a dozen models of cars or computers any of which works. We can use, and can afford, only one model at a time. On with the drive itself.

The essays on Herbert and Herrick were published in slightly different versions in SEL and ELH. Debts to scholars and critics herein are usually specific and are indicated where appropriate, but I have drawn more frequently upon Arnold Stein's Milton than citations might suggest and have kept Earl Miner's view of metaphysical, cavalier, and restoration modes in mind on occasions that may not be evident.