HERRICK'S BOOK OF REALMS AND MOMENTS

CHAPTER SEVEN

TAKING INVENTORY

The seventeenth-century folding of existing kinds seemingly left very little as simple and intact as it was, as, for instance, in the Jacobean drama's subversion of comedy and tragedy, the stretching of love poems and sonnets in Donne, Herbert, and Marvell, and Milton's modifications of the masque, pastoral, epic, and tragedy. Almost a second Alexandrian movement in this respect, the poetry of Herbert, Vaughan, Milton, and Marvell turns in upon itself to question the functions of poetry. Herrick at first glance appears to be an exception. Of all seventeenth-century poets, he has perhaps the most casual tolerance of variety and the most unsustained fits of self-examination. He ranges easily from metaphysical wit to the simple piety of Noble Numbers, and from Jonson's assumptions about a cultivated small circle to a sense of the poet's near isolation. That he betrays so little concern for the national traumas marching and countermarching before him over a long career suggests that he could stay afloat. Yet he has the tetchy good sense to rid himself of the warty "Dean-bourn" and its churlish generations when they become intolerable.

A similar casualness is evident in his relations to readers. In what may be the last of his yearly holidays with a group of them, for instance, he bids farewell without commotion:

Loth to depart, but yet at last, each one
Back must now go to's habitation:
Not knowing thus much, when we once do sever,
Whether or no, that we shall meet here ever.
As for my self, since time a thousand cares
And griefs hath filde upon my silver hairs;
’Tis to be doubted whether I next yeer,
Or no, shall give ye a re-meeting here.
If die I must, then my last vow shall be,
You’ll with a tear or two, remember me,
Your sometime Poet; but if fates do give
Me longer date, and more fresh springs to live:
Oft as your field, shall her old age renew,
Herrick shall make the meddow-verse for you.

“The parting verse, the feast there ended.” H-355

These are not very close friends or the encounters would be more than yearly, but they are stable, and the poet can claim a special place among them, not as a center or a key educator but as simply one of them. Out of gatherings small commemorations grow, and out of the permanent departure of the poet a stronger feeling is to be allowed for a moment. So spring seasons come to a natural end for the individual, while the group continues to balance renewals and continued aging. In between occasions, each has his separate domesticity to occupy him and whatever tribulations that may mean.

It is for this reasoned tone and coupled accounting that Jonson appears chief among Herrick’s poetic company and brings “manners” into lyric compass. But the similarity serves mainly to underscore a difference and mark Herrick’s place among the others of that Alexandrian turn: before society, whether rural and given or urban and to be cultivated by the poet, come the objects of place and occasion, and these are not as easily administered as Jonson’s or as reducible to domestic possession. Although set forth without metaphysical complexity in poems of some formal regularity and definition, they can indeed be elusive to the critical touch. What counts about them is not merely their surfaces but their uses in the community and their emanations and affinities with the observer and with predecessors, who lead in several directions. Yet unlike the precisely etched objects of poets like William Carlos Williams and Marianne Moore, they do not stand alone but serve as emissaries, often from realms of lesser mythology—of faery or pagan gods, for instance. The messages they bring are cryptic and unsystematic and often not very earth-shaking, and so the poet is not expected to make important announcements at those yearly “re-meetings.” Despite Herrick’s commitment to epigram and sententiousness at times, they elude abstraction and moral urging, which offer interpreters such satisfying paraphrases of other seventeenth-century poets. Although they may stand as specimens and types—these Maypoles, wassails, custards, “ductile Codlin’s skins,”
and trout-flies curious wings—we are not meant to reduce them to shadows or make them into signs and emblems, as we are encouraged to do with the landscapes of a Herbert or a Vaughan.

That our placement of them must be so tentative is largely due to Herrick’s preference for contrast and variety in place of idea and arrangement. Certainly he provides decoration and furniture not merely for one but for several places, as *Hesperides* introduces us to many kingdoms in turn without mapping their connections or their mutual influences. Where he does decide to bring landscapes and their objects into some sort of order, he depends more upon custom and ceremony than upon rational principle. Neither Platonism nor Christian doctrine figures consistently in his poetry, for instance, and where one or the other does it is likely to ornament an occasion and appeal less to the devotional spirit than to the aesthetic sense.

Lacking a map of realms or exact calendar of moments, what does Herrick offer by way of guidance to interpret his objects and their settings? The introductory poems of *Hesperides* provide some early indications if not very conclusive answers. “To the Most illustrious and Most hopeful Prince, Charles,” for instance, touches upon several realms—the book, nature, and the state—and gives them the special aura of sanctioned, important orders. The poet is to transport the fires of inspiration into those morning and evening stars, the volume’s individual poems. Their source, the prince, preserves them even as they preserve him—permanence and glory being so entwined that one cannot exist without the other. The difficulty is that the volume does not pursue the prominence Herrick assigns either the prince or the state, which as it turns out, is true of nearly everything: whatever holds the stage at a given moment may be flattered with thematic weight and dignity, but in the way of a variety show. We have no reason to think that Herrick takes his large claims for Charles seriously, given the flat style, the conventional imagery, and the quick diversion of his attention to other matters.¹

If from the dedicatory poem we are led momentarily to expect a book of royalist apologies, we are relieved to find a quite different list of subjects in “The Argument of his Book.” As the term “argument” suggests, these other subjects are systematized to a degree, if not as rigorously as logical argument would require. The poetic site shifts from court to countryside, from sovereign to folk and to fairyland royalty. Although the sestet rises to full voice before it ends, the poem is relaxed in its inventory. The items it lists are
predominantly natural, outfitted for celebration, and humanized by custom. The catalogue progresses from country items to a higher vision, but it does not really constitute a program or suggest an itinerary for the poetic sensibility among increasingly sophisticated matters. Where Milton's progress through joy and pensiveness in "L'Allegro" and "Il Penseroso" pits one set of assets against another, Herrick enumerates without much contrast except for heaven and hell. And where Milton's realm of fairy is clearly for the folk and stands somewhere between country song and visionary dream, Herrick's as it turns out serves primarily to enlist the eye with detail and to put common objects in a foreign light. It restricts mythology to household matters of mealtime, love, and furnishings. He accepts both his rural and his fairy realms for what folkways have made of them and concentrates on the description and on the genius of place. Nor does he suggest the sort of optical illusions that Marvell works with in "Upon Appleton House"; despite the delight in disorder that "The Argument" suggests and several poems explore, he does not cause appearances to shift so confusedly as to throw the venture of seeing and assessing entirely into doubt. We recognize none of the experiments in perspective or anamorphic painting in him that we do in Marvell. He forgoes any dialectical use of realms to interrogate each other or to raise doubts about human citizenship in them.

What sort of organization does Herrick propose for the catalogue of topics that "The Argument" and Hesperides give us? Does the movement toward the final couplet, for instance, really give it the scope it claims in its otherworldly expansion?

First, technically, Herrick manages a certain order by likenesses in rhythm, sound, and principles of adjacency. The surfaces of words and their phonic network, always important to him, make up a large part of the poem's sense of arrangement as well as its playfulness, which is vital to its sense of ease. Wassails and Maypoles are an impedimenta for holidays, with histories and symbolic dimensions. Second, the list of subjects is highly selective: the months and the ceremonial elements are a springtime concentration, and the balms and spices are obviously not plain but special fare. The relative certainty of seasonal things coming around in course is undercut by a questioning of origins, since roses had to have beginnings and thus a time when they were surprising. It is as a mythological poet concerned with fictions of origin that Herrick stresses ovidian metamorphosis: that both times and things "trans-shift" urges us toward the realm of faery—and ultimately behind it to the greater mythology of heaven and hell.
On one hand this carries argument and explanation toward absolutes. On the other hand, the introduction of the sacred, which has the apparent effect of encircling the poem with outer limits, is more pausal than definitive. As the poem opens a door upon the stock and surplus of *Hesperides* and its loosely assembled topics, heaven and hell in that context are not really binding even among the list of subjects they conclude. They do not gather up the rest or subordinate them—merely cast suspicion upon some of them. Although the minister in Herrick no doubt sees them as ultimates, the poet does not apply them to a scaling down of all other matters in proportion. In any case “The Argument” takes no particular notice of the potential dangers of sensuous revels and epicurean excesses, and just how the poet plans to sing of hell and what importance it will have remain mysteries both here and in the rest of the volume. Nonetheless, what seems at first familiar and easily definable in the daily or seasonal terms of the octave now becomes more elusive. The introduction of far different realms makes the reader pause as he steps through the doorway.

Even so, it is important to see that Herrick’s catalogue of topics and the volume’s subsequent miscellany are also far from random. The gaps between items are not an indication of confusion or an indefinable universe. The difference is evident if we think of the neutralized miscellany of Moore or Williams, especially in the latter’s excursions into a happenstance world in poems like “Term.” For Herrick, randomness has no great appeal, although disorder of course does. Where Williams takes delight in the “anarchy of poverty” (“The Poor”), for instance, Herrick’s disorder is almost decorative. Heaven and hell bring the encompassing framework of “The Argument” to bear upon its miscellany somewhat tentatively but with sufficient force to conclude the sonnet. The final declaration climbs to higher ground from which creation’s panorama may be seen, even as the poem begins to ask for a kind of explanation that requires a visionary poet, or an epic, and thereby leaves the lyricist suspended between realms. The balance between anticipation and the formal rounding off of the inventory is nicely maintained.

What “The Argument” announces about its subjects is both their particularity and the kind of access the poet will take to them. He will in fact sing “piece by piece,” which means that he plans to act not as an epic poet gathering a cosmos into a single structure but as a poet of isolated moments and glittering images. The volume’s multiplicity of surfaces promotes a seeing-in-parts that increases the observer’s wealth “by subdividing it finely.” Just so Robert Harr-
bison describes Francesco Colonna’s *Hypnerotomachia*, and although Herrick may not be a Poliphilo—a lover of “too many Polias,” whose parts are multiplied by her wardrobe, as Harbison suggests of that more distracted lover—he is nonetheless a great “lover of many.” He “manufactures series feeds himself with course after course,” until such a surfeit suggests that “there is no end to the succession of ascending thoughts we can have.”

Anyone who reads Herrick’s collection of small pieces consecutively sees this variety long before he locates any principle of order or recurrence. Even the volume’s most expansive moments are in a sense belittled by the casualness of attitude that marks the movement from piece to piece. What counts is the poet’s performance on each occasion, in each place, hallowed or profane.

CLOTHES AND THE FURNISHINGS OF FAIRYLAND

A sweet disorder in the dresse
Kindles in cloathes a wantonnesse:
A Lawne about the shoulders thrown
Into a fine distraction:
An erring Lace, which here and there
Enthralls the Crimson Stomacher.
Doe more bewitch me, then when Art
Is too precise in every part.5

“Delight in Disorder” H-83

By comparison to such far-ranging allegories of clothes as Swift’s top notches and laced coates in *A Tale of a Tub* and Professor Diogenes Teufelsdröckh of weissnichtwo’s eccentric philosophy in *Sartor Resartus*, Herrick’s clothes are limited—almost to the dandy’s enthrallment with charms. Clothes in all three, as in Jonson, are analogous to language; they are idiom, and fall generally under what these days we call semiotics. For Swift’s heirs to religious heritage, they stand for doctrines, and for Teufelsdröckh, for outward forms in which all “habilatory endeavours, an Architectural Idea will be found lurking.”

Herrick is ordinarily more interested in the enthusiast’s sentiment. But on occasion he anticipates Carlyle’s habilatory resplendence, and in “The Transfiguration” may be remembering Herbert’s resurrected souls wearing “their new aray”:

Immortall clothing I put on,
So soone as Julia I am gon
To mine eternall Mansion.

Thou, thou art here, to humane sight
Cloth’d all with incorrupted light;
But yet how more admir’dly bright
Wilt thou appear, when thou art set
In thy refulgent Thronelet,
That shin'st thus in thy counterfeit?

This is to say nothing of course against the counterfeit itself, with which Julia prefigures her paradisal self. But all things must be seen in proportion, and even the celebrator of Julia’s petticoat realizes that some degrees of splendor reduce one’s earthly enthrallments.

More characteristically, what Herrick pursues are ratios of revelation and concealment, art and nature, barely hinted in the “counterfeit” and balanced in a quite different way by Jonson in The Silent Woman:

Still to be neat, still to be dressed,
As you were going to a feast;
Still to be powdered, still perfumed,
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 the adulteries of art:
They strike mine eyes, but not my heart.

Jonson’s well-dressed lady is unsound and counterfeits something besides her immortal image. Both Herrick and Jonson find the concealment giving rise to paradoxes of clothing-as-language, then: clothes are both revealing and concealing. What catches the eye in Herrick’s observer is their movement, not inner soundness or taste. Julia’s petticoat, for instance, attracts the eye and holds it without suggesting much concern with the person within:

Thy Azure Robe, I did behold,
As ayrie as the leaves of gold;
Which erring here, and wandring there,
Pleas’d with transgression; ev’ry where.
And all confus’d, I there did lie
Drown’d in Delights; but co’d not die.
That Leading Cloud, I follow’d still,
Hoping t’ave seene of it my fill:
But ah! I co’d not: sho’d it move
To Life Eternal, I co’d love.

The petticoat is not only errant but capricious, sometimes one thing, sometimes another, which is why it must be watched so closely. Its “brave expansion” and conjuring of a star-filled sky give it magnitude and a touch of transcendentalism even as it remains
closely attached to its owner. Its metaphoric alliances lead Herrick as interpreter into history and theophany without suggesting that its real interest lies in anything beyond itself. It is not merely a symbol, as it might be for Teufelsdrockh. We may be reluctant to believe that Herrick will maintain this high tone without a conversion of the surface into something else, but if we expect an ironic countermovement along the way or a sleight-of-hand that replaces it with something more pontifical, we are surprised: he gives himself completely to the wild fling and the swoon. The conjuring object sends the imagination into distances and beckons the onlooker as the Lord drew the Israelites and pointed the way to paradise; yet it clings to Julia and remains, after all is said, merely itself.

Such an object has perhaps more of Marvell’s metaphoric riot and exaggeration than it has of Jonson’s restraint. Its blazing and abating excites an aesthetic response and in effect makes up its own realm. If heaven and hell linger in the vicinity, they do not detract from its moment. The power that petticoats have resembles, if anything, that of wine and the muses. Whatever is to claim the moment must bewitch and urge the imagination toward some equivalent of fairyland, as though a hovering lyric enchantment were searching for a place to alight, whether in Oberon’s, Charles’s, or Julia’s realm. Herrick gives just enough focus and direction to the description here and in related clothing poems to prevent scattering. Something similar happens in “Upon Julia’s Clothes”:

When as in silks my Julia goes  
Then, then (me thinks) how sweetly flowes  
That liquefaction of her clothes.

Next, when I cast mine eyes and see  
That brave Vibration each way free;  
O how that glittering taketh me!

We would be justified with most other poets in thinking these clothes expressive primarily of Julia, as one of her many attractions. (It is after all she who makes them move.) But Herrick finds clothes, even so provocatively filled, leading relatively independent lives, like objects in Dickens that take it upon themselves to move without a visible force to propel them. Human purpose is not sufficient to explain their behavior, yet no gods or goddesses linger in the vicinity.

In such observations of lively thingness, the texture of images has ascendancy over their expressive purposes. Even while he makes verbal action a turnstile of denotation, he exploits additional
dimensions of image, sound, and rhythm to stir an interest beyond strict accounting, as liquefaction and vibration do here. As Julia's silks move, the peripheral qualities of words mount up. Emotion climaxes in the "Oh how" and in the exclamation mark, without debt to or hindrance from maxim. Herrick is less interested even in the silks themselves, finally, than in their flowing and shaking. The attributes of clothes take over the priorities of substance and action, as "flowes" is recast in the heftier "liquefaction." Herrick announces this enshrinement of quality in a noun as a fuller discovery of something that has been tentative in "me thinks." The reiterated "then, then" in imitation of Julia's pace crystalizes the perception of movement. But then flowing itself gives way to the still greater vagrancy of "brave vibration," in a movement that, in being "each way free," liberates flashy qualities from their materials.

Herrick shares with Jonson another value of costuming, its implications for role-playing, ornamentation, "insincerity" and glamor—or in Jonson's view, more often false glamor. Yet no poet could be further from Herrick in the value of surfaces than Jonson, unless Donne in the Satyres. Like Donne, Jonson usually prefers the inner man and his undisguised honesty to any equivocations of the eye as in "Still to be neat." He scorns appearances and decoration, especially if they suggest a wavering faddishness, or again as in an Englishman dressed French:

Would you believe, when you this monsieur see,
That his whole body should speak French, not he?
That so much scarf of France, and hat, and feather,
And show, and tie, and garter should come hither
And land on one whose face durst never be
Toward the sea, farther than half-way tree?
That he, untravelled, should be French so much,
As Frenchmen in his company should seem Dutch??

Jonson notices motion as Herrick does, but it is the cartoonlike motion of the costume sailing through the air and landing on one who is himself untraveled, and the puppet motion of the Monsieur walking about town as a mannikin or sidewalk advertisement. His emphasis on this detachability of appearances underscores the imposture of someone who is ignorant, English, unstylish, and un-French in everything except costume. The discrepancy between interior and exterior is as maddening to the moralist in Jonson as the excess of scarf, hat, and feather is to the aesthete. Both prefer a plain answerability of inside to outside, the linguistic equivalent to which is attention to the strict meaning or inner essence of words rather than to mere sound and texture.

Herrick's tendency in dealing with objects is more often to rid
them of moral and philosophical definition, and it is often the
muses who grant him leave to do so as they push him toward
frenzy, as wine does in making him “full of God.” In “Master
Herrick’s Farewell unto Poetry” (S-4), the poet in his transcendence
of local situations and modest settings converts virtually the whole
world into motion:

And in that mystic frenzy, we have hurled,
As with a tempest, nature through the world,
And in a whirlwind twirl’d her home, aghast
At that which in her ecstasy had passed.

This expansive mood exceeds Herrick’s usual tempest in a petticoat
and delight in disorder; he is normally not apocalyptic (needless to
say), nor does frenzy provide access to higher realms. But at the
margin of tangibility where change and motion prevail, rules relax
and materials begin to vibrate and glitter. Paradoxically, to look
upon them too directly would be to deprive them of bewitchment.
The tyranny of the eye, like that of defining rationality, must be
broken by a cultivation of disorder, by trans-shifting.

Herrick does sometimes return to the solid object itself to coun­
ter these flights of imagination. Several unclothing poems that re­
move lawns and veils point up substances that lie more or less inert
and stable before us. In “To Perenna” he limits our contact with
embodied beauty to light glances and concentrates on appraisal:

When I thy Parts runne o’er, I can’t espie
In any one, the least indecencie:
But every Line, and Limb diffused thence,
A faire, and unfamiliar excellence.

The implication is that a roving eye would be quick to catch any
indecencies if any were there. But the object is chaste and the eye
fully satisfied by it, even though the desire to possess must hold off
a little. The key words “diffused” and “excellence” suggest that
vision requires the assistance of mind and imagination, since noth­
ing is blatantly obvious even here. If we nearly catch up to excel­
ence in “fair,” we relinquish part of it again in “unfamiliar.” The
parts can be seen well enough for “love,” which closes the distance
and brings something resembling possession. In effect Herrick
manages a well-defined indeflnability: the poem makes a reasona­
bly clear statement without actually producing an embodiment of
excellence. “The Vine” does something similar in a dream state in
which a catalogue of parts is tangible but has the remoteness of
ideal visions.
Pleasures in Herrick are often either anticipatory or fleeting like those of “To Perenna” or again in “Corinna’s going a Maying.” Actually more satisfying to the eye because more teasing is the simultaneous stalling and realization of bits of vision in “To Anthea Lying in Bed”:

So looks Anthea, when in bed she lyes,  
Orecome, or half betray’d by Tiffanies:  
Like to a Twi-light, or that simpring Dawn,  
That Roses shew, when misted o’re with Lawn.  
Twilight is yet, till that her Lawnes give way;  
Which done, that Dawne, turns then to perfect day.

We do not come upon such an insistant and acute placement of objects often in Herrick, and at that all but the last line here renders distances and postponements.

One of Herrick’s most successful poems of elusiveness, “The Lilly in a Cristal,” extends that half-vision through more complex situations than this and at the same time sustains an argument on behalf of concealment behind clothing that is itself paradoxically explicit and open:

You have beheld a smiling Rose  
When Virgins hands have drawn  
O’re it a Cobweb-Lawne;  
And here, you see, this Lilly shows,  
Tomb’d in a Christal stone,  
More faire in this transparent case,  
Then when it grew alone  
And had but single grace.

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

Nature screened through art is soliciting, as lawns and silks flow and a white cloud divides “Into a doubtful Twi-light.” That such an extended discourse on the aesthetics of concealment should come down to practical advice on how to dress does not trivialize the observation for Herrick, although it demystifies it. The juxtaposition of burial rites and innocent vestal play in the first stanza of the poem suggests an intensity of beauty and a distinction between things seen and things unseen. The phrase “juggle with the sense” suggests that the courting of perceptions risks spillage even though the poet manages his lecture without obscurity.
The Lilly in a Cristal is remarkable partly for its avoidance of potential defenses of other sorts of artistic arrangement and ornament. Herrick's concentration on the arranger's manipulations and the viewer's reaction to them is unusual in renaissance aesthetics, although it has precedents in Castiglione's emphasis on the courtier's artful masking. In effect he proposes aesthetic delight as a kind of moveable feast gathering affairs of moment and place without regard to connection. Thus where one might expect a lilly enshrined in glass to suggest permanence, arrangement, and order, Herrick makes no use of these qualities, nor does he exploit the capacity of such objects to serve as emblems. Arranging them behind veils changes only our perception of them. It puts the viewer in a permanent proleptic state—always anticipating, never arriving at hermeneutic satisfaction. The poetic site is virtually the eye itself, and behind it the imagination. Any white dish of cream tintured with color, with a strawberry in it, may capture the poet's attention, as Julia's petticoat or fairyland may.

Herrick never seems to doubt that what lies gauzed over will sooner or later be perfectly clear, the corollary of which is that teasing language delays but also names something recognizable and will not hurl endless enigmas at the ghost of Jonson. It was after all on Jonson's leathery plain truth that Herrick stropped his epigrams. His compression and eye for preserved essence coexist with his love of concealment. They are nicely captured by flies made into neat artifacts:

I Saw a Flie within a Beade
Of Amber cleanly buried:
The Urne was little, but the room
More rich then Cleopatra's Tombe.

Herrick is sure that what the small bead shows is just what is there to be seen, ambered in its enclosure. (He nearly places Father Jonson himself in such a place in the "Globe of Radiant fire.") The richness is contained entirely in the color, not in any multiplicity of meanings, and of course not in any litter of crowns, gold plate, and jewels that Cleopatra's mourners might have sent off with her. No sleight of hand whisks away the fly and installs a fable in its place. "Cleanly" sets both the edge of the image and the value of the perception. It is the precision that grows into the richness, as small replaces great.

The mythology of Herrick's realms gives more attention to glittery costume than it does to placement—the lesser mythology re-
fleeted from scattered places and almost-sealed-off kingdoms. Thus the kingdom of faery, his most detailed and remarkable place, is separated from ordinary pastures, farm houses, and kitchens. The Oberon poems not surprisingly contain some of his best pure description. Their adjectival qualities and adverbial movement find a whole realm of charm to give them company. They defy translation into either pure familiarity or intellectualized equivalents or emblems. Unlike previous fairylands, for instance, Herrick's is not an extended conceit or kingdom wherein Britons may discover ideal images of a queen of glory or gentleman perfected in virtuous discipline; nor is it a Jonsonian masque realm of symbolic personages clothed in splendor. Rather, it arranges objects from the natural world in a special light, altering proportions and displaying articles pulled loose from their native habitat:

A little mushroome table spred,
After short prayers, they set on bread;
A Moon-parcht grain of purest wheat,
With some small glittering grit, to eate
His choyce bitts with; then in a trice
They make a feast less great then nice.

And so on with the sounds of puling fly, piping gnat, fuzz-ball puddings, hornes of papery butterflies, the eggs of emits, stewed thighs of newts, a bloated earwig or two, moths, mole's eyes, and other dainties reminiscent of Drayton's *Nimphidia*.

Although the list also contains some of the familiar consumables of rural feasts, Oberon's fare is not that of an ordinary holiday. Herrick plays with niceties of size and holds down our disgust with a sense of elfish difference: we are never too immersed in the details of the cuisine to be nauseated by it, as we are by Gulliver's proximity to similarly overpowering things. Again in "Oberon's Palace," he scales down the size and calls attention to minutiae. The narrative is primarily a pretext to itemize such things as the shine of snails, the neat perplexity of the path, and "mites / Of Candid'd dew in Moony nights" (H-443). Fairyland has a built-in charm that moves its objects as by an invisible thread—in the way creatures from it upset a bowl of milk or spoil a party-frock without putting in an appearance. The eye is drawn into its pursuits of "dissparkling" fires and jewels by lines of force as strong as the influence of stars and as hard to trace.

Where "The Lilly in a Cristal" withholds the direct perception of the things that it causes to "dance in the eye," Herrick is precise here with items lifted from the common world and left in moonlit
paths and bowers. But he can delineate those items more exactly precisely because the groves of fairies are already distanced by estrangement. He is also careful not to allow fairyland to become overly nice, which would make us superior to it, as children to toys. It may be small but it is also crude and poses a resisting disorder or contingency, which as Herrick elsewhere insists should prevent art from prevailing too easily. The paving of the cave’s floor is made from squirrels’ and children’s teeth. Discased fingernails, warts, and a mole stolen from a virgin’s neck provide exterior decoration, the latter decking the “holy entrance” of love’s bower. The interior of Mab’s residence resists any conversion of nature’s particles into precious artifacts, as Herrick again makes the task of decoration more difficult by collecting a good many unsightly particles:

within
The roome is hung with the blew skin
Of shifted Snake: enfreez’d throughout
With eyes of Peacocks Trains, and Trout-flies curious wings; and these among
Those silver-pence, that cut the tongue
Of the red infant, neatly hung.
The glow-wormes eyes; the shining scales
Of silv’rie fish; wheat-strawes, the snailles
Soft Candle-light; the Kitling’s eyne;
Corrupted wood; serve here for shine.

The lighting is important to the reassembling of these dismembered articles, because it softens an otherwise stark discreteness. These anatomized eyes, warts, teeth that the fairies have secretly gathered are droppings from the precincts of a domestic world we both recognize and find transfigured here. Thus if we are a little taken back to see such things, we are also attracted to them as specimens in the glow of candlelight and rotting wood:

No glaring light of bold-fac’t Day,
Or other over radiant Ray
Ransacks this roome; but what weak beams
Can make reflected from these jems,
And multiply; Such is the light,
But ever doubtfull Day, or night.

In that curious light, the viewer is stayed in his approach, as in the prolepsis of “The Lilly in a Cristal.” He is forbidden to repossess what fairyland has stolen. And yet for all its dim light, fairyland puts into view a good deal of the ordinary. If Herrick leaves it undefended by intellect, resemblances to the human realm are nonetheless unavoidable. Oberon hustles off to Mab possessed by a recognizable lust, though we are not obliged to judge him for it. In his imperious bearing, he is a pompous little mon-
arch, “this great-little-kingly Guest.” His dream of Mab and the bearing of “her Elvish-majestie” atop her downy bed of “six plumb Dandillions” remind us of the pomp and circumstance of real courts and perhaps Drayton’s faery equivalents, but it is a familiarity that we see through the wrong end of the telescope.

PURFLING THE MARGENTS AND HARVESTING THE BOUNTY

For all his ventures into flickering light, disorder, and things behind the veil, Herrick does not suggest a dispossessed spirit or poet without a realm. He revels in both the variety of Hesperides and its tangible temptations. To counterbalance the perpetual tease of the proleptic mode, he likes to invoke such certainties as the seasonal round and the consummation of marriage, in revels of harvest and festivity. These can be seen in two different sets of poems that concern rural bounty and the poem itself as a concrete object, or book of them enacting certain graces. “The Argument” of course combines both in a prefigurative way. “The Apparition of his Mistresse calling him to Elizium” does also, offering a typically hallowed meadowlike place for the reception of poets. Herrick has one of his mistress figures serve as a muse to beckon him toward a company of poets that includes Musaeus, Homer, Pindar, Anacreon, Virgil, Ovid, Catullus, Jonson, and others. Such a meeting place is intriguing for the quality of its light and its clarity, as though in dream—as in fairyland—the final veil could be lifted and one could arrive at a satisfying conclusion:

Come then, and like two Doves with silv’rie wings,
Let our soules flie to th’shades.
This, that, and ev’ry Thicket doth transpire
More sweet, then Storax from the hallowed fire:
Where ev’ry tree a wealthy issue beares
Of fragrant Apples, blushing Plums, or Peares:
And all the shrubs, with sparkling spangles, shew
Like Morning-Sun-shine tinsilling the dew.
Here in green Meddowes sits eternall May,
Purfling the Margents, while perpetuall Day
So double gilds the Aire, as that no night
Can ever rust th’Enamel of the light.

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Had Herrick provided a map of Hesperides, he would surely have placed these meadows near the center. Situated outdoors, the poets that his mistress names for his enticement do not require household goods, and coming before agriculture, the soil is fruitful without tilling. And yet the beauty of May is very formal, double gilded, enameled, and even booklike in its decorated margins—
which is to say that the scene the visionary imagination presents is coincidentally nature’s and the poet’s. Poets of course do appear in books with decorated margins, not precisely threaded, as perfilare suggests, but leaf-fringed, like Keats’s urn, and since they have invented Hesperides and its fragrant apples to begin with, it is fitting that they should live there and welcome Herrick as one of their number. Anacreon is his special host, and the harvest of grapes for “bowles of burning Wine” prepares for the rapture of his greeting. Love itself, always so much a matter of unconsummated substitutions of playfulness and flirtation in Herrick, conducts the poet into his vision, as though the muse were not an impersonal or idealized grace but a specific mistress who appears to give not herself but a vision permeated with delight. Gordon Braden remarks with respect to Herrick’s epithalamion that it converts a bedsheet into a flurry of snowflakes, as the sexual drive “at the crucial moment suddenly transforms itself into a swarm of objects.”

Something similar happens here, except that it is paradise itself that spills out in all its shrubs, “tinsilling” sunshine, and purfling of margents, and then a considerable population of poets beheld “in a spacious Theater” full of glories. As we would expect, Jonson reigns here as a surrogate God, resplendent among the chief prophets of the ages:

He shew thee that capacious roome
In which thy Father Johnson now is plac’t,
As in a Globe of Radiant fire, and grac’t
To be in that Orbe crown’d (that doth include
Those Prophets of the former Magnitude)
And he one chiefe.

Unfortunately, the vision breaks off at the coming of day and much remains unsaid. Like Milton’s blind poet beckoned by his late espoused saint, Herrick presumably returns to a day that is like night by comparison. But he spares us such an awakening and the framing of imagination’s lucid tableau by the obscurities of ordinary sight. The Hesperidean paradise has radiance, magnitude, potential poetic wildness or frenzy, and personal invitation. Its harvest images in the midst of spring compress the best of youth with the fruition of maturity and the evolved products of time with eternity. It is just such a vision that Keats longs for and Yeats sails to Byzantium to locate. But it comes by means of escape from quotidian reality, in a realm of sleep. In that respect, despite its clarity, it remains just out of reach—again as vision rather than consummation.

As “The Apparition” indicates, Herrick shares with Herbert as
well as with Jonson a sense of the book as a special place presiding over and presenting its parts, if presiding much more loosely than *The Temple* and not claiming the incarnate Word as a divine presence. The book of poets, enshrined in that decorated border, does not have a staged entry—an altar-shape in words or set of invitations and directions to the reader to initiate and guide his course to an inner sanctum or a mystical repast. But it is tangible enough, as it goes forth to voyage from house to house, to fall into the hands of virgins who blush over it and those who use it in ways the poet condemns. It is scratched by thumbnails and encounters sour readers and critics. In “When he would have his verses read,” it also comes to those who are “well drunk and fed,” who are better suited for it than those who are sober. The several prologue verses and the images of the book that recur throughout establish both book and poet as presences in a community that takes up poems mostly as interludes and goes about its business. Poems accompany the activities of alehouse and courtship that would be carried on without them. They not only cite piecemeal objects but dwell among similar things, consorting with cottages, courts, bedrooms, public houses, and the furniture, clothing, foods, and activities of those places. They thus dwell among the challenges that the orindary makes to poetic enchantment, just as it is mainly trivia that turn up in Oberon’s realm. “The holy incantation of a verse” may be defeated by sober mornings, but it assists the rituals of wine, fireside, love, and marriage, all forms of consummation and possession. The authority of the poet derives not from the wisdom he offers for these occasions but from his presence as a participating guest and the service he offers in identifying the fleeting emanations of foreign realms and their almost invisible assistance at domestic events.

If any of Herrick’s geographical realms, as opposed to the land of apparitions, overcomes the handicaps of evasion and suggests a home realm, it would be the rural estate, which combines the ordinary and the hallowed and treats assorted usable things with reverence. Such a place also has the sanctions of Horace and Jonson and hence seats the poet within a heritage that he both sustains and alters with his own light touch. Without taking leave of the familiar, the rural estate allows visitations from creatures of lower mythology and fosters hieroglyphs to go with its communal festivities, as “The Argument” suggests. Again it allows the poet a place as a conductor of revels and genius of place. The wonders of the natural world are close enough to domestic routine to be absorbed into the orders of pantry and fireside. In that scheme of things, autumn
means not so much parallels between deciduous nature and human mortality as hock carts and abundance:

Come Sons of Summer, by whose toile,
We are the Lords of Wine and Oile;
By whose tough labours, and rough hands,
We rip up first, then reap our lands.
Crown'd with the eares of corn, now come,
And, to the Pipe, sing Harvest home.
Come forth, my Lord, and see the Cart
Drest up with all the Country Art.

A small piece of the Elizabethan social order survives here in the hierarchy of the country, which has a residue of the court. The landowner has transplanted elegance, which, as James Turner has pointed out, has little to do with the actual conditions of rural life. The poet stresses decorum, ownership, and the master's place, as again in "The Country Life, to the Honoured M. End. Porter," where the bounty of nature is domesticated and issued under the customs of a rural holiday.

Even among these familiar places and rituals, disorder offers some variety to the revels. Indeed, confusion challenges ceremony on the estate as it does in fairyland and in the movement of Julia's clothes; another mask of the stager of revels is that of the truant. This is perhaps more evident still in "A Nuptiall Song, or Epithalamie," which qualifies careful artifice and wedding ceremonies with Dionysiac rout:

14. If needs we must for Ceremonies-sake,
Bless a Sack-passet; Luck go with it; take
The Night-Charme quickly; you have spells,
And magicks for to end, and hells,
To passe; but such
And of such Torture as no one would grutch
To live therein for ever: Frie
And consume, and grow again to die,
And live, and in that case,
Love the confusion of the place.

The bridal bed is a "maze of Love" that "lookes for the treaders," cleverly woven with "Wit and new misterie." The wiles of love are intricate in the "hieroglyphicks" of kiss and smile. Sweet disorder challenges the sanctity of holy rituals, and life thrives on confusion.

A good deal of Herrick is summed up in that ritualized confusion of the bedroom and the country feast, with all their charms, their chantlike rhythm, and their passage to the borderlands of heaven and hell—reduced to human proportion. The erotic ele-
ment is less attenuated and more clearly part of the cleanly wan­tonness of festivity and game than it is in the clothes poems. Threatened by a transience that urges us to seize the day, it im­plicitly contrasts the temporal setting of love’s pleasures to the more lasting bliss that lovers might wish. Wedded love belongs more to the folk than to Christian sacrament and to the world of night charms and the colloquial diction of “grutch” and “frie.”

In such matters, as in the country harvest poems, Herrick finds some Elizabethan continuities and some typical seventeenth-cen­tury replacements of poetry, but his invasion of so many realms with an effective striking capacity and quick retreat also has some­thing modern about it. I suggested Williams and Moore earlier, but Herrick also makes appropriations of discrete items in another vein. Despite the shape-changing of nature’s various things and the brevity of the poet’s attention to anyone of them, enough of the stability of species clings to each inventory to prevent naming from becoming inappropriate; but the delight in disorder also uses phi­losophy to hold off philosophy. It is some such elusiveness in the geography of Herrick’s work and overall wandering that prevents us from grasping the total Book of Herrick. Marvell’s tour of the Appleton grounds and Vaughan’s frequent pilgrimages encounter a similar resistance to readability and coherence but seek to do more with it. The closest thing to a rural ramble in Milton, in “L’Allegro” and “Il Penseroso,” works through a Herricklike misc­ellany for a moment, in a dancelike rhythm Herrick would have approved, but realigns it in retrospect as preamble.

In Herrick the realms exist side by side—the rural estate, the far­off reaches of heaven and hell, the kingdom of strange meta­morphoses and ancient poets discoursing in meadows. Things like maying are delightful, but when the poet urges his Corinna to come forth, it is for a momentary reprieve only. Other kingdoms and other moments will claim them. One resides not so much in an immortal book as in fading visions and ghostlike fables. The true lyric possession is of the moment, and such a possession is to be cherished in a falling rhythm:

So when or you or I are made
A fable, song, or fleeting shade:
All love, all liking, all delight
Lies drown’d with us in endless night.

Herrick’s very assertion of this gives echoing, intangible return to classical precedents and reminds us that the present is both en­riched and evaporated by them.
You dwell, said he, in the City of Destruction, the place also where I was born: I see it to be so; and dying there, sooner or later, you will sink lower than the grave, into a place that burns with fire and brimstone: be content, good neighbors, and go along with me.—Bunyan, The Pilgrim’s Progress