The Matter of Dust in Renaissance Literature

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ABSTRACT

'The Matter of Dust in Renaissance Literature'

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This thesis investigates the paradox of Renaissance dust and its poetics. It examines how the seemingly insignificant matter of dust - the least of substances, barely visible, mundane and base - was considered by contemporary theology, anthropology, and natural philosophy to be intrinsic to mankind's existence: how it figured as the very stuff from which man's body was made, and into which it would disintegrate at death; how it was equivalent to the atoms which some theories of matter posited as the basis of the cosmos; and how in theology – especially Reformed theology – man's dusty nature was both the root and result of sin, and a prompt to constant contemplation of human humility. It argues that it was this kind of dust that artistically engaged writers of the period, generating what this study will call a poetics of dust.

Dust is a difficult material to handle critically, as it is simultaneously everywhere, and only very rarely the explicit or sustained subject of discussion. In order to capture both its pervasive particulars and its cumulative significance in particular writers, the thesis first takes a broader look at the theological, cultural, and natural philosophical ideas that shaped the meaning of dust in a range of texts, from biblical commentaries to atomistic treatise. The thesis then considers how specific writers creatively engaged, or chose not to engage, with the poetics of dust, examining the figurative use of dust in the works of canonical figures such as John Milton, John Donne, George Herbert, Sir Thomas Browne, Lancelot Andrewes, Du Bartas, and Lucy Hutchinson.

The intention thereby is to provide a study of the paradoxes of dust – barely visible yet ubiquitous, the least of substances and yet the stuff of which man is made – revealing new perspectives on the interactions of literature, theology, and natural philosophy in the early modern period, unearthing the complex yet generative semantic textures from the mundane and minimal matter of dust.

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CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

> What piece of work is a man! How noble in reason! How infinite in faculties! In form and moving, how express and admirable! In action, how like an angel! In apprehension, how like a god! The beauty of the world, the paragon of animals! And yet to me, what is this quintessence of dust?
>
> (*Hamlet*.II.ii.256-9)[1]

At the start of the seventeenth century, the poet and playwright William Shakespeare wrote the tragedy *Hamlet*, in which Renaissance literature's most famous character returns, repeatedly, to dust. In the midst of despondency, Hamlet rhetorically inflates the human race, depicting them as the supreme creatures on God's earth, to then burst that illusion, imaginatively crumbling them into pulverised dirt. Man, the 'paragon of animals', is, in the prince's disaffected summation, merely the 'quintessence of dust'.[2] Later in the play, when Hamlet is asked by Rosencrantz what he has done with the corpse of Polonius, he retorts that he has 'compound[ed] it with dust whereto 'tis kin' (IV.ii). Hamlet's most extended meditation on dust, however, is in the graveyard scene:

> HAMLET To what base uses we may return, Horatio! Why may not imagination trace the noble dust of Alexander till 'a find it stopping a bunghole?
> HORATIO 'Twere to consider too curiously to consider so.
> HAMLET No, faith, not a jot. But to follow him thither with modesty enough, and likelihood to lead it: Alexander died; Alexander was buried; Alexander returneth to dust; the dust is earth; of earth we make loam; and why of that loam whereto he was converted might they not stop a beer-barrel?

It is clear that dust captures Hamlet's 'imagination': it is not a mundane subject but one that inspires a speech pregnant with egalitarian undertones. Horatio's caution that the fate of Alexander's dust is 'too curious[…]' a subject speaks to how destabilising it might be to think too much about dust'.[3]

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[1] William Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, ed., G.R. Hibbard (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008). Subsequent references are to this edition.

[2] Although he does not discuss the phrase 'quintessence of dust' further, Iván Nyusztay notes how Hamlet's despondent conclusion to the passage subverts 'the Renaissance idolization of man'. See 'The "Piece of Work" And The "Quintessence Of Dust": The Elevation and Depreciation of Man in The Renaissance,' *Hungarian Journal of English and American Studies*, vol. 11, (2005), pp. 133-150, p.134.

[3] Curiosity was constructed as an intellectual vice in the patristic era, owing to the part it played in the fall of man, yet, as Peter Harrison has shown, at the start of the seventeenth century curiosity was beginning to be reformulated as a virtue. Nevertheless, when Shakespeare was writing the dominant connotations associated with curiosity would

Indeed, Hamlet proceeds to reduce a person of great nobility into rhetorical dust, putting the pulverized remnants of the great Alexander to base uses and thereby showing established hierarchy to be a fallacy when intellectually probed.

What Hamlet's dusty musings encapsulate is how unexpectedly significant a matter dust is. Dust is assumed to be the least of substances – barely visible, minute, mundane and base, something to be swept aside. As Joseph Amato observes, dust does not appear to be a 'subject of worthy of reflection'.[4] As he explains in his history of the substance, 'throughout the ages, dust has been the first and most common measure of smallness . . . [and] its most regular associates are fragments, tailings, splinters, scraps, shreds, morsels, chips, and nicks. It is commonly identified with the trivial, meagre, petty, scanty, puny, and picayune.'[5] Yet, as Chapter One will discuss, dust is literally the stuff of mankind, possibly of the whole universe, and also the mark of death and sin. It is thus a crucial matter for the period, for theology, anthropology, natural philosophy, and ethics. Hamlet's reflections capture the anthropological significance: it is kin to man, the stuff that the body was first made from and the stuff that it will return to in death, and this pulverised fate is universal, overruling constructed social hierarchies.

Furthermore, the idea that humanity is 'the quintessence of dust' goes beyond dust as a metaphor for the flesh. Quintessence is an ambiguous word: it has the sense in the period of being an essential feature of something non-material, but also the sense of being the perfect embodiment of a certain type of person or thing.[6] In the context of chemistry it is the refined essence of a substance and, in alchemy specifically it means the essence of celestial bodies which alchemists believed to be the fifth element.[7] Thus, when Hamlet pronounces man to be 'the quintessence of dust', the line between the material and non-material blur: man is not equated with dust but

have been sin. See 'Curiosity, Forbidden Knowledge and the Reformation of Natural Philosophy in Early Modern England', *Isis,* vol.92, (2001), pp.265-90.

[4] Joseph Amato, *Dust: A History of the Small & the Invisible* (Berkley: University of California Press, 2000), p.5.

[5] Ibid., p.4.

[6] *OED* n., 3.a & b.

[7] *OED* n., 2.a & 1.a.

figuratively made into a sublimated idea of dust, Shakespeare performing a kind of rhetorical alchemy.[8] What Hamlet is alluding to is the capacity for dust to signify not merely the flesh but the very essence, the spiritual core, of mankind.

In sum, what Shakespeare's engagement with dust suggests is that in the Renaissance the significance and imaginative potential of dust lies not in actual dust heaps, but in the way it is ineluctably tethered to the human condition. Shakespeare's famous lines about dust encapsulate a dense, compacted, complicated tradition of thinking about dust, prompted by its centrality in the Biblical story of Creation and original sin, by atomistic philosophy, and by its prominence in the burial service of the Book of Common Prayer, which made early modern dust a peculiarly potent insubstantial substance. It is thus the proposition of this thesis that Shakespeare's figurative plays on dust are not unique to the playwright, but rather epitomise the conception of dust that was prevalent in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries – particularly in theological thinking – and reflect a general trend amongst early modern writers who creatively engaged with the semantically textured and abstract kind of dust: the dust that signifies the origin, end and essence of mankind.

i Unearthing the Meaning of Dust

This study, in its essence, is interested in the poetics of 'dust', the textures of meaning in the word and how writers of the period put it to artistic use. Thus, it is first necessary to consider the question, what is, or what was, dust? For something so mundane and simple, it is surprisingly difficult to define. If we look for a convenient definition of dust in the early modern period, we

[8] The significance of this phrase has not hitherto been properly apprehended by critics. Raymond Reno understands Hamlet to be referring to the dust of death: in Hamlet's worldview, 'the unweeded garden becomes a graveyard [as] man becomes. . .dust'. Magreta de Grazia sees the passage as demonstrating how 'how flesh and earth coalesce' in the play: 'with Shakespeare's Hamlet, dirt is more than skin deep. . . Man, in Hamlet's estimation . . . is only the most rarefied form of earth from which he was extracted, an autochthonous sublimination or "quintessence of dust" – a sophisticated piece of earthenware.' De Grazia and Reno are not wrong, but both only give a superficial reading of dust's meaning. Reno, in taking Hamlet's dust to only pertain to the posthumous body, and De Grazia, by only understanding dust to refer to the flesh, both miss the non-material spiritual sense of being quintessentially dust. As this thesis will demonstrate, dust's significance in the early modern period lay in its semantic textures, wherein it could signify the origin of mankind, the body's eventual state in death, and the condition of the humble soul. Raymond Reno, 'Hamlet's Quintessence of Dust', *Shakespeare Quarterly*, Vol.12, (1961), pp.107-113, p. 110. Margreta De Grazia, *Hamlet without Hamlet* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), p.3, p.33.

find none, for dust is a paradox: it is both material and immaterial, meagre and yet anthropologically significant, utterly ubiquitous but never defined; no-one writes a treatise about dust, and yet the word, idea, and substance are everywhere.

To take the first of the paradoxes, regarding the materiality of dust, as a word, dust represents both the abstract – the flesh or quintessence of man – and the concrete – the pulverized matter that laced highways and unkept homes, and at times hovers between the two, as Chapter Two will discuss. Thus, dust is a matter that epitomises the complex relationship between concepts, words, and objects.[9] This presents challenges when researching dust, for it is difficult to place the study of dust within the methodological framework of word histories, histories of concepts, or materialist approaches. Aspects of this study do align with the philological approach defined by Ita Mac Carthy in her introduction to *Renaissance Keywords*.[10] Yet whilst the study of keywords, recently revived and advocated by Mac Carthy et al., is useful, dust is too dispersed, too trivial and too mundane to be considered a keyword.[11] What is more, dust is too concrete to fully work with Neil Kenny's study on concepts, and too abstract to align with a materialist approach as is taken by Magreta De Grazia et al. in their studies of the subject and object in Renaissance culture.[12] In order to unearth the full meaning and significance of dust in the Renaissance, it must be acknowledged that it lies at the intersection of words, ideas and things. So, because dust

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[9] For methodological options of looking at the relation between words and concepts see Neil Kenny, *The Uses of Curiosity in Early Modern France and Germany* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004) and Neil Kenny, *Curiosity in Early Modern Europe: Word Histories* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1998). For key studies in concept theory see Arthur Lovejoy, "The Study of the History of Ideas", in *The Great Chain of Being: A Study of the History of an Idea* (New York: Harper, 1960), pp. 3-23; Quentin Skinner, "Meaning and Understanding in the History of Ideas" [1969], in *Visions of Politics*, *Volume I: Regarding Method* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp.57-89.

[10] Ita Mac Carthy, ed., *Renaissance Keywords* (Leeds: Legenda, 2013), p.2. Following the work of Raymond Williams and his *Keywords*, *Renaissance Keywords* focuses on language in history and on language as history (p.2), but unlike William's study *Renaissance Keywords* goes for depth over breadth, focusing on a handful of keywords over a wider coverage of interconnected vocabulary. Raymond Williams's seminal study investigates the history of over a hundred common yet contested word, exploring how their meaning shifted over time. See Raymond Williams, *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society* (London: Fontana Press, 1988).

[11] What is more, because this thesis is interested in the poetics of dust, it is not a strictly a study of semantics, although the meaning of the word is of course significant. For further discussion on semantics see William Empson, *The Structure of Complex Words*, 3rd ed (London: Penguin, 1995); Roland Greene, *Five Words: Critical Semantics in The Age of Shakespeare and Cervantes* (Chicago, Illinois: The University of Chicago Press, 2013).

[12] Kenny investigates whether 'concepts' exist through his study of early modern discourse about curiosity. Yet the word 'curiosity', unlike 'dust', does exist as a material substance. See Kenny, p.8. See also Margreta De Grazia, Maureen Quilligan, Peter Stallybrass, eds., *Subject and Object in Renaissance Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

challenges neat categories of analysis, it has necessitated an approach - discussed further below - that combines philological attention with intellectual history, in order to support the literary readings that are so important to the thesis.

Further difficulties arise when attempting to study dust, as the very simplicity of it made it too trivial a word to define. As a lexical unit, dust is simple: it is monosyllabic and etymologically of German origin. This gave dust a certain Englishness: the poet George Gascoigne, in *Certayne Notes of Instruction* remarks that 'the most ancient English words are of one syllable, so that the more monosyllables that you use the truer Englishman you shall seem, the less you shall smell of the inkhorn.'[13] The inkhorn, as Jamie Ferguson has noted, 'represents superfluous—and therefore affected—foreign borrowings (especially from Latin).'[14] Thus, the very form of dust associates it with a certain English concreteness and simplicity. Yet, because dust is such a simple, and commonplace, term, there is not a formal definition of it in early modern dictionaries. The first monolingual dictionaries contained only 'hard words,' words whose meaning was not evident. More obscure dusty words with Latin origin such as 'pulverise' and 'pulverent' – both rooted in the Latin for 'dust', meaning 'to reduce to dust' and 'dusty', respectively – appear in the majority of lexicons of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, but not dust itself, its absence speaking to its apparent obviousness and commonality. It was not until Samuel Johnson's *Dictionary of the English Language* in 1756 that a definition was offered for the word:

1. Earth or other matter reduced to small particles […].
2. The grave; the state of dissolution […].
3. Mean and dejected state […].[15]

Here, dust is classified, as particulate matter, matter at the edge of its materiality and a state of being respectively. [16] These meanings are the meanings with which this thesis is concerned,

[13] George Gascoigne, *The Poesies* (London: by H. Bynneman, 1575).
[14] Jamie H. Ferguson, 'The Roman Inkhorn: Religious Resistance to Latinism in Early Modern England' in *The Oxford Handbook of the Bible in Early Modern England, c.1530-1700,* eds., Kevin Killeen, Helen Smith, Rachel Judith Willie (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), p.84.
[15] Samuel Johnson, *A Dictionary of the English Language*, vol.1, (London: Longman, 1990).
[16] The Oxford English Dictionary offers further meanings that were around in the early modern period, such as commotion or turmoil, which stems from the phrase 'to raise the dust', and money, for which dust was slang.

however Johnson's definition, written over a century after the period under consideration, is a later consequence of the verbal trends of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and does not capture the specific meaning that dust held in the Renaissance.

The lack of formal definition of 'dust' or of a treatise on dust in the period means that there is not a neat anchor to which the meaning of dust may be tethered. Yet as Raymond Williams has shown, dictionaries, whilst giving a show of authority, of offering a 'proper sense' of a word and a range of its usage throughout history, cannot convey the full complexities and semantic history of a word.[17] Instead, the meaning of a key term in any period may be established, as Thomas Dixon has argued, through considering a broad range of published works, and also through the focus of particular individuals.[18] 'Pursuing these different research strategies,' Dixon remarks, 'will result in the recovery of different kinds of meaning. The first approach will give us definitions of a term, or its formal denotation. The second approach will provide further definitions and more detailed discussion.'[19] It this formulation, wherein a broad survey of a word's meaning is combined with a focus on individual works, that this thesis replicates in order to both establish how dust was defined in the Renaissance and investigate the various semantic textures that can be recovered from combining broader approaches with more focused ones.

Yet collecting the dusty verbal fragments from across the early modern period is a complicated task, for the figure of dust in literature is much like the matter itself: pervasive but fragmented and prone to dispersion. There is no play or epic poem that centres around the image in the early modern period; there is no treatise on dust. Dust is thus a difficult material to handle critically, as it is simultaneously everywhere, and only very rarely the explicit or sustained subject of discussion. Whilst subjects such as 'nothing' were treated in the genre of mock encomium, none, to my

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However, this thesis will not focus on these additional senses of dust, but instead will concerned with how dust signifies the base and abject state of mankind and condition of the posthumous body in the period. *OED* n., 5. & 6.

[17] Williams, *Keywords*, p.18-19.

[18] Thomas Dixon, *The Invention of Altruism: Making Moral Meanings in Victorian Britain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), p.23.

[19] Ibid.

knowledge, existed on the subject of dust.[20] Thus, in order to capture both its pervasive particulars, and its cumulative significance in particular writers, this study balances chapters which survey kinds of literature and discussions in which dust played an important but dispersed role, including Biblical commentary and texts concerned with atomism, with chapters which focus on dust in the works of canonical figures such as John Milton, William Shakespeare, John Donne, George Herbert, Sir Thomas Browne, Du Bartas, and Lucy Hutchinson. It may be said that the material in this thesis is gathered into two dusty heaps. It is structured to first take a broader look at theological, cultural, and natural philosophical ideas that shaped the meaning of dust across a wide range of writing, providing a philological understanding of dust to lay the groundwork for the ensuing chapters. The remainder of the thesis, the second heap, goes on to focus on how specific writers creatively engaged, or chose not to engage, with the poetics of dust. Owing to the dispersed nature of dust in written works, this second half of the thesis covers a medley of literary genres: it considers genres that are more conventionally thought of as literary such lyric and epic poetry but also considers prose writing, and owing to the immensity of dust's theological significance, sermons.

ii The Dusty Critical Field

Hitherto, there has been no in-depth study of the idea of dust in the writing of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, although the subject of dust has not been ignored by critical studies. Amato has provided a sweeping history of dust, considering it in its material form. He argues that during Medieval times and the early Renaissance 'dust was the first and most common measure of smallness'.[21] But, Amato notes, 'as Science and technology have penetrated inward and downward, plain old dust, though still profoundly present in life – especially rural life – has lost its definition

[20] Thomas Nashe, for example, provides a catalogue of paradoxes in his work *Lenten stuffe* and mentions a work named 'the prayse of nothing'. See *Lenten Stuffe* (London: Printed for N. L. and C. B, 1599), p.24.
[21] Amato, p.3.

of the small . . . .dust no longer constitut[ing] a boundary between the visible and the invisible'.[22] This cultural change in perceptions of the minute started in the seventeenth century with the development of microscope.[23] The period that this thesis covers aligns with this different way of looking at the minute and particulate, speaking to the cultural relevance of crumbs of matter such as dust. However, the seismic shift, Amato goes on to argue, occurred later in the twentieth century, 'when Western humanity followed the atom and the germ into more cryptic and powerful worlds'.[24] However, whilst he touches on the matter of dust in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, Amato's study is too expansive to provide more than a gloss of any time period, and considers only the literal dust that occupied peasants homes and the small particles that were placed under the microscope.

Michael Marder, in his concise object study *Dust*, moves away from the literal and provides a phenomenology of dust. For Marder, the phenomenon of dust provides a key to thinking about existence and community: it is the ancestor of mankind, it is a tangible mark of the passing of time, as all things fall to dust, and it generates dusty communities, as things that once were coherent forms intermingle in their pulverized state.[25] Whilst Marder's observations on the phenomenology of dust are not consigned to a specific time period, these ideas are certainly relevant to Renaissance dust, and will be regarded in this study. Yet because this philosophical approach is ahistorical, some of the nuances regarding dust are consequently lost. Marder is concerned with the present moment, dust's relation to 'us', but he also pulls from past writers to inform his thinking. One such as writer is John Donne. Marder uses a quotation from Donne's sermon about the 'revolutions of dust' to explain how 'dust is the destiny and destination for everybody, whether organic or inorganic'.[26] Yet, whilst his quotation from Donne demonstrates his point, it does

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[22] Amato, p.159.
[23] For an in-depth study of this cultural event see Catherine Wilson, *The Invisible World: Early Modern Philosophy and the Invention of the Microscope* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995). Wilson does not, however, attend to the matter of dust.
[24] Amato, p.109.
[25] Michael Marder, *Dust* (London: Bloomsbury, 2016), p,40-1, p.38 & p.66.
[26] Ibid., p.90.

nothing to illuminate the role of dust in Donne's writing, which, as this thesis will demonstrate, had a specific theological purpose. Nor does Marder attend to the rhetorical scheme of the sermon, paying no heed to the point at which Donne mentions dust in the sermon, which again, this thesis will address. Such engagement with writers such as Donne gives the illusion that dust in the early modern period has been considered; however, it is only surface engagement, leaving the full concept of dust unprobed. In sum, Amato and Marder provide a general understanding of both the substance of dust and the concept of dust, but do little to illuminate the idiosyncrasies of dustiness in the early modern period.

Significant critical attention has been paid to the word dust in the Victorian period, which produced works such as John Ruskin's *The Ethics of the Dust* and Charles Dicken's *Our Mutual Friend*, a novel in which dust heaps are a prominent motif.[27] For the twentieth century, Beci Carver has provided a study of how modernist writers gave aesthetic coherence to the fragmentation, particularisation, and inchoateness of the era.[28] These studies have shown the literary value of researching ideas of the pulverized dirt and fragmented matter in particular time periods. The modernist's granulation of narrative that Beci Carver identifies, for example, was specific to modernist era because it was a reaction to what had come before.[29] Similarly, this thesis argues that there is something idiosyncratic about Renaissance dust because of certain shifts in thinking about theology and natural philosophy that was particular to the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

Yet very little attention has been paid to the dusty images that circulate in early modern writing. There is no single study of dust in the period in general, which is peculiar, given how ubiquitous dust is, and the extent to which it underlies discussions of natural philosophy, theology, and ethics. Dust has acquired some interest amongst early modern critics. In his article, 'Dust',

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[27] See for example Carolyn Steedman, *Dust* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2001), p.157-170. Ella Mershon, 'Ruskin's Dust', *Victorian Studies*, Vol. 58, (2016), pp. 464-492 and Sabine Schuelting, *Dirt in Victorian Literature and Culture: Writing Materiality* (London: Routledge, 2016), p.26- 34; Kate Flint, *The Victorians and the Visual Imagination* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp.40-63.
[28] Beci Carver, *Granular Modernism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).
[29] Carver, p.4.

Geoffrey Bennington has discussed how in Shakespeare's history plays the figure of dust is linked with the 'internal crumbling of the principle of sovereignty'.[30] Yet this reading is not informed by early modern conceptions of dust, but by the motif of ashes that appears throughout the works of the French philosopher Jacques Derrida. In the later chapters of this thesis, various scholarly treatments of early modern dust and powdered matter will be addressed. Ceri Sullivan, for example, touches on the behaviour of dust in Herbert's poetry, whilst Philip Schwyzer briefly considers the dusty dissolved body in Donne's writing.[31] Yet whilst these studies have their strengths, because they are not comprehensive and not supported by the crucial theological and intellectual contexts presented in this thesis, they often fall short of giving a nuanced and precise critical reading of the figurative use of dust in early modern literature.

Thus, this thesis will tread new critical ground: it will provide an in-depth examination of the meaning and figurative use of early modern dust by taking into account not only the literary, but also the intellectual, natural philosophical, and theological context that was particular to the period. The theology of sixteenth and seventeenth centuries is of particular importance to this study for, as will be discussed in Chapter One, dust's relation to mankind was mainly owing to dust's role in the scripture, which states that man was made of dust, and returned to dust at death. Whilst this study is concerned with the historical context of the period, it is not a development on Amato's history of dust. It does not seek to further explore the material dust of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries that Amato sweeps over: this study will not assay how the lower social ranking lived in dusty dwellings, or consider the various dusts that were produced from or examined in early modern science. It does not consider, for example, the dusty filings of a loadstone that Sir Thomas Browne discusses in *Pseudodoxia Epidemica* or the fertile dust found on the back fronds of ferns that engaged the attention of members of the Lyncean Academy, which

[30] Geoffrey Bennington, 'Dust', *Oxford Literary Review,* vol. 34 (2012), pp.25-49, p.42.
[31] Ceri Sullivan, *The Rhetoric of the Conscience in Donne, Herbert, and Vaughan* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), p.157-192; Phillip Schwyzer, *Archaeologies of English Renaissance Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), p.140-9.

carried some of the first microscopical observations.[32] As will be discussed in chapters Three and Six, natural philosophy provided inspiration for figurative uses of dust, and its synonym ashes. But the concern is with the literary engagement with such matters of natural philosophy, and the figurative language found in natural philosophical writing, not the history of actual dust in science. Furthermore, whilst this thesis considers many of the aspects of dust identified by Marder – dust as a symbol of disintegration and decay, its capacity to mingle indiscernibility and its existential value – unlike Marder's work these concepts of dust will attend to historical context and will be informed by the theology and intellectual thinking of the period under discussion.

Moreover, this thesis stands apart from literary considerations of dust from other periods: there is something idiosyncratic about early modern dust. In many critical studies of dust in the Victorian period, the dust under consideration is of the literal kind: it is the dust of muddy streets, of industry or the unkept home.[33] While in Dickens's *Our Mutual Friend*, in Andrew Miller's words, the dust heaps that fill the novel serve as a 'unifying symbol of the economic situation', and thus have figurative purpose, the dust that Dickens writes about is definitely material: it described how 'dust was heaped by contractors' and characters reside in areas 'entirely composed of dust'. [34] But in the early modern period, it is the more abstract dustiness of the human race, not the literal dust of the environment, that animates writers, as shifts in Christian thinking in sixteenth and seventeenth century gave particular prominence to dust. In sum, the dust that this thesis will place under scrutiny is the dust that signifies the quintessence of the human race. This thesis will examine how the period thought and wrote about dust being the primal ingredient of the body, and, in atomic contexts, the building blocks of all creation, the spiritual condition of the humble and repentant, and the ultimate end of the fallen human frame.

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[32] Sir Thomas Browne, *Pseudodoxia Epidemica*, ed. Robin Robbins, vol.1, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981), p.100-110; Charles Singer, *A History of Biology to about Year 1900* (London: Abelard-Schuman, 1959), p.147-8. For further discussion of the Lyncean Academy see C.H. Luthy, 'Atomism, Lynceus and the Fate of Seventeenth-Century Microscopy' in *Early Science and Medicine*, vol.1, (1996), pp.1 -27.

[33] Flint, p.43-44.

[34] Charles Dickens, *Our Mutual Friend* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), p.24, p.42.

iii Outline of Thesis

The initial three chapters are philological in their approach. Chapter One investigates the theological foundation of dust's meaning in the early modern period. Focusing on three key bible passages – Genesis 2.7, 3.19, and 18.27 – it discusses the way in which the Bible and commentary on it establish dust as the original material of mankind, the state of the posthumous body, and an expression of the humble soul, and how the translation of scripture into English put emphasis on this dustiness of humankind. The chapter will then go on to look at how this new prominence of the dustiness of humanity generated an intellectual discourse around dust and its meaning.

The first chapter is thus both an exercise in philology and intellectual history. It focuses in part on the linguistics of dust, considering how theology and translation history shaped the semantics of the word, and how certain synonyms throw relief on what is specific about the word 'dust'. Yet it also takes into account the intellectual shifts that occurred during the Reformation, how reformed thinkers reshaped the way in which Christianity was thought of and practiced in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and how this reflected back on the meaning of dust. Chapter Two assays the figurativeness of the dusty dead. Dust sits on the boundary between the concrete and the abstract, the literal and the metaphorical. This chapter investigates the tensions between these poles in the representation of dust. The discussion is informed by both the cultural and intellectual history of the period, with both Christian traditions of burial and empirical understandings of putrefaction illuminating the ways in which, in reality, death is not as dusty as many of the period's commonplaces suggest. Chapter Three is another examination of the semantic texture of dust, but moves away from theology and into the realm of natural philosophy, considering the way in which dust relates to the atom, a minute particle that in atomistic philosophy was thought not only to be the building block of mankind but of the entire universe. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries the vocabulary of natural philosophy was changing owing to the growing appeal of corpuscularian matter theory over Aristotelianism. The chapter investigates whether during this time of a shifting scientific lexicon dust functioned as metaphor, simile, or

equivalent for the atom. The chapter also works to challenge the current critical assumption that the dustiness of atoms was due to the influence of the Roman poet Lucretius. What instead is put forward is that the tradition of equating dust with atoms is far more diffuse and is also influenced by the surviving fragments Democritus' and Epicurus' philosophy. These initial chapters lay down important philological groundwork that enable this thesis to go on and consider further about the interaction of dust with various different modes of poetics or poetic figures: it provides the foundation for thinking about how dust operates as a trope of repetition, the way it rhymes; the way it hovers between the literal and figurative; the way etymology works with it and the way it acts as a synecdoche or metonymy.

Thus, having given a broader examination of the semantics of dust, the thesis then provides a more focused study of the poetics of dust found in specific writers and literary works. Chapter Four looks at how three of the period's hexameral epics – Joshua Sylvester's English translation of Guillaume de Salluste Du Bartas's *La Sepmaine; ou, Creation du monde*; Lucy Hutchinson's *Order and Disorder* and John Milton's *Paradise Lost* – reinterpret Gen 2.7 and Gen 3.19. As Chapter One establishes, the figure of dust was a reminder of mankind's inherent baseness and sinful nature: as Gen 3.19 relates, the transgression of Adam and Eve is cause of the body's reversion back to dust in death. What Chapter Four considers is how Hutchinson, Du Bartas, Sylvester and Milton, conceive of the dustiness of the body's original matter in the perfection of the unfallen world whilst writing from a postlapsarian perspective.

Chapter Five is the first of two chapters on sermons. It looks at how two distinguished preachers, Lancelot Andrewes and Thomas Adams, use the tropes of both dust and ashes in their penitential sermons to edify their auditory on the subject of repentance in accordance with reformed doctrine. It furthers the discussion in Chapter One regarding the way in which Gen 18.27 provided a paradigm for humbly approaching God through identifying with dust and ashes. It also reveals the way in which the seemingly synonymous dust and ashes were seen to have different theological textures, illuminating what sets dust figuratively apart from other particulate

matter. Chapter Six continues exploring the relation between the very similar substances dust and ashes through the works of Sir Thomas Browne. It examines how trends in scientific experiment and archaeological discoveries made ashes a more creatively stimulating and effective image with which to work and bend to his theological purpose than dust. Unlike the sermons of Andrewes and Adams, ashes are not shown to have a different meaning to dust, but rather they usurp dust as the metaphor for the posthumous body. Browne is notable for going against the dusty grain, for despite explicitly acknowledging dust to be that which the Bible stipulates as the condition of death, throughout *Religio Medici* and *Urne Burial* he prefers ashes to figurately depict mortality.

The final two chapters turn to two writers who highly favoured the figure of dust in their writing: John Donne and George Herbert. Chapter Seven considers the way in which the figure of dust powerfully articulates for Donne the senselessness and indistinction of the posthumous body. This potent figure of speech is used by Donne in his homiletic rhetoric to edify his auditory. As this chapter will demonstrate, Donne applies the figure of dust in his preaching in order to bring his auditory to the humble depths of despair, to then exalt them with God's grace by the close of the sermon, in keeping with the paradox of humility that will have been outlined in Chapter Two. The final chapter will consider Herbert's handling of dust in *The Temple*. Herbert is remarkable for the way in which he plays on the various semantic textures of dust to achieve his poetic intent. Whilst for Donne, dust was the matter of death, for Herbert it was multivalent, as in *The Temple* Herbert plays on many senses of dust found in scripture. Herbert is particularly poetically dextrous with his handling of the much rehearsed trope of dusty humility: whilst preachers such as Thomas Adams called on their auditory to mind their dusty beginnings and ends, the speaker of Herbert's poetry internalises this doctrine and, through his speech, personifies what it means to be humble in dust.

These are, of course, far from the only writers for whom dust is important in the early modern period, and chapters could have been multiplied almost infinitely to focus on further authors. William Shakespeare's political use of dust, as the beginning of this introduction suggests,

could have sustained an entire chapter; many other lyric poets, like Robert Herrick or William Shirley, could also have taken up space. What has governed my choice has been the opportunity to show the ways in which the theological and natural philosophical material discussed in the first half of the thesis were most productively and inventively taken up by particular authors.[35] The intention thereby is to provide a study of the paradoxes of dust – barely visible yet ubiquitous, the least of substances and yet the stuff of which man is made – revealing new perspectives on the interactions of literature, theology, and natural philosophy in the early modern period, unearthing the complex yet generative semantic textures from the mundane and minimal matter of dust.

[35] This thesis has also not taken into consideration the way in which the word dust is both a verb and a noun, and how, in verb form it, as Carolyn Steedman has noted, curiously 'bifurcates in meaning', since, if you dust something, it can either mean removing the dust or sprinkling some powdered form over something, making it dusty. Both senses were active in the early modern period, but it is beyond the scope of this project to comment further. See Steedman, p.160.

CHAPTER ONE: REFORMED DUST

> And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground.
> (*Gen. 2.7*)

> In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return.
> (*Gen. 3.19*)

> And Abraham answered and said, Behold now, I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord, which am but dust and ashes.
> (*Gen. 18.27*)[36]

The King James Bible makes it clear that dust is the material origin and essence of the human race. It was the matter from which the progenitor of humanity was created (Gen.2.7), it was the fated existence of the flesh in death (Gen. 3.19) and it formed part of the self, identification with it expressing the important virtue of humility (Gen.18.27). This chapter discusses how the translation of the Bible into English and the reformulation of the liturgy during the Reformation established dust as the fundamental component of humankind, and created an intellectual discourse – both theological and natural philosophical – that considered deeply the dustiness of humanity. The references to dust in the Old Testament are many and so, for concision's sake, this chapter will chiefly focus on the above three verses taken from the Book of Genesis, which are the foundation for dust's significance in the rest of the Bible. The chapter will consider how these verses were translated, how they were repeated and reworked in the reformed liturgy, and how early modern preachers and commentators responded to them and engaged with the shifting semantics that English translations of scripture engendered. This theological significance of dust and the corresponding scholarly engagement with it gave mundane dust figurative weight in the English language, making it not only the literal stuff of the ground but also a compelling image of both the humble soul and the body in death.

[36] Unless otherwise specified, all translation will be taken from the King James Bible (1611).

i Dusty Creations

The creation narrative is at the root of humanity's dustiness. Yet the story of mankind's creation receives two versions in Genesis. At first, in Genesis 1, it is related that mankind was made in the likeness of God, but nothing is said with regards to how humans were made. In Genesis 2, however, details are provided about the matter from which Adam was formed. In the Hebrew of Gen 2.7 it details that man, האדם *Adam*, is formed from עפר מן האדמה, *aphar min hadamah*, 'dust' of the ground. The crucial word עפר, *aphar*, is defined as dry, fine particles of dirt, dust or loose soil.[37] Early translations, however, implied a different kind of substance. The Vetus Latina, which was used by many Church Fathers, and the Latin Vulgate, which was the authoritative Bible for the Middle Ages, alter the sense of the Hebrew: in both translations, Adam is said to be made *de limo terrae*, from the mud or slime of the earth, thus shifting the composition of man's original from friable dry soil to a clayey, moist, and more cohesive substance.

These Latin translations influenced Patristic understandings of Adam's original, as the writing of Augustine reveals. In his work *De Genesi Contra Manichaeos*, Augustine saw the necessity of defining Adam's original properly, as the baseness of God's material for man's creation invited questions regarding the substance's quality and signification: '*Primo enim quod de limo terrae Deus hominem finxit, solet habere quaestionem qualis ille limus fuerit, vel quae materia nomine limi significata sit.*'[38] Thus, Augustine specifies that Adam was made from mud, '*limus'*, which, he goes on to specify, is a mixture of earth and water: '*aquae et terrae commixtio est'*.[39] This understanding, whilst in accordance with the Biblical translation of the age, nevertheless is at odds with the original Hebrew. For a time, therefore, it can be said that the dominant Latin versions of scripture propagated a

[37] William L. Holladay, *A Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Hebrew Bible* (Leiden: Brill, 1971), p.279

[38] Augustine of Hippo, *De Genesi Contra Manichaeos* in *Patrologiae cursus completus: Series Latina*., ed. Jacques-Paul Migne, vol. 34 (Paris: Garnier frères, 1861), p.200: 'So since God first created man from the "limus" of the earth, the question ought to be posed what kind of thing this "limus" was, or what material is signified by the name "limus".'

[39] Ibid. Augustine also worked with the Greek Septuagint. However, this version translates that ἔπλασεν ὁ Θεὸς τὸν ἄνθρωπον, χοῦν ἀπὸ τῆς γῆς (God shaped man from dust taken from the earth), the Greek χοῦν meaning 'dust'. For his understanding of Gen 2.7, therefore, he most likely worked with the Latin texts, his language following these versions.

description of man's original matter different from the Hebrew, resulting in Western Christianity losing and emphasis on the body's arid and particulate origin.

However, when, with the momentum of the Reformation, there emerged a committed effort to translate the Bible into the vernacular, the dustiness of Adam's primal ingredient returned. A priority of the Reformation was to provide a translation from which an authentic understanding of the scripture could be attained.[40] The humanist edge to biblical scholarship in the Renaissance meant that translators were determined to return *ad fontes*, which placed importance on philology in the discipline.[41] Thus, sixteenth- and seventeenth-century translators shunned the Vulgate and medieval hermeneutics and instead returned to the original texts, with a particular emphasis on the minutiae of language.[42] It was under this scrutiny that Adam's original shifted from glutinous earth to dry dust.

The first English translation to reflect the priorities of Reformed thought was William Tyndale's version of the Pentateuch, published in 1530. In his translation of Gen 2.7, Tyndale writes that God shaped man from the 'moulde of the earth'. This phrasing shows Tyndale engaged with the Hebrew, following the meaning of עפר, *aphar*, with 'mould' holding the sense of loose, broken, or friable earth.[43] Tyndale's translation establishes a return to the Hebrew that was then followed by subsequent English translators. Some critics have argued that Tyndale's translation of the Pentateuch was indebted to Luther, yet his rendering of Gen 2.7 is testament to Lloyd's argument that although Tyndale made use of scholarly aids, 'there is no doubt that he worked from

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[40] Lloyd Jones, *The Discovery of Hebrew in Tudor England: A Third Language* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1983), p.56.

[41] For an initial introduction see Allan K. Jenkins and Patrick Preston, *Biblical Scholarship and the Church: A Sixteenth Century Crisis of Authority* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007), esp. pp.27-53. See also Jerry H. Bentley, *Humanists and Holy Writ: New Testament Scholarship in the Renaissance* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983).

[42] For the attention to minutiae, cf. John Monfasani, 'Criticism of Biblical Humanists in Quattrocento Italy' in *Biblical Humanism and Scholasticism in the Age of Erasmus*, ed. Erika Rummel (Brill: Leiden, 2008), p.22.

[43] *OED* n., 1.a. The Septuagint, which Tyndale is thought to have utilized, has it that man was made from χοῦν, meaning dust or loose dirt. For Tyndale's source see Gerald Hammond, "William Tyndale's Pentateuch: Its Relation to Luther's German Bible and the Hebrew Original," *Renaissance Quarterly*, vol. 33, (1980), pp. 351-85, p.351-3.

a Hebrew original'.[44] In Luther's translation of the Pentateuch, עפר *aphar*, takes on a different sense: Adam is formed from 'Erdenkloß', a lump or clod of earth, a term that shows Luther understanding Adam's original to be a mouldable mass, not a powdery heap. As he specifies in a lecture on Genesis: 'God formed him from a clod, as a potter forms a pot out of clay.'[45] Luther was not unsensitive to the Hebrew meaning. When he later comments upon Gen 3.19, he notes the fragmented quality of Adam's original, observing that 'the word עפר properly denotes earth that has been dug up, and somewhat tossed up'.[46] However, this loose earth signifies for Luther a coherent, albeit fragmented, mass, not powdery matter. The English sense of 'mould', on the other hand, holds far more ambiguity, and has a greater sense of friability than 'clod'.

The two English translations that followed Tyndale depended heavily on their predecessor, and so, unsurprisingly, retained his wording of Gen 2.7. Thus, in the 1535 Coverdale Bible, the first complete printed bible in English, and the 1537 Matthew Bible, man is said to be shaped from the 'moulde of the earth'. However, when Coverdale produced another version of the English Bible – one that was based on a retranslation of the original texts rather than prior translations – a notable modification was made: in the Great Bible of 1540 God does not form man from 'the molde of the earth' but from 'the dust of the grounde'.[47] The semantic shift was more subtle than that of *limus,* or mud, to mould: both dust and mould capture the Hebrew sense and both find their etymological roots in an older, Germanic form of English, resisting the Latinate English that was seen to be associated with Catholicism.[48] What the use of 'dust' does show, however, is

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[44] See William A. Clebsch, *England's Earliest Protestants, 1520-1535* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1964), p.138 and J.I Mombert, *William Tyndale's Five Books of Moses, Called the Pentateuch, Being a Verbatim Reprint of the Edition of M.CCCCC.XXX* (New York: A. D. F. Randolph, 1884).

[45] Martin Luther, *Luther's Works: Lectures on Genesis; Chapters 1-5*, ed., Jaroslav Pelikan, vol 1. (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1958), p.83. In the original it is written 'Nempe, quod Deus eum finxerit ex gleba, sicut figulus manu ex luto fingit ollam . . . Quod homo quoad originem suam primam fuisset gleba.' See Martin Luther, *D Martin Luthers Werke. Kritische Gesammtausgabe*, vol.42 (Weimar: Hermann Böhlaus Nachfolger, 1900), p.63. This lecture post-dates Tyndale's translation, however it is nevertheless indicative of Luther's thinking on the subject.

[46] Ibid., p.215. In the original it reads, 'Eine solche erde, die auff gegraben ist und ein wenig auff geworffen'. See Martin Luther, *D Martin Luthers Werke. Kritische Gesammtausgabe*, vol.24, p.49.

[47] Both the Rogers and Coverdale Bibles were deemed unsatisfactory: 'Coverdale's version was based on other translations rather than the original languages. . . Rogers was doctrinally suspect.' See Jones, p.125.

[48] Jamie H. Ferguson, 'The Roman Inkhorn: Religious Resistance to Latinism in Early Modern England' in *The Oxford Handbook of the Bible in Early Modern England, c.1530-1700* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), p.83.

Coverdale's efforts to move away from previous translations and produce a more authentic vernacular Bible. It is not a coincidence that the scholarly aids used by Coverdale – namely the Complutensian Polyglot and Sebastian Münster's *Hebraica Biblia* – specified the dustiness of Adam's original.[49] Whilst the Complutensian Polyglot used the Vulgate for the corresponding Latin translation of the Hebrew, in the Latin paraphrase of both the Greek Septuagint and the Aramaic Targum, which were both displayed alongside the Hebrew, Adam was said to formed *pulveré,* or from dust, of the earth.[50] What is more, in the accompanying Hebrew dictionary, the *Vocabularium Hebraicum*, עפר, *aphar,* is defined as *pulvis*, dust.[51] Similarly, in the Latin paraphrase that accompanied his Hebrew Bible, Münster writes '*Formavit quoque dominus deus hominem, pulverem de humo*', God formed man from the dust of the ground.[52] Thus, whilst the Vulgate accompanied the Hebrew, other translations and interpretative aids were accessible, providing an alternative reading of Gen 2.7 and presenting dust as viable translation of עפר, *aphar*.

Subsequent English translations aligned with reformed thinking followed Coverdale, with the Geneva Bible (1560), the Bishops' Bible (1568) and the King James Bible (1611) all stating that Adam was made from the 'dust of the ground'. The Junius-Tremellius Bible, the Protestant Latin translation preferred by John Donne and John Milton, also maintained Adam's dustiness, as man is said to be made *de pulvere terrae*, of the dust of the ground. The only English exception was the Catholic Douai-Rheims Bible (1582), which, unsurprisingly, has it that man was made from the 'slyme of the earth.' The choice of 'slyme' is evidently an attempt to preserve an etymological closeness to the Latin Vulgate, in which Adam is said to be made from *de limo terrae*. The translation uses a Latinate-English term that has its etymological roots in the Latin *limus*, and thus as both a word on a page and a word spoken from the pulpit, 'slyme' possess the visual and aural echo of

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[49] For Coverdale's use of Hebrew scholarship, see Lloyd, p.126.
[50] *Vetus Testamentū Multiplici Lingua Nūc Primo Impressum [Complutensian Polyglot],* vol. 1 (Alcalá: Arnaldi Guillelmi de Brocario, 1514 -17).
[51] Ibid., vol.5. Pagnini also defines עפר as *pulvis, terra*. See Sante Pagnini, *Thesaurus Lingae Sanctae* (Lugduni: Sebastianu Gryphius, 1529), p.1794.
[52] Lector En Tibi, *Hebraica Biblia*, trans. Sebastian Münster (Basel: Michael Isingrin, Heinrich Petri, 1534).

the *limus* found in the Vulgate. In summation, the priorities of the Reformation – to produce a Bible in the vernacular that was faithful to the original Hebrew text – generated a shift in terminology that repositioned dust's place in the English language and Christian thought. Its presence in influential and authoritative English Reformed translations of Gen 2.7 showed dust more conclusively to be the primal ingredient of humanity. Despite Adam being formed from *de limo terrae*, the Vulgate has it in Gen 3.19, when God curses mankind, that mankind is *pulvis*, dust. Thus, Adam's original changing from the muddy earth to the dust of the ground works to harmonise Gen 2.7 and Gen 3.19. Put simply, in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the English got definitively dustier.

Yet this reformed emphasis on the dustiness of Adam's original, whilst an apt rendering of the Hebrew, caused certain problems. Whilst slime is mouldable, and mould invokes the idea of formation, friable dust doesn't. Thus, the Vulgate had a kind of advantage, logically speaking, over reformed translations, prompting clarifications and rationalisations by the era's theologians over Adam's dusty origins. The particular material qualities became necessary to define, as demonstrated by a funeral sermon delivered in 1625 by the 'Silver-tongued' Calvinist clergyman Humphrey Sydenham: even a passing reference to mankind's original details its specifics, as he remarks that man was made from 'earth', although 'not that more solid part of it, but the brittlest, dust'.[53] Such attentiveness was especially prevalent in the exegesis of the era. With the emphasis on the primacy of scripture and its single literal sense, English commentaries inevitably attended to the detail of Adam's dusty nature in their annotations to Gen 2.7.[54] In the commentary of the clergyman Nicholas Gibbens, for example, the Hebrew sense of עפר, *aphar* is noted and defined:

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[53] Humphrey Sydenham, *Five Sermons upon Severall Occasions* (London: John Parker, 1627), p.3.

[54] Whilst there was move away from the Medieval *quadriga* or fourfold sense of scripture toward a hermeneutic that placed more primacy on the literal sense of the word, this literal sense is nevertheless complex and encompasses a spiritual sense as well. In David Steinmetz's words, what Protestants 'advocated was a letter pregnant with spiritual significance'. See 'The Reshaping of the Christian Exegetical Tradition in the Sixteenth Century', *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies*, 27, (1997), pp.245- 264, p.247. For a further consideration of the complex nature of the literal sense see Debora Shuger, 'Isaiah 63 and the Literal Senses of Scripture' in *The Oxford Handbook of the Bible in Early Modern England*, c. 1530-1700, pp.149-163.

'the originall matter whereof the body of man was framed, is called drie earth of the ground, or dust of the ground.'[55] Meanwhile Andrew Willet, a clergyman with allegiances to both the Puritanism and Calvinism, comments in his *Hexapla in Genesin* that 'man was made of the dust, as the thinner and purer part of the earth, not of a slimie matter mixed of earth and water, as some thinke'.[56] Here, Willet can be seen to be responding to the idea put forward by Augustine, and underpinned by the Vulgate's use of *limo*, that Adam was made from mud, '*limus'*. In this response there is a discernible effort to distance himself from the Roman Catholic tradition as he rationalises Adam's dustiness, showing dust to be not merely a synonym for earthy matter, but a specialised term that designates a more attenuated form of soil.

Later writing of the seventeenth century continued to justify friable dust. In his essay *Conjectura Cabbalistica*, the Cambridge Platonist Henry More provides a literal interpretation of Gen 2.7, in which he understands that God formed man from the 'dust of his dry ground' owing to the fact that

> The Hebrew word signifies so, and I make no mention of any moistning of it with water. For God is here set out acting according to his absolute power and Omnipotency. And it is as easie to make men of dry dust, as hard stones. And yet God is able even of stones to raise up children unto Abraham.[57]

The friability of dust is used to make his theological point. Dust's arid and thus unmalleable nature illustrates God's omnipotence, which far surpasses human reason and the natural laws that govern the operations of making and moulding in the earthly sphere: in creating Adam from dust, God shows that he can form the unformable. More solves the discursive problem created by the accuracy of reformed translations, using the illogical dustiness of Adam's creation as an opportunity to evidence God's greatness. In sum, the comments of Sydenham, Gibbens, Willet

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[55] Nicholas Gibbens, *Questions and Disputations Concerning the Holy Scripture* (London: Printed by Felix Kyngston, 1601), p.56. Gibbens defines עפר as 'dust lying upon the earth'.
[56] Andrew Willet, *Hexapla in Genesin* (Cambridge: by John Legat, 1605), p.31.
[57] Henry More, *Conjectura Cabbalistica* (London: Printed by James Flesher, 1653), p.11 & p.124. This philosophical essay on the mind of Moses was inspired by the methods that produced the Jewish Kabbalah. Thus, More reconstructs what he believes to be a Christian Cabbala containing three interpretations, literal, moral, and philosophical.

and More all reveal that affirming dust to be the specific stuff of Adam's material make-up was of theological importance in the early seventeenth-century and added valency to the seemingly mundane substance.

Yet whilst the dustiness of Adam's creation was established in the reformed English translations of the later sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, and whilst certain commentaries justified it, there still existed uncertainty on the subject. Even attempts to adhere to the original Hebrew resulted in ambiguity. The French Hebraist Jean Mercier, a figure sympathetic to Protestantism, puts forward a confounding reading of Adam's primal ingredient. In his commentary on Genesis, he first defines עפר, *aphar,* as *pulvis, terra proprie sicca,* dust, or dry earth, but then, antithetically defines אדמה, *adamah,* as '*argilla, terra madida, apta ad formas recipiendas',* clay, or wet earth, apt to receive impressions.[58] Mercier explains that man was therefore made from mud, a mixture of dust and clay.[59] This reading crosses the sea and is picked up by the English clergyman John Preston, whose published sermons continued to exert a considerable influence on the godly in England throughout the seventeenth century. In a funeral sermon preached in 1617, Preston reiterates in the vernacular Mercier's definition. Drawing his congregation's attention to the pun on *Adam* and *Adamah*, which forges an etymological bond between man and the lowly earth to 'keepe in memory that he was but earth', Preston remarks that '*Adam*, that is man', was made 'from *Adamah*, which is moist earth, fit to receive formes and impressions'.[60] In his selective use of Mercier, and elision of עפר *aphar,* Preston asserts that man was made from a viscous clayey material. This disrupts the sense of man being made from a dry, particulate substance that the

[58] Jean Mercier, *In Genesin*, ed. Théodore Bèze (Geneva, 1598), p.45. Man's materiality is often figured forth in the Hebrew Bible not as עפר, *dust,* or אדמה, *earth,* but as a clayey substance, particularly in the books of Job and Isaiah. In Isaiah 64.8, for example, חמר, *chomer,* clay is the material from which God moulded man: 'O Lord, thou art our father; we are the clay, and thou our potter; and we all are the work of thy hand.' Nowhere in the King James Bible is עפר, *dust,* or אדמה, *earth,* translated as 'clay' however. Henry Ainsworth, associates Isaiah 64.8 with Genesis 2.7: God created 'earthly man, Adam' and thus 'hereupon it is sayd: we are the clay, and thou (Lord) our former, (or Potter). See Henry Ainsworth, *Annotations upon the Five Bookes of Moses* (London: John Bellamie, 1627), p. 7 &10.
[59] Mercier, p.45.
[60] John Preston, *A Sermon Preached at the Funeral of Mr. Arthur Upton Esquire in Devon* (London: Printed by Tho. Payne 1619), p.7

Protestant translations and exegesis had sought to establish, despite Preston's focus on the original Hebrew. Thus, even as English Protestants endeavoured to be faithful to the original language of the scriptures, uncertainty and ambiguity manifested itself.

One response to such uncertainty was to avoid specification, as demonstrated by Sir Walter Raleigh in his *History of the World*. As was customary in world histories, Raleigh commences with creation, which necessitates an account of Adam's original. The definition is noticeably indeterminate:

> The externall man God formed out of the dust of the Earth, or according to the signification of the word, *Adam* of *Adamath*, of red Earth, or, *ex limo terrae*, out of the slime of the Earth, or a mixed matter of Earth and Water. *Non ex qualibet humo, sed ex ghaphar adamath (idest) ex pinguissima & mollissima*.[61]

Raleigh begins simply by defining man's primal ingredient as dust, which, by the time he was writing in 1614, had been established in translations of scripture for well over half a century. Yet he then proceeds to unframe this clarity, resulting in an ambiguous heap of meanings: he takes into account the Vulgate, cites the Antwerp Polyglot's editor Arias Montanus who understood that the substance was *pinguissima & mollissima*, very fertile and pliant, and, in his reference to 'earth and water', echoes Augustine. He also captures the nuances of the Hebrew definition of אדמה, *adamah*, which is properly defined as red tilled soil, being etymologically related to אדם, *adom*, red.[62] Raleigh's potential sources were markedly varied. As Nicholas Popper has observed, Raleigh's collection of biblical scholarship was 'notably more ecumenical than its collector—Catholics, Lutherans, Calvinists, Anglicans, and pagans were all well represented.'[63] Certainly, inflections of

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[61] Sir Walter Raleigh, *The History of the World* (London: 1614), p.29.

[62] An understanding of the ruddiness of Adam's original was commonplace in the early modern period. It was noted in the first century CE by the Jewish scholar Josephus, who, as Thomas Lodge translates in 1609, noted that 'man was called Adam, an Hebrew worde signifying ruddie, because he was made of [earth], tempered with redde or yeallow.' This sense was further endorsed by the classification of אדם *adam* and אדמה *adamah* in the scholarly aids available in the period. In the *Thesauri Hebraicae Linguae* appendix to the Antwerp Polyglot, for example, אדם *adam* is defined as '*Homo, sive terrenus, aut rufus, vel sanguineus'*, man, either earthy, or red, or bloody, whilst אדמה *adamah* is similarly defined as '*Terra, aut rufa, aut sanguinea'* earth, red or bloody. See Philip Almond, *Adam and Eve in Seventeenth-Century Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999) p.17; Flavius Josephus, *The Famous and Memorable Workes of Josephus*, trans., Thomas Lodge (London: Printed by Humfrey Lownes, 1609), p.3 and Benedictus Arias Montanus, *Biblia Sacra Hebraice, Chaldaice, Græce, & Latine*, Vol.8, (Antwerp, 1569–73).

[63] Nicholas Popper, *Walter Ralegh's History of the World and the Historical Culture of the Late Renaissance* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012), p.30.

both Roman Catholic and Reformed interpretations can be discerned in Raleigh's description. Thus, whilst there is a discernible trend amongst Protestant English translators and commentators to stress the dustiness of Adam's original, their proclivities were not necessarily reflected across all areas of scholarly engagement and generic boundaries. Sermons and commentaries had an exegetical and doctrinal function, and thus made conclusive assertions. Yet the synthesis and syncretism typical of the genre in which Raleigh was writing, that of a world history, meant that whilst Willet may stress that Adam was not made 'of a slimie matter mixed of earth and water,' the ambiguity of Adam's original matter, and the potential Catholic undertones of 'slime', could be left unresolved by Raleigh.

Raleigh *is* concerned, however, with the specifics of how Adam's original was handled, that is, the manner in which God formed man from the dust, red earth, or slime. At the close of his description, Raleigh detects that through his diverse examples – which accentuate the sense of man's original as a clayey, mouldable substance – he is potentially inviting the assimilation of the act of divine creation with that of a mundane potter. He concludes with the qualification 'not that God made an Image or Statue of Clay, but out of Clay, Earth or dust God formed and made flesh, bloud, and bone, with all parts of man.' At points in the Hebrew Bible numerous allusions are made to the body as חמר, *chomer*, clay, and God likened to a potter. In Isaiah 64.8, for example, it is written 'Lord, thou art our Father: we are the clay, and thou art our potter, and we all are the work of thine hands', whilst in Job 10.9 the afflicted figure beseeches God, 'thou hast made me as the clay (חמר); and wilt thou bring me into dust (עפר) again?'.[64] The latter verse of Job is of particular salience as it correlates clay with the creative matter of the body, and dust (עפר) with the body's material end. However, Genesis does not use חמר (*chomer*) and despite references to God as a potter within scripture, writers were cautious about the anthropomorphic implications of thinking about God as handling the material that he was creating and moulding. Raleigh makes

[64] See also Isaiah 45:9, Job 4.19 & Job 13:12.

this explicit: citing the Benedictine monk Rabanus – who himself was referencing Bede – Raleigh warns that 'the beggerlinesse of carnall sense is to bee avoided, lest perhaps we should thinke . . . that God with bodily hands made mans body of slime'.[65] This has its origin in Augustine, who, despite understanding the original matter of Adam to be a mud-like substance, nevertheless cautioned against thinking of God as a potter in a literal sense in the Creation narrative.[66] In *De Genesi ad litteram,* the Church Father deemed childish the thought of God moulding man from the mud of the earth with bodily hands.[67]

Unsurprisingly, considering the influence of the Vetus Latina and the Vulgate at the time at which they were writing, Rabanus, Bede, and Augustine all speak of Adam's original as *ex limo terrae.* Two salient points emerge from this: firstly, in terms of the early modern lexicon for Adam's original, whilst dust becomes the dominant term in English Reformed Scripture, the language of influential Patristic sources preserves and propagates verbal variations, Raleigh himself picking up on the phrase *ex limo terrae*. Secondly, the material quality of Adam's original had important doctrinal implications over the manner of God's creative acts, regardless of whether it was slime or dust. As we have seen, the friability, and thus unmouldability, of dust produced religious conundrums for early modern theologians. Yet whilst slime, or clay, made the most logical sense, it still had its own theological issues, as it encouraged a vulgarisation of God's miraculous act of creation.

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[65] Raleigh, p.29. The passage from Rabanus that Raleigh cites is in fact taken from Bede's commentary on Genesis, which reads: 'In qua videlicet sententia vitanda est paupertas sensus carnalis, ne forte putemus Deum vel manibus corporeis de limo formasse corpus hominis, vel faucibus labiisve inspirasse in faciem formati, ut vivere posset et spiraculum vitae habere. Nam et Propheta cum ait: Manus tuae fecerunt me, et plasmaverunt me tropica hoc locutione magis quam propria, id est, juxta consuetudinem qua solent homines operari, locutus est. See Rabanus Maurus, *Incipiunt Commentaria In Genesim* in *Patrologiae cursus completus: Series Latina.*, vol. 107, p.474 and Bedae Venerabilis, *Hexaemeron* in *Patrologiae cursus completus: Series Latina*., vol. 91, p.42.

[66] Indeed, Bede acknowledges that his commentary is heavily informed by Augustine, see Bedae Venerabilis, *Hexaemeron,* p.10-11.

[67] 'Quod enim manibus corporalibus Deus de limo finxerit hominem, nimium puerilis cogitatio est, ita ut si hoc Scriptura dixisset, magis eum qui scripsit translato verbo usum credere deberemus, quam Deum talibus membrorum lineamentis determinatum qualia videmus in corporibus nostris.'

[67] Augustine of Hippo, *De Genesi ad litteram* in *Patrologiae cursus completus: Series Latina*., vol. 34, p.347.

In sum, whilst there was a tendency, particularly in reformed English exegesis, to stress the dustiness of Adam's original, there were also early modern discourses that engaged with the multiple possible interpretations of עפר: as Raleigh's History demonstrates, certain genres encouraged a syncretism which took into account various interpretations, including that of Patristic writers and European reformers. Thus, although dust was held by many English reformers to be the correct designation, the word was part of a larger semantic field concerning the essence of mankind. As will be discussed in subsequent chapters, the simultaneous specificity and variability of Adam's original had literary ramifications, generating an ambiguity that provided fertile ground for poetic representations of the creation narrative.

ii Returning to Dust

The opening books of Genesis state that dust is not only the origin of the body, but also its end. As a consequence of Adam and Eve's original sin, God imposed a punitive curse on the transgressive pair, decreeing that עפר אתה ואל-עפר תשוב: dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return (Gen. 3.19). In death, the body will revert back to its original matter, dust or עפר, which thus bookends human existence. As Nicholas Gibbens succinctly summarises in his commentary to Gen 3.19, when the body turns to dust, 'his original is rehearsed'.[68] Saliently, the verse presents עפר as a metonym for the posthumous body, a figurative function that is reflected in other books of the Hebrew Bible: in Isaiah 26:19, for example, dead bodies are said to 'dwell in dust', whilst the despairing Job calls to God asking 'wilt thou bring me into dust again' (Job.10.9)?[69] Numerous other instances of the metonym appear, and some will be discussed later in this section, but, in essence, the phrasing of Gen 3.19 shows עפר to be the prime expression of the condition of the body in death, which is indicative of a trend across the Hebrew Bible.[70] Much like Adam's creation

[68] Gibbens, *Questions and Disputations Concerning the Holy Scripture*, p.164.

[69] עפר is used in both verses: עשיתני ואל-עפר תשיבני (Job.10.9); ורננו שכני עפר כי טל (Isa.26.19)

[70] Dust is used figuratively with regards to human existence repeatedly throughout the Hebrew Bible, and the image abounds. In the New Testament, however, there are only a few references to dust, and all in relation to it as a literal

from dust, the understanding of and lexical field surrounding the body's fated return to dust were shaped by changes made during the Reformation. In this case, the relevant instigators of such change include both English translations of the Bible and the reformulated liturgy set out in the Book of Common Prayer.

In comparison to the English translations of Gen 2.7, there was less uncertainty amongst translators about the meaning of עפר in Gen 3.19: the Great Bible, the Bishop's Bible, the Geneva Bible, the King James Bible and even the Douai Rheims all translate 'dust'. The Douai Rheims, expectedly, follows the Latin Vulgate, which has it that God decrees *pulvis es et in pulverem reverteris.* It is of note that the Vulgate is inconsistent in its translation of עפר, understanding it to mean *limus* in the context of Adam's creation, but *pulvis* with regards to the body's dissolution.[71] It is likely that this disparity was owing to the fact that Hebrew simply has fewer vocabulary items, and thus it is natural that a sense of variation in translation might emerge. Yet the consequence of this inconsistency, reproduced in English in the Douai Rheims, is that there is a disruption of the coherence of the Hebrew Genesis narrative, in which beginnings and ends are, linguistically speaking, one and the same. It was an incongruity however that, from the Great Bible onwards, disappeared in Protestant English translations.

The earlier English translations of the sixteenth century do, however, present an alternative term, which reflects older linguistic traditions: Tyndale translates 'unto erth shalt thou returne', with the 1535 Coverdale and 1537 Matthew Bible following suit. The body's return to 'earth' parallels in English the Vetus Latina's translation of the verse, referenced by Augustine and John

substance, to be shaken or wiped off the body (Matt.10:14; Mark 6:11; Luke 9:5; Luke 10; Acts 13:51) or cast about (Acts 22:23; Revelation 18:19).

[71] It is also of note that the Septuagint's translations of עפר, with regards to Gen 2.7 and Gen 3.19, are also inconsistent. However, Jerome's main source for translating Genesis was not the Septuagint but the Hebrew. Indeed, the inconsistences do not match: the Septuagint has it that man was created from χοῦν (dust) in Gen 2.7 but returns to γην (earth) in Gen 3.19. For a discussion of the sources Jerome used when translating Genesis, and his approach, see David L. Everson, 'The Vetus Latina And The Vulgate Of The Book Of Genesis' in *The Book of Genesis: Composition, Reception, and Interpretation,* eds., Craig Evans, Joel Lohr, David Petersen (Leiden: Brill, 2012), pp.519-536, p.522-3.

Chrysostom, which reads *terra es et in terram ibis*.[72] It was likely, however, that Tyndale was influenced by the Septuagint, of which the Vetus Latina was a translation, which reads: ὅτι γῆ εἶ καὶ εἰς γῆν ἀπελεύσῃ· (for earth thou art and to earth thou shalt return). Yet, the fact that the terminology of the Septuagint matches that of the Vetus Latina used by the Church Fathers means that Tyndale is, knowingly or unknowingly, maintaining a verbal trend of earlier theologians.[73] It may be said that with regards to his translation of עפר, into 'moulde' and 'erth', Tyndale's work is more of a reflection of the linguistic preferences of the past, than a display of reformed innovation.

One need only turn to the fourth stanza of a popular poem of the Middle Ages to see how Tyndale's translation is a continuation of verbal traditions:

> Erthe gothe apon erthe as molde apon molde.
> So goeth erthe apon erthe alle gleterynge in golde,
> Lyke as erthe into erthe neuer go scholde,
> And ȝet schalle erthe into erthe rather then be wolde.[74]

It was not uncommon for dust to be used in relation to the human body in the Medieval period.[75] However, as the poem suggests, dust did not have primacy but rather sat more indiscriminately alongside 'mould' and 'earth' as terms that encapsulated humankind's base materiality. It was only through the reformed translations that dust was repositioned and given a certain authority, and, in this context, 'dust' acquires a sense of modernity in the early modern period, unsettling the balance of previously conventional terms. Of course, a translator committing himself to the Hebrew would not see himself not as breaking with tradition as such but rather returning to a disrupted one, making dust both ancient and avant-garde.

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[72] For Augustine's and St. Chrysostom's use of *quia terra es, & in terram ibis*, see Augustine of Hippo, *De civitate Dei* in *Patrologiae cursus completus: Series Latina*., vol. 41, p.396 and St John Chrysostom, *Homiliae in Genesin* in *Patrologiae cursus completus: Series Graeca*., ed. Jacques-Paul Migne, vol. 53-4 (Paris: Garnier frères, 1861), p.447.

[73] The Greek Septuagint and the Latin Vetus do not correspond with regards to Gen 2.7. In the Septuagint it is translated that God formed man by taking dust from the earth, καὶ ἔπλασεν ὁ Θεὸς τὸν ἄνθρωπον, χοῦν ἀπὸ τῆς γῆς. In the Vetus, as previously discussed, it is said that man is formed from *de limo terrae.*

[74] 'MS. Harl. 4486. B Version' in *The Middle English Poem, Erthe upon Erthe: Printed from Twenty-four Manuscripts*, ed., Hilda M. R Murray (London: Published for the Early English Text Society by the Oxford University Press, 1964), p.13.

[75] *OED*, n., 3.a & b.

The body's return to dust did not elicit from commentators the same defensive reasoning on the material specifics, or a similar level of curiosity, to exegetical responses to the body's creation from dust in Gen 2.7. In his notes to Gen 3.19, Gervase Babington adds no further insight to his earlier remark that dust is 'the assured end', whilst for Alexander Ross, whose commentary is comprised of questions and replies, the matter warrants no inquiry, despite earlier probing into why 'God made man from the dust of the earth'.[76] However, what is remarked upon by some is the naturalness of the body's return to dusty matter. The subject is carefully considered in Calvin's commentary:

> [The] question is easily answered, Why God pronounceth that he shall returne to dust, which was taken out of dust. For so soone as he was advanced to so great dignitie, that the glorie of the image of God shined in him, the originall of the terrestrial bodie was almost buried. Now, after that he was deprived of the divine and celestiall excellencie, what remaineth, but that he acknowledge him selfe to earth, by the verie end of life? Hereof it commeth that we feare death: because dissolution cannot naturally be desired, for that is an enimie to nature. The first man, if he had stoode in his perfection, should have passed into a better life. But then there had beene no departure of the soule from the bodie, no corruption, no manner of destruction, and to be shorte, there had beene no violent mutation.[77]

Because Adam and Eve fell in sin, rather than standing in perfection, and thus lost their 'celestiall excellencie', the natural course of the body was disrupted: rather than progressing upwards, and leaving behind any traces of earthliness, the trajectory of the body's materiality turns in on itself in what Calvin terms a 'violent mutation'. In no uncertain terms, therefore, the return to dust is unnatural: certain, maybe, but nonetheless a deviation from the perfect state that was possible for humankind.

Andrew Willet concurs: although he lists the Jewish Historian Josephus as arguing the contrary – amongst other less favourable writers such as the Pelagians and 'Popish writers' – Willet is assertive in his reasoning that 'death was not naturall to man, but happened because of sinne ...

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[76] Alexander Ross, *The First Booke of Questions and Answers Upon Genesis* (London: Printed by Nicholas Okes, 1620), p.37 -8.
[77] John Calvin, *A Commentarie of John Calvine, Upon the First Booke of Moses Called Genesis*, trans., Thomas Tymme (London: John Harison and George Bishop, 1578), p.117.

it was never said to man before he had sinned, that he should returne to dust.'[78] The incurvation of the body's materiality, its return to dust, is thus a physical symptom of sin: theologically speaking, sin was a turn, a deviant turn away from God. As Augustine explains in *The City of God*, when the will sins and 'leaves the higher and turns to the lower, it becomes bad not because the thing to which it turns is bad, but because the turning itself is perverse.'[79] God's punishment is therefore equal to the crime, Adam's sinful turn matched materially with the penalty of the return to dust.

It is important to note at this juncture that Genesis 3.19 does not only work to prescribe the body's end: in its phrasing, it creates further meaning which encompasses more than the fate of the posthumous body. As Nicholas Gibbens astutely observes:

> the Lord saith not, thou art of the dust, but thou art dust; and as before he said, the Lord made man dust of the ground, shewing that the whole matter whereof man was formed, was but dust; so now the Lord saith againe, thou art but dust: which is as if the Lord had said. Thou wast raised out of dust to such excellent perfection, as to beare in an earthlie bodie a heavenly image: now through thy default, the matter remaining, the forme is perished; the earthlie image is left, the heavenlie is lost; and that little, which remaineth by the mercie of the Lord of that same heavenlie thou hast made subject to the earthlie image, that is to say, to flesh & blood.[80]

In essence, the lack of the partitive genitive 'of' makes Gen 3.19 convey a different message from that of Gen 2.7, showing dust to not only be something that the body was made from but also a state of being – 'thou *art* dust' (my italics). Gibbens takes efforts to explain the physical mutation that occurs in Aristotelian terms, the imposition of form on matter, elucidating the repercussions of immorality through natural philosophy: the human race becomes matter without heavenly form, a condition figured in dust. Thus, Gibbens' commentary shows Gen 3.19 to pertain not only to the body's dusty end, but to its dusty existence too, a meaning of dust that will be discussed in more detail in final section of this chapter.

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[78] Willet, *Hexapla in Genesin*, p.46.
[79] Augustine, *City of God*, XII.vi.478, see also XII.viii.480 and XIV, xiii. For a discussion of Augustine and the 'inward turn' see Matt Jenson, *Gravity of Sin: Augustine, Luther and Barth on 'homo incurvatus in se'* (London: T & T Clark, 2006), p. 6-43.
[80] Gibbens, *Questions and Disputations Concerning the Holy Scripture*, p.164.

Saliently, the biblical metonym of dust signifying the posthumous condition not only appeared in theological conversations, but also flecked the early modern literary landscape, particularly in writing centred on meditations of mortality. In the popular genre of *ars moriendi* literature, iterations of the return (Gen.3.19) or turn (Eccles.3.20) to dust was commonplace.[81] In Thomas Becon's *The Sicke Mans Salve* (1561) the dying Epaphroditus concedes that the body, 'according to the ordinance of god [will] be turned into dust', whilst in William Perkins's *A Salve for a Sicke Man* (1595), it is noted how 'the bodies of men have their winter […] in which they are turned to dust'.[82] In George Strode's *The Anatomie of Mortalitie* (1618), a text that frequently cites the body's turn to dust, aural motifs of death transform into dusty speech, as he writes that 'in great Citties wee have almost every day Death rung in our eares, the deadly bell telleth us, that dust wee are, and to dust wee must goe againe.'[83] This 'deadly bell' is the same bell that Donne speaks of in the *Devotions*, when he remarks 'never send to know for whom the bell tolls. It tolls for thee':[84] it is the bell that was rung in churches to give sign of a death or funeral, and thus signals a call to hear the funeral liturgy. The dusty verses of reformed scripture can therefore be seen to shape the early modern vocabulary of death. Yet, as the ensuing chapters on Donne, Andrewes, Adams, Herbert and Browne will demonstrate, in the hands of certain writers this biblical metonym was imaginatively reformulated beyond simple reiterations, creating a biblically informed yet simultaneously avant-garde rhetoric of dusty death.

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[81] As Ian Green has shown, manuals on how to live a good Christian life and die a good Christian death were best-sellers. See Ian Green, *Print and Protestantism in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000)

[82] Thomas Becon *The Sicke Mans Salve* (London, 1561), p.281 and William Perkins, *A Salve for a Sicke Man* (Cambridge: Printed by John Legate, 1595), p.45. See also William Perneby in *A Direction to Death* , who directly cites Eccles. 12.7, see p.5, p.56 & p.401 and Christopher Sutton in *Disce Mori*, who summarises death as 'when dust shall turne to dust againe.' See, respectively, *A Direction to Death* (London: Printed for Thomas Man, 1599), p.5, p.56 & p.401 and *Disce Mori, Learne to Die* (London: Printed by John Wolse, 1600), p.56.

[83] George Strode, *The Anatomie of Mortalitie* (London: Printed by William Jones, 1618), p.69.

[84] John Donne*, Devotions Upon Emergent Occasions*, ed. Anthony Raspa (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1975), p.98.

iii Dust to Dust, Ashes to Ashes

As we have seen, English and Latin translations of scripture provided certain synonyms for the human body: earth, mould, and slime were amongst them, but through the reformed English translations dust became the salient term. Yet, with regards to the posthumous specifically, other products of the Reformation alongside scripture also worked to establish certain synonyms, namely the Book of Common Prayer. Like English translations of the Bible, the Book of Common Prayer was part of the reformed efforts to mediate the words of the Christian faith in the vernacular. Although the drive of the project was a replacement of Catholic practices, the creator of the reformed liturgy, Thomas Cramner, did not shun the Medieval Catholic heritage entirely. Instead, the book was, in Brian Cummings's words, a 'bastard heir to several hundred years of Latin liturgical tradition based on the Roman rite'.[85] What it altered, omitted, and retained from this liturgical tradition shaped the vocabulary of death in the period, simultaneously varying and enshrining the language of Gen 3.19.

In the Burial Service of the Book of Common Prayer, as the priest casts earth on the dead body lying in the ground, he recites:

> Forasmuche as it hath pleased almightie God of his great mercy to take unto hym selfe the Soule of oure deare brother, here departed, we therefore comitte hys bodye to the grounde, earthe to earthe, ashes to ashes, dust to dust, in sure and certain hope of resurrection to eternall lyfe, through oure Lorde Jesus Christe.[86]

'Earth to earthe, ashes to ashes, dust to dust': a pithy and reiterable maxim that expresses the condition of the body in death. The phrase was taken directly from the Medieval *Sarum Manuale*, which read '*terram terre: cinerem cineri: puluerem pulueri.*'[87] '*Puluerem pulueri'* enshrines the biblical repetition in compact form, squeezing out the surplus words of the Gen 3.19 and leaving a simple

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[85] Brian Cummings, ed., *The Book of Common Prayer: The Texts of 1549, 1559, and 1662* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), p.xvii.
[86] Ibid., p.172. Although the Book of Common Prayer was first published in 1549, the 1559 will henceforth be referenced as it is the edition that 'held sway' for the period under consideration in this thesis. See Cummings, *The Book of Common Prayer,* p. xvi & xxxiv.
[87] *Manuale ad usum percelebris ecclesie sarisburiensis*, ed A. Jeffries Collins, vol.91 (Chichester: Moore and Tillyer Ltd, 1960), p.158-9.

yet perfectly reflective expression of the body's inevitable return to dust. But the maxim also includes two other synonyms for the posthumous body, 'earth' and 'ashes'. '*Terram terre'* is a condensed form of the Vetus Latina's rendering of Gen 3.19, *terra es et in terram ibis,* and, as discussed above, a Medieval linguistic preference.[88] Yet it may also recall a translation of another biblical verse. The body's return to dust, first articulated in Gen 3.19, is reiterated throughout the Old Testament, and Ecclesiastes 3.20 is a near exact repetition:

הכל הולך אל מקום אחד הכל היה מן העפר והכל שב אל העפר

All go unto one place; all are of the dust, and all turn to dust again. Whilst almost all English translations – including Tyndale – interpret עפר as dust, the Latin Vulgate has it that *De terra facta sunt, et in terram pariter revertuntur*, which of course is reflected in the Douai Rheims: 'of earth they were made, and into earth they returne together'. Thus, in both the burial service and some translations of the scripture, the general term 'earth' is offered as a metonymical synonym for the dead.

The origin of *'Cinerem cineri'* is a little more complex, likely referring not to Genesis directly but rather to Job 34.15:

יגוע כל-בשר יחד ואדם על-עפר ישוב

'All flesh shall perish together, and man shall turn again unto dust'. The Vulgate, however, reads '*homo in cinerem revertetur*'. The Douai Rheims follows this, translating that the body returns to 'ashes'. What is more, in the commentary to Gen 3.19, the Douai Rheims recollects the ritual of Ash Wednesday, wherein penitents humbly 'cast ashes on their heads', suggesting an established synonymy in the Catholic tradition between dust and ashes with regards to the posthumous body.

Cranmer's decision to retain 'ashes' in the Burial Service is perhaps an unexpected one, as there emerges in the handling of the reformed liturgy a perceptible sensitivity over the subject. The

[88] Biblical and liturgical language extended into the literary production of the middle ages: 'earth' was the Medieval preference to describe the material ends of the body, as the popular poem 'Erthe upon Erthe' demonstrates. For the popularity of the poem see Murray, ed., *The Middle English Poem, Erthe upon Erthe,* p.xxxviii-xl. See also the pithier, epigrammatic poem 'Erthe tok of erthe with wogh' in Thomas G. Duncan, ed*., Medieval English Lyrics and Carols* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2013), p.107.

Burial Service itself underwent numerous changes from its first promulgation in 1549, and, despite alterations to the surrounding passages, the memorable maxim remained unchanged through all editions of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.[89] However, efforts were made in other sections of the Book of Common Prayer to eradicate the sacramental use of ashes. Unlike its Roman Catholic predecessor, the *Sarum Manuale*, in the Book of Common Prayer 'the sacramental nature of penance is suppressed', the marking of ashes on the forehead considered popish and over-literal and thus omitted.[90] By the 1552 edition ashes had even been removed from the title of the service, 'Ashe-Wednisdaye' instead termed 'A Commination Against Sinners'.[91]

What is more, the use of 'ashes' to express posthumous remains directly contradicted the Christian custom of disposing of the dead. Burial, not cremation, was the common practice in early modern England, a Christian tradition that had been established for centuries.[92] Consequently, whilst mouldering into dust was the eventual outcome of being interred in the earth, the idea of dissolving into ashes sat uneasily alongside this practice. Sir Thomas Browne, when considering the cultural history of the disposal of corpses, notes 'that carnall interment or burying, was of the elder date, the old examples of Abraham and the Patriarchs are sufficient to illustrate'. Whilst, as Browne observes, burning the dead was popular in Antiquity, it nevertheless contradicted scripture. Thus:

> Christians abhorred this way of obsequies, and though they stickt not to give their bodies to be burnt in their lives, detested that mode after death; affecting rather a depositure than absumption, and properly submitting unto the sentence of God, to return not unto ashes but unto dust againe, conformable unto the practice of the Patriarchs, the interrment of our Saviour, of Peter, Paul, and the ancient Martyrs.[93]

For the dead to be consumed by fire is at odds with what the Bible sets out as a paradigm, Browne making explicit that the sentence of God prescribes that the body turns to 'dust', not ashes. Thus,

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[89] For the alterations see Cummings, p. xxviii; p.82 and Eamon Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars: Traditional Religion in England c.1400-c.1580* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1992), p.475.
[90] Cummings, *The Book of Common Prayer*, p.719. See also Duffy, p.459.
[91] Cummings, *The Book of Common Prayer*, p.92 & p.176. The emendation was made by Cranmer at the suggestion of Bucer. See Cummings, *The Book of Common Prayer,* p.744.
[92] Clare Gittings, 'Sacred and Secular: 1558-1660', *Death in England: An Illustrated History,* eds., Peter Jupp, Clare Gittings (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999), pp.147-173, p.166.
[93] Ibid., p.92-3.

the Christian method of disposing of the dead is 'rather a depositure than absumption', burial not burning.

And yet, certain scriptural passages present ashes as intrinsic to the human condition in a manner concomitant with dust, thus lending authority to the antanaclastic phrase 'ashes to ashes'. Ashes as the symbol of the living soul is expressed by the biblical figures of Abraham and Job, who both humbly identify with עפר ואפר dust *and* ashes (Gen 18:27; Job 30:19, my italics). With regards to 'ashes' pertaining to the body in death, however, it is not explicitly stated in the Hebrew Bible: instead we must turn to the New Testament and to 2 Peter 3.10:

> Ἥξει δὲ ἡ ἡμέρα Κυρίου ὡς κλέπτης ἐν νυκτί, ἐν ᾗ οὐρανοὶ ῥοιζηδὸν παρελεύσονται, στοιχεῖα δὲ καυσούμενα λυθήσονται, καὶ γῆ καὶ τὰ ἐν αὐτῇ ἔργα κατακαήσεται.
>
> But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up.

2 Peter's prediction of the Earth's conflagration was acknowledged by Augustine. In the *City of God*, he notes that 'figura hujus mundi mundanorum ignium conflagration praeteribit, sicut factum est mundanarum aquarum inundatio diluvium' (the form of this world will pass away in a blazing of the fires of the world), and this idea was widely accepted in early modern period.[94] Thus, Genesis may determine that ashes are not the substance to which the body returns to in death, but if, as 2 Peter foretells, the whole world is ultimately consumed by fire, it would be logical to assume that ashes would be the material conclusion of all worldly entities, in which the human race would be included. Indeed, Milton's God declares that on the day of Judgment 'the world shall burn, and from her ashes spring | New Heaven and New earth' (III.334-5).[95]

For the preacher Thomas Adams, the world's fiery end correlated with the subject of death and corporeal dissolution. In his commentary to 2 Peter, he expounds upon how the

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[94] C. A Patrides, 'Renaissance and Modern Thought on the Last Things: A Study in Changing Conceptions', *The Harvard Theological Review*, Vol. 51, (1958), pp. 169-185, p.180-1. Augustine, *De Civitate Dei*, p.682. For the English see *City of God*, trans., Henry Bettenson (London: Penguin, 2003), p.927.

[95] The Dies iræ also asserts that the world end in ashes, stating that 'on the day of wrath, the earth will be dissolved in ashes' (Dies iræ, dies illa | Solvet sæclum in favilla,).

elements – the earth and its works included – will be burned up at the eschaton. In his explanation, Adam makes clear that the fiery consummation of the elements will not bring about complete annihilation:

> The Elements may *consenescere*, but they shall not *evanescere*: they shall be melted, not destroyed. When we melt Silver or Gold, we intend not the rejecting, but the refining of it: we make it purer and better, we doe not make it nothing... The Earth shall be burnt ... like metall in a Fornace, or gold in the crucible, which by separation of the drosse, is brought to perfect purenesse.[96]

Conceiving the theological point via natural philosophy, the potential for regeneration in a seemingly bleak scenario becomes apparent. The fate of the physical world is *consenescere* not *evanescere*, disintegration but not utter vanishment. Through this melting, as alchemical practices exemplify, refinement can take place, leaving a purer form of matter. Adams finds in this destined dissolution of the earth an analogy with funeral customs, that is, cremation, remarking that 'this old gran-dame [Earth] must have her day: there is a funerall fire ordained for her aged bones'.[97]

Yet, most significantly, the discussion of the earth's consummation in flames elicits a discussion of the posthumous body, in which ashes become a preferred figure of speech. The final consenescence of the elements offers, in Adams words, 'a figure of our owne mortalitie', the preacher thus correlating conflagration with corporeal deterioration:

> Man is the noblest part of the earth, and hee so melts and moulders away, as if hee were a statue, not of earth, but of Snow. . . this aestuant heate is to the world; so is a fever to man . . . a sicknesse so melts him, as if lead were molten in a fornace: and death so melts him, that it calcines him, and reduceth him to Atomes and ashes. . . . So our bodies made up of those elements, though death take them in peeces, breake them to clods, searce them to ashes, and examine every dust; doe but suffer a clensing; and there is such a quickning vertue in the divine Head of those scattered members, that it shall recollect those ashes, give life to that dust, redintegrate those bodies, and make them shine brighter than the Sunne and Starres in their clearest glory.[98]

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[96] Thomas Adams**,** *A Commentary or, Exposition Upon the Divine Second Epistle Generall, Written by the Blessed Apostle St. Peter* (London: Printed by Richard Badger, 1633), p.1329- 1331.
[97] Ibid., p.1299.
[98] Ibid., p.1299-1300.

In the analogy, mouldering away becomes not a dry disintegration into dust, as Gen 3.19 might suggest, but instead a chemical process of calcination, in which ashes emerge as the prominent image amidst other particulate synonyms. Calcination allows for a clear analogy of the miraculous regenerative capacity of the resurrection: Adams depicts a scientific process, in which the body is broken up into pieces, searced – that is, sifted into finer particles of ash. The 'examin[ation]' of dust also gives dust an ashen quality, as the term 'examine' means not only to generally appraise something, but to specifically test the composition of a substance through melting it in a furnace.[99] Saliently, though, Adams blends theology with natural philosophy as the breaking up of clods, searcing of ashes and examination of dust matches the run through of earthly materials found in the burial service, when the priest commits the body to the ground and recites 'earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust'.[100]

The period's struggles with conceiving of the resurrection, which could not be understood empirically, will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter 6, but for now it is important to note that ashes allow for a figurative representation of death and resurrection that writers such as Adams evidently found imaginatively stimulating. Indeed, Adams' conceit here is not original, but rather borrows heavily from the works of John Donne, namely the *Devotions*.[101] In his commentary, Adams copies an entire passage from 'Meditation II', before reformulating it in his own words later in the text. In the original, John Donne is in grips of a potentially fatal illness, and perceives sickness as a living decomposition, presaging the dissolution that would inevitability occur in the grave – what Ramie Targoff terms a 'proleptic putrefaction'.[102] In this early meditation he writes:

> Man, who is the noblest part of the Earth, melts so away, as if he were a statue, not of Earth, but of Snowe. We see his owne Envie melts him, he growes leane with that; he will say, anothers beautie melts him; but he feeles that a Fever doth not melt him like snow, but powr him out like lead, like iron, like brasse melted in a furnace: It doth not

[99] *OED* v.,1.b.
[100] *Book of Common Prayer*., p.172.
[101] There are also discernible echoes of Donne's sermons, in particular an Easter Day sermon preached in 1626 at St Paul's Cathedral and a wedding sermon preached in 1627, both of which will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter 6.
[102] Ramie Targoff, *John Donne: Body and Soul* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008) p.130.

> only melt him, but calcine him, reduce him to Atomes, and to ashes; not to water, but to lime.

Donne provides Adams with a figurative correlate between the body's disintegration and fiery ends, 'Lime' – a form of earth alkalinised through heat – and 'ashes' both being the material residue of conflagration. What is more, further influence can be discerned regarding in the way in which Donne draws the association between the body's feverous calcination into ashes with the Day of Judgment. Donne does not broach the subject of the earth's end in flames, but, in the ensuring expostulation, the diseased body soon leads to thoughts of the eschaton: 'I consider in my present state, not the haste and the despatch of the disease, in dissolving this body, so much as the much more haste and despatch, which my God shall use, in recollecting and reuniting this dust again at the resurrection.' For Adams too, the melting, diseased body tends thoughts to the point of the resurrection. Adams, however, is far more invested than Donne in keeping ashes as metonym for death in his writing. In his expostulation, Donne switches back to the figure of 'dust', yet Adams builds on Donne's conceit to imagine posthumous disintegration and the resurrection through the searcing of ashes and the examination of dust. As Chapter Five and Six will discuss, for both writers dust was the main metonym for the posthumous body: for Donne, the image of ashes rarely appears in his sermons, yet dust abounds. For Adams, dust signifies the body dissolved in death, with ashes serving a different function – to 'put us in mind that wee have merited also the destruction of our Soules'.[103] However, in Adams' commentary on 2 Peter, ashes are shown to be a powerful figurative emblem of particulate remains, despite associations with Catholic sacramental practices and not, strictly speaking, being sanctioned by scripture as the product of death.

In summary, the decision by most English Biblical translators to stay faithful to the Hebrew and render עפר as dust established the term as the significant metonym for the posthumous body.

[103] Adams, *Five Sermons*, p.24.

However, 'earth' and 'ashes' remained prominent figures of speech, with ashes in particular – being correspondingly powdery in form – proving a notable and theologically authoritative counterpart to dust. As later chapters will investigate, the figure of ashes functions as both an interchangeable synonym with dust and as a term distinct from dust, its semantics offering certain writers figurative fuel to feed their imaginative depictions of the body in death.

iv *Humble Dust*

Preaching a funeral sermon in 1638, Thomas Hooker issued the following instructions to his auditory:

> Brethren, if ever you pray, pray now, if ever you fast, now fast; if ever you humble your selves, now bee humbled in dust and ashes before the Lord, never more need, never greater want.[104]

Pulverised matter is invested with particular theological significance, as Hooker puts forward the doctrine that humility is attained in 'dust and ashes'. The idea is rooted in scripture, yet Hooker is not drawing on Gen 2.7, Gen 3.19, nor even the Burial Service, but rather the final biblical verse that this chapter will scrutinize: Gen 18.27. In this, Abraham addresses God, and in doing so humbly declares: 'Behold now, I have begun to speak unto my Lord, and I am but dust and ashes'. Whilst the ambiguity and diversity generated by English interpretations of other dusty bible passages have been shown in this chapter to generate noteworthy discourse on dust and its qualities, the importance of this verse does not lie in its translation history, which, unlike Gen 2.7 & Gen 3.19, is uncomplicated. In Hebrew, he declares he is עפר ואפר, *dust and ashes*, and all English translations concur, the collective accordance with the original no doubt aided by the Vulgate's *cum sum pulvis et cinis*. Instead, the significance of Gen 18.27 lies in its moral ramifications, as it tethers the figures of dust and ashes to the Christian virtue of humility. As the commentary to Gen 18.27 in the Geneva Bible observes: 'hereby we learn, that the nearer we approach unto God, the

[104] Thomas Hooker, *The Soules Possession of Christ. Whereunto in annexed a sermon preached at the funerall of that worthy divine Mr. Wimott* (London: Printed by M. Flesher, 1638), p. 45.

more doth our miserable estate appear, and the more are we humbled.' Through Abraham's example, identification with dust and ashes is shown to be the model of a debased soul, which, in the Christian tradition, was the necessary route to humility.

Although not one of principal theological virtues, the virtue of humility was essential to Christian piety and highly valued in the early modern period.[105] Yet, its achievement ran counter to intuition: as Augustine explains in *De Civitate Dei*:

> It is good to lift up your heart and to exalt your thoughts, yet not in the self-worship of pride, but in the worship of God. This is a sign of obedience, and obedience can belong only to the humble. Thus, in a surprising way, there is something in humility to exalt the mind, and something in exaltation to abase it. It certainly appears somewhat paradoxical that exaltation abases and humility exalts. But devout humility makes the mind subject to what is superior. Nothing is superior to God; and that is why humility exalts the mind by making it subject to God. Exaltation, in contrast, derives from a fault in character.[106]

The principle is theologically complex. Augustine puts forward that humility exalts and exaltation abases: *elatio sit deorsum, et humilitas sursum.* The paradox was well established in the early modern period, imbedded in the liturgy through the Magnificat, taken from Luke 1.46-55, recited daily at Evensong. The canticle states that 'he [the Lord] hath put down the mightie from their seate: and hath exalted the humble and meeke.'[107] Similarly, the Beatitudes also put forward that 'Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth' (Matt.5.5). The message in both – that spiritual advancement is attained through lowliness – is clear, although the clergyman Daniel Cawdrey summarises the paradox more succinctly in his 1624 sermon on humility: 'the lower is our humiliation, the higher shall bee our exaltation. He that is humble shall be exalted.'[108]

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[105] As Jennifer Clement argues, 'in both the Roman Catholic and reformed traditions there persisted the view that humility was foundational to Christian identity'. See *Reading Humility in Early Modern England* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2015), p.2.

[106] Bonum est enim sursum habere cor: non tamen ad se ipsum, quod est superbiae; sed ad Dominum, quod est obedientiae, quae nisi humilium non potest esse. Est igitur aliquid humilitatis miro modo quod sursum faciat cor, et est aliquid elationis quod deorsum faciat cor. Hoc quidem quasi contrarium videtur, ut elatio sit deorsum, et humilitas sursum. Sed pia humilitas facit subditum superiori; nihil est autem superius Deo: et ideo exaltat humilitas, quae facit subditum Deo. Elatio autem quae in vitio est. See *De Civitate Dei,* p.421*,* and *City of God*, p.572.

[107] Cummings, *The Book of Common Prayer,* p.15.

[108] Daniel Cawdrey*, Humilitie, the Saints Liverie* (London: Printed by John Haviland, 1624), p.51.

As exemplified by Abraham in Gen 18.27, this exalting humbleness could be expressed through the trope of 'dust and ashes'. Dust in particular, as the earthly origin of man, exemplified this base condition as it drew on the connection between humility, man, and the base earth that was enshrined in etymology. 'Humility', along with 'humble', derives from the Latin *humilis,* meaning lowly, insignificant or base, which is also related to *humus,* signifying ground, or earth. The etymological connection between *humus* and *homo*, that is, man, had been established as early as the 4th century, with Lactantius in *Divinarum Institutionum* writing that '*hominem figuravit ex limo terrae; unde homo nuncupatus est, quod sit factus ex humo*' (man was formed from the mud of the earth: whence it was called man, because he was made from earth).[109] Lactantius finds in the Latin language the same pun evident in the Hebrew creation narrative: האדם *adam* from אדמה *Adamah*, *homo* from *humo.* Throughout the Medieval period the earthly origin of man was used as a prompt for humility. Following St Francis of Assisi, for whom humility involved external and internal annihilation of the self, the theologian Bonaventure taught that to arrive at *perfecta humilitas*, perfect humility, one must consider the body's origin in mud and eventual return to dust.[110] Reformed theology placed a high premium on this sense of humility, and it is particularly evident in the works of the influential reformer John Calvin.[111] In his *Institutio Christianae Religionis*, Calvin rehearses the humility paradox. As Thomas Norton translated in 1561, 'what way is there to humble our selves, but that we being altogether needy & empty, should give place to the mercie of God? For I do not call it humblenesse, if we thinke that we have anything remaining with us.'[112] This destitute state

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[109] Lactantius, *Divinarum Institutionum* in *Patrologiae Cursus Completus: Series Latina.,* vol.6, p.312.
[110] André Vauchez, R. B. Dobson, Michael Lapidge. *Encyclopaedia of the Middle Ages* (Cambridge: James Clarke, 2000); 'Tertia semita, per quam debes incedere, si vis ad perfectam humilitatem pervenire, est circumspection tui . . . Considera ergo, unde veneris, et scias, quia de massa perditionis et de pulvere et limo terrae facta es, et in peccatis conversata et exsul es de beatitudine paradisi . . . Considera etiam illud, quo tendis; tendis enim ad corruptionem et incinerationem, quia pulvis es et in pulverem reverteris.' See Bonaventure, 'De Perfectione Vitae Ad Sorores' in *Decem Opuscula ad theologiam mysticam spectantia*, ed. Patres Collegii (Quaracchi: Collegium S. Bonaventurae, 1949), pp.250-309, p.262.
[111] As Richard Strier has noted, this emphasis on humility emerged owing to responses by Luther and Calvin to Classical ethics, which resurfaced as a consequence of humanism and advocated 'high' self-esteem, or pride. See *The Unrepentant Renaissance* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2011), p. 248-255.
[112] Jean Calvin, *The Institution of Christian Religion*, trans. Thomas Norton (London: by Reinolde Wolfe & Richarde Harison, 1561), p.183

could be reached by contemplating the earthly nature of mankind, for when 'man was taken out of earth and claye, a bridle was putte uppon his pride', proud exaltation thus curtailed by man's original.

Calvin reiterates this theological stance in his commentary on Gen 2.7, which Thomas Tymme translated into English in 1578:

> Least man shoulde ware proude, their first originall is set before them: . . . For Moses saith that man was in the beginning, dust of the earth. Let foolish men go nowe and boaste of the excelencie of their nature. . . Nowe Adams body is saide to be of dust, and wanting sense, least any man should be delighted beyond measure in his fleshe. For what soever he be that learneth not humilitie hereby, is more then senslesse. [113]

Again, Calvin uses man's 'first originall' as a prompt to humility. Markedly, in the original Latin Calvin alternates between *terrae pulverem,* dust of the earth*,* and *lutum*, mud, to describe Adam's primal ingredient. Whilst it is beyond the scope of this chapter to ascertain the translation history of scripture in the French vernacular, it is interesting to note that for the French theologian it was the morality attached to the baseness of Adam's original, not the specifics of the material, that was germane to his theological point. What is also notable is that where Calvin states that Adam's corporeal form was made from '*lutum*', Tymme renders it as 'dust'. The intention behind this cannot be gleaned from the text itself; however, in deviating from Calvin's understanding of Adam's original, it could indicate a resolve to adhere to the proper sense of עפר, *aphar*. At the very least, it demonstrates how the new translations of English scripture pervasively, even if unconsciously, influenced the English language.

Calvin's theology shaped Protestantism in early modern England and his emphasis on the moral ramifications of mankind's earthly condition is resonant in English exegesis, especially in commentary on Gen 2.7.[114] In his response to man being made from 'the dust of earth,' Henry Ainsworth talks of 'man's base original' and defines dust as a 'base, vile' substance, while for

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[113] Calvin, *A Commentarie*, p.57.
[114] Brian Cummings, *The Literary Culture of the Reformation: Grammar and Grace,* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), p.282 and John Stachniewski, *The Persecutory Imagination: English Puritanism and the Literature of Religious Despair* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), p.12.

Alexander Ross, man was expressly made from dust in order 'to put us in minde of humility'.[115] Gibbens similarly writes that 'the more base the matter is, the more excellent is the power and wisedome of the workmaster; the more ought man to bee humble in himselfe, and to glorie in the Lord'.[116] The committed Calvinist Gervase Babington puts it most emphatically :

> Man was created of the duste of the earth, that so base a matter might ever worke humilitie of minde, cut the cordes of swelling conceipts (for wherefore should dust and claye be lifted up) and cause a true remembrance of assured end, that earth wee were, earth we are, and to earth againe we shall returne: hee, not we can tell how soone.[117]

For good measure, Babington also notes in the margin that 'mans base matter should humble him.' What the commentaries Babington, Ross and Willet make clear is that the theological association between dust and ashes and humbleness, which was observed by the early church fathers and reinforced by Calvin, is emphatically maintained by English early modern theologians.

This sense of humility invested in the figure of dust was not confined to scholarly understanding, but rather was a matter of common knowledge. In the notes to his lectures on Gen 2.7, the preacher Lancelot Andrewes observes that 'the dust is the origine and beginning of Man, which though it be often repeated, yet God is fain in the 3. of Gen. 19. tell it to Adam again to humble him.'[118] Andrewes' comment not only makes clear that Adam's dustiness is a prompt to humility, but that this detail has value in its re-iteration: God himself repeated it to Adam in his curse, and Andrewes himself repeats it to his audience, despite recognising it to be a common knowledge. This re-minding of the dustiness of mankind will be discussed at greater length in Chapter Five; for now, it is salient to observe that figure of dust was invested with significant theological textures in the early modern period, embroiling dust and ashes in the discourse concerning the spiritual exhalation attained through humility. In essence, the spiritual need for

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[115] Ainsworth, p.10 & Ross, p.37.
[116] Gibbens, p.57.
[117] Gervase Babington, *Certaine Plaine, Briefe, and Comfortable Notes upon Everie Chapter of Genesis* (London: Thomas Charde, 1592), Fol. 9r.
[118] Lancelot Andrewes, *ΑΠΟΣΠΑΣΜΑΤΙΑ or A Collection of Posthumous and Orphan Lectures* (London: Printed by R. Hodgkinsonne, 1657), p.149. Although they are generically termed lectures, Andrewes work on the first four chapters of Genesis functions as commentary. P. G. Stanwood defines the lectures as 'exegetical'. See 'Lancelot Andrewes's "Orphan Lectures": The Exeter Manuscript', *English Manuscript Studies*, 13 (2008), pp. 35– 46.

mankind to remember his dusty nature made dust discursive and a matter that was required to be kept at the forefront of the early modern Christian mind.

There were, of course, exceptions to the general view that dust was evidence of mankind's baseness and thus a prompt to humility. In a highly unusual remark upon the particulars of Adam's original substance, the politician and natural philosopher Sir John Pettus advocates the pre-eminence of dust. Whilst he admits that man 'was made of little more than nothing; for he was made of the dust of the earth', man's dusty constitution was nonetheless a sign of his superiority over the rest of creation.[119] Pettus reasons that dust is 'the superficial part of the earth, of which man onely was made; for all Creatures are said to be made out of the ground, but not of the dust of the ground; but Man of the dust of the ground or earth.'[120] Dust is thus seen by Pettus as a crucial factor in distinguishing between the earthly materiality of animals and that of mankind, and, in contradiction to many of the early seventeenth-century commentaries to Genesis 2.7, is not perceived to be evidence of his baseness. The common trope of mankind's pre-eminence was his upright stature, yet Pettus uses the material quality of man's original matter to demonstrate his nobility: [121]

> Now whither this dust was made by a peculiar omnipotent Calcination, or other Rarification is not demonstrated; but we may conceive it of the most attenuated part of the earth, and therein the more Noble part . . . For the Targum of Jerusalem adds to our honor, that we are made *ex pulvere Sanctuarii*, i.e. of holy dust, differing from all other dusts: which should raise this Contemplation in us, that as we are not like beasts or other Creatures in our Temperaments, they made of the ground, that is, of the faeces or dregs of the Earth, we of the Superficies (or of some peculiar sanctify'd dust;) so ought the habits of our bodies to be sublime, and alwaies ascending to an higher sphere, and not to be alloyed and turned into various Corruptions.[122]

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[119] John Pettus, *Volatiles from the History of Adam and Eve* (London: Printed for T. Bassett, 1674), p.20.
[120] Ibid., p.21.
[121] For Willet, it is the frame of Adam, his 'excellent constitution,', that is proof of his sovereignty over creation, commenting that 'Mans bodie hath the preheminence in respect to his upright stature, whereas other creatures looke downeward, whereby he should be admonished to looke upward toward his creator, and to behold the heavens, as also thereby is signified the dominion and command, which is given unto man over other creatures'. See Willet, p.31. Sir Thomas Browne takes common errors concerning the subject to task in his chapter 'On the Erectness of Man' in *Pseudodoxia Epidemica*, p.291-4.
[122] Pettus, p.21-2.

Here, theology and natural philosophy coalesce as Pettus combines his familiarity with Rabbinic commentary with his knowledge on the properties of matter that emerged from his work on metallurgy. Dust is considered in scientific terms as conjectures are made as to the process of refinement. Pettus postulates as to whether the dust was made by 'calcination', which he himself defines as a method to reduce matter 'by Fire to a friable or brickle temper', or 'rarification' a process of refinement that reduces the density of matter.[123] He further makes use of his metallurgical vocabulary when he argues for man's bodily habits to be always 'ascending to an higher sphere, and not to be alloyed and turned into various Corruptions'. In Pettus' metaphor, metallic adulteration is equated with somatic degeneracy, yet what is significant is that dust is not the 'alloyed' substance; God did not make man from the 'base, vile' matter, as commentators such as Ainsworth would have it, but rather 'the most attenuated part of the earth'.

Pettus' foundation for this understanding comes from the 'Targum of Jerusalem' that was included in Brian Walton's 1658 London Polyglot, a source for Pettus' *Volatiles*.[124] The Targum was part paraphrase of and part exegesis on scripture in Aramaic. In the Latin translation of the Targum in Walton's Polyglot, for Genesis 2.7 it is detailed that God took *pulverem*, dust, from *loco domus sanctuarii*, a sacred place.[125] Pettus thus concludes that Adam was made from a sort of 'sanctify'd dust', a surface material more pure than that of the deep earthly matter from which the rest of creation was made.

This understanding of Adam's original, which removed the baseness associated with dust, was only supported by the Targum, not by scripture or even Patristic sources, and thus was not the conventional conclusion to draw. Although scholarship in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries was attentive to Jewish approaches to scripture, this did not imply acceptance. As Frank

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[123] John Pettus, *Fleta Minor: The Laws of Art and Nature, in Knowing, Judging, Assaying, Fining, Refining and Inlarging the Bodies of Confin'd metals* (London: Printed by Thomas Dawks, 1683), Hv.
[124] Pettus acknowledges that 'the Notions which I have us'd herein are chiefly from my Notes out of Dr. Waltons Laborious and Learned Polyglotta'. See Pettus, *Volatiles*, p.4.
[125] 'Triplex Targum Sive Versio Pentateuchi' in *Biblia Sacra Polyglotta,* Brian Walton, Vol 4, (London: Thomas Roycroft, 1658), p.4.

Mattern observes 'what made Hebrew philology so crucial to protestants was their empathetic affirmation of the value and authenticity of the Hebrew text'.[126] However when it came to the more interpretative material there was a 'permeant recourse to distinction and qualification: not everything to be found in the rabbis is to be accepted, but some elements may be useful for Christian purposes.' Thus, only certain aspects of rabbinic commentary filtered into Christian scholarship and the idea that Adam was formed from sanctified dust would not have been influential, running counter to fundamental Christian doctrines on humility.[127]

Indeed, whilst Frank Mattern and Jeffrey Shoulson warn of the "fluid interaction" between Christianity and Judaism, ancient Jewish interpretations of Genesis 2.7 were markedly distinct from Christian readings.[128] As has been discussed, Adam's sinful fall and the resulting return to dust preposterously caused man's creation from dust to be a mark of his inherent baseness. Orthodox Jewish thought, however, did not find the root of sin in the Adamic Fall. As J.M. Evans observes, 'for the early Christian Church the actual incarnation of Christ served to establish Adam's sin as the fundamental cause of His mission, but Judaism had no comparable historical event to define the Fall's doctrinal position.'[129] Consequently, the rabbinic responses to Genesis 2.7 were less disposed to draw negative inferences from Adam's creation from the dusty earth, as the Targum of Jonathan establishes. Thus, Pettus' claim was unusual in the context of early modern Christianity, in which dust was conventionally seen as a prompt to humility and, as the ensuing chapters will discuss, gave writers a morally charged trope of the abject human condition with which to put to creative use.

Overall, two salient points can be gleaned from this chapter. The first is that dust is invested with theological textures that give it anthropological significance. Dust is the material

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126 Frank Mattern, *Milton and Christian Hebraism* (Heidelberg: Winter, 2009), p.24.
127 Frank Mattern observes that a 'well-known aggadah' in the early modern period was 'that the "dust of the ground" […] from which man is said to be moulded had been collected from the four corners of the earth'. See Mattern p.150.
128 Mattern, p4.
129 J. M. Evans., *Paradise Lost and the Genesis Tradition* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968), p.26. For the Jewish attitude to existence of evil see Evans, p.26 and N. P. Williams, *The Ideas of the Fall and of Original Sin* (London: Longmans, 1927).

make-up of the body, it is the condition of the dead, and it is an expression the humble self. In a nutshell, Hamlet was right: man is the quintessence of dust. What is more, the results of the reformed English translations of scripture show there to be something quite 'early modern' about dust: by taking עפר to unequivocally mean dust when translating Gen 2.7 and Gen 3.19, sixteenth- and seventeenth-century translators repositioned dust as the authoritative stuff of mankind's origin and end. That is not to say that terms such as earth or slime became entirely redundant, but, endorsed by scripture, dust became the standard. But before considering how the theologically textured figure of dust was handled in the literature of the period, the dustiness of death requires further probing, which the ensuing chapter will now address.

CHAPTER TWO: THE WAY TO DUSTY DEATH

> To-morrow, and to-morrow, and to-morrow,
> Creeps in this petty pace from day to day
> To the last syllable of recorded time,
> And all our yesterdays have lighted fools
> The way to dusty death.
> (*Macbeth,* V.v.19-23)[130]

Death in the early modern period was a dusty affair, as Macbeth's sombre meditation suggests. Shakespeare's alliterative phrase – 'dusty death' – is typical of how writers used dust to figure forth the posthumous condition: George Herbert, for example, writes of how 'the blast of deaths incessant motion' drives all 'to a heap of dust', while John Donne, in the midst of a potentially fatal illness, contemplates what happens to the greatness of man in the grave when he 'consumes himself to a handful of dust'.[131] A pile of dust was, for these writers, the imagined state of the deceased. Yet what is necessary to assay is whether a heap, or handful, of dust can be considered to be a figure of speech, an imagined state, or if in fact it is a literal depiction of posthumous remains. Dust is poised between the literal and the imaginative, and it will be the intention of this chapter to expose that boundary.

The verbal function of a trope is, according to Quintilian, 'a shift of a word or a phrase from its proper meaning to another.'[132] To some extent, dust is the proper designation of the dead, as the process of decay does indeed reduce the body to a minute and fine state of subdivision. However, this pulverised state is not immediate. Thomas Laqueur writes in his history of mortal remains how 'the dead body lives on many time scales,' noting the 'indeterminate time, from years to centuries, it takes for the body, flesh, and bones to become dust.'[133] Dust is the final point of the body's dissolution, the conclusion of decay. It is the enduring substance of death, what remains

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[130] William Shakespeare, *Macbeth*, ed., Nicholas Brooke (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), p.203-4.
[131] George Herbert, *The Temple* in *The Works of George Herbert*, ed. F. E. Hutchinson (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1941), p.64-5. Subsequent references are to this edition. Donne, *Devotions*, p.21. Subsequent references are to this edition.
[132] Quintilian, *The Orator's Education*, ed. and trans., D. A. Russell, vol. 3. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014), p.425., Book 8, Chap.6.
[133] Thomas Walter Laqueur, *The Work of the Dead: A Cultural History of Mortal Remains* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015), p.31.

once the process of decomposition has run its course: Michael Marder writes that as 'a gentle refusal of complete evanescence, a protest, lodged at the heart of mortality, against the finality of death, dust is the image of eternity stamped on every least bit of material reality.'[134] Dust is the figure of something on the brink of becoming nothing, hovering between existence and absence. Yet it does not depict the condition of death in its entirety. There are many stages of decomposition that befall a corpse before it becomes a particulate heap.[135] Thus, as expressions of the posthumous body, Donne's 'handful of dust' and Herbert's 'heap of dust' are suspended between accuracy and imprecision, the neat images dependent on collapsing barriers of time: for dust to properly convey and entirely encompass the condition of death, the imagination must overleap the moments that render the dead body so variable in constitution. Accordingly, this chapter will consider the literalness of dusty death, examining the extent to which it is a figurative construction, rather an empirical truth.

i Renaissance Realities of the Mouldering Dead

The future Bishop of Gloucester Godfrey Goodman admits in *The Fall of Man* – a work centred on the corrupted human condition – to never having seen the tomb of the 'very honourable minded man' Sir Christopher Hatton.[136] Nevertheless, he postulates self-assuredly on what may be found within:

> I will tell you in briefe (if my tale were worth the telling) what you shall finde, a few rotten bones, and a handfull of dust; some crawling wormes, which have devoured this great little man, whom we supposed to haue bin as great under ye earth, as wee see his monument statelie mounted aboue ground.[137]

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[134] Marder, p.46.
[135] As Andrew T. Chamberlain and Michael Parker Pearson note 'putrefaction is a gradual transformation in which the complex biological constituents of the body's cells are converted into simpler molecules'. See *Earthly Remains: The History and Science of Preserved Human Bodies* (London: British Museum Press, 2001), p.13. For a complete overview of the process of the body's decay see pp.12 -44.
[136] Godfrey Goodman, *The Fall of Man (*London: Printed by Felix Kyngston, 1616), p. 145.
[137] Ibid., p.146.

Goodman draws on the tropes of death to make a point about earthly vanities and the deluding effect of material 'shewes' such as monuments. Notably, the figure of the grave is worms, bones and 'a handful of dust', an image that was frequent in such fictional depictions.[138] However, reflections on the subject of mortality in early modern writing often challenge these tropes, revealing that actual encounters with posthumous remains involve not handfuls of dust, but rather more varied and changeable products of decay. In *The Rule and Exercise of Holy Dying*, which Nancy Beaty terms the 'artistic climax' of the *ars moriendi* tradition, the combative clergyman and later Bishop Jeremy Taylor considers it 'very material' to think on the circumstances of the grave when preparing for a holy death. Taylor thus presents to his reader an account of the immediate alterations that may be observed when the soul departs the body, as 'it is a mighty change that is made by the death of every person, and it is visible to us who are alive.' [139] The distance between the vitality of a living body and 'the hollownesse and dead palenesse' of a corpse can be 'perceive[d]' to be 'very great, and very strange' and, Taylor continues,

> is the portion of every man, and every woman; the heritage of worms and serpents, rottennesse and cold dishonour, and our beauty so changed that our acquaintance quickly knew us not, and that change mingled with so much horror. . . that they who six hours ago tended upon us, either with charitable or ambitious services cannot without some regret stay in the room alone where the body lies stripped of its life and Honour. [140]

The alterations that death inflicts on the body, however unwelcome a sight, are common and 'quickly' discernible.[141] Taylor's account is, in essence, an empirical one, constructed through experience, the 'hollownesse' and 'cold dishonour' 'visible and 'perceive[d]' by all. Markedly, these universal realities of death are far from a dusty affair. Following on from the early changes of

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[138] Humphrey Sydenham similarly imagines in his sermon entitled *Nature's Overthrow and Death's Triumph*, that in a grave 'thou maist behold the glory of thy ancestors, as Augustine did at Rome, that of Caesars in his sepulchre. --- An eyelesse, cheekelesse, worme-gnawne visage; nought but rottennesse, and stench, and wormes, and bones, and dust.' See Humphrey Sydenham, *Five Sermons*, p.19.

[139] Nancy Lee Beaty, *The Craft of Dying; A Study in the Literary tradition of the Ars moriendi in England* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1970), p.197, Jeremy Taylor, *The Rule and Exercise of Holy Dying* (London: printed for R. Royston,1651), p.10

[140] Taylor, *The Rule and Exercise of Holy Dying*, p.10-11.

[141] Sarah Tarlow notes the general familiarity with decaying remains in the period despite the evident horror such a scene evoked. See *Ritual, Belief and the Dead in Early Modern Britain and Ireland* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), p.3.

death, the next stage of deterioration for the posthumous body is putrefaction, 'rottenesse' and 'worms'. This unfavourable phenomenon was, for the most part, less observable: burial followed quickly so that putrefying remains were concealed beneath the earth.[142] Accordingly, for this stage of the description, Taylor moves away from observational evidence towards the anecdotal: he recalls reading a report of a German gentleman, who made allowances for a painter to visit his vault a few days after burial and 'draw the image of his death unto the life.' Depicted was 'his face half eaten, and his midriffe and back bone full of serpents.'[143] The fictionality is twofold, as not only is it a report that he has 'read', but the circumstances of death are shown through art rather than reality. Corpses in an advanced stage of decomposition, rotten and worm-eaten, were popular in funerary art in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, evidenced by the trend for *transi* or cadaver tombs, although by the seventeenth-century tastes altered and effigies replaced the corpse in funereal monuments.[144] Taylor's anecdote is thus more a demonstration of the residual influence of a then-outmoded artistic style, rather than an example of an empirical understanding of death. In endeavouring to put forth the manner of death verbally, Taylor blends both observational and artefactual evidence, and shifts indiscriminately between the two.

As noted by Sir Thomas Browne, however, vermiculation was not often discoverable in cadavers. In his discourse prompted by the newly discovered urns in Norfolk, *Urne-Buriall*, Browne momentarily diverges from the subject of cremation and shifts his focus to the particulars of buried remains:

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[142] Though unfortunate circumstances sometimes meant that a body would not be interred and left to moulder in the earth, it was the custom in early modern England for corpses to be buried in the grounds of a local church. Nigel Llewellyn notes that 'deaths by accident which left the body lost and thus never buried were of special concern' in the period. Yet, as Clare Gitting observes, 'the vast majority of people dying in England between 1558 and 1660 were buried in their local churchyard in unmarked graves, as had happened for centuries.' See Llewellyn, *The Art of Death* (London: Reaktion Books, 1991), p.35 and Gittings, 'Sacred and Secular:1558-1660', p.166. For the anxiety surrounding the process of bodily decay and the concomitant use of coffins and the practice of embalming see Tarlow, p.132-5 and Clare Gittings, *Death, Burial and the Individual in Early Modern England* (Sydney: Croom helm, 1984), p.104-5; p.114.

[143] Taylor, p.11.

[144] For discussions of the popularity of transi-tombs in the fifteenth century see, Philippe Ariès, *The Hour of Our Death (*London: Allen Lane, 1981), p.110-114; Duffy, p.306-7; Llewellyn, p.46; Peter Marshall, *Beliefs and the Dead in Reformation England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), p. 22 & 277. For the move away from cadaver iconography see Llewellyn p.134 & Ariès, p.110 & 118.

> But while we suppose common wormes in graves, 'tis not easie to finde any there; few in Church-yards above a foot deep, fewer or none in Churches, though in fresh decayed bodies. Teeth, bones, and hair, give the most lasting defiance to corruption. In an Hydropicall body ten years buried in a Church-yard, we met with a fat concretion, where the nitre of the Earth, and the salt and lixivious liquor of the body, had coagulated large lumps of fat, into the consistence of the hardest castle-soap.[145]

The assessment of the posthumous condition is one founded on Browne's own encounters, the 'Hydropicall body' he 'met' in a churchyard, and serves to correct common suppositions that lack empirical understanding. In Browne's account, many tropes of death – such as the dust and worms found in Goodman's fictional tomb – are shown to not be frequently discoverable in the grave. Rather, experience teaches that 'worms' may be discovered in the beginning stages of decay, but it is 'Teeth, bones, and hair' that 'give the most lasting defiance to corruption,' with 'lumps of fat' discoverable in certain swollen corpses.[146]

Browne possessed an unusually comprehensive and empirical understanding of cadavers, his scientific inquiries leading him to 'rak[e] into the bowells of the deceased' and to be in 'continuall sight of Anatomies, Skeletons, or Cadaverous reliques'.[147] In his experience, the condition of the body in the grave not only differed from common assumption, but was also varied and uncertain:

> bodies in the same ground do not uniformly dissolve, nor bones equally moulder; [...] The body of the Marquesse of Dorset seemed sound and handsomely cereclothed, that after seventy eight years was found uncorrupted. Common Tombs preserve not beyond powder: A firmer consistence and compage of parts might be expected from artefaction, deep burial or charcoal.

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[145] Sir Thomas Browne, '*Hydriotaphia, Urne-Buriall*' in *Religio Medici and Other Works*, ed., L.C. Martin (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1964), pp.89-125, p.109.

[146] Browne is here observing what is now known as adipocere, 'a waxy or soapy compound, sometimes referred to as 'grave wax' which is formed when body fats are converted by endogenous and bacterial enzymes into fatty acids.' See *Earthly Remains*, p.18.

[147] Browne encountered various forms of cadavers both culturally on his travels and through his studies at various institutions, including Oxford and Leiden. His investigations into the more macabre aspects of natural philosophy leads him to defend in *Religio Medici* his reputation of 'a well resolved Christian', arguing that he has not 'become stupid, or have forgot the apprehension of mortality, but that marshalling all the horrours, and contemplating the extremities thereof, I finde not any thing therein able to daunt the courage of a man'. The defence suggests how Browne's interests were not conventional for period. See Sir Thomas Browne, *Religio Medici* in *Religio Medici and Other Works*,pp.1-75, Sect. 38., p.37 and for a full account of Browne's biography see Reid Barbour*, Sir Thomas Browne: A Life* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), esp. pp. 80-1, 136-7. For the rise in anatomical investigations and the dissection culture of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, see Jonathan Sawday, *The Body Emblazoned* (London: Routledge, 1994).

The observation regarding the Marquesse, which speaks to the variability of the grave, was not Browne's own. Yet is was nevertheless sourced from a supposedly empirical account, that of William Burton, who was present when the vault was opened and who observed the undecomposed body.[148] The salient point, however, is that when considering the more 'common' places of burial, Browne exposes how the body does not simply return to dust. It is acknowledged that 'powder' and mouldered bones, crumbled to dust, do feature in ordinary graves. Yet Browne also takes into consideration the potential variants produced by environmental factors, observing that the body will be in a less pulverized state if it experiences 'artefaction, deep burial or charcoal.'

Decades earlier, the varying procedures and products of putrefaction also concerned the natural philosopher Francis Bacon, the primary spokesperson for empirical enquiry in the seventeenth century. In his investigations into putrefaction, Bacon discovers that when already purified matter such as dung is added to a body, it accelerates the process. This, he remarks, is 'notably seene in Church-yards, where they bury much; Where the Earth will consume the Corps, in farre shorter time, than other Earth will.'[149] Earth made up of decomposed bodies speeds up the process of decay, demonstrating how variable the decomposition of a cadaver can be, depending on its environment. In sum, both Bacon and Browne's description of the grave demonstrates that for writers committed to observation, the condition of death is far more diverse than the topoi and tropes of death would imply. Accounts of deceased bodies do not depict a neat pulverised heap, but rather variable and persistent forms of matter – fat, bones, the Marquesse of Dorset – defying the simplistic designation of 'dust'.

In an era of increasing empiricism, several early modern writers in the Baconian vein were deeply curious about putrefaction, and invested in rare opportunities to establish facts about the

[148] Browne acknowledges Burton in the marginal notes to this passage. In the original, Burton relates that he was present in the vault when the coffin was opened in 1608, and observed that despite the 'whole body having lyen there by the space of 78 yeares. . . [there was] found nothing corrupted, the flesh of the body nothing perished or hardened, but in colour, proportion and softnesse, alike to any ordinary corpses newly to be interred.' See William Burton, *The Description of Leicestershire* (London: 1622), p.51.
[149] Francis Bacon, *Sylva Sylvarum* (London: Printed for W. Lee, 1627), p.89

dissolution of corpses. Indeed, despite the veneration of uncorrupted corpses having an air of popery, bodies that defied decay were documented with relish.[150] In a similar inquisitive vein to Browne's account of the Marquesse of Dorset's uncorrupted body, John Aubrey in his *Brief Lives* details an incident when the monument of the early Renaissance churchman John Colet was broken open by Great Fire of London:

> after the Conflagation, (his Monument being broken) his coffin of which was Lead, was full of liquor which conserved the body. Mr Wyld and Ralph Greatorex tasted it, and 'twas of a kind of an insipid taste, something of an Ironish taste the body felt (as to the probe of a stick which they thrust in to a chinke) like Brawne.[151]

The experience is immersive, engaging not only the key sense of observation – that of sight – but of taste and touch as well, the men sampling the insipid liquor and prodding the pickled mass. Samuel Pepys also participated in a more tactile form of experiencing posthumous remains in his visit to the tombs at Westminster Abbey. Pepys records in his diary the delight of kissing the parched corpse of Queen Katherine of Valois, which was centuries old yet still partially intact: '[I] had her upper part of her body in my hands. And I did kiss her mouth, reflecting upon it that I did kiss a Queen.'[152]

These encounters with and experimental inquiries into putrefied remains serve not only to demonstrate how certain writers with macabrely inclined curiosities possessed a perceptive comprehension of the variable constitution of death. It also reveals the gulf between the discursive and meditative consideration of death, and the physical reality: dust is a commonplace trope of posthumous remains and yet these accounts very rarely, if at all, mention pulverized matter. Dust as a designation of the dead body thus hovers between the figurative and the real: it is simultaneously the proper name, as eventually everything moulders down to powder, yet it is also

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[150] Phillip Schwyzer notes the commonality of reports of uncorrupted bodies in the later middle ages and the 'miraculous significance of the phenomenon'. See *Archaeologies of English Renaissance Literature*, p.45-5 & p.52.
[151] John Aubrey, *Brief Lives with An Apparatus for the Lives of our English Mathematical Writers*, ed., Kate Bennett, Vol.1, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), p.652.
[152] Samuel Pepys, *The Diary of Samuel Pepys:* eds., Robert Latham and William Matthews, vol. 9., (London: Harper Collins, 1971), p. 456-7.

figurative, signifying the interim of non-dusty putrefaction, arefaction, liquification, vermiculation, bones, hair, and lumps of fat.

ii The Figurative Dustiness of Death

The prominence and particularity of dust as a verbal sign for the posthumous condition is thrown into relief when set against the period's visual depictions of death. In Renaissance art, bone is the emblem of mortality, skulls and skeletons commonplace in paintings in the *memento mori* vein.[153] In the well-known woodcuts of Hans Holbein, which mark the beginning of the tradition, death always, notes Nigel Llewellyn, 'takes the form of a skeleton – a transitional and corrupted form of the natural body.'[154] Skulls were a common trope of *vanitas* art, the 17th-century Dutch genre of still-life painting that incorporated symbols of death or mutability designed to exhort the viewer to meditate on the inevitability of mortality.

Skeletal remains were a familiar and observable product of death: the problem of overcrowded graves in urban areas meant that bones were continually being dug up and displaced.[155] 'Gravestones', notes Browne in *Urne-Buriall*, 'scarce tell the truth forty years,' whilst earlier in the seventeenth-century Donne similarly laments in a sermon preached at St Dunstan's how 'almost every Grave is oppressed with twins . . . the dead were buried, and thrown up again before they were resolved to dust, to make room for more.'[156] Donne's remark highlights the

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153 As Phillip Aries has observed, this marks a cultural shift in the imagery of death: 'The dried-out skeleton, the *morte secca* so common in the seventeenth and even in the eighteenth century, does not belong to the iconography characteristic of the fourteenth to sixteenth centuries, which is dominated by repellent images of corruption.' See *The Hour of Our Death* (London: Allen Lane, 1981), p.110. For a discussion of this shift see also Michael Neill, *Issues of Death* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1997), p.66-7.

154 Llewellyn, p.23-6. For Holbein's repeated use of the skeleton to depict death see *The Dance of Death*, ed., Ulinka Rublack (London: Penguin Books, 2016), p.7-92. For further discussion of this emblem see William E. Engel, *Death and Drama in Renaissance England: Shades of Memo*ry (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), Ariès, p.118 and Neill, p.51-101.

155 See F.P. Wilson, *The Plague in Shakespeare's London* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1927), p. 43; Ralph Houlbrooke, *Death, Religion and the Family in England 1480-1750* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), p.334-5; Neill, p.19 -22; Schwyzer, p.111, Keith Thomas*, The Ends of Life* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), p.262.

156 Sir Thomas Browne, '*Hydriotaphia, Urne-Buriall*', p120. John Donne, *Sermons*, ed. G.R Potter and E.M. Simpson (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1953-62), vol.6, p.362. Subsequent references are to this edition, unless otherwise specified. See also John Aubrey: 'Our bones consecrated ground never lie quiet, and in London once in ten years (or thereabout) the earth is carried to the dung-wharf', see Aubrey, *Monumenta Britannica,* annot. Rodney Legg, ed. John Fowles (Sherborne: Dorset Publishing Company, 1980), p.710.

temporality of dissolution and dust's place on this scale: dust *is* the final resolution of the corporeal form, yet it takes time which circumstance prevents.

Skulls and skeletons were thus representative of the posthumous condition, and held creative potency in the visual arts. Rose Marie San Juan, commenting on the *Vanitas* tradition, notes that:

> bones, due to their enduring properties, not only remain after death but also convey a sense of wholeness and containment that gives them the semblance of presence. . . The skull thus becomes a key transit point between life and death, both the furthest point before complete material disappearance and oblivion, and the closest point from which one might imagine being looked at from the other side.[157]

San Juan's general point is correct: skeletons are a vestige of the human form. The skull in particular gives an artificial sense of recognition that delivers only an empty one-way exchange, a vacant stare reflecting back at the expectant observer. The penultimate emblem of Geoffrey Whitney's popular work *A Choice of Emblemes* comprises of a skull and scattered bones, which, as the Latin Title, *Ex Maximo Minimum*, signals, depicts death's capacity to diminish the paragon of animals to the least of forms.[158] This commonplace of death is reinforced by the accompanying verse, which relates how the head, once blessed 'with sighte, with smell, with hearinge, and with taste' in death becomes an insensate fragment, a 'skull, both rotten, bare, and drye | A relike meete in charnell house to lye'.[159] The image of skull, observes William Engel, 'has no voice of its own but manages to speak to us about our mortality through the emblem, figured as a resonant echo from beyond the grave.'[160] The skull's evocation of resonance is notable, as it is precisely this capacity for skeletal remains to retain a trace, however slight, of character that mark them out distinctly from dust. As Chapter Seven will discuss in greater detail, dust encompasses for writers like John Donne utter oblivion in a way that bone, with its vestige of the human form, does not.

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[157] Rose Marie San Juan, 'The Turn of the Skull: Andreas Vesalius and the Early Modern Memento Mori', *Art History*, vol. 35., (2012), pp.958-97, p.960.
[158] As William Engel notes, this emblem was a commonplace of death. See *Death and Drama in Renaissance England,* p.14. The emblem was taken from Barthélémy Aneau's *Picta poesis* (1552).
[159] Geffrey Whitney, *A Choice of Emblemes* (Leiden: Printed by Francis Raphelengius, 1586), p. 229m
[160] Engel, p.18.

Thus, Juan's observation requires qualification, as whilst skulls and bone convey the loss of self in death, they are not 'the furthest point before complete material disappearance and oblivion': that definition must be reserved for dust.

It is more that skeletal remains mark the least point of human existence that can be portrayed through visual images. Yet when it comes to the medium of language, a greater minimum can be expressed through the figure of dust. Indeed, in Whitney's *Choice of Emblemes*, whilst the skull is the emblem of death, throughout the work the language used to depict the posthumous condition is dust.[161] The emblems display no dusty heaps, but the verses tell how death 'into dust dothe turne us all alike' and that even the famous Nestor and Homer 'to dust are broughte', as are Monarchs and Princes, who shall 'at lengthe to turne to duste.'[162] Similarly, in an anonymous 1604 broadside entitled *The Map of Mortalitie*, an image of the skull is dominant, holding centre page. However, in the accompanying verse, there is no mention of bones. Rather, dust is used to figure forth the posthumous condition. In clear echoes of both Genesis 3.19 and the Burial Service, in which, through repetition, the body is said to rehearse its original, the verse relates that 'dust will to dust, as thou art once were wee' and 'man made of dust, to dust must turne againe'. Whilst bone may best convey the condition of death in visual culture, as both Whitney's *Emblemes* and the anonymous broadside demonstrate, dust dominates in the verbal medium. Ultimately, skulls and skeletons, whilst familiar products of death, did not have the same scriptural authority as dust: the primacy the reformed church placed on the word inevitably meant that the verbal and figurative trends within the Bible would hold sway in a discursive context, even against observational evidence and experience. Even in texts where the condition of the posthumous body is informed by more empirical habits of thought, the trope of dust is prominent: while Taylor knows posthumous remains to be comprised of varying stages of 'rottenesse', in *The Rule and Exercise of Holy Dying* he later asserts that 'I know not any thing that can better represent . . . a changing

[161] Skulls are also the image of death in the emblem entitled *Varij hominum sensus*. See p.46.
[162] Whitney, *A Choice of Emblemes*, p.68, p.167, p.225.

greatnesse' than 'a little heap of dust', proposing that in life man may achieve 'the greatest secular dignity', but in death they are diminished to merely 'dust, and ashes', pulverized matter proving to be utmost expression of the posthumous condition.

The figurative sense of dust prevails over the literal: Taylor is not taking into account the process of decay, but instead imaginatively overleaps that stage and reaches for the figure of dust. At this point in his text, Taylor is concerned with emphasising the baseness of mankind, the diminishment of 'greatnesse' in death, and it is for this reason that the figure of dust is used by Taylor: dust cannot be said to accurately convey all stages of death, but it does signal the degrading, base condition of the bodily remains, and it is this, as ensuing chapters will discuss, that drew many writers towards using the figure of dust. Before moving on to this matter, however, the following chapter will provide one further philological study. We have seen how dust was invested with theological textures, and how its metaphoricity holds a certain level of ambiguity. What will now be considered is the way in which natural philosophy invested a certain meaning in dust, specifically investigating the supposed synonymity between dust and the building blocks of the universe – atoms.

CHAPTER THREE: DUSTY ATOMS

I my life near spill
With sorrow and disdain, for that foul lore
That crept from dismall shades of Night, and quill
Steep'd in sad Styx, and fed with stinking gore
Suckt from corrupted corse, that God and men abhorre.

Such is thy putid muse, Lucretius,
That fain would teach that souls all mortall be,
The dusty Atoms of Democritus
Certes have fall'n into thy feeble eye,
And thee bereft of perspicacity.[163]

In his poem concerning the immortality of the soul, the Cambridge Platonist Henry More attributes the descriptor 'dusty' to the invisible, indivisible particles that were the central tenet of Epicurean philosophy.[164] The image of 'dusty atoms' prepares for the pun in the ensuing line, in which More draws on a well-known Latin proverb – *pulverem oculis offundere* – to illustrate how the teachings of Lucretius and Democritus obscure a proper understanding of the immaterial soul, such as a dust mote in the eye would obscure sight.[165] This affinity between dust and atoms – in which the former can define the latter – is indicative of a trend in the seventeenth-century. Yet the source of this trend has been oversimplified by current criticism, which ignores nuances in how the European Renaissance received its understanding of atomism through fragments of ancient philosophical writing, and how those various fragments each presented distinct ideas about the relation between dust motes and atoms. Cassandra Gorman, for example, has recently identified 'the fashion of atoms becoming conflated with dust motes' in the civil war era, to which Henry

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[163] Henry More, 'The Argument of Psychathanasia or The Immortality of the Soul' in *Philosophical Poems* (Cambridge: Printed by Roger Daniel, 1647), p.74

[164] More was a Cambridge Platonist who criticised materialist philosophy throughout his life, although he ascribed to a form of what Stephen Fallon terms a 'redefined atomism'. See Stephen M. Fallon, *Milton Among the Philosophers* (Ithaca: Cornell University, 1991), pp.50-78. Furthermore, Gerard Passannante has observed how More was engaged not in the atomist content of *De rerum natura*, but in the pervasive influence of Lucretius poetics. See Gerard Passannante, *The Lucretian Renaissance* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011), pp. 185-97.

[165] The maxim was included in Erasmus' Adages, in which he explains that 'a man is said to throw dust in someone's eyes who of set purpose makes a question difficult and deprives his adversary of the means of solving it' (II.ix.43). See *Collected Works of Erasmus: Adages II vii 1 to III iii 100*, trans. R.A.B. Mynors, vol., 34 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992), p.106-7 and Morris Palmer Tilley, *A Dictionary of the Proverbs in England in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1950), p.176.

More's 'dusty atoms' attest. However, whilst the point is valid, Gorman cites the second book of Lucretius's *De rerum natura* as 'the greatest influence' on this phenomenon.[166] In this atomistic poem, dust motes are a striking image used by the Roman writer to figure forth the behaviour of invisible atoms. Yet, as this chapter will go on to discuss, in the image put forth by Lucretius, the 'many minute particles mingling in . . . the [sun's] rays' are only *likened* to atomic activity. This does not, therefore, explain the extent to which atoms and dust were considered to be equivalent in meaning during the period.[167] Whilst the previous chapter was concerned with whether dust functioned figurately or literally, what is of issue here is the relation between metaphor, simile, and equation, and where dust sits in these modes of expression in relation to the atom. Accordingly, this chapter will delve further into how sixteenth and seventeenth centuries thought and wrote about the association between dust and atoms. This was a period during which the vocabulary of natural philosophy was shifting, as corpuscularian matter theory was gaining approval over the previously dominant Aristotelian theory of substances and qualities that had informed Medieval and early Renaissance scholasticism.[168] First, however, this chapter will investigate the history of

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[166] Cassandra Gorman, 'Poetry and Atomism in the Civil War and Restoration', *Literature Compass*, 13, (2016), pp.560–571, p.568 & 565

[167] 'multa minuta modis multis per inane videbis | corpora misceri radiorum lumine in ipso'. See Lucretius, *De rerum natura,* ed. and trans. W. H. D. Rouse, rev. Martin F. Smith, 2nd edn. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992), II.116-7, p.104-5. Subsequent references are to this edition.

[168] Aristotelian physics held dominance because it had been successfully synthesised with Christianity: as Catherine Wilson has stated, 'theology had adopted many useful concepts from Aristotle and Plato, notably the long-lived scheme of matter and form, efficient and final causes, and the participation of earthly things in a supramundane reality, but Epicureanism was not capable of assimilation in the same way.' Yet, in in the seventeenth century, Aristotelian theories began to lose traction: as Wilson notes, 'the anthropomorphic and vitalistic elements of Aristotelianism – its four causes, its teleology, its powers and virtues conceived on analogy with human dispositions – were expunged.' See Catherine Wilson, *Epicureanism at the Origins of Modernity* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2008), p.4 and *The Invisible World*, p.16. It is beyond the scope of this chapter to survey conceptions and the according vocabulary of minute matter in the seventeenth century. Nevertheless, it is important to note that the Aristotelian world view that had held sway in the previous centuries did have a partial correlate for the atom in *minima naturalia,* although, as Christoph Meinel explains, they were by no means equivalent terms: 'the doctrine of *minima naturalia* . . . provided a concept of small, qualitatively different parts of matter that related more closely to experience than did the atoms of the ancients. The minima, however, were not mechanical particles and could not simply be translated into corpuscular terms.' See "Early Seventeenth-Century Atomism: Theory, Epistemology, and the Insufficiency of Experiment." *Isis,* vol.79 (1988), pp. 68–103, p.70-1. To my knowledge, this *minima naturalia* did not share the same synonymity with and equivalence to dust that atoms did, and therefore is not of relevance to this thesis. For a further discussion of *minima naturalia* and its relation to the atom see John E. Murdoch, 'The Medieval and Renaissance Tradition of Minima Naturalia' in *Late Medieval and Early Modern Corpuscular Matter Theories*, ed. Christoph Lüthy, John E. Murdoch, and William R. Newman (Leiden: Brill, 2001), p.91 – 131 and Antonio Clericuzio, *Elements, Principles, and Corpuscles: A Study of Atomism and Chemistry in The Seventeenth Century* (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 2001), p.9 - 33.

the image, examining how the fragments of Epicurean philosophy that survived in popular philosophical writings worked to conflate the atoms and dust prior to the English revival of Epicurus' teaching. Importantly, it will distinguish how ancient Greek philosophers, such as Democritus and Epicurus, handled the image of dusty atoms in a manner distinct from the Roman poet Lucretius. The chapter will then move on to consider how the early modern period received these ideas, examining how dictionaries and scientific writing fixed the synonymity of dust and atoms in the English language and assaying the extent to which Lucretius' image shaped the period's understanding of dusty atoms and influenced writers' figures of speech.

i The Dustiness of Grecian Atoms

Ancient atomic philosophy held that everything in existence is comprised of atoms, matter in its most minute and indivisible state, and void, the empty space in which the infinitesimal bodies moved. The creation of the earth occurred through the chance collision of these atoms, an aleatory swerve that engendered the contingency of elemental particles and thus the formation of the material world. It was rooted in the teachings of certain pre-Socratic philosophers, Democritus, Leucippus, and Epicurus: the former two founded the theory in fifth century BC, whilst the last developed the principles of atomism in his own philosophy a few generations later, in the late fourth and early third century BC.[169] Their philosophy survived antiquity, but only in fragmentary form. The main mediator of their ideas to the Renaissance was a Latin poet named Lucretius, writing two centuries later. His didactic epic poem *De rerum natura* explicated Epicurean philosophy in verse, which sought 'the right words and the right poetry to light | Brilliant lanterns for your mind' (I.143-4). The philosophy of Democritus, Leucippus and Epicurus were thus indirect contributors to the revival of atomism in the Renaissance. The usual critical line is that most of

[169] A. A. Long, D. N. Sedley, *The Hellenistic Philosophers,* Vol.1., (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), p.504.

what was known about the atomic theories of the Greek philosophers came via Lucretius.[170] However, there were other routes, often neglected in scholarship. Epicurus in particular had a separate influence, which gives rise to a subtly different story about the dustiness of atoms. The following discussion will therefore briefly survey the distinct paths taken on the one hand by the atomistic philosophy of Democritus, Leucippus and Epicurus, and, on the other, by Lucretius' *De rerum natura*, before moving on to how their works differently handle the image of dust.

Lucretius began to influence the intellectual consciousness of Renaissance Europe when a manuscript of *De rerum natura* was discovered by Poggio Bracciolini in 1417. The poem had previously been unknown, as whilst it had been alluded to by familiar writers such as Virgil, and Lucretius' name and his association with atomism was certainly recognised by some medieval philosophers, the text itself had nevertheless sunk into obscurity during the Middle Ages.[171] The extent to which Lucretius' newly discovered poem influenced the European Renaissance and the manner in which it was received is complex. On the one hand, its content, which denied the action of an omnipotent God in creation, was considered impious and made *De rerum natura* a volatile work.[172] On the other, the humanist interest in classical languages made the text an intriguing study. In recent criticism on the matter, the extent to which it influenced the period's thinking has been contended. Stephen Greenblatt has sensationally argued that with the discovery of this text 'the world swerved in a new direction,' yet as David Norbrook has recently summarized, it has been argued that Lucretius 'was not really "discovered" in 1417; nor did his natural philosophy

[170] Out of these three, Leucippus is the least established. For his relative anonymity see Bertrand Russell, *History of Western Philosophy*, 2nd ed., (London: Routledge, 2000), p.71-2. With regards to the influence of Lucretius on disseminating Epicurean ideas, Ada Palmer notes that Lucretius introduced to Renaissance humanists the details of atomistic physics and demonstrated how central they are to the moral philosophy of Epicureanism. See *Reading Lucretius in the Renaissance* (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2014), p.20.

[171] For the Middle Ages' engagement with Lucretius, see Christophe Grellard, Aurélien Robert, eds., *Atomism in Late Medieval Philosophy and Theology* (Leiden: Brill, 2009), p.2. For the role of Virgil in the transmission of Lucretius see Passannante, *The Lucretian Renaissance*, p. 18-77 and on the influence of Lucretius on Virgil see Philip Hardie, *Lucretian Receptions,* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010). For a succinct survey of the afterlife and influence of *De rerum natura* in Europe from antiquity to seventeenth century, see David Butterfield, 'Lucretius in the Early Modern Period: Texts and Contexts' in *Lucretius and the Early Modern,* eds., David Norbrook et al (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), pp.45-68.

[172] Palmer, p. 4-6.

adumbrate modern science; nor did it precipitate a wave of atheism; nor is there good evidence that his poem did sweep Europe'.[173] What is clear, however, is that the newly re-discovered *De rerum natura* did generate interest in learned circles across Europe. As Ada Palmer has observed, 'Fifty-four surviving manuscripts and thirty print editions of the poem were produced between 1417 and 1600', which enjoyed 'extensive circulation.'[174] It can be said, therefore, that the fifteenth century marks the return of *De rerum natura* to European scholarship, even if it did not cause the intellectual waves that Greenblatt claims. David Norbrook summarises the phenomenon succinctly: 'something new came into the world in 1417. But its reception was fascinatingly and unusually problematic.'[175]

This 'problematic' reception means that pinpointing the influence of Lucretius' *De rerum natura* on the writing, particularly the early seventeenth-century writing, of the English Renaissance is not straightforward, nor is it simple to extricate it from that of Epicurus's works. As the poem's translation history makes clear, by the mid-seventeenth century there was a discernible literary – that is, distinct from scientific – interest in Lucretius' *De rerum natura*. Although a complete English translation of the poem was not in print until Thomas Creech's edition of 1682, John Evelyn published an English translation of the first book in 1656. Lucy Hutchinson rendered the poem into her native tongue in the 1650s, and there exists an anonymous prose translation, likely to have been composed in the 1660s, although both remained unpublished.[176] The translation of a Classical text marked, amongst other things, an acquisition and assimilation of that text into English culture:[177] as Stuart Gillespie remarks 'a classical text, author or even genre is felt to have been definitively acquired for the anglophone world once successful translations have become

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[173] Stephen Greenblatt, *The Swerve: How the Renaissance Began* (London: Vintage, 2012), p.11; David Norbrook, 'Introduction' in *Lucretius and the Early Modern*, pp.1-27, p.2.
[174] Palmer, p.4.
[175] David Norbrook, 'Introduction', *Lucretius and the Early Modern* pp. 1-28, p.6.
[176] For a discussion of the likely date of Hutchinson's composition see Lucy Hutchinson, *The Works of Lucy Hutchinson: The Translation of Lucretius, Part 1, Introduction and Text, eds., Reid Barbour, David Norbrook,* vol.1 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), p. xix – xlii and for the probable date of the anonymous translation see Butterfield, p.62-3.
[177] For a succinct critical overview of the variegation in the purpose of translation, see Sheldon Brammall, *The English Aeneid: Translations of Virgil, 1555-1646* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2015), p.5.

available'.[178] Thus, the mid to late seventeenth century English translations of *De rerum natura* mark a significant literary engagement with the text. However, the poem was shaping the literary landscape many decades before this surge in English translations, owing to the availability of Latin editions, although its impact is harder to trace.[179] The anti-Epicurean polemic evident in sixteenth-century England demonstrates somewhat of a cultural awareness of the Roman poet: in the English translation of Calvin's *Institution*, 'the blasphemous sayings of the filthy dogge Lucretius,' are condemned, yet nevertheless the name appears.[180]

However, this denouncement, and others like it, do not demonstrate literary engagement with *De rerum natura*, and nor do they distinguish Lucretius from the atomic philosophers he is espousing. As Adam Rzepka has observed, distinctions between Lucretius and Epicurus are difficult to perceive in the sixteenth century 'because Epicureanism in general is most visible as the object of sweeping, virulent accusations of intellectual lassitude, sensual decadence, and outrageous heresy.'[181] However, in the decades before the more pronounced rehabilitation of *De rerum natura* in the 1650s, specific literary engagement with Lucretius' writing is apparent. Spenser translated sections of the work in his *Faerie Queene* and *De rerum natura* was recognised by the scientific thinkers of the Northumberland Circle, headed by the so-called Wizard Earl, Henry Percy, which consorted with eminent writers such as John Donne, Walter Ralegh and Francis Bacon.[182] Lucretius also acquired recognition through Montaigne, whose widely read *Essais*, translated into English by John Florio in 1603, contained extensive citations of *De rerum natura*.[183] As Stuart Gillespie has noted, 'while it may be true that Lucretius had had less impact on English

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[178] Stuart Gillespie, *English Translation and Classical Reception: Towards a New Literary History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), p.10.
[179] For a discussion of the availability of Lucretius' *De rerum natura* in mid to late sixteenth century Europe, see Palmer, p.206 -210. Montaigne, for example, read the Latin, as did Ben Jonson. See Greenblatt, *The Swerve*, p. 243.
[180] Jean Calvin, *The Institution of Christian Religion,* p.8.
[181] Adam Rzepka, 'Discourse Ex Nihilo: Epicurus and Lucretius in Sixteenth-Century England' in *Dynamic Reading: Studies in the Reception of Epicureanism,* eds., Brooke Holmes, Brooke, W.H. Shearin (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), pp.113 – 132, p.121.
[182] Stuart Gillespie, 'Lucretius in the English Renaissance' in *The Cambridge Companion to Lucretius,* eds., Stuart Gillespie, Philip Hardie (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), pp.242-253, p.246-7; Rzepka pp.125 – 131.
[183] For a transcription and study of Montaigne's annotated copy of Lucretius, see M. A. Screech, *Montaigne's Annotated Copy of Lucretius* (Geneva: Librairie Droz S.A., 1998).

writers than any other major Latin poet by 1650, he had been read and appreciated by an important minority,' including distinguished figures such as Edmund Spenser, George Chapman, John Donne and Ben Jonson.[184] Ultimately, although it cannot be said that Lucretius was an accepted literary figure at the start of seventeenth-century, and distinctions must be made between attendance to the poetic qualities of *De rerum natura* and reactionary diatribe against its atomic content, it is useful for the ensuing discussion to borrow Gerard Passannate's phrase, and generalise that Lucretius was "in the [English] air" at the start of the century.[185]

Although the fate of Epicurus' and Democritus' atomic materialism were entwined with *De rerum natura*, their philosophy was also known through a variety of other sources. In antiquity, atomism endured through Diogenes Laertius' *Lives of the Philosophers*, which contained accounts of Democritus and Epicurus; Plutarch's *Moralia*; and in certain works of Cicero, including *On the Nature of the Gods*, the *Tusculan Disputations*, and *On Ends*. Knowledge of the philosophy survived through disparaging discussions by the early Church Fathers, including Augustine, Lactantius, Arnobius, Ambrose, and Jerome.[186] Like Lucretius, Epicurus was discussed by medieval philosophers but faded into obscurity. An important reason lay behind this decline of Epicurus' infamy: in the thirteenth century there arrived a new Latin translation of Aristotle's texts on natural philosophy and thus, as Christophe Grellard and Aurélien Robert have observed, 'Epicurus and Lucretius were no longer the protagonists when people dealt with the nature and function of atoms, as both were progressively replaced by Democritus, to whom Aristotle devoted many passages in the *Physics*, the *De generatione et corruptione* and *De caelo*.'[187] The centrality of Aristotelian physics in the Middle Ages and the early Renaissance meant that although Aristotle refuted atomism, his discussions of it are, as we shall see, important sources.[188]

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[184] Gillespie, pp.242-253.
[185] *The Lucretian Renaissance,* Passannante, p.158.
[186] Wilson, p.13-14.
[187] Grellard & Robert, p.5.
[188] As Christoph Meinel notes 'Aristotle's consistent refutation of [atomism] . . . became an integral part of every scholar's training in philosophy.' See Meinel, p.70.

The fifteenth century saw not only the rediscovery of *De rerum natura*, but in the 1420s and 1430s Diogenes Laertius' *Lives* was translated into Latin, providing a less hostile account of atomism.[189] With the increased availability of material on Epicurean atomism, scientific interest in the philosophy simmered in Europe in the subsequent century. By the end of 1500s, the beginnings of a revival in atomic materialism could be felt in England, and was much more discernible than that of the concurrent literary engagement with Lucretius *De rerum natura*. The scientific discourse of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century showed a growing interest atomic theory, particularly in the writing of natural philosophers associated with Henry Percy, ninth earl of Northumberland.[190] One such associate was Thomas Harriot, whose work had a significant impact on scientific thinking in the seventeenth-century.[191] Notably, his understanding of atomism did not come from a single text, but rather he was influenced by miscellany of sources, including Diogenes.[192] The understanding of atomism was not dependent solely on the poetics of Lucretius. By the mid-seventeenth-century, atomic theory became far more widely accepted by scholars of natural philosophy: in his work *Animadversiones* (1649) Pierre Gassendi removed the impiety implicit in the ideas of Democritus, Epicurus and Lucretius, and through Walter Charleton, who translated the work in 1654, this more palatable form of atomism became accessible in English. Gassendi's atomism was also not influenced derived from Lucretius. Sources other than *De rerum Natura* were at play: as Walter Charleton writes, through 'the rhapsodies of Plutarch and Diogenes Laertius, [Gassend] hath built up the despised Epicurus again, into one of the most profound, temperate, and voluminous among Philosophers.'[193]

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[189] For a more detailed overview of the reception of Epicureanism in Renaissance Europe see Palmer, p.15-20 and Wilson, p.15-20.

[190] Stephen Clucas, 'Corpuscular Theory in the Northumberland Circle', *Late Medieval and Early Modern Corpuscular Matter Theories*, pp. 181-208, p.181.

[191] For Harriot's influence see Robert Hugh Kargon, *Atomism in England from Harriot to Newton* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), p.31 -42.

[192] As Kargon observes, Harriot was 'familiar with the atomism of Giordano Bruno, Hero of Alexandria, Lucretius. . . and Diogenes'. See *Atomism in England*, p.24.

[193] Walter Charleton, *Physiologia Epicuro-Gassendo-Charltoniana* (London: Printed by Tho. Newcomb, 1654), p.4. The *Animadversiones* contains a translation of Book X on Epicurus from Diogenes *Lives*. See Pierre Gassendi, *Animadversiones in Decimum Librum Diogenis Laertii*, 3 vols. (Lyons: Guillaume Barbier, 1649) and Diogenes Laertius,

This sketch of the various ways in which the embers of atomism dimly glowed from its inception in Ancient Greece to its restoration to mainstream natural philosophy by Gassendi is significant here because it shows that Lucretius cannot always be assumed to be behind literary allusions to Epicurean philosophy and that there is a broader scope of atomistic material to draw from. And thus, although Barbour has observed that the early seventeenth-century 'lacked a systematic understanding of the relations between Democritus, Epicurus and Lucretius', there are distinctions to be made.[194] With regards to the relation between atoms and dust, there are marked differences between Lucretius' poetic treatment of them and the mentions of them in the fragments of atomistic philosophy. Accordingly, the following discussion will consider the synonymity between dust and atoms, but taking in account the variegation of atomistic sources.

ii *Dust Motes in the Sun*

It is in Book II of *De rerum natura* that particles of dust appear in Lucretius' atomistic imagery. In line with Epicurean philosophy, the poem proposes that the world consists only of atoms and void, which are in continual motion as 'the first bodies have nowhere to rest, since space is without end or limit'.[195] Lucretius provides a model for this ceaseless movement of indiscernible atoms:

> Of this fact there is, I recall, an image and similitude always moving and present before our eyes. Do but apply your scrutiny whenever the sun's rays are let in and pour their light through dark room: you will see many minute particles mingling in many ways throughout the void in the light itself of the rays, and as it were in everlasting conflict struggling, fighting, battling in troops without any pause, driven about with frequent meetings and partings; so that you may conjecture from this what it is for the first-beginnings of things to be ever tossed about in the great void. So far as it goes, a small thing may give an analogy of great things, and show the tracks of knowledge (II.112-125).[196]

Lives of the Eminent Philosophers, trans. R. D. Hicks, 2 vols. (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1925), p.528 – 677.

[194] Barbour, p.23.

[195] 'neque habere ubi corpora prima | consistant, quoniam spatium sine fine modoquest.' II.91-92, p.102-3.

[196] Cuius, uti memoror, rei simulacrum et imago
ante oculos semper nobis versatur et instat.
contemplator enim, cum solis lumina cumque
inserti fundunt radii per opaca domorum:
multa minuta modis multis per inane videbis
corpora misceri radiorum lumine in ipso
et velut aeterno certamine proelia pugnas

In this image dust motes are used to visualise the vibrancy of atomic activity for the reader. The 'many minute particles' perceptible only by the illumination of sunlight are an analogy of the invisible seeds that make up the material world and their movement. As John Digby puts it in his eighteenth-century commentary on this passage, Lucretius 'turns into an Argument the Similitude,'[197] the validity of his reasoning reliant on the semblance between dusty flecks and elemental bodies. It is significant that it is an analogy, for it is a poetic way of imagining what is happening at the level of the imperceptible; a tool to think with, and not an equation. Lucretius's method of argument was not exceptional, but rather part of a rhetorical practice amongst ancient philosophers, best expressed by Anaxagoras' axiom that 'visible things are the mirror of the invisible.'[198] According to the reports of Sextus Empiricus, Democritus commended this saying and, as Geoffrey Lloyd notes, in his own writing 'Democritus used visible phenomena to provide a "vision", that is an understanding, of things that are, by nature, invisible.'[199] In Lucretius' simile, therefore, the influence of Democritus' method of tackling the limitations of knowledge may be discerned. However, the image itself, in which dust motes are used to provide a vision of atomic activity, is possibly of Lucretius' own making: in the surviving fragments of Democritus' works, there is no evidence that he uses the image of dust as an analogy for the imperceptible movement of atoms.[200] Lucretius' use of this commended rhetorical practice proved to be a component

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edere turmatim certantia nec dare pausam,
conciliis et discidiis exercita crebris;
conicere ut possis ex hoc, primordia rerum
quale sit in magno iactari semper inani.
dumtaxat rerum magnarum parva potest
res exemplare dare et vestigia notitiai.
Ibid., (II.112-125), p.102-4

197 T. Lucretius Carus, *Of the Nature of Things, in Six Books, Translated into English Verse; by Tho: Creech…. Explained and Illustrated with Notes and Animadversions,* 2 vols. [ed. John Digby] (London: Printed by J. Matthews, 1714).

198 P. H. Schrijvers, 'Seeing the Invisible: A Study of Lucretius' Use of Analogy in *De rerum natura*' in *Oxford Readings in Classical Studies: Lucretius,* ed., Monica R. Gale (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), pp.255-288, p.255.

199 Geoffrey Lloyd, *Polarity and Analogy: Two Types of Argumentation in Early Greek Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p.338 & p.340.

200 It is reported, however, by Seneca, that Democritus 'illustrated his theory of winds by drawing a comparison with a crowded market-place, his theory of winds being that they are caused by a whole multitude of atoms jostling together in a confined space.' See Lloyd, p.340.

essential to the eventual success of the philosophy he was advocating: his display of 'tracks of knowledge' contributed to the approval of corpuscularianism in the seventeenth century, as 'the persuasive appeal of the pictorial scheme supplied by Lucretius's poetic imagery,' notes Meinel, 'offered an immediately convincing way of picturing material processes on the basis of everyday experience within the visible world.'[201]

Yet the vision of dust motes swarming in the sun not only works to analogise the motion of atoms, but also encompasses a secondary paradigm for the atomic world. Lucretius theorizes that 'these bodies which are seen to be in turmoil within the sun's rays . . . indicates that there are secret and unseen motions . . . hidden in matter.' These imperceptible impulsions, Lucretius is certain, originate from primordial bodies, and thus it is conceived that:

> the movement ascends from the first-beginnings and by successive degrees emerges upon our senses, so that those bodies also are moved which we are able to perceive in the sun's light, yet it does not openly appear by what blows they are made to do so.[202]

In this second example Lucretius uses dust particles to demonstrate the unseen origins of motion: the continual circulation of the motes has no clear impetus, allowing Lucretius to theorize that the impulsion occurs at an atomic level that is not apparent to the senses. What is more, they subtly convey the varying degrees of perceptibility: themselves undiscernible without the aid of the sun's rays, the motes break down the assumption that only that which can be observed holds vitality. Notably, dust is used more than as a similitude to the atomic world. As P. H. Schrijvers has observed, Lucretius' use of motes moving in a ray of sunlight 'demonstrates that an image drawn from the visible world may serve at the same time as both an analogue for (*simulacrum et imago*, 2.112) and a manifestation of (*exemplare*, 2, 2.124 . . .) the atomic processes and forces which it illustrates.'[203] The image of airborne dust is thus a potent device in Lucretius' explication of atomism. The multitude of minute bodies [*multa minuta . . . corpora*] provide the perfect likeness of

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[201] Meinel, p.103.
[202] Lucretius, II.125-141.
[203] Schrijvers, p.256.

the sundry motions of atoms. Moreover, the imperceptible provocation for their activity is evidence of an unseen influence – the force of 'the first-beginnings.' It is important to stress however that, despite the important role dust plays, Lucretius' motes are not equated with atoms: the former are an observable reality whereas the latter are explicitly invisible and can only be 'seen' through reason.

Although the Roman poet's application of dust particles to depict the motion of atoms appears to be unparalleled in the work of his predecessors, Lucretius' use of dust in relation to atomism was not novel. Rather, the use of the image followed the verbal habits of the Epicurean philosophy that he was espousing.[204] As Don Fowler observes 'both Democritus and Epicurus . . . used the phenomenon of motes in the sunbeam'.[205] Aristotle, when investigating the nature of soul in *De Anima*, writes of how for Democritus 'spherical atoms' are equivalent to the 'things in the air called "motes" which can be seen in rays of light through windows.'[206] The reference is fleeting, but it is markedly distinct from Lucretius' detailed analogy, and works to make atoms equatable with dust motes. In Christian theological texts, dust-like atoms were also associated with the Greek philosophers.[207] In Jerome's commentary on Isaiah, he remarks that what the Hebrew call the smallest dust, *tenuissimum pulverem*, is called 'atomos' by Democritus and Epicurus, suggesting a synonymity between the two.[208] In Theodoret's *Graecarum Affectionum Curatio,* meanwhile, it is put forward that Democritus and Epicurus thought atoms to be the small, meagre bodies that float in the beams of sunlight that pierce through windows, making the equivalence

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[204] Don Fowler, *Lucretius on Atomic Motion: A Commentary on "De Rerum Natura": Book Two, Lines 1-332* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), p.193 & 4.
[205] Fowler, p.193.
[206] Aristotle, *De Anima*, trans., Hugh Lawson-Tancred (London: Penguin, 1986), p.133, I.ii.404a. In the original Greek it reads ἀπείρων γὰρ ὀντων σχημάτων καὶ ἀτόμων τὰ σφαιροειδῆ πῦρ καὶ ψυχὴν λέγει, οἷον ἐν τῶι ἀέρι τὰ καλούμενα ξύσματα ἃ φαίνεται ἐν ταῖς διὰ τῶν θυρίδων ἀκτῖσιν, ὧν τὴν μὲν πανσπερμίαν στοιχεῖα λέγει τῆς ὅλης φύσεως.
[207] Outside of Christianity, the association was also maintained. As C.C.W. Taylor has observed, 'in some accounts of Democritus' atomism preserved in medieval Arabic authors the motes in the air are identified with atoms.' C.C. Taylor, *The Atomists Leucippus and Democritus* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999), p.103.
[208] 'Aiunt autem Hebraei hoc verbo significari tenuissimum pulverem, qui vento raptante saepe in oculos mittitur, et sentitur potius quam videtur. Minutissima ergo frusta pulveris et pene invisibilia, hoc verbo appellantur: quas forsitan Democritus cum Epicuro suo atomos vocat.' See St. Jerome, *Commentariorum in Isaiam* in *Patrologiae cursus completus: Series Latina*., ed. Jacques-Paul Migne, vol. 24 (Paris: Garnier frères, 1845), p.407.

explicit.[209] Similarly, Lactantius, attacking the absurdity of Democritus', Leucippus' and Epicurus' philosophy, writes that the restless movements of atoms are as the 'pulveris minutias' observable in rays of light.[210] These references, although making different points, all work to relate dust to atoms, and do so without the mention of Lucretius. Indeed, both Classical and Patristic sources show a lineage of an idea – of a synonymity between dust and ashes – that is detached from the reception of *De rerum natura.* They also reveal what is distinct about Lucretius' use of dust: for the Roman poet, motes moving in rays of light are a visual model of atomic processes, the analogy imitating Classical models of rhetoric. None of the dusty references above, notably scant on detail, can be said to use sunlit motes in such a way. Thus, on the one hand we have Lucretius, who, following Classical models of analogy uses dust motes to visualize the behaviours of invisible atoms. In this atoms and dust are distinct matters. On the other, we have accounts of Epicurean and Democritean atomism, which either equate or compare atoms to dust, and, for the most part, suggest the two terms are synonymous.

Early modern lexicons across the period indicate the pervasiveness of the latter idea. As early as 1538, whilst defining *Atomus* as 'a thynge so small that it may not be deuyded or made smaller', the humanist Sir Thomas Elyot in his Latin dictionary sets forth that the Latin plural for Atom*, Atomi,* 'be motes in the sonne'.[211] Later in the century, John Florio, compiler of the Italian-English dictionary *World of Words*, similarly defined the Italian *Atimo* as 'an atome or mote or an indivisible thing,'[212] also adding an extra dimension denoting 'a moment of time.' The linguist Claudius Hollyband shunned semantic variances, simply defining the French 'Atomes,' as 'Moates

[209] 'Vocant autem hoc nomine, parva illa tenuissimaque corpuscular, quae per senestras ac spiracula iubar soli ingrediens, sursum atque deorsum sibi inerrantia passim ostendit.' Theodoret, *Theodoreti Cyrensis Episcopi Graecarum Affectionum Curatio* (Heidelberg: Printed by Commelinus, 1592), p.57.

[210] 'Haec, inquit, per inane irrequietis motibus volitant, et huc, atque illuc feruntur, sicut pulveris minutias videmus in sole, cum per fenestram radios ac lumen immiserit.' Lactantius, *De Ira Dei* in *Patrologiae latina cursus completes*, vol.7, p.102.

[211] Sir Thomas Elyot, *The Dictionary of Syr Thomas Eliot* (London: T. Berthelet, 1538). Elyot defines the singular, Atomus, as 'a thynge so small, that it may not be deuyded or made smaller'.

[212] John Florio, *Worlde of Wordes* (Printed at London: By Arnold Hatfield, 1598).

in the sunne'.[213] In the seventeenth century, definitions of the atom continued to render the indivisible particle equivalent in meaning to dust.[214] In 1616 the lexicographer John Bullokar classified an 'Atomie' as 'a mote flying in the sunne. Anything so small, it cannot bee made lesse'.[215] The English dictionaries of Henry Cockeram (1623), Thomas Blount (1656), Edward Phillips (1658), and Elisha Coles (1676) that spanned the seventeenth-century offered nearly identical definitions.[216] Only in Blount's *Glossographia* was an additional meaning ascribed to the term, as, like Florio five decades earlier, he classifies the 'Atome' as 'a mote flying in the sun-beams; the least moment of time, or anything so small that it cannot be made less.'[217] Although an atom could signify the smallest amount of time or matter, a dust-mote in the sun is the primary definition offered by all the writers.[218]

What these lexicons show is an established trend in English, in which dust motes and atoms are synonyms. It is unlikely that the second book of *De rerum natura* is 'the greatest influence on the early modern conflation of atoms and dust' as Gorman argues, since the definitions offered by the dictionaries giving no hint of the analogical function of dust motes. Instead, it is more probable that a more diffuse set of sources were at play, that references to atomism found in the works of Aristotle and certain Christian theologians – all of which were known in the early modern period – shaped the dusty meaning of 'atom'. When Henry Cockeram classifies 'Atomie' as 'a mote flying in the sunne beames', it is not Lucretius and his dusty 'simulacrum et imago' that comes to mind as a possible influence. Rather, the resonance is with the statements of theologians such as

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213 Claudius Hollyband, *A Dictionarie French and English*, (London: By T[homas] O[rwin] for Thomas Woodcock, 1593), D3r.
214 Cassandra Gorman also explores this, although focused on the mid-seventeenth century. See Gorman, p.564-565.
215 J. B. [John Bullokar], *An English Expositor* (London: by John Leggat, 1616), B3r.
216 Henry Cockeram, *The English Dictionarie: or, An Interpreter of Hard English Words* (London: printed for Edmund Weaver, 1623): 'Atomie. A mote flying in the sunne beames: any thing so small that it cannot be made lesse.' Edward Phillips, *The New World of English Words* (London: Printed by E. Tyler, 1658), Dv**:** 'Atom, (Greek) a mote in the sun-beams, also a word used in Philosophy, being the smallest part of a body that can be imagined.' Elisha Coles, *An English Dictionary* (London: Printed for Samuel Crouch, 1676), Dr, 'Atome, g. a mote in the sun; the smallest part of anything.'
217 Thomas Blount, *Glossographia* (London: Printed by Tho. Newcomb, 1656).
218 For mid-seventeenth century definitions of atoms see Gorman, p.564-5.

Lactantius or Theodoret, who put forward that atoms were equivalent to 'pulveris minutias videmus in sole'.[219]

This tradition, in which atoms and dust motes are figuratively interchangeable, is prevalent in English texts of the period. In his preface to *The Anatomy of Melancholy*, Robert Burton satirically assumes the persona of Democritus Junior. This is not an endorsement of the philosopher's atomic philosophy: as Christoph Lüthy has argued, there was 'a polyvalence of the revived figure of Democritus' in the early modern period, and atomism was not always the foremost association with his name.[220] Lüthy identities four kinds of early modern Democritus, including Democritus the 'Atomist' and the 'Moralizing Democritus':[221] this latter figure was based on a letter supposedly written by Hippocrates, in which the philosopher is said to have rested under a tree anatomising the condition of madness and chastising the futile enterprises of his fellow citizens.[222] It was this kind of Democritus that Burton features in his writing, and he makes efforts to distance himself from the former, atomist kind: Burton warns his reader that despite usurping the name of Democritus, they should not expect 'some prodigious Tenent, or Paradox of the Earths motion, of infinite Worlds *in infinito vacuo, ex fortuitâ atomorum collisione,* in an infinit wast, so caused by an accidentall collision of Motes in the Sunne, all which *Democritus* held, [and] *Epicurus* and their Master *Leucippus* of old maintained.'[223] This passing remark incidentally exposes the verbal habit of understanding atoms to be synonymous with sunlit dust particles. The editor's notes to the Oxford edition of this work comments that this passage alludes to lines 2.114–22 in *De rerum natura,* 'where

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[219] Lucretius, *De rerum natura*, (II.112); Theodoret, *Theodoreti Cyrensis Episcopi Graecarum Affectionum Curatio*, p.57.
[220] Christoph Luthy, 'The Fourfold Democritus on the Stage of Early Modern Science', Isis, Vol. 91, (2000), pp. 443-479, p.447.
[221] Ibid., p. 448 & 462. The other Democritus' Luthy identifies are 'the laughing philosopher' and 'the alchemist'. See p.455 & p.471.
[222] Ibid., p. 461 -462.
[223] Robert Burton, *The Anatomy of Melancholy*, eds., Thomas C. Faulkner, Nicolas K. Kiessling, Rhonda L. Blair, vol. 1, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), p. 1. Later in his address, Burton gives his reasoning for the pseudonym: according to Hippocrates, the Greek physician came across Democritus "under a shady Bowre, with a booke on his Knees, busie at his study, sometimes writing, sometime walking. The subject of his booke was Melancholy and madnesse, about him lay the carcasses of many severall beasts, newly by him cut up and anatomized, not that he did contemne Gods creatures, as he told Hippocrates, but to finde out the seat of this *atra bilis* or Melancholy, whence it proceeds, and how it was engendred in mens bodies, to the intent he might better cure it in himselfe, by his writings and observations, teach others how to prevent & avoid it." As the work was lost, Burton intended "to revive againe, prosecute and finish in this Treatise' Democritus' study on Melancholy. See Burton, p.6.

the movement of atoms in the void is compared to that of motes in a sunbeam'.[224] However, as discussed above, Lucretius's use of the image of motes in the sun does not conflate them with atoms, something to which Burton would likely have been attentive: the *Anatomy* contains numerous citations of *De rerum natura* that demonstrate a familiarity with Lucretius's authorial intention.[225] Accordingly, Burton's substitution of 'atoms' with 'motes in the sunne' is less an allusion to Lucretius's lines 2.114-22, but informed by the more diffuse tradition. Indeed, Burton references Theodoret's *Graecarum Affectionum Curatio* and Lactantius' *De Ira Dei* in the *Anatomy*, which, as discussed above, both suggest atoms and dust are synonymous.[226] A similar assumption regarding the interchangeability of atoms and motes in the sun is made by Thomas Heywood in his long narrative poem of 1635, *The Hierarchie of the Blessed Angels*. In his digression on 'the opinion of some Philosophers, concerning the beginning of the World', he writes that 'Leucippus, Diodorus, Epicurus and Democritus, into their schools obtruded, Plenum & Vacuum, Full and Empty. To the Plenum, full, they gave the name of Atomes, which are no other than those small bodies perceived and seene onely in the Sun, where it pierceth through a shadow.'[227] The discussion of Atoms is brief, but it nevertheless indicates, like Burton's *Anatomy,* how the analogical function of Lucretius' dust motes was not always evident in early modern considerations of atomism.

The Englishness of dusty atoms suggests itself in John Florio's translation of Montaigne's *Essais*, in which he offers dust motes as an alternative term to atoms. When, in the Lucretian-inflected essay 'Apologie de Raimond Sebond', Montaigne argues that 'les plus grossieres et pueriles ravasseries se trouvent plus en ceux qui traittent les choses plus hautes et plus avant' ('the grosest and most Childish dotings, are more commonly found in these which treat of highest and

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[224] Robert Burton, *The Anatomy of Melancholy*, eds. J. B. Bamborough, Martin Dodsworth, vol.4, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), p.7.
[225] The Oxford Edition notes sixteen references to Lucretius, none of which discusses dust motes. See Burton, *The Anatomy of Melancholy*, vol. 1, (1989), p.664 and Robert Burton, *The Anatomy of Melancholy*, eds., Thomas C. Faulkner, Nicolas K. Kiessling, Rhonda L. Blair, vol. 3, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), p.664.
[226] Burton, *Anatomy*, vol. 1, p.269 & p.274.
[227] Thomas Heywood, *Hierarchie of the Blessed Angels* (London: Printed by Adam Islip 1635), p.156 & p.157.

furthest matters'), he includes the Epicureans in his critique.[228] Montaigne remarks 'de quelle simplicité estoyent ils allez premierement imaginer que leurs atomes, qu'ils disoyent estre des corps ayants quelque pesanteur et un mouvement naturel contre bas, eussent basti le monde'. In Florio's translation, however, the passage reads: 'by what simplicitie did the Epicureans first imagine, that the Atomes or Mothes, which they termed to be bodies, having some weight and a naturall mooving downeward, had framed the world.' Where Montaigne had just used the term 'atomes', Florio adds 'mothes' into the mix. As Peter Mack has observed, the English translator is notorious for offering two words where Montaigne has one, and 'on most pages there will be several examples of Florio doubling a verb or a noun'.[229] This is one such example, and it makes evident the English persistence of the double sense of atoms.

In John Davies 'Orchestra', a poem on the subject of dancing presented through the dialogue of a Penelope and her suitors, motes also prove to be an accepted synonym for atoms. In his attempt to persuade Penelope to dance, one of the suitors, Antinous, reasons that such a regulated activity bought about the creation of the natural world: 'the first seedes whereof the world did spring' left their 'first disordred combating', to 'daunce', in which 'they neyther mingle nor confound, | But every one doth keepe the bounded space'. He initially uses 'seeds' to describe primordial bodies, but when criticizing the Atomist theory of creation occurring through the aleatory swerve of atoms, Davies switches to 'motes'. The 'undivided motes' did not form 'this goodly architecture' through chance, but rather 'Loves smooth tongue, the motes such measure taught' and 'made them meete in a well-ordered daunce.'[230] Much like Burton, Davies references atomism only to discredit it, yet even though pejorative, it works to strengthen the synonymity between primordial seeds and dust. Furthermore, Davies' poetic image demonstrates the way in

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[228] Michel de Montaigne, *Les Essais*, ed. J. Balsamo, M. Magnien, and C. Magnien-Simonet (Paris: Gallimard, 2007). P.575-6. Michel de Montaigne, *The Essayes or Morall, Politike and Millitarie Discourses* (London: By Val. Sims for Edward Blount 1603), p.315.

[229] Peter Mack, 'Montaigne and Florio' in *The Oxford Handbook of English Prose*, 1500-1640', ed., Andrew Hadfield (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), pp.77-90, p.82.

[230] Sir John Davies, *The Poems of Sir John Davies*, eds., Robert Krueger, Ruby Nemser (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975), p.94-5, Stanzas 17 -21.

which the phrasing of natural philosophical ideas and responding theological criticisms filtered into early modern literature, shaping figurative expressions of the minute.

The relationship between dust and atoms takes a curious turn in Lucy Hutchinson's English translation of *De rerum natura*.[231] Hutchinson translates Lucretius' visualisation of atomic movement as follows:

> Besides all these, many loose bodies be
> Which nere receiu'd into societie,
> Alone still wander through this vast extent,
> Whose image dayly obiects represent.
> For if you marke, when the high sun conveys
> Into an obscure roome his piercing rayes,
> Even where the light flowes in with glorious streames,
> Armies of attoms sport in those bright beames,
> And meeting in perpetuall skirmishes,
> Here ioyne, there part, their motions neuer cease;
> Fro whose vicissitudes we may comprize,
> What motions the first bodies exercise,
> In the vnbounded world; thus small things may
> Illustrate greate, and guide vs in the way
> Which to cleare knowledge leads; Againe when we
> Those mooving attoms in the sunbeames see,
> The perplext agitations there declare,
> Such secret tumults in the matter are;
> For these troopes smitte'n with vndiscerned force
> Are oft drive'n back, and often change their course,
> Here mount, there sinke, on euery side reverst,
> All by th'impulsiue matter thus disperst.
> For principles first moove themselues, then those
> Whose bodies fewest substances compose,
> Who next them plac't, their mooving power provokes,
> By the impulsion of its secret strokes.
> These moovd by them, moove the next rank, from whence
> Motion proceeds, vntill it meete our sence;
> Which sees the attoms in the sunbeams strive,
> But not the force, whence they that power derive.
> (108-137)[232]

[231] The poem was not published in the seventeenth-century, however a manuscript version was circulated. Hutchinson was not a proponent of atomism, and even disavowed her own translation, yet nevertheless was dedicated enough to prodice a near complete English version of the Epicurean poem. For a discussion of the possible reasons behind the translation and Hutchinson's approach to the material see David Norbrook, 'Introduction' in Hutchinson, *The Translation of Lucretius,* pp.xv-cxxiv; Goldberg, Jonathan, *The Seeds of Things* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2009), pp. 152 – 178 and Reid Barbour, 'Between Atoms and the Spirit: Lucy Hutchinson's Translation of Lucretius' in *Renaissance Papers*, eds., Barbara J. Baines, George Walton Williams (Raleigh: The Southeastern Renaissance Conference, 1995), pp.1-16.

[232] Lucy Hutchinson, *The Works of Lucy Hutchinson,* vol.1., p.91.

Hutchinson's version preserves the Lucretian method in which the atomic world may be perceived by similitude, that the images of 'loose bodies' can be represented by 'dayly obiects'. She admits that the impetus for movement begins out of sight at an atomic level, which *then* progress to a level of perception, which for Lucretius is the motes in the sunbeams. However, in one aspect the translation does veer from the original: the little particles, or what Lucretius terms '*minuta … Corpora'*, are not presented as specks of dust but rather 'Armies of attoms'. The military allusion is consistent with the sense of the original, as Lucretius depicts atoms as being in an 'everlasting conflict struggling, fighting, battling in troops without any pause.'[233] The choice of 'attoms', however, is not consistent. Hutchinson uses 'attoms' infrequently in her translation. Prior to this passage, the term is only employed once in *Liber Primus* to depict the unseen substance of moisture that evaporates from clothes, which 'in small attoms flies' (I.316). Hutchinson instead favours other terms, alternating between 'bodies', 'principles,' and 'seeds'.[234] Yet throughout this passage Hutchinson continues to employ 'attoms' to describe the minute bodies that populate the illuminated air. Its presence in the translation is irregular as Lucretius himself never uses the term *atomos*, an elision that John Evelyn followed in his partial translation.[235] Additionally, it does not correlate with other interpretations of the passage: the anonymous prose translation and Thomas Creech's much later English version both follow Lucretius in rendering the airborne particles as 'little bodies.'[236] There is thus no precedence for the translation, and, most saliently, by rendering 'minuta … Corpora' as 'attoms' the image no longer works as a rhetorical visualisation of imperceptible phenomena. The little bodies no longer analogise atoms, but rather *are* atoms: in Hutchinson's version 'attoms in the sunbeames' are 'see[n]'. Hutchinson mirrors the thinking

[233] The allusion would have been pertinent to Hutchinson living during the English Civil War and, as Reid Barbour has argued, this context may in part be the reason behind Hutchinson's attraction to *De rerum natura*. Barbour relates that 'the metaphorical connections between atomism and the Civil War were manifold and pervasive.' See Barbour, p.9-10.
[234] Hutchinson, p.36, n.316.
[235] Ibid., p.22, n. 51-3.
[236] See MS Rawl. D. 314 ('Anon': anonymous prose translation of Lucretius)., p.57 and Titus Carus Lucretius, *Lucretius his six books De Rerum Natura done into English,* trans., Thomas Creech, (Oxford: Printed by L. Lichfield, 1682), p.38

found in the writing of Lactantius and Theodoret, understanding atomists, in this case Lucretius, to believe that motes in the sun *are* atoms. The result is that the first half of the passage quoted above is, essentially, non-sensical: the 'atoms' (11) are not 'represent[ative]' (15), as claimed – they are the thing itself.[237] Hutchinson's inattentiveness to the imaginative work that Lucretius' '*minuta … Corpora*', were intended to do thus turns the figurative into the literal, and in doing so obliterates the art of Lucretius' analogy.

Whilst the synonymy of atoms and dust was prevalent in early modern writing, the affinity between the two terms was not, however, entirely unchallenged. In the mid-seventeenth century, certain proponents of atomism attempted to correct the equation of dust and atoms said to have been made by the ancient philosophers. One such figure was Walter Charleton, a natural philosopher who was instrumental in removing the associations of impiety with atomism. Through presenting God as the authority behind elemental bodies, Charleton's *Physiologia Epicuro-Gassendo-Charltoniana* made atomic theory palatable to his English audience.[238] In this work, Charleton addresses the semantic confusion that dust motes elicit in an atomic context. For Charleton, atoms are

> endowed with certain corporeal Dimensions, though most minute, and consisting in the lowest degree of physical quantity; so that even those of the largest size, or rate, are much below the perception and discernment of the acutest Opticks, and remain commensurable, only by the finer digits of rational Conjecture. . . Theodoret . . . positively affirms, that Democritus, Metrodorus, and Epicurus, by their exile Principles, Atoms, meant no other but those small pulverized fragments of bodies, which the beams of the Sun, transmitted through lattice Windows, or chincks, make visible in the aer: when according to their genuine sense, one of those dusty granules, nay, the smallest of all things discernable by the eyes of Linceus, though advantaged by the most exquisite Engyscope, doth consist of Myriads of Myriads of thousands of true Atoms, which are yet corporeal and possess a determinate extension.[239]

The unbefittingness of assimilating dust with atoms is made evident by Charleton. As he explains, a mote of dust is not a single particle, despite appearances to the average eye, but instead consists

[237] The second half, lines 122-137, does, however, make sense, as it concerns not the atoms themselves but the imperceptible impulsions that generate movement.
[238] For Charleton's role in seventeenth-century atomism see Kargon, pp. 77-92.
[239] Charleton, p.113.

of 'Myriads of Myriads of thousands of true Atoms'. Even with ocular aids or the acute eyesight of the mythical Lynceus, the atomic world cannot be apprehended, such is their smallness.[240] What is more, following Gassendi's *Animadversiones*, of which *Physiologia* was an English translation and paraphrase, Charleton uses Theodoret as an authority on the misapprehensions of the Hellenistic philosophers, an indication of the extent to which early Christian responses to the philosophy of Democritus and Epicurus informed the understanding of the relation between atoms and motes centuries later.[241] Charleton's conclusion on the magnitude of atoms and their relation to dust particles was reiterated by Robert Boyle in his later work on the nature of effluviums. Boyle also concluded that 'one of those little grains of Dust, that is visible only when it plays in the Sun-Beams, may be composed of a multitude of Atoms, and exceed many thousands of them in Bulk,' the habitual poetic equation of motes and atoms proving to be untenable to certain scientific minds.[242] Thus, whilst language willingly conflated atoms and dust motes, under the scrutiny of natural philosophers accustomed to probing the subtilties of natures, there were degrees of minuteness to be recognised, with atoms being distinctly less than the dust illuminated by the sun's rays.

For Margaret Cavendish, a contemporary and acquaintance of Walter Charleton, dust was also an unsuitable analogy for elemental matter. Both Cavendish and Charleton were part of the Newcastle Circle, whose associates, which included Thomas Hobbes and Sir Kenelm Digby, were instrumental in the reception of atomism in England.[243] However, whilst they shared intellectual interests, the way in which atomism was theorised by its members varied: as Robert Kargon notes,

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[240] The engyscope, more commonly known as a microscope, was a modern instrument being developed whilst Charleton was writing in 1655. The timing was not a coincidence: as C.H. Lüthy has observed, 'the popularity of microscopy went hand in hand with that of corpuscularianism'. C.H Lüthy, 'Atomism, Lynceus and the Fate of Seventeenth-Century Microscopy', p.14.

[241] In Charleton's own words, found on the title page, *Physiologia* was 'founded by Epicurus, repaired by Petrus Gassendus, Augmented by Walter Charleton'. For Gassendi's original argument see Gassendi*, Animadversiones*, p.20.

[242] Robert Boyle, *Essays of the Strange Subtilty Great Efficacy Determinate Nature of Effluviums* (London: Printed by W. G., 1673), p.4.

[243] Kargon, p 42. Cavendish came to the group in its more illustrious phase in France in the 1640s through William Cavendish, whom she married in 1645. For a discussion of Margaret Cavendish and the Newcastle or 'Cavendish' Circle, see Kargon, pp.63-76. For study of the impact its thinking had in the period see Stephen Clucas, 'The Atomism of the Cavendish Circle: A Reappraisal' in *The Seventeenth Century,* vol.9 (1994), pp. 247–73.

there was a 'wide spectrum of atomism in the Newcastle Circle'.[244] Cavendish exhibited, in Kargon's words, a 'partisan Epicureanism', which on occasion Charleton reproached her for, owing to its fanciful nature.[245] Thus, perhaps unsurprisingly, whilst, like Charleton, Cavendish takes issue with the dustiness of atoms, it is not for the same reason: for Cavendish it is not the size of dust that is problematic, but rather its inert quality. In *Philosophical and Physical Opinions,* Cavendish argues against the mechanical aspects of atomism, giving, in Stephen Clucas' words, 'a refinement of the crudities of an updated Democritean-Lucretian atomism'.[246] The central focus of Cavendish's engagement with materialism was the vitalism inherent within matter and, thus, when approaching of atomic theory she hypothesizes 'that if the onely matter were atoms . . . every atom must be of a living substance'.[247] Dust is therefore an unsuitable model for the atomic world: [248]

> I cannot think that the substance of infinite matter is onely a body of dust, such as small atoms, and that there is no solidity, but what they make, nor no degrees, but what they compose, nor no change and variety, but as they move, as onely by fleeing about as dust and ashes, that are blown about with winde, which me thinks should make such uncertainties, such disproportioned figures, and confused creations, as there would be an infinite and eternal disorder.[249]

The directionless dust motes which appear only to be enlivened by the external force of the wind fail to embody the rational and sensible parts of matter integral to her theory of materialism. Yet, a distinction must be made: in this passage, Cavendish is not exactly denying that atoms are synonymous with dust. Rather the issue is that, with regards to Democritean-Lucretian atomism, dusty atoms are uninspired and thus lack vital qualities. Cavendish is redefining the properties of

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[244] Kargon, p.68.
[245] Ibid., p.68 & p.75.
[246] Clucas, "Atomism . . .", p.261.
[247] Margaret Cavendish, 'A Condemning Treatise of Atomes', in *The Philosophical and Physical Opinions* (London: Printed for J. Martin and J. Allestrye, 1655), A3v. Margaret Cavendish believed every material body is comprised of three parts, the rational, the sensitive (both of which were animate) and the inanimate. As John Rogers has observed, this view was out of touch with the trends in natural philosophy, 'asserted considerably after the vitalist movement had flourished and faded.' In her early work *Poems, and Fancies*, Cavendish appears to promote a form of atomism. However, as the decade progresses she moves towards vitalist materialism. Although the passage is taken from 'A Condemning Treatise of Atomes', Cavendish nevertheless continues to entertain the possibility that the only matter is atomic matter, just of a particular 'innated' kind. For a consideration of her 'conversion from mechanism to vitalism' see John Rogers, *The Matter of Revolution* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1996), p.183 – 190.
[248] Cavendish, A3v.
[249] Ibid.

atoms, and, in this novel conception of atomism, there is no place for the figure of inert, unvital dust.

iii Poetic Motes

Thus far, the chapter has been concerned with the verbal relation between atoms and motes in texts that explicitly acknowledge atomic philosophy. Yet, the image of dust motes swarming in the sun was also a poetic trope that existed outside of the context of scientific ideas. For many writers of the period, dust mingling in the air represented the chaotic infinitude, and used in a way that was detached from atomism. For example, in Thomas Nashe's 1594 prose work on apparitions, *Terrors of the Night*, he discusses how the devil lodges in the souls of many a man in London, remarking that 'in Westminster Hall a man can scarce breathe for them; in every corner they hover as thick as motes in the sun.'[250] The phrase is a passing one, and not repeated in the text. Yet, it is nevertheless a thread in the tapestry of Nashe's prose, showing illuminated dust motes to be literary trope in their own right, separate from atomic theory. Likewise, in Joshua Sylvester's popular 1605 translation of Du Bartas' *Semaines*, it is mentioned how 'fantastike swarmes of Dreames' hover in the air, resembling 'Th'unnumbred Moats which in the Sunne doo play', whilst in Christopher Marlowe's *Tamburlaine II*, written c. 1597, the eponymous character asks his son:

> Hast thou beheld a peale of ordinance strike
> A ring of pikes, mingled with shot and horse,
> Whose shattered lims, being tost as high as heauen,
> Hang in the aire as thicke as sunny motes [?]
> (III.ii.98-101) [251]

Later in the century, Milton invokes the image to a similar effect. In 'Il Penseroso', the melancholic poetic voice tells 'vain deluding Joys' to go and:

> Dwell in some idle brain,

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[250] Thomas Nashe, *The Unfortunate Traveller and Other Works* (London: Penguin, 1985), p.212.
[251] Guillaume de Salluste Du Bartas, *The Divine Weeks*, ed., Susan Snyder, trans. Joshua Sylvester, Vol. 2., (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979), 'The Vocation: The I Part of the III Day of the II Week', line 560, p.504.
Christopher Marlowe, *Doctor Faustus and Other Plays* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), p.98.

> And fancies fond with gaudy shapes possess,
> As thick and numberless
> As the gay motes that people the sunbeams.[252]

There has been some critical confusion over the poetic function of dust motes in this verse. Reid Barbour argues, and Gorman follows this thinking, that Milton is reducing fancy to motes in the sun in this verse, and thus suggesting motes, like atoms, were equated with fanciful thought in period.[253] However, this verse reveals a different literary trend to what Barbour believes: Milton is in fact comparing the numerousness of dust in the air to 'fancies', not the motes themselves, and therefore demonstrating dust's function to convey a sense of multitudinousness, much like Du Bartas, Nashe, and Marlowe before him.

For all these writers, the idea of the swarming multitude – the mass of politicians, shattered limbs, dreams, or fancies – is succinctly figured forth by dust motes dancing in sunlight. They may have had Lucretius' verse in mind, the 'multa minuta modis multis per inane videbis | corpora misceri radiorum lumine in ipso' (the many minute particles mingling in many ways throughout the void in the light itself of the rays), although none of the above examples seek to replicate Lucretius' performative alliteration. They may have also been influenced by Chaucer, who, in 'The Wife of Bath's Tale', writes of the many friars 'that serchen every lond and every streem, | As thikke as motes in the sonne-beem'.[254] Either way, in each instance the simile has no clear debt to either Lucretius or, indeed, Chaucer. It is more likely that the image of motes in a sun beam was itself hanging around in the air; as an observable phenomenon, an explicit literary source was not a prerequisite for its usage. Of course, as *De rerum natura* became more prominent in intellectual circles, and as atomism garnered more credibility, sunlit motes are likely to have held connotations of Lucretius, however it cannot be said with any certainty that the trope is always indebted to the Roman poet.

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[252] John Milton, *Complete Shorter Poems*, ed., John Carey, 2nd edn.,(Harlow: Longman, 1997), p.145, lines 5-8.
[253] Barbour, p.45.
[254] The trope is part of a literary tradition that dates back to Chaucer: in 'The Wife of Bath's Tale', Chaucer writes of the many friars 'that serchen every lond and every streem, | As thikke as motes in the sonne-beem'. See Chaucer, *The Riverside Chaucer*, ed., Christopher Cannon, 3rd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), p.116-7, lines 867-8

In sum, what this chapter has sought to provide is, on one hand, an intellectual history of dusty atoms, and the other, a consideration of its uses in early modern writing. Dust motes and atoms were certainly synonymous in the period, and examples of this can be found in both the scientific discussions and the poetics of the period. Yet, as this chapter has demonstrated, the source of this literary phenomenon cannot wholly be ascribed to Lucretius. Nevertheless, it does demonstrate how the image of dust had more than anthropological significance in the period: as the poetry of John Davies' demonstrated, motes were also considered to be the building blocks of the universe, not just the body of man. What is more, motes flying the sun was also prevalent as a poetic rather than an atomistic or Lucretian trope, and one with its origins in the poetic tradition, rather than the natural philosophical. Yet, what is also salient, beyond the trend of illuminated dust particles conveying a sense of the chaotic infinitude, is that this trope shows dust to have a figurative role that was not shaped by scripture. Here, the significant characteristic of dust is not its baseness, or even smallness, but rather its presence, as a teeming mass, in the air. As the following chapters will discuss, this airborne quality of dust was something that writers played with in the period, and, at times, the atomic associations are clear: in John Donne's sermon preached at St Pauls on Christmas Day in 1624, he tells his congregation: 'The aire is not so full of Moats, of Atomes, as the Church is of Mercies; and as we can suck in no part of aire, but we take in those Moats, those Atomes'.[255] Reminiscent of Florio's doubling of nouns, Donne offers two terms for the particles that fill the air, the airborne atoms and motes both being used to figuratively convey the magnitude of Christian mercy. Donne's use of the image is telling: at a point in the seventeenth-century when atomism had not yet been synthesised with Christianity, dusty atoms are nevertheless being used as a potent image to express the sense of multitudinousness. The sense of many motes mingling in the air has Lucretian undertones. Yet, as this chapter has argued, the image of the dusty motes is not always a Lucretian reference, but is in fact representative of a much more diffuse and

[255] Donne, *The Sermons*, vol.6, p.170-1.

general mode of cultural influence, one that is multiple and non-linear – itself like the many motes dispersed and mingling in the air.

CHAPTER FOUR: DUSTY CREATIONS IN EARLY MODERN HEXAMERAL EPICS

> Least man shoulde ware proude, their first originall is set before them: . . . For Moses saith that man was in the beginning, dust of the earth. Let foolish men go nowe and boaste of the excelencie of their nature
>
> (John Calvin, *Upon the First Booke of Moses Called Genesis*)[256]

> O Adam, one almighty is, from whom
> All things proceed, and up to him return,
> If not depraved from good, created all
> Such to perfection, one first matter all.
>
> (John Milton, *Paradise Lost*) [257]

Conversing with Adam in the garden of Eden, in John Milton's *Paradise Lost,* the angel Raphael tells of the 'perfection' of the newly formed earth. All creation, including Adam himself, was made spiritually pure and physically faultless, as all stemmed from the 'almighty' God.[258] Yet, as Calvin's annotation to Gen 2.7 demonstrates, and as Chapter One discusses in detail, in reformed theology it was held that Adam's creation from the dust of the earth showed the body's inherent baseness. As descendants of the fallen Adam, and thus inheritors of original sin, the postlapsarian intellect of early modern theologians could do nothing but discern the moral implications of their dusty origins. Yet those writers who sought to author a poetic adaption of the Genesis narrative had to reimagine an Eden that was untainted by original sin. The following discussion will examine how the key hexameral epics of the period in English – Joshua Sylvester's English translation of Guillaume de Salluste Du Bartas's *La Sepmaine; ou, Creation du monde*; Lucy Hutchinson's *Order and Disorder* and John Milton's *Paradise Lost* – reinterpret Gen 2.7 and Gen 3.19, and how they conceive of the dustiness of the body's original matter in the perfection of the unfallen world.

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[256] John Calvin, *A Commentarie*, p.57.
[257] John Milton, *Paradise Lost*, ed., Alastair Fowler (London: Pearson Education, 2007), p.311, V. 469 -72. Subsequent references are to this edition.
[258] For Milton, 'original matter is not to be thought of as an evil or worthless thing, but as a good thing, a seed bank of every subsequent good.' See John Milton, *The Complete Works of John Milton: De Doctrina Christiana*, eds., John K. Hale and J Donald Cullington, vol. 8 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), p.293.

i Earthly Creations in Du Bartas' The Divine Weeks

At the start of the seventeenth-century, the most admired poetic adaption of the creation narrative and the Adamic fall was *The Divine Weeks*.[259] The work was a translation by Joshua Sylvester of Guillaume de Salluste Du Bartas' *La Sepmaine* and *La Seconde Semaine*: the former recounts the first seven days of creation, interspersed with extensive discourse on both scientific and theological matters, whilst the latter expands upon the history of mankind from the fall of Adam and Eve to King David. As Peter Auger has shown, Sylvester's translation was the means through which many readers came by Du Bartas' work: the *Devine Weeks* 'marked the meridian point in Du Bartas' British reception . . . placing the *Semaines* securely in the seventeenth century literary firmament.'[260] Saliently, as a translation the text blends both the talents and sensibilities of the French Huguenot writer and the English Protestant translator. Sylvester was committed to an accurate rendering of Du Bartas's divine poem and as Susan Snyder has demonstrated, 'the two sympathize not only on matter but on manner'.[261] However, whilst both sharing protestant values and having a predilection for copious language, distinctions are apparent between the two writers: as Snyder remarks, 'for all their common ground, creator and translator do diverge. However admirable as poet and Protestant, Du Bartas was after all a foreigner. Sylvester had not only to translate his poem but to naturalize it.'[262]

Markedly, whilst there are moments of accordance, the way in which Sylvester chose to render Du Bartas' retelling of Adam's creation from dust, and God's judgment, is an example of this naturalisation, Sylvester's verbal preferences injecting an Englishness to the subject of

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[259] Sylvester's translation of the *Semaines* and King James' high regard for Du Bartas' writing helped to secure the popularity of his works in the seventeenth-century. The poem's popularity did not endure into the Restoration, yet even as his favour diminished, later poets were nonetheless shaped by Du Bartas' literary efforts. For the English reception of Du Bartas' *Semaines* see Snyder pp.72-95 and Peter Auger, 'The Semaines' Dissemination in England and Scotland until 1641', *Renaissance Studies*, 2012, vol.26, pp.625-640. It is also worthwhile to note that the English translation is in essence a seventeenth-century text: although parts of Sylvester's translation of the second week had indeed been published in the latter half of the sixteenth-century, the First Week did not appear until the 1605 volume, the first collected edition. Snyder, p.97.

[260] Peter Auger, *British Responses to Du Bartas' Semaines, 1584-1641*, Thesis (D.Phil.), University of Oxford, 2013, p.86

[261] Snyder, p.45.

[262] Snyder, p.50.

mankind's dusty origin and end. The following discussion will thus take into account how, on the one hand, Sylvester can be seen to imitate Du Bartas, and on the other, he left his own mark on the epic adaption of the creation narrative.

If we were to consider only the English commentaries to Gen 2.7, it may be assumed that the primary purpose of Adam's creation from dust was to establish the baseness of the human body. To remember Gervase Babington, 'man was created of the duste of the earth, that so base a matter might ever worke humilitie of minde.'[263] However, what stood in tension with this tenet was the understanding that mankind was God's magnum opus: as Lancelot Andrews puts it in a sermon preached at Whitehall in 1606, man was considered to be the 'the master-piece of His workes.'[264] This claim is evidenced in Gen 1.28 when God charges humanity to be viceroy of the newly-formed terrestrial realm, granting Adam and Eve 'dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth.' (Gen.1.28), endowing the human race with imperial power. As Philip Almond observes, this dominion, 'despite diminishment, was to survive the Fall.'[265] This nobility of Adam is evident in the *Divine Weeks*, and, as in Andrewes' sermon, mankind is termed God's 'Maister-Piece', the rest of creation being merely 'Essaies'.[266] The poem uses the sequence of creation to substantiate mankind's innate imperial power and aptitude to rule: Adam is made last out of all creatures 'not that he was the least', but so that 'so great a Prince' would have an earthly realm, already made, over which to 'Raigne'.[267]

Thus, on the one hand the human race was elevated above the rest of creation, bestowed by God with an imperial status. On the other, it was humbled by God, owing to its dusty origins. Remarking on this phenomenon in early modern exegesis, Arnold Williams summarizes that 'the

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[263] Babington, *Notes upon Everie Chapter of Genesis*, Fol. 9r.
[264] See Almond, pp.33-41 and Williams, p.68-70. Lancelot Andrewes, *XCVI. Sermons*, eds. William Laud and John Buckeridge (London: Printed by George Miller for Richard Badger, 1629)., p.891.
[265] Almond, p.35.
[266] 'The First Week; The Sixth Day', 466 & 465, p.275.
[267] Ibid, 503-10, p.276. As Alexander Ross observes, 'nature begins at that which is most imperfect in generation, so God in the creation did keepe this course: for man the little world and patterne of all the creatures, was not created till the sixth day', p.15.

commentaries spoke eloquently of the excellence of man, but they also knew that with all his superior endowments he was figuratively and literally [dust]. To induce the proper humility in this colophon and masterpiece of creation they continually reminded him ... of the material from whence he was formed.'[268] Thus, whilst the theologian Henry Ainsworth writes that man was made only 'a little lower then the Angels' and 'crowned with glory and honor', 'set [to rule] over the works of Gods hands,' he also notes the 'base[ness]' of 'man's . . . originall'[269]. Alexander Ross similarly comments that man is 'the Lord and end of all other creatures' yet was also made of dust 'to put us in minde of humility'.[270]

Saliently, in the *Divine Weeks*, the nobility of the human race is not initially shown to be tempered by the lowly ingredient from which man was made. Whilst the period's commentaries are quick to emphasise the implicit moral of Gen 2.7 – that the baseness of mankind's essence should necessitate humility – the depiction of Adam's creation from dust in Du Bartas' biblical epic gives no such message. As Sylvester's translation reads:

> So, of an earthly substance mad'st thou all
> The slimie Burgers of this Earthly Ball:
> To th'end each creature might (by consequent)
> Part-sympathize with his owne Element.
> Thearfore, to forme thine Earthly Emperour
> Thou tookest Earth, and by thy sacred power
> So tempred'st it, that of the verie same
> Dead shape-les lumpe, did'st Adams bodie frame.[271]

The emphasis is placed on Adam's aptness to rule over the newly created earth: his creation from the ground is not an assurance of his baseness, but done so that he may 'part-sympathize' with the earth that he is to reign over. The sympathetic tone is Du Bartas' own: he wrote that man was formed from the earth in order that he may have 'quelque sympathie' with his own element.[272]

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[268] Arnold Williams, *The Common Expositor: An Account of the Commentaries on Genesis 1527-1633* (Chapel Hill: North Carolina Press, 1948), p.70.
[269] Ainsworth, p.7 & p.10.
[270] Ross, p.21 & p.37.
[271] Ibid., 503-10, p.276.
[272] Guillaume de Salluste Du Bartas, *La Sepmaine: (Texte de 1581)*, ed., Yvonne Bellenger (Paris: Nizet, 1981), 'Le Sixiéme Jour', 486, p.273. My italics.

Drawing on ancient philosophies, in early Renaissance Europe sympathy meant the occult affinity between worldly entities, representing the divine coherence of the universe.[273] For the Neoplatonist Marsilio Ficino, commenting on Plato's *Symposium*, 'true magic' is found in universal sympathy, wherein:

> the parts of this world, like the parts of a single animal, all deriving from a single author, are joined to each other by the communion of a single nature. Therefore just as in us the brain, lungs, heart, liver, and the rest of the parts draw something from each other, and help each other, and sympathize with any one of them when it suffers, so the parts of this great animal, that is all the bodies of the world, similarly joined together, borrow and lend natures to and from each other.[274]

This philosophy of sympathy in which 'all the bodies of the world. . . borrow and lend natures to and from each other' shaped many spheres of intellectual thought from the medicine of Paracelsus to Fracastoro's theory of disease.[275] Although the authority attributed the sympathetic worldview began to shift in the seventeenth-century, at the time Du Bartas was writing and Sylvester translating the *Divine Weeks*, sympathy had yet to be contested and revaluated by the likes of Francis Bacon or Robert Boyle.[276] Indeed, it was the use of 'sympathy' in *The Divine Weeks* that helped to inject the broader philosophic meaning of the term into the English language, as Seth Lobis has argued.[277] Throughout the poem, sympathy is invoked to describe, in Ficino's terms, the occult 'communion of a single nature', the 'rare sympathie' that with 'unknowne Cords' and 'unseene hands' draws the iron to the loadstone, or the 'secret sympathie' between 'the bright Sunne and

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[273] Sympathy was associated with Stoic, Pythagorean, Aristotelian and Epicurean philosophies. See Seth Lobis, *The Virtue of Sympathy: Magic, Philosophy, and Literature in Seventeenth-century England* (New Haven: Yale University, 2015), p.7.

[274] Marsilio Ficino, *Commentary on Plato's "Symposium" on Love*, trans Sears Jayne. (Dallas: Spring Publications, 1985), p.127

[275] For an overview of sympathy in the Renaissance see Eric Schliesser, *Sympathy: A History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), pp.72-87.

[276] Michel Foucault theorizes that at the beginning of the seventeenth-century, 'the noble, rigorous, and restrictive figures of similitude were to be forgotten.' See *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences* (London: Routledge, 2002), p.57. However, in a more comprehensive evaluation, Seth Lobis has recently argued that 'over the course of the seventeenth century a sympathetic worldview was increasingly called into question, but it did not suddenly disappear'. Instead, especially in the realms of English natural philosophy, 'sympathy was an important subject of reflection and site of contestation.' See Lobis, p.16 & 18. For the reappraisal of sympathy by seventeenth-century natural philosophers, see pp.10-16.

[277] '[T]he wider interest in the word "sympathy" was generated by the appearance of Josuah Sylvester's translations of Du Bartas.' See Lobis, p.328. n13.

the Marigold.'[278] Consequently, whilst Adam only sympathises in 'part' with the earth, having also been instilled with the 'rare excellence' of spirit,[279] when Adam's kinship with the earth is explained to be part of the divine coherency found in nature, inferences of man's innate lowliness and potential for immorality that are to be found in his earthly origins are diminished. To be clear, it is not that the poem transmutes earth into a more refined substance, such as occurs in the writings of John Pettus discussed in the previous chapter. Indeed, in neither the description of humanity as 'slimie Burgers' or in the image of Adam being formed from a 'Dead shape-les lumpe', is earthliness presented as a refined form of materiality. However, the sympathetic purpose of mankind's earthliness dilutes implications of baseness, bestowing the earthly emperor with a sense of prelapsarian perfection and innocence.

When focusing on the image of dust in the poem, it appears that Sylvester was committed to putting forward a prelapsarian poetics: when retelling Adam's creation, his word choice suggests an attempt to draw on language that did not carry moral undertones, eliding Du Bartas' adaption of Gen 2.7. In *La Sepmaine*, Du Bartas writes:

> De mesme tu formas d'une *terrestre masse*
> Des fragiles humains *la limonneuse race*,
> Afin que chasque corps forge nouvellement
> Eust quelque sympathie avec son element.
> Estant donc desireux de produire en lumiere
> Le terrestre Empereur, *tu prins de la poussiere*,
> La colas, la pressas l'embellis de ta main,
> Et d'un informe corps formas le corps humain.280

Many elements of the passage do find their equivalent in the English translation. In Du Bartas' verse, man was formed from an earthly mass, 'd'une terrestre masse,' and in Sylvester's version, man is similarly made from an 'earthly substance'. Echoing the language of the Vulgate, Du Bartas then describes mankind as the slimy race, 'la limonneuse race'. Sylvester retains the viscosity of

[278] Du Bartas, 'The Third Day of the First Week', lines 966 & 938-9 and ''The Seventh Day of the First Week, lines 531-2. For other examples with the poems engagement with the traditional sense of sympathy see also 'The Fourth Day of the First Week' lines 81-90 & 475-80.
[279] Du Bartas, 'The Sixth Day of the First Week,' line 750.
[280] Ibid., 483 – 92, p.273

their material nature and accurately renders humanity as 'the slimie Burgers of this Earthly ball.'[281] Yet what is revealing is the point at which Sylvester diverges from the French author. Following the reformed French translations of Genesis 2.7, Du Bartas then writes that God took dust, 'prins de la poussiere', and formed the human body. Sylvester, however, simply writes that God took the nondescript 'Earth' to form Adam. Of course, here Sylvester is not only deviating from the words of the French author but from the language of scripture in English: when Sylvester was working on the poem at the turn of the century, dust had been established in English bibles as the stuff of man's origin for decades.[282] As a result, whilst the original French contains a variety of terms and only twice uses 'terrestre' to describe man's material quality, Du Bartas uses 'earth' and its variants four times in the passage, only once varying the description with 'slime.' The repetition of this term, particular to Sylvester's work, suggests that in English 'dust' carries implications of mankind's fallenness, unsuited to depictions of prelapsarian Eden: earth, a more non-descript synonym of Adam's original, allows Sylvester to keep Du Bartas' sense of the innocence of Eden, without reminding his English readers of their lowly dusty essence.

Taken in isolation, Sylvester's omission of dust in the rendering of Adam's creation is only suggestive of its potential for postlapsarian inferences. Yet, when it is considered alongside scenes after the transgression of Adam and Eve, dust does appear to be a term that only befits the fallen world. Dust enters the *Divine Weeks* when God punishes the first humans for their transgression, ruling that:

> (In short) thou shalt not taste the sweetes of rest,
> Till ruth-les death by his extreamest paine
> Thy dust-borne bodie turne to dust againe.[283]

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[281] As in England, in France the presence of the Vulgate and the desire of the reformers to return to the original sources generated a variance in the terms used to describe man's original matter. While Tyndale's translation returned to the Hebrew, in France the first sixteenth-century reformed translation of the Bible into the vernacular was in fact taken from the Vulgate, and thus Lefebvre d'Etaples translation of 1530 has it that man was made from 'du limo de la terre'. The subsequent translation by Pierre Olivétan that quickly followed in 1535 did, however, use the original sources and has it that Adam was made from 'de la poudre de la terre'.

[282] As discussed in Chapter One, from the Great Bible (1540) onwards, reformed English translation had it that man was made from the dust of the ground.

[283] 'The Second Week; The Imposture', 472, p.351.

Sylvester echoes the words of Gen. 3.19, at last attending to the dusty qualities of mankind. Yet this dusty detail is not an attempt by the English translator to replicate the original. In Du Bartas' version God pronounces that man is formed from earth, 'ton corps de terre pris,' and therefore will be sent back under the earth, 'envoyra sous la terre.'[284]. The preference for dust over earth in a postlapsarian context occurs again a few lines later when, in the English, Adam is branded as a 'dustie wormeling' for setting his sights above his station: in the original, Du Bartas deemed him a 'vermisseau de terre,' worm of the earth.' [285]

In the English translation dust can therefore be seen to have a particular placement in the narrative timeline: dust is elided in depictions of prelapsarian Eden, Sylvester imprecisely rendering 'la poussiere' as 'earth'. Yet once the poem moves into the fallen world, 'dust' is deemed a suitable substitute in English for 'la terre'. 'Dust' therefore emerges as a loaded term, weighted with associations of sin and so unsuited to the poetics of the perfect, unfallen world: indeed, before the fall, mankind is described as an 'Earthly Emperor', his terrestrial qualities not diminishing his regal lustre. Yet after, this figure devolves into a 'dustie wormeling', the particulate quality of man's original substance becoming emblematic of his sinful nature.

ii Curious Creations in Hutchinson's Order and Disorder

This potential unease surrounding the presence of dust in the perfection of Eden is also manifest in another, albeit less influential, seventeenth-century Hexameral epic – Lucy Hutchinson's *Order and Disorder*. Notably, the structure of Hutchinson's poem allows for a distinctive portrayal of Adam's creation. The first cantos of *Order and Disorder* were subtitled 'Meditations upon the Creation and Fall, as it is recorded in the beginning of Genesis'. As David Norbrook observes, "'Meditations" implies a secondary form of writing, one whose main aim is not to tell a story but

[284] Guillaume de Salluste Du Bartas, *La Seconde Semaine (1584),* ed., Bellenger, Yvonne (Paris: Société des Textes Français Modernes, 1991), 'Livre II: L'imposture', 470, p.124. Subsequent references are to this edition.
[285] The Second Week; The Imposture', 487, p.352; 'Livre II: L'imposture', 485, p.124.

to summarize it and suspend the action to discourse on its meaning.'[286] This form, of first relaying the moment and then meditating on its significance, is used by Hutchinson to grapple with Adam's dusty constitution. When first depicting Adam's formation from the earth, Hutchinson's views on the baseness of mankind are held at bay. Her initial account reads:

> Then made the Lord a curious mould of clay
> Which lifeless on the earth's cold bosom lay
> When God did it with living breath inspire
> A soul in all, and every part entire,
> Where life ris' above motion, sound and sense
> To higher reason and intelligence.
> (13 -18)[287]

No authorial commentary is provided for this passage, but rather an abstruse account of Adam's creation is given. Hutchinson diverges from biblical terminology instead, stating that man was made from 'a curious mould of clay'. The phrase is unclear, as Hutchinson's use of 'mould' could imply that man was made either as a 'curious shape of clay' or out of a 'curious terrestrial lump of clay'. 'Curious' is equally fraught with uncertainty as Hutchinson could be expressing the intricacy of the mould, its peculiarity, the involved way God moulded it or the sinfulness latent in the clay, gesturing towards the corrupt curiosity which led to the fall. The latter sense is reinforced later in the canto when she writes, in general terms, about 'man's own imprudent curiosity' (III.90).[288] Equally, the term could have been invoked by Hutchinson to echo Psalm 139:15, in which man is said to have been 'curiously wrought in the lowest parts of the earth'.[289] Yet if Hutchinson is indeed echoing the Psalm, she elides the morality it attaches to man's earthiness: there is no mention of

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[286] Lucy Hutchinson, *Order and Disorder*, ed. David Norbrook (Oxford: Blackwell, 2001), p.xxv. Subsequent references are to this edition.
[287] Hutchinson, *Order and Disorder*, p.32.
[288] Curiosity has this sense of impudency in the preface to her translation of Lucretius' *De rerum natura*, in which Hutchinson writes that 'I abhorre all the Atheismes & impieties in it, and translated it only out of youthfull curiositie'. See Hutchinson, *The Translation of Lucretius*, p.7.
[289] The King James translation 'of the earth' is faithful to the Hebrew ארץ. The Geneva Bible has a different rendering of the passage: 'I was made in a secret place, and fashioned beneath in the earth.' Elizabeth Scott-Baumann detects the influence of the Geneva Bible in *Order and Disorder*, but also acknowledges that Hutchinson used the Geneva Bible and the King James Bible when transcribing passages from her husband's bible that he had annotated whilst incarcerated. See *Forms of Engagement: Women, Poetry, and Culture 1640-1680* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), p.171.

the mould of clay being of the 'lowest' form of earth, Adam's primal ingredient instead depicted as morally ambiguous.

Hutchinson does not provide further details regarding the specifics of Adam's creation from the earth. Rather, like Du Bartas, Hutchinson is intent on displaying the nobility of the finished piece, disregarding his dusty origins. She details the body's similitude with the earth in a manner that, as David Norbrook notes, 'follows the generic conventions of the formal, part-by-part praise of the body, the blazon'.[290] Hutchinson moves through the body, comparing the finest qualities of the earth to the splendours of the human body, from its 'fair smooth skin' (41) to 'the head which is the body's chiefest grace' (64). In the first section of Canto III, the narrative is focused on presenting prelapsarian man in all his perfection, outlining the excellency of God's magnum opus.

However, when the poem moves away from summarizing creation, and into the commentary part of the meditation, such commendation of the human form is soon undercut:

> But while we gaze upon our own fair frame,
> Let us remember too from whence it came,
> And that, by sin corrupted now, it must
> Return to its originary dust.
> How undecently doth pride then lift that head
> On which the meanest feet must shortly tread?
> Yet at the first it was with glory crowned,
> Till Satan's fraud gave it the mortal wound.
> This excellent creature God did Adam call
> To mind him of his low original,
> Whom he had formed out of the common ground
> Which then with various pleasures did abound.
>
> (123-34)

Hutchinson interrupts the narrative, and thus the innocence of Eden, with postlapsarian exposition on the meaning of Adam's creation from the earth. The tension that was simmering in the ambiguity of Hutchinson's portrayal of man's creation boils over in this passage. She reminds her readers that mankind is 'by sin corrupted now' and thus must 'return to its originary dust' and, in

[290] Ibid., p.33

the process, switches from 'clay' to 'dust' to describe the original material from which Adam was made. Indeed, in a later canto, Canto V, Hutchinson writes how in death, mankind 'to their first material dust revert' (V.248).

The vehemence of this response to Adam's creation from earth is a result of Hutchinson's Calvinist leanings.[291] Indeed, her moral stance in *Order and Disorder* is paralleled in her theological treatise *Principles of Christian Religion*, for which Calvin's *Institutes* was a source.[292] Hutchinson's text places a strong emphasis on the association between humility and man's original matter, reflecting the fervent ideas of Calvin in the *Institutes*. Following the traditional Christian line of the humility paradox emphasised by Calvinist doctrine, Hutchinson writes that 'Selfe abasement or selfe deniall is soe greate a requisite to the whole worship of God'.[293] As discussed in Chapter One, for Calvin the body's earthly nature is a bridle to pride. Hutchinson too stresses this point, asking 'what . . . shall man thinke highly of himself for, whose foundation is in the dust' and using Abraham, who 'acknowledged himselfe to be but dust and ashes', as a paradigm for self-esteem.[294] In *Order and Disorder*, the same theological stance is manifest in her invective interjection, the earthiness of man signifying the necessity for humility. For why should 'pride then lift that head', when it is fated to become the lowly matter on which 'the meanest feet must . . . tread.' At this moment in the poem, Earth is no longer the abundant source of creation. Instead Hutchinson stresses the lowliness of man's prime matter, using the etymological bond between man and earth, *Adam* and *Adamah*, to underscore man's baseness, Adam named after the 'common ground' to 'mind him of his low original.'

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[291] It should be noted that by the time Hutchinson was writing in the latter half of the seventeenth century, the grip that Calvinism had had on the religious landscape at the start of the century in England had loosened. As David Norbrook has observed, to some readers of *Principles of Christian Religion* 'her variety of Calvinism seemed rebarbative and outmoded'. See Lucy Hutchinson, *The Works of Lucy Hutchinson: Theological Writings and Translations: Part One*, eds., Elizabeth Clarke, David Norbrook, Jane Stevenson, vol.2. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), p. xvii. For the influence of Calvinism on Lucy Hutchinson see Mark Burden, 'Lucy Hutchinson and Puritan Education', *The Seventeenth Century*, vol.20, (2015), pp.163-178.
[292] Hutchinson, *Theological Writings and Translations*, p.161.
[293] Ibid., p.251.
[294] Ibid., p.252., p.252.

In sum, in an effort to depict the perfection of God's masterpiece, prelapsarian man, Hutchinson delays her commentaries on the innate baseness of man's original. Robert Wilcher observes in *Order and Disorder* 'a careful and self-conscious authorial policing of the narrative dimension of the poem',[295] in which Hutchinson resists reinventing the truth of the scripture. Through her use of form and language, Hutchinson attempts to stay true to the sense of the Gen 2.7 and, in the moment of depicting Adam's creation from the earth, avoids leaving any trace of a postlapsarian perspective. However, unlike the *Divine Weeks* in which Adam's earthly conception is rationalized as part of a sympathetic world order, Hutchinson is unable to sustain a perfect representation of unfallen man. Much like the commentaries, Hutchinson cannot extrapolate humanity's dusty origins with his base nature, the depiction of Adam's perfect creation soon supplemented in the narrative with an invective on his common, base essence. Yet a pattern does emerge between the two epics: much like *The Divine Weekes*, in *Order and Disorder* 'dust' is shown to be the language of the fallen world, Hutchinson's delay in using the term revealing its potency as a postlapsarian term, unsuited to an Edenic context.

iii The Fallenness of Dust in Milton's Paradise Lost

John Milton's *Paradise Lost*, the final hexameral epic that this chapter will consider, provides the most nuanced poetic handling of mankind's dust. In Milton's work, the moral implications of Adam's dusty origin are only fully apprehended by the fallen mind, dust proving unremarkable in the innocence of Eden. Stanley Fish has noted the interaction of pre- and postlapsarian perspectives in the poem, observing the way in which language operates at different levels depending on one's state of fallenness.[296] Fish comments how certain words function 'like litmus paper. They test acidity (sin) by taking on the hue of the consciousness that appropriates them.'[297]

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[295] Robert Wilcher, 'Lucy Hutchinson and Genesis: Paraphrase, Epic, Romance', *English*, 59, (2010), pp.25-42, p.27.
[296] This refers not only the characters in the poem but to the reader. Stanley Fish remarks that 'wanton' and 'loose' and 'error' trouble us because we cannot help but read into them moral implications that are not relevant until the Fall has occurred.' See *Surprised by Sin,* 2nd edn. *(*London: Macmillan, 1997), p.92-107, p.100.
[297] Ibid., p.103.

Fish does not consider the function of dust in his work, but as this section will argue, dust also operates in such a way. Milton's use of dust in prelapsarian Eden treads a careful line. Its sematic textures are kept hidden, for so little is said about the dust from which Adam was formed that not much can be inferred about its meaning: However, its very presence works much like 'wanton', 'loose' and 'error', 'dust' being a word that tempts the reader into reading into its moral implications. Thus, in order to achieve his poetic intent, unlike Sylvester and Hutchinson, Milton does not elide dust from his adaption of Gen 2.7, but rather neglects it.

This disregard of dust in Milton's depiction of Adam's creation is remarkably odd, for throughout the poem Milton routinely explicates and expounds scripture, illuminating the ways of God to men. Yet, in prelapsarian Eden, Adam's creation from the dust of the earth is treated as insignificant, its meaning kept hidden, as to both the unfallen Adam and the angel Raphael, the details of Adam's creation from the dust are shrouded in brevity. Indeed, at the moment when Raphael is meant to be elucidating the act of creation to the first man, the intimacy between man and dust is left unexplained, the archangel keeping to the pithy verses of Genesis:

> He [god] formed thee, Adam, thee O man
> Dust of the ground, and in thy nostrils breathed
> The breath of life: in his own image he
> Created thee, in the image of God
> Express, and thou becam'st a living soul.
> (VII. 524 -8).

And, to remember Genesis 2.7:

> The Lord God also made the man of the dust of the ground,
> and breathed in his face breath of life,
> and the man was a living soul.

Placed alongside each other, it becomes apparent how little Milton deviates from scripture. There are, however, some modifications. In these subtle alterations, Milton's language reinforces the bond between man and dust, but simultaneously does little to elucidate the divine act of man's creation or its significance. Far more than the English of Gen 2.7, Milton's biblical paraphrase

gestures towards the pun of the original Hebrew, in which *Adam* and *Adamah*, man and earth, are essentially synonymous with each other. The mirroring syllables of 'Adam' and 'O Man' recalls the Hebraic language, imbedding the Hebraic etymological relationship into the poetic rhythm.[298] What is more, the Bible presents dust as the material of which man was 'made . . . *of*'. Through his omission of 'of', Milton uses apposition to conflate the raw material with the finished product, writing how 'He formed thee, Adam, thee O man | Dust of the ground.' Unlike the scripture, Adam is not shown to be made *of* dust but rather *is* dust and with no punctuative break between 'man' and 'dust', 'the dust of the earth' becomes syntactically epithetical for 'man'.

However, despite the significance of these subtle amendments, Milton makes no further additions to the moment of Adam's formation from the earth. Milton does not put forward the prevalent opinion found in early modern biblical exegesis that man's creation from dust was to 'humble' him. He does not, like the *Divine Weeks*, present an alternative philosophic system to explain man's earthliness or, like Hutchinson, merely momentarily delay the diatribe on man's dusty baseness. Neither does he derive further meaning from other more unorthodox sources. Critics have noted how, at certain moments, *Paradise Lost* is shaped by Milton's knowledge of the Hebraic biblical tradition.[299] However, unlike John Pettus, who drew from the Targum of Jerusalem presented in Walton's Polyglot, he draws no significance from the less accepted rabbinic exegesis on man's formation from dust.[300] Instead, Milton furnishes the poem with an only marginally altered version of the pithy verse of Gen 2.7.

The extraordinary brevity of Adam's birth from the ground is thrown into relief when placed against other reports of creation in the narrative. At many points in *Paradise Lost*, Milton's

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[298] For an overview of Milton's intimacy with the Hebrew language, as opposed to his engagement with Hebraism more generally, see Peggy Samuels, 'Riding the Hebrew Word Web,' in *Living Texts: Interpreting Milton*, eds., Kristin A Pruitt, Charles W. Durham (London: Associated University Press, 2000), pp.162 – 177.

[299] For Milton's engagement with Hebraic sources see Mattern; Jeffrey Shoulson, *Milton and the Rabbis: Hebraism, Hellenism and Christianity* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001); Golda Werman, *Milton and Midrash* (Washington: Catholic University of America, 1995); Douglas Brooks, ed., *Milton and the Jews* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008) and Jason Rosenblatt*, Renaissance England's Chief Rabbi: John Selden* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), pp.74- 92.

[300] Milton was acquainted with Walton and publicly supported his production of the Polyglot. See Barbara Lewalski, *The Life of John Milton: A Critical Biography* (Oxford: Blackwell Publisher, 2000), p.292.

language flourishes at the moment of creation, as he can be seen to greatly embellish the short accounts of the bible. Milton significantly develops the description of earth's formation from chaos found in Gen 1.1-2 (VII.224-242) and, what is more, he vastly elaborates on the earthly conception of animals: in Gen 1.24 it is detailed quite simply how God made creatures of the earth 'according to their kinds', but Milton's account is far more expansive. The ground opens 'her fertile womb,' releasing animals not mentioned in the verse of the bible, with particular attention being paid to their earthly arrival and the physical dynamics of creation:

> Out of the ground up rose,
> As from his lair, the wild beast where he wons
> In forest wild, in thicket, brake, or den;
> . . .
> The grassy clods now calved; now half appeared
> The tawny lion, pawing to get free
> His hinder parts, then springs as broke from bonds,
> And rampant shakes his brinded mane; the ounce,
> The leopard, and the tiger, as the mole
> Rising, the crumbled earth above them threw
> In hillocks: The swift stag from under ground
> Bore up his branching head: Scarce from his mould
> Behemoth biggest born of earth upheaved
> His vastness.
>
> (VII.456-72)

Through the figure of Raphael, the particulars of the first creatures' emergence from the soil are vividly told: the Lion struggles to release himself from his earthly confines, 'pawing to get free | His hinder parts.' Moreover, the passage works to underscore the earthliness of created being. The emergence of the formidable felines – the leopard and the tiger - is likened to a 'mole rising', as 'the crumbled earth above them threw in hillocks.' In typical Miltonic fashion, the analogy complicates the very thing it is supposed to be elucidating, as the moment the great creatures escape from the ground, they are tied to a lesser species consigned to dwell beneath the surface of the earth. [301] Moles were not admired creatures in the period; they were creatures of the

[301] For the general complexity of Milton's similes see Geoffrey Hartman 'Milton's Counterplot', *ELH*, 25, (1958), pp.1-12 and Fish, p. 22-37.

underworld, condemned to live beneath the ground and not above it.[302] Even in name they were indistinguishable from the earth; as Margreta De Grazia has observed, 'mole' and 'mould' were often interchangeable in the period:

> The etymology of the word explains the overlap: mole is an abbreviation of the Anglo-saxon compound mouldewarpe (or molewarpe), compounding moulde (earth) and warpen (to throw). The abridgment leaves the "mole" phonetically and orthographically indistinct from the "mold" it tosses up.[303]

Indeed, when assessing the mole in his *History of Four-Footed Beasts*, Edward Topsell alternates between 'mole' and 'mold' at numerous points in his discussion.[304] This overlap between the two terms was strengthened by the fact that 'mouldwarp' was still in use in the Renaissance. In *The Mirror for Magistrates*, for example, when the mole's activities beneath the soil is used to depict an undesirable human trait, 'Truth' compares 'an underminer' to 'a Moldwarp, or a mole.'[305]

Thus, the equation of the newly-formed leopard, ounce and tiger with such an earthly and detested creature as the mole disrupts any preconceived ideas of the status of certain animals. Karen Edwards suggests that 'the simile grants dignity to the little mole, which has "rising" in common with the great cats.'[306] Yet the effect is not so much the enhancement of the mole, but rather the reduction of even the most noble of beasts. The telluric qualities of the first creatures are further emphasised when Raphael relates how 'Scarce from his mould | Behemoth biggest born of earth upheaved | His vastness.' Having placed the image of the mole amidst the 'crumbled earth' in the previous statement, the meaning 'of 'mould' as friable soil suggests itself. Yet the choice of pronoun also demands that '*his* mould' (my emphasis) signifies a matrix, a place of origin. Here mole and mould, the created and the creative material, blend as the entire passage reminds the reader that, despite appearances, the creatures are not so distinguishable from the 'crumbled earth' from whence they came.

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[302] For an overview of the undesirable qualities of moles, see Karen Edwards, 'Milton's Reformed Animals: An Early Modern Bestiary', *Milton Quarterly*, vol. 42, (2008), p.117-9.
[303] De Grazia, *Hamlet without Hamlet*, p.29.
[304] Edward Topsell, *The Historie of Foure-Footed Beastes* (London: Printed by William Jaggard, 1607), p.500.
[305] William Baldwin et al, *A Myrroure for Magistrates* (London: by Thomae Marshe, 1559), F1.
[306] Edwards, p.119.

In sum, the graphic depictions of the first animals rising from their terrestrial mould, interlaced with subversions of assumed hierarchical order, are a stark contrast to Raphael's terse account of Adam's creation. Later in the narrative Raphael reveals that he was absent on the day Adam was made, 'bound on a voyage uncouth and obscure' (VIII.230), in order to prevent the mixture of 'destruction with creation' (235). The sixth day of creation was consequently unobserved by Raphael and thus unknown, and so the resemblance to the terse Biblical passage could be justifiable: it is God's word that Raphael is reliant on, not his own empirical experience. Yet the animals were also created on the sixth day, for which Raphael provides an expansive version of Genesis, leaving the disparity between the two accounts unexplained.

Consequently, despite desiring to know 'what within Eden or without was done | Before his memory,' (VII.65-6), Adam is given very little information by Raphael regarding his primal ingredient. Adam himself possesses minimal insight into his first moments, admitting that 'For man to tell how human life began | Is hard; for who himself beginning knew' (VIII.250-1)?[307] Thus when Adam takes over from Raphael to 'relate [his] story' (VIII.204-50), there is no reference to his delivery from the ground: he awakes as a sentient, formed being, lying 'in the flowery herb . . | In balmy sweat' (VIII.254-5), bearing no relation to the inanimate particulate earth.[308] Adam does, however, possess a small understanding of his origins, although the source of this knowledge is never revealed by Milton. In prelapsarian Eden, in neither his conversation with the angels nor in his early interactions with his maker is the significance of Adam's formation from the earth discussed. Yet, when relating his first moments in Eden, Adam expresses his concern that in 'gentle sleep' he would pass 'back to my former state | Insensible, and forthwith to dissolve' (VIII.290-1), revealing a certain intuitive awareness of his original – particulate and insensate – condition. Furthermore, before Raphael recounts how he was formed from the dust of the ground, Adam

[307] For further consideration on Adam's first moments, see Timothy Harrison, 'Adamic Awakening and the Feeling of Being Alive in Paradise Lost' in *Milton Studies*, vol.54, (2013), pp.29-57.
[308] This aligns with Renaissance artwork: as Roland Frye observes, 'pictorial representations of the creation of Adam in most cases show Adam lying upon a slightly elevated bank of the earth.' See *Milton's Imagery and the Visual Arts* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978), p.259.

makes reference to his original: he speaks to Eve of God's goodness 'that raised us from the dust and placed us here | In all this happiness' (IV.416-7) and when Raphael places doubt on mankind's obedience, Adam asks 'Can we want obedience then | To him, or possibly his love desert | Who formed us from the dust, and placed us here' (V.414-6)? Adam's use of 'us', referring to himself and Eve, implies that he recognises his earthly condition. Eve is not *directly* formed directly from the dust of ground, but rather from his rib, however, as the earlier reference to the Hebrew pun on 'Adam' suggests, 'Adam' is equivalent to 'the dust of the earth.' Thus, Eve is *intermediately* 'raised . . . from the dust'. In sum, for Adam's use of 'us' to make logical sense, it must follow that he is on some level complicit with the idea that his identity is compounded with the dust.

Yet both of these examples are only subtle indications of Adam's awareness of his relation to the base dust ground, with Adam never fully grasping the gravity of his origin. His creation from the dust is only ever evidence of divine benevolence not mankind's humble origins, illuminating the nature of God but not of Adam: Milton depicts the first man as ontologically naive, innocent of the significance of his dusty birth and how its implicit baseness reflects on the nature of man. Thus, a curious gap in knowledge emerges in the narrative as the original matter of man attains a peculiar state of anonymity, touched on by Raphael and the unfallen Adam but it's significance never fully comprehended.

The obscurity of Adam's dusty origins in the prelapsarian world is somewhat elucidated when Milton's own conception of matter and his attraction to a monist view of the material world are brought to bear on the subject. It is not my intention to brand Milton an unequivocal monist; critics have observed how the materialist philosophy that Milton articulates in his writings is both complex and fluid and, particularly in Milton's early years, it can be seen to conflict with the strands of monism evident in *Paradise Lost*. Stephen Fallon has detected a Neoplatonic dualist tendency in Milton's early poetry whilst in Sugimura's more recent study, Milton's engagement with Aristotelianism at Cambridge can be shown to disrupt critical attempts to brand the writer simply

as an adherent to monism.[309] However, according to Fallon, by the late 1650s, Milton had left behind his poetical dalliances with dualism: there was a discernible shift in his writing, and, for Milton, 'instead of being trapped in an ontologically alien body, the soul is one with the body.'[310] Whilst critics have since challenged the absolute nature of this shift there is nevertheless a distinctive move in Milton's writing towards a monist philosophy in which the body and soul are fused.[311] This chapter does not seek to define Milton's materialism in any certain terms, observing Sugimura's caution that 'the problem with aligning Milton with. . . materializing philosophies is that it diminishes the complexity with which the literary, philosophic, and theological are intertwined in his poetry.'[312] However, when it comes to the consideration of earthly or corporeal matter in *Paradise Lost*, Milton's monistic tendencies, in which the corporeal and spiritual elements of man are conceived of as one substance, are an essential component of his treatment of dust in *Paradise Lost.*

For the Milton of *De Doctrina Christiana,* the unbreakable fusion of the body and spirit is instilled in the story of Genesis:[313]

> God fashioned man out of the dust of the earth, and blew into his nostrils the breath of life. So man became a living soul; Job 32: 8: surely this spirit is in man, and the breath of the almighty makes them intelligent. Nor did he merely blow that spirit in, but in each actual person he shaped it, inwardly implanted it, and enhanced and distinguished it with its own faculties. . . When man had been created in this way, it is at last said: so man became a living soul [anima]; from which it is understood (unless we prefer to be taught what the soul is by pagan authors) man is an animate being, inherently and properly one and individual, not twofold or separable—or, as is commonly declared, combined or

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[309] See Stephen M. Fallon, p.79-80 and N.K. Sugimura, *"Matter of Glorious Trial": Spiritual and Material Substance in* Paradise Lost (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009) pp.1-39.
[310] Fallon, p.80.
[311] See William Walker, "'Milton's Dualistic Theory of Religious Toleration in 'A Treatise of Civil Power,' 'Of Christian Doctrine' and 'Paradise Lost,'" *Modern Philology*, vol. 99 (2001), pp. 201–230 and Rachel J. Trubowitz, "Body Politics in Paradise Lost," *PMLA*, 121 (2006), pp. 388– 404.
[312] N.K. Sugimura, 'Milton and Matter' in *Oxford Handbooks Online*, ed. Colin Burrow. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), p.21.
[313] Whilst it is generally accepted that *De doctrina Christiana* was dictated by Milton, there are considerations to be borne in mind when engaging with this text. As William Poole warns in his use of the work, 'because of its manner of composition, its multi-scribed state, and its theological orientation, [*De doctrina Christiana*] is not likely to display full consistency with established Miltonic works at every point'. However, as John K. Hale and J. Donald Cullington remark in their introduction to the Oxford edition of *De doctrina Christiana* 'once rid of any doubts about authorship, we can trace Milton on every page'. See Poole, *Milton and the Idea of Fall*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), p.142 and for a critical summary of the authorship question, see John Milton, *The Complete Works of John Milton: De Doctrina Christiana*, eds., John K. Hale and J Donald Cullington, vol. 8 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), p. xix & p.xxviii – xxix.

> composed from two mutually and generically different and distinct natures, namely soul and body—but that the whole man is soul, and the soul is man; namely a body or substance which is individual, animated, sensitive, and rational.[314]

The creation of man is not at the point at which the body is fashioned from the earth, but in the moment that God 'shaped. . . implanted . . .enhanced . . .and distinguished' the spirit. As with his adaption of Gen 2.7 in *Paradise Lost*, the body is first created and then the soul.[315] However, in contrast to the terse representation in *Paradise Lost*, this passage provides an insight into how, in the first moments of creation, the dusty matter from which man was fashioned is only of little consequence. What is important is that dust is sublimated into a substance that is both spirit and body: as Milton puts it, 'the soul is man', one indistinguishable substance 'which is individual, animated, sensitive, and rational,' bearing little relation to the inanimate dusty ground.

This fusion of earth and spirit places mankind higher on the ontological hierarchy of substance than mere earthly matter. The same monist philosophy that fuses the body and soul also prescribes that the world is composed of one primal substance.[316] However, as articulated by the voice of monism in *Paradise Lost*, Raphael, the substance is graduated, moving from the corporeal up to the spiritual, 'differing but in degree, of kind the same.' As he explains to Adam and Eve, everything is comprised of:

> One first matter […]
> Indued with various forms, various degrees
> Of substance, and in things that live, of life;
> But more refined, more spirituous, and pure,
> As nearer to him placed or nearer tending
> Each in their several active spheres assigned,
> Till body up to spirit work, in bounds
> Proportioned to each kind.
> (V.472-479)

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[314] Milton, *De Doctrina Christiana*, p.301-3.

[315] Here, Milton is appearing to follow Chrysostom's theory, in which the soul was created after the body, rather than Origen's, where the soul is created first, or Thomas Aquinas', in which the body and soul are formed together. See Milton, *Paradise Lost*, p.422n524-8.

[316] Whilst I draw on Fallon's seminal study, I align myself with Phillip Donnelly in understanding that 'body' and matter' or 'substance' are not interchangeable for Milton. Thus, when I invoke the term 'Monist materialism,' I am understanding that for Milton, 'matter' is not simply body or corporealized spirit but a fusion of both, to varying degrees. See Phillip J. Donnelly, '"Matter" Versus Body: The Character of Milton's Monism', *Milton Quarterly*, 33, (1999), pp.79-85

The 'more spirituous' the substance, the more 'refined' and nearer to God. Thus, because God created man as a synthesis of spirit and earthly matter, of these 'various degrees,' humanity is positioned between earthly objects and celestial beings. Whilst man was formed of the earth, he does not remain the base dust of the ground, but rather, through the breath of God, the body is made into a more refined matter. This of course stands in opposition to the general consensus that emerges from early modern Biblical commentary, which seeks to identify man with the base, fragmented earth. However, it is worth observing that Raphael is speaking before the fall of man, at a time when dust is a past condition with no relation to the present or future.

As the voice of God makes clear elsewhere in the poem, 'I made him just and right, | Sufficient to have stood, though free to fall' (III.98-9), and the ambiguous morality of dust is part of this potentiality of sin. As Milton's indifference to the baseness of dust shows, in unfallen Eden, Adam's dustiness does not conclusively mark him as a vile, sinful creature. The meaning is latent within dust, but at beginning of creation, it is not determined in man's nature. Rather, in the Augustinian line of thinking, it is conditional. Augustine put forward that 'God did not create men in the same condition as the angels, completely incapable of death even if they sinned. The condition of human beings was such that if they continued in perfect obedience they would be granted the immortality of the angels'. [317] Thus, the body's return to dust, that is, death, is only latent: in the perfection of Eden, mankind is not resolved to be drawn back into dust. Indeed, in their innocent state Adam and Eve are fixed on diminishing their earthly ties and transcending to a more spiritual state of being.

Notably, however, for Milton the attainment of a spiritual existence is not a split between the soul and body, but rather the rarefaction of the latter. As Milton rationalises in *De Doctrina Christiana*, 'God created us . . .not for separation from the body, but for achieving perfection of

[317] Augustine, *City of God*, XIII.i., p.510. In Latin it reads, 'Non enim eo modo quo Angelos, condiderat Deus homines; ut etiam si peccassent, mori omnino non possent: sed ita ut perfunctos obedientiae munere sine interventu mortis angelica immortalitas.' See *De civitate Dei*, p.377. As William Poole observes, Augustine throughout his works is 'careful to stress the conditional nature of Adam and Eve's prelapsarian state'. See Poole, p.24-5.

both elements.'[318] Raphael informs the pair that 'your bodies may at last turn all to spirit,| improved by tract of time | . . .If ye be found obedient' (V.497-501). In this statement, Raphael tethers materiality to morality, showing the extent of Adam and Eve's corporeality to be subject to the extent of their obedience. Invoking the typical Christian paradox, this ascension to a spiritual state is achieved through attendance to the lowly earth, Raphael admonishing Adam to 'be lowly wise: | Think only what concerns thee and thy being' (VIII.173-4) and not the celestial realms. It implicitly infers the pun on humilis, humus and homo, which, as discussed in Chapter One, etymologically binds the virtue of humility with man's baseness. It is not explicitly said, but, in essence, Raphael is instructing Adam to mind his dust, that is, his element and his earthly domain. Accordingly, in the innocence of Paradise, the knowledge of mankind's dusty heritage is, on the one hand, something to be minded by Adam and Eve. Yet, on the other, it is something not fully comprehensible to them: Adam is not properly informed of the details of his origin, and their sights are set towards spiritual ascension, not on reverting back to the base earth. Knowledge of dust is thus of the intuitive sort in Milton's prelapsarian Eden, its moral implication latent but not determined. So, whilst Du Bartas and Hutchinson avoid handling dust in their depictions of the unfallen world, Milton finds a way in which to present a form of prelapsarian dustiness to his reader, wherein through its obscurity the undertones of mankind's baseness in dust are subdued.

Whilst Raphael and Adam possess little insight into the nature of the relationship between mankind and the dust of the earth, in unfallen Eden the terrestrial origin of Adam is considered in depth by one character. Satan's intrusion into Eden introduces the base condition of mankind into the consciousness of the poem. Even before the fallen angel enters Eden, there emerges a Satanic interest in man's material condition. In Pandemonium, in a speech 'first devised | By Satan' (379-80), Beelzebub, discussing the newly created earth, counsels the need 'to learn | What creatures there inhabit, of what mould, | Or substance, how endued'. II.354-6. That the 'mould, or

[318] Milton, *The Complete Works*, p.461.

substance' of the newly created human race is of consequence to the fallen angels introduces into the poem an unsettling perspective on the materiality of man, as even before the creation of Adam is related, his composition becomes aligned with sinful inquiry.

When Satan first espies Adam and Eve, it is not their material qualities that initially arouse his interest:

> The fiend
> Saw undelighted all delight, all kind
> Of living creatures new to sight and strange:
> Two of far nobler shape erect and tall,
> Godlike erect, with native honour clad
> In naked majesty seemed lords of all.
> (IV.285-90)

It is the form of Adam and Eve that first captivates Satan, their 'erect' stature emanating a Godlike aura.[319] He gives only sight conjecture towards their substance, later deeming them 'high advanced | Creatures of other mould, earth-born *perhaps*' (359-60, *my italic*s). As Satan speculates upon the earthly foundations of the pair, the doubts regarding the nature of human creation are focalized through the fallen angel. That Adam and Eve only '*seemed* lords of all' to Satan, and are only 'perhaps' of terrestrial origins, suggests that the fallen mind can see within the 'happy race' (III.679), or, at least, make conjectures about the latent imperfections that make man 'free to fall' (III.98-9). Of course, Satan's observations are not to be trusted: the fiend who 'saw undelighted all delights' evidently has a mind to corrupt what is perfect. Indeed, as Stanley Fish succinctly remarks, in *Paradise Lost*, 'the fallen consciousness infects language'.[320] At this point in the narrative, Satan is in a different ontological state: he is a postlapsarian figure, his own fall having already happened, looking on a prelapsarian state. Thus, in these early observations, Satan projects into prelapsarian Eden a postlapsarian perspective, revealing the potential for mankind to be other than 'Godlike erect.'

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[319] As discussed in Chapter One, the common trope of mankind's pre-eminence was his upright stature.
[320] Fish, p.103.

It is not until his second intrusion into Eden that 'Satan, bent | on man's destruction' (IX.55-6) considers in depth the telluric materiality of mankind. This time round, Satan has no reservations regarding man's earthly origins, as he rails against the Almighty's decision to advance 'A creature formed of earth, and him endow, | Exalted from so base original, | With heavenly spoils, our spoils' (IX.149-51). Again, Satan's perceptions of creation are perverse; he distorts the gifts bestowed to mankind, defining them as 'spoils', a derivative of conflict which inherently holds the sense of destruction.[321] What is more, these 'spoils' are enjoyed by unworthy recipients. Man's creation is, for Satan, a direct affront: that 'a creature formed of earth' should share in the benefits of heaven is an insult to his kind. Man's earthly qualities are repeatedly disdained by Satan, as he later observes that Adam is 'of limb | Heroic built, *though* of terrestrial mould' (IX.484-5, my italics), admitting man's admirable qualities only *in spite* of his earthliness. What is more, Satan's mention of Adam's 'base original' verbally resonates with the Biblical exegesis of the fallen world. As discussed in Chapter One, Henry Ainsworth, noted 'man's base original,' whilst Gervase Babington too commented upon the 'base . . . matter' of humanity's origins.[322] Credence can thus be given Satan's viewpoint, which detects the incipient baseness of mankind from the offset. Yet, in the context of a prelapsarian Eden, Milton ensures that this potentiality is only apparent to the fallen mind – to his fallen audience and to the fallen archangel.

Continuing his bitter diatribe, Satan further corrupts the account of man's conception.:

> Since higher I fall short, on who next
> Provokes my envy, this new favourite
> Of heaven, this man of clay, son of despite,
> Whom us the more to spite his maker raised
> From dust: spite then with spite is best repaid
> (IX.174-8)

For Satan, 'this man of clay' directly equates to the 'son of despite.' Thus rather than illuminating the condition of man, Satan's musings are illustrative of his own degeneracy, as 'clay' and 'dust'

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[321] OED v., 1.
[322] Ainsworth, *Annotations*, p.10 & Babington, *Notes upon Everie Chapter of Genesis*, Fol. 9r.

become loaded with inferences of contempt.[323] In Satan's mind, man was 'raised | From dust' through 'spite', in direct opposition to Adam's earlier conclusions that man was born out of dust owing to God's benevolence. In *Paradise Lost* Milton thus offers two approaches to man's humble origins: it can either be seen as evidence of God's magnanimity or of his malevolence. Yet the apparent truth of the matter lies not in the actions of God himself, but in the perceptions of the fallen or unfallen mind. Overall, Satan's observations provide a distorted yet essential perspective on man's emergence from the dust of the earth. They do not overtly comment upon man's condition, but by focalizing the significance of Adam's dusty origins through Satan, Milton intimates that dust's significance can only reside in postlapsarian consciousness.

It is only through God's punishment for his transgression that Adam begins to comprehend his relationship with the dust of the earth, as the Son of God pronounces the following condemnation:

> In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread,
> Till though return unto the ground, for thou
> Out of the ground was taken, *know thy birth*,
> For dust thou art, and shalt to dust return.
> (X.205-8, *my italics*)

Milton follows the scripture closely, yet in his deviation from Genesis 3.19 the meaning behind the obscurity of man's creation is finally made clear. Milton's interpolation, in which the Son sentences Adam to 'know thy birth,' reveals that God is inflicting on Adam the full sense of his humble origins. In his notes Alastair Fowler comments that this pronouncement is 'odd; Raphael has already told how Adam was formed of 'dust of the ground.'[324] Yet, as has been shown, Raphael's retelling of Adam's creation illuminated very little, giving no indication of the meaning of man's dusty origins. Consequently, this addition to the biblical verse is a subtle yet crucial acknowledgment that hitherto in *Paradise Lost* the baseness implicit in Adam's dusty origins had

[323] Lee Jacobus charts Satan's misapprehension of his fallen state, and his inability to fully comprehend either himself or God. See *Lee Jacobus, Sudden Apprehension: Aspects of Knowledge in Paradise Lost* (The Hague: Mouton, 1976), pp.27-31.
[324] Milton., p.550.

been unknown by the first man: only at this moment in the narrative, in his fallen state, does the significance of dust begin to be comprehended by Adam

After the divine sentence, this unwelcome acquisition of knowledge is instantly apparent, dust becoming a prominent motif in Adam's reaction to the news. In his 'sad complaint' (719), Adam laments:

> Did I request thee, maker, from my clay
> To mould me man, did I solicit thee
> From darkness to promote me, or here place
> In this delicious garden? As my will
> Concurred not to my being, it were but right
> And equal to reduce me to my dust,
> Desirous to resign and render back
> All I received .
> . . . I submit, his doom is fair
> That dust I am and shall to dust return:
> . . . How gladly would I meet
> Mortality my sentence, and be earth
> Insensible.

In this response to his sentence, Satanic traits begin to emerge in Adam's language. Prior to this, only Satan had discussed the act of moulding Adam from the earth: as discussed above, in Pandemonium there was a devilish interest in the 'mould or substance' of humanity, and when Satan first espies the pair, he remarks how 'such grace | The hand that formed them on their shape hath poured' (IV:364-65). In Satan's mind, this graceful creation was made for the purpose of spiting the fallen angels, and, in his fallen state, Adam's mindset also begins to shift. It is no longer God's 'good[ness]' (IV.414) that raised him from the dust, and instead God becomes the subject of blame, the maker that placed clayey man in the path of temptation.

The use of the prefix re- in Adam's speech is a verbal marker of the fall: humanity is no longer on an upwards trajectory, with the hope of 'turning all to spirit'. Instead, the body falls back into itself, becoming a repetition of its original: it is 'reduc[ed]' to a particulate heap, its integrity 'resign[ed]' and 'render[ed]' back, 'return[ing]' to its primitive dust. Markedly, turning in oneself was a marker of human concupiscence: for Luther, *incurvatus in se* was a definition of sin used frequently throughout his works, indicating that sinners errantly turn away from God to instead

become self-seeking and self-centred.[325] Indeed, Milton draws on this doctrine in his simile for Satan's sinful scheming: his 'dire attempts' on mankind 'like a devilish engine back recoils | Upon himself'. The *re*coiling is a particularly devilish movement: as Paul Hammond remarks, 'in *Paradise Lost* the imaginative and theological importance of the set of ideas signalled by 're-' should be immediately apparent: these words mark out the physical and spiritual movements of the rebel angels' recoil from God and their attempted recovery of their position'.[326] Thus, Adam's repeated use of the prefix re- establishes, how, like the rebel angels, humanity fell away from God in sin. Most saliently, this fall away from Grace is simultaneously a fall back towards dust, a rebound towards his origin.

In the above passage, as Adam comes to terms with the God's judgment, he exhibits an unprecedented identification with dust, speaking of 'my dust' and asserting that 'I . . . am dust'. Yet, at this point in the narrative, Adam is not foregrounding the humility of Abraham, who, before God, acknowledged himself to be 'but dust and ashes' (Gen 18.27). Rather, his meditation on his dustiness, his desire to meet his mortality and 'be earth insensible' is more self-interested than humble, the 'welcome' anticipation of death stemming from his desire to escape the torment of life. Yet eagerness soon turns to dread when he reflects on the possibility that his death may not in fact initiate a 'sleep secure':

> Yet one doubt
> Pursues me still, lest all I cannot die,
> Lest that pure breath of life, the spirit of man
> Which God inspired, cannot together perish
> With this corporeal clod . . .
> Will he draw out,
> For anger's sake, finite to infinite
> In punished man to satisfy his rigour
> Satisfied never? That were to extend
> His sentence *beyond dust* and nature's law.
> (782 -806, my italics)

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[325] Rober Kolb, Irene Dingel, Ľubomír Batka, eds., *The Oxford Handbook of Martin Luther's Theology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), p.644.

[326] Paul Hammond, *Milton's Complex Words: Essays on the Conceptual Structure of Paradise Lost* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), p.388. Notably, however, Hammond also observes the equally prevalent, but instead ameliorative, role of the prefix re- in Paradise Lost, it being regularly used in the sense of a recovery and restoration. For a discussion of Milton's multivalent use of the prefix re- see Hammond, pp.386- 396.

Adam recognises that whilst returning to dust is an unhappy fate, God's retribution could have much more severe: residing in dust gives a finality to suffering, yet if the punishment were to be extended 'beyond' this point, there would be no end to misery.

This lament, which comes in the immediate aftermath of the fall, shows Adam comprehending his own dustiness, but not yet realising the full moral significance of this condition. It is only through his discourse with Eve that Adam obtains self-knowledge, realising the benevolence in God's sentence, the 'mild | And gracious temper he both heard and judged | Without wrath of reviling' (X.1046-9).[327] The outcome of this self-realisation is the full understanding of the path to salvation: Adam accepts that both he and Eve must 'end | In dust, our final rest and native home', and so resolves himself to be humble before God:

> What better can we do, than to the place
> Repairing where he judged us, prostrate fall
> Before him reverent, and there confess
> Humbly our faults . . .
> In sign
> Of sorrow unfeigned and humiliation meek.
> (X.1085-92)

Whilst Milton does not show Adam to exhibit his humility in dust and ashes – the ground on which he prostrates himself is not described, nor does his speech anticipate Abraham's humble declaration – yet it is no coincidence that his resolve to be humble before God follows immediately after his recognition that dust is his 'native home'. Again, humility is related to *humus* and *homo*, the sign of 'humiliation meek' being man prostrate on the earth.

In his ensuing discourse with the angel Michael, in which he is shown a vision of future times, his return to dust becomes part of the fabric of his speech. When he is shown Cain's bloody murder of Abel, he questions in horror 'Is this the way | I must return to native dust (XI.462-3)?' Similarly, when the many pains and general loathsomeness of death are revealed to him, he asks

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[327] As Jun Harada argues 'Eve seems to Adam to be an external means by which he can achieve self-knowledge . . . [and] provides a mirror in which he can see himself'. See 'The Mechanism of Human Reconciliation in "Paradise Lost"' in *Philological Quarterly*, vol. 50 (1971), pp.543-552, p.546.

Michael, 'is there yet not other way, besides | These painful passages, how we may come | To death, and mix with our connatural dust?' (527-9). Here, Adam does not simply speak of dust, but instead describes death as a return to his 'native', 'connatural' dust, acknowledging his kinship with and origin from the base stuff. It is subtle, but Adam's speech demonstrates how in his fallen state he fully comprehends his dustiness, that dust is both his origin and end.

Saliently, it is not that Adam improves his mental faculties after the fall. As Peter Harrison observes, there was a general consensus in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries that 'the Fall had wrought havoc with the intellect', imposing limitations on human cognition.[328] Milton reflects this thinking across his prose, remarking that 'the end of learning is to repair the ruins of our first parents by regaining to know God aright' for the fall occasions 'the loss or at least extensive darkening of that right reason, whose function it was to discern the chief good'.[329] Thus, it is not an enhancement of knowledge, but rather it is that when Adam and Eve transgress, they activate a dormant truth. Adam proved incapable of being 'lowly wise', of intuitively grasping the need for humility. Thus, God made it explicit: indeed, he made it known empirically, the sentence 'thou shalt return to dust' making dustiness known through experience. In sum, this chapter has shown that the semantics of dust was so invested with the understanding of human depravity and sin, that in literary depictions of the prelapsarian world, dust's usage had to be regulated so as not to taint the innocence of Eden. In the following chapters, we shall see the figure of dust untethered from such restraints: in early modern sermons, a genre in which spiritual edification is the objective, dust, along with ashes, was such a compelling figure of speech precisely because it was so morally charged.

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[328] As Harrison also notes, however, there was a diversity to this consensus: there were varying opinions on 'the issue of whether Adam's fall resulted in the total corruption of his reason, or a less severe privation,' In which it was understood that 'the natural powers of reason retained their efficacy even after the Fall'. See Peter Harrison, 'Original Sin and the Problem of Knowledge in Early Modern Europe'*, Journal of the History of Ideas*, vol. 63 (2002), pp.239-59, p.243- 249.

[329] John Milton, *On Education*, *The Prose Works of John Milton*, eds. J. A. St John, Charles Sumner, vol. 3 (London, 1848-64), p.462-63; John Milton, *De Doctrina Christiana*, 6.395.

CHAPTER FIVE: TURNING TO DUST AND ASHES

In 1582 the Catholic priest and biblical translator Gregory Martin weighed in on the ongoing theological dispute regarding the proper translation of the Greek words μετανοεῖτε and μετάνοια that appear throughout the New Testament.[330] For Martin, the true meanings were '*penance* and *doe penance*,' translations that gave a performative sense to the terms.[331] This sense was at odds with the primacy the reformed church placed on the doctrine of justification through faith alone, which rendered Catholic sacraments and public and private confessions of sin superfluous to attaining salvation. Thus Martin, in his *Discoverie of the Manifold Corruptions of the Holy Scriptures by the Heretikes of our Daies*, incensed that the Lutheran heresy of *sola fide* leads to 'the deniall of all penance and satisfaction for sinnes', takes pains to re-assert the salvific efficacy of the ceremonial and performative quality of repentance that had been revoked by reformed doctrine.[332] To buttress his argument Martin cites Matthew 11.21. and Luke 10.13, which both recall the ancient Christian ritual of covering the body in 'sackcloth and ashes', part of a penitential act termed exomologesis.[333] These verses and the act of lying in ashes they recount serve as evidence for Martin that μετάνοια 'plainly signifie[s] penitential *workes*' [my italics], that is, '*doing* penance'. Such external

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330 For the use of terms see Matthew 3:2; 4:17; 11:20; 11:21; 12:41; Mark 1:15; 6:12; 10:13; Luke 11:32; 13:3; 13:5; 15:7; 15:10; 16:30; 17:3; 17:4; Acts 2:38; 3:19; 8:22; 17:30; 26:20; 2 Corinthians 12:21; Revelation 2:5; 2:16; 2:21; 2:22; 3:3; 3:19; 9:20; 9:21; 16:9; 16:11.

331 Gregory Martin, *Discoverie of the Manifold Corruptions of the Holy Scriptures by the Heretikes of our Daies* (Rheims: John Fogny, 1582), p.197.

332 Ibid., p.196.

333 Ibid., p.197. Although exomologesis stems from the Greek ἐξομολόγησις, confession, it is not only verbal manifestation of sin: as Foucault notes in *Hermeneutics of Self*, in the Medieval church exomologesis involved 'a theatricality in which verbal expression did not have the main role'. Tertullian notes that "[Repentance is] not be exhibited in the conscience alone, but may likewise be carried out in some (external) act. This act, which is more usually expressed and commonly spoken of under a Greek name, is ἐξομολόγησις [exomologesis], . . [and] commands (the penitent) to lie in sackcloth and ashes'. Citing Isidore, Heinrich Bullinger, a Swiss reformer whose exegesis was notable for supporting humanist principles, outlines that 'Exhomologesis is the discipline of prostrating and humbling men in habite, in living, to lye in sacke and ashes', but also cautions that 'this rituall or ceremoniall Repentaunce, as it was used amonge them of old, appeareth not to have béene commaunded of God.' See Michel Foucault, 'About the Beginning of the Hermeneutics of Self' in *Religion and Culture*, ed. Jeremy R. Carrette (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999), pp.158 – 181, p. 173; Tertullian, 'On Repentance', *The Writings of Quintus Sept. Flor. Tertullianus,* Vol.I, trans., Peter Holmes and Sydney Thelwall, Sydney (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1869), pp. 257-278, p.273 and Bullinger, *Fifty Godlie and Learned Sermons* […], trans., H.I., (London: RALPHE Newberrie, 1577), p.574-5.

manifestations of penance were supported by one of the Cappadocian Fathers, St. Basil, who, according to Martin, maintained that sackcloth and ashes 'maketh penance'.[334] In Martin's use of these active, performative words of making and doing, he makes explicit the need for ceremony when undertaking the observance of penance. The loquacious William Fulke, however, in the period's endemic style of confutations – which Brian Cummings argues produced 'a monstrous hydra of counter-textuality' – makes various issues with this 'popish' claim:[335]

> Such is your malicious frowardnes, that you will not understande *resipiscentia*, repentance, or amendement of life, a sorow or griefe of mind for the life past: which is testified sometimes by outward signes of sackcloth and ashes, fasting and humbling of mens bodies, as in the texts of Math. 11. and Luc. 10. and diverse other, is expressed. But shew us that the wearing of sackcloth and ashes, is a satisfaction for the life past, or any part of amends to Gods justice, or else you do but trifle, and waste the time. But S. Basil sayth, that sackcloth maketh for penance, &c. I marvell whether you redde that saying in Basil, and durst for sinne & shame alledge it for your popish[...] penance: where he plainly sheweth the use & ende of sack cloth. . . . . Sackecloth is an helper unto repentance, being a signe of humiliation, for of olde tyme, the Fathers repented sitting in sackeclothe & ashes. This signe of humbling, or of submission, you have cleane omitted.[336]

Taking a swipe at Martin's selective, and thus erroneous, use of St Basil along the way, Fulke argues for a more nuanced understanding of μετανοεῖτε and μετάνοια. Concurring with the principles of the reformed church, Fulke takes μετάνοια to mean repentance, much like William Tyndale before him, who, refuting the Catholic Thomas More's use of 'penance', advocated the use of 'repentance' in order to cleanse the term of associations with 'holy dedes', that is, penitential sacraments.[337] For Fulke, repentance is properly an experience of the interior, a 'griefe of mind', with outward displays, such as immersion in sackcloth and ashes, being not the thing itself, but only 'signes', tokens of humility, and not the realisation of repentance. As he goes on to summarise, external remonstrations of penitence 'serveth to repentance, as a testimonie of sorrow, and

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[334] Martin, p.198.
[335] Cummings, *Grammar and Grace*, p.379.
[336] William Fulke, *A Defense of the Sincere and True Translations of the Holie Scriptures into the English Tong* (London: Henrie Bynneman, 1583), p.257-8.
[337] English bible translations also reflect this semantic dispute between the confession divisions: for Matt.11.21 and Luke 10.13, the Geneva Bible translates μετάνοια [technically it's μετενόησαν, 'they would have repented] as repentance, whilst the Douai Rheims, following the Vulgate's use of *poenitet,* translates the term as doing penance.

humbling of our selues before God, not as any satisfaction or amendes for our sinnes.'[338] This understanding was heralded by Calvin, who in his sermon upon the Book of Job asserted that 'Ashes and duste are not the true repentance it selfe, but onely signes of it.. . . For when the men of olde time did cast dust upon their heads, it was in token of humilitie and acknowledgement of their sinnes. . . such Ceremonies bee signes of repentance.'[339] He stresses 'that it is too no purpose for men to have great store of Ceremonies, or too martyr themselves much in outwarde sight of the worlde', the act of casting of dust and ashes over the head deemed an insufficient means to achieve true repentance.[340]

Two salient points emerge from Martin and Fulke's semantic dispute. Firstly, that the Reformed distaste for Catholic ceremony shaped verbal expressions of the acknowledgement of and atonement for sin, so that the word μετάνοια came to signify not both the interior state *and* external acts, but rather an entirely insubstantial and spiritual condition. Secondly, it demonstrates how in the early modern period the reformed dislike of Catholic ceremonial duty marked ashes with a 'popish' stain, so much so, that, as we have seen, the ritual of marking ashes on the forehead was removed from the Ash Wednesday service. In his lecture *Hermeneutics of the Self*, Michel Foucault observes that 'Tertullian has a word to translate the Greek word exomologesis; he said it was *publicatio sui*, the Christian had to publish himself.'[341] This publication of the self was, Foucault claims, 'a dramatic manifestation of the renunciation to oneself', an act that simultaneously reveals the self and effaces the self, articulation through disarticulation. This self-rejection was of course in accord with reformed principles – 'wee are never our selves perfectly,' writes the moderate puritan Richard Sibbes, 'till we have wholly put off our selves.'[342] The decisive shift away from Catholic 'publication', or, rather, public works, meant that the repentant, self-rejecting subject had

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[338] Fulke, p.358.
[339] John Calvin, *Sermons of Master John Calvin, upon the Booke of Job*, trans., Arthur Golding (London: Printed by Lucas Harison And George Bishop 1574), p.50.
[340] Ibid.
[341] Michel Foucault, 'About the Beginning of the Hermeneutics of Self' in *Religion and Culture,* ed., Jeremy R. Carrette (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999), pp.158 – 181, p. 173.
[342] Richard Sibbes, *The Soules Conflict With It Selfe, and Victory Over It Self By Faith* (London: by M. F., 1635), p.111.

to be re-articulated, and with this came a reformulation of theological engagement with dust and ashes. In the Old Testament, dust and ashes played an undeniably important in role in humility and repentance, and could not be ignored. As discussed in Chapter One, humbly identifying with dust and ashes was one scripturally endorsed method to approaching God, and this token of humility was also shown to be the means by which the penitent subject could be expressed: in the Book of Job, Job turns to God and humbly declares that 'I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes' (Job.43.36). Thus, what this chapter will consider is what it meant in the early modern period to 'repent in dust and ashes', when contact with powdered matter in the physical world smacked of popish ritual. The focus will be on two distinguished preachers, Lancelot Andrewes and Thomas Adams, and will examine the way in which they use the tropes of both dust and ashes in their penitential sermons to edify their auditory on the subject of repentance in accordance with reformed doctrine. It will also consider how the homiletic method of pulverizing or 'crumbling' scripture – that is, taking words or fragments of words in isolation – allowed for theological nuances of repentance to emerge from the tropes of dust and ashes.

i Lancelot Andrewes: Turning to Ashes

For Lancelot Andrewes – a preacher who often stood apart from the Calvinist orthodoxy of the early seventeenth-century – the significance of ashes in the Bible was striking.[343] In a sermon preached before the King on Christmas Day in 1613, Andrewes considers Abraham's prescience of and desire for the coming of Jesus Christ: the Patriarch was in anticipation of this advent because, as Andrewes observes, 'a Redeemer he stood in need of', evidenced by his humble assertion that 'I am but dust and ashes' (Gen.18.27). Lighting upon this verse, Andrewes proceeds to explain to his auditory one of its apparent mysteries, that of ashes. Dust held very little intrigue,

[343] As Peter McCullough notes in his introduction to Andrewes' sermons, he was often 'willing to distance himself from Calvinist orthodoxy'. See Lancelot Andrewes, *Lancelot Andrewes: Selected Sermons and Lectures,* ed., Peter McCullough, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), p. xlii.

for 'dust, is plain: it refers us to *Pulvis es, & in pulverem*: He was that by nature; by his very creation.'[344] It was, for Andrewes, simply the material quality of mankind. As he succinctly remarks in an earlier Christmas Day sermon in 1607, 'Why, what is flesh? It is no mysterie to tell what it is: It is dust'.[345] Andrewes's blithe dispatching of dust as unmysterious, and thus unworthy of scrutiny, is in contrast to many of the estimations of the theologians discussed in this thesis, who often regarded dust as a subject that warranted considerable exposition. Ashes, however, were a different matter: 'But, why *ashes*? how come they in? *Ashes*, he was not made of; That, is not naturall: That (sure) refers to somwhat els.'[346] Ashes demand explication, and thus Andrewes proceeds to argue that 'ashes (we know) come of fire, without it, they are not made; ever presuppose a fire precedent. So that, besides death to resolve Him into dust, he saw a fire to turne Him into ashes.'[347] Here, Andrewes indicates the theological texture of the two terms through the subtle variance in his verbs. The body's *resolution* into its original dust is a literal return, as in death it separates back into its natural components. *Turning* to ashes, however, has a different sense: it is an internal, spiritual conversion, a turn of the soul rather than the body. As he goes on to explain, in a somewhat diffuse manner, Abraham, in Genesis 15, saw in the 'fiery furnace' that appeared before him God executing his final judgment upon the world's sinners. In turning to behold the enflamed sinners, Abraham himself then turns to God in acknowledgment of his own sin. Thus, Andrewes concludes that 'dust he was, & ashes he was to be; dust by creation, ashes by condemnation', the sign of ashes revealed to be interlaced with complex spiritual signification. This hermeneutics of ashes is put forward more clearly in the notes to an earlier sermon in 1598 on John 8.56:

> So *Abraham* desired a Redeemer . . . for he confessed himself *to be both dust and ashes,* . . . Dust in regard of his nature, and therefore subject to corruption; but ashes in regard of his sinnes, by which he is subject to everlasting condemnation; in respect of both he desired a Redeemer, that might deliver both his body from death and his soul from destruction . . .

[344] Andrewes, *XCVI. Sermons*, p.65
[345] Ibid., p.19.
[346] Ibid.
[347] Ibid.

> [and] desired one that would deliver his soul from being ashes, and his body from the dust.[348]

Ashes, for Andrewes, are the figurative materialization of the sinful soul. Carefully elided is one meaning of ashes that appears numerous times throughout both the Old and New Testament – of their role as an ornament of the penitent body. Andrewes makes the separation between the body and soul explicit, so that dust applies only to the former, and ashes to the latter. In doing so, ashes remain decidedly symbolic, disassociated from ceremonial acts.

Unsurprisingly, Andrewes attends most to the theological reconfiguration of repenting in ashes in his Ash Wednesday sermon, preached before James VI & I in 1619. Andrewes selects Joel 2.12-3 for the *thema*: 'Therefore also, now (saith the LORD) turne you unto Me, with all your heart, and with Fasting, and with Weeping and with Mourning. And rend your heart, and not your clothes, and turne unto the LORD your GOD.' Andrewes seizes upon the 'turn' in the verse, or as the accompanying Latin has it, *convertimini*, saturating his sermon with the word.[349] Throughout, the 'turn' is subject to ceaseless wordplay, as Andrewes deploys in earnest the figures of polyptoton, antanaclasis, and syllepsis, placing the 'turn' in a dizzying semantic fluctuation according to his devotional intent.[350] To take merely the summary for example, Andrewes uses the temporal 'turn' of the seasons – the migratory '*return*' of birds and the '*Equinoctiall*' rotational 'turn' of the sun – to impress upon his auditory the propriety of the occasion, for, in this penitential

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[348] Andrewes, *Apospasmatia SACRA: or A Collection of Posthumous and Orphan Lectures,* p.552.

[349] The Latin matches the Vulgate exactly, whilst the English is similar to both the Geneva and King James. As Peter McCullough and Valentine Cunningham have observed, although Andrewes had contributed to the King James Bible, he tended to preach 'from the Vulgate and from his own English translations based on the Geneva Bible. . . because of his multilingual erudition and deep familiarity with the earliest available originals of versions of the Scriptures, he had no fond notions about there being a single 'correct' text of translation.' See "Afterlives of the King James Bible," in *Manifold Greatness: The Making of The King James Bible,* ed. Helen Moore and Julian Reid (Oxford: Bodleian Library, 2011), p. 141. See also Alison Knight, "The Very, Very Words": (Mis)quoting Scripture in Lancelot Andrewes's and John Donne's Sermons on Job 19:23-27 in *Studies in Philology*, vol.111, pp.442 – 469, p.448.

[350] To use the term 'wordplay' is not to suggest Andrewes' frivolity with language: as Peter McCullough has observed 'Andrewes' manipulations of words display a deep-seated respect for God given language.' See 'Lancelot Andrewes and Language', *Anglican Theological Review,* vol.74 (1992), pp.304 – 316, p.308. Sophie Read identifies syllepsis and antanaclasis as chief amongst the rhetorical figures used in sixteenth and early seventeenth century puns. See 'Puns: serious wordplay' in *Renaissance Figures of Speech,* eds., Sylvia Adamson, Gavin Alexander and Katrin Ettenhuber (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), pp. 81 – 94, p.81. See also Sophie Read, "Lancelot Andrewes's Sacramental Wordplay", *Cambridge Quarterly*, vol. 36 (2007), pp. 11-31.

season, it is 'our *time* to *turne* to GOD'. In his use of antanaclasis, the 'turn' shifts from physical to metaphysical, the seasonal turn of nature becoming the requisite spiritual turn of the soul. Succeeding this, the sense of 'turn' turns again. Discussing the 'great and fearfull Day of the LORD', Andrewes teaches his auditory that sufferance is not integral to the occasion, that they need not 'abide it': instead, 'turne it away you may: turne it into a joyfull day, by this turning to the LORD', the turn simultaneously becoming an act of rejection, of transformation and proximation. It could thus be said that Andrewes' wordplay is a kind of rhetorical pulverization. George Herbert criticised the preaching style that had a 'way of crumbling a text into small parts. . .since the words apart are not Scripture, but a dictionary.' Such an approach, in Herbert's view, fragmented scripture into a heap of particulars, while he preferred 'observations drawn out of the whole text, as it lyes entire, and unbroken in the Scripture it self.'[351] Whilst the critique is unlikely to have been pointed at Andrewes, the homiletic method of 'crumbling' scripture is something that the renowned court preacher can certainly be seen to do.[352] In Andrewes's 1614 Nativity sermon, for example, he shivers the name 'Immanuel' into three, maintaining that the word is 'compounded, and to be taken in peeces'.[353] Thus 'Immanuel' is taken parts, Andrewes understanding it to consist of '1 El, the mighty GOD: 2 and Anu, we, poore we; (Poore indeed, if we have all the world beside, if we have not Him to be with us:) And Im, which is cum, And that cum, in the midst betweene nobis and Deus, GOD and Vs; to couple GOD and us: thereby to conveigh the things of the one, to the other.'[354] As Sophie Read has noted, 'the ingenious pressure he brings to bear cracks the word apart to reveal its Hebrew composition'. But this breaking up of scripture is not disintegrating its meaning, but rather illuminating it.[355] Thus, Andrewes does not crumble biblical texts in the pejorative sense that Hebert understands it to be. As Read goes on to argue, Andrewes' wordplay

[351] Herbert, *A Priest to the Temple* in *The Works,* p.235.
[352] Certain critics have taken the comment to be pointed at Andrewes, suggesting the applicability of textual crumbling to Andrewes' sermons, however both Read and McCullough have shrewdly opposed this contention. See Read, "Andrewes Sacramental Wordplay", p.27 and Peter McCullough, 'Introduction' in *Lancelot Andrewes: Selected Sermons and Lectures* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), p. xlii.
[353] Andrewes, *XCVI. Sermons*, p. 75.
[354] Ibid.
[355] Read, "Andrewes Sacramental Wordplay", p.20.

'is a positive articulation of faith, because Andrewes believes that his scrutiny will turn up shards of revelatory meaning.'[356] Accordingly, in his Ash Wednesday sermon, the 'gravity' and 'sweetness' of scripture is not lost through rhetorical pulverization, as it is through the crumbs of Joel 2.12-13 – the 'turn' and the 'return' – that the theological point of the verse is realised. Figures of repetition ensure that the intense scrutiny of a single word does not fall into redundant tautology, but rather unpicks the threads of spiritual meaning woven into the verbal texture of 'turn'.

Amongst the various vicissitudes of 'turn' in the summary, the salient pun relies on one particular thread of meaning – that of repentance. This semantic quality of 'turn' was manifest in the original verse. The Hebrew had שבו (*shub*) for 'turn' and as William Tyndale noted in the introduction to his English translation of the New Testament:

> Concerning this word repentaunce. . .the Hebrue hath in the old Testament generally *(Sob)* turne, or be converted. For which the translation that we take for S. Jeromes, hath most part *(Conuerti)* to turne, to be conuerted . . .And the Greeke in the newe Testament hath perpetually *(Metanoeo)* to turne in the hart, and minde, and to come to the right knowledge, and to a mans right wit agayn.. . . the very sence and signification both of the Hebrue, & also of the Greke word is: to be converted and to turne to God with all the hart, to know hys will, & to live accordyng to his lawes. . . Confession, not in the Priestes eare, for that is but mans invention, but to God in the hart.[357]

Throughout both the Old and New Testament, repentance is figured by the 'turn' and thus the 'very sense and signification' of the Book of Joel's *shub* is conversion, a repentant turn towards God. [358] As with his semantic dispute with More, Tyndale ensures that repentance is understood as a process of the 'hart' and mind', an internal turn. Andrewes does not directly address the semantic dispute in his sermon, yet he never uses the term penance. More importantly, in his treatment of the trope of ashes he ensures that turning to God is far removed from external acts and very much a practice of the mind.

Andrewes does not draw from the verbal subtleties of either the Greek or Hebrew word for repentance in order to edify his auditory. Rather, it is the Latin word *converti* that the preacher

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[356] Ibid., p.23.
[357] *The Newe Testament dylygently corrected and compared with the Greke by Willyam Tindale* (Antwerp, 1534)
[358] For a consideration of the theological point of the Greek *metanoia,* see Kathryn Murphy, 'Hill's Conversions' in *Geoffrey Hill and his Contexts*, eds., Piers Pennington, Matthew Sperling (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2011), pp.61-80.

discerns the most efficacious theological textures. Andrewes impresses upon his auditory the original sense of repentance, that of a turn towards God:

> *Repentance* it selfe is nothing els, but *redire ad principia,* a kind of circling; to *returne* to Him by *repentance,* from *whom,* by sinne, we have turned away. And much after a *circle* is this *text:* it beginns with the word *turne,* and *returnes* about to the same word againe. Which *circle* consists (to use the *Prophet's* owne word) of *two turnings*; (for, twise he repeats this word;) which two must needs be two different motions. . . First, a *turne,* wherein we looke forward to GOD, and with our *whole heart* resolve to *turne* to Him. Then, a *turne* againe, wherein we looke backward to our *sinnes,* wherein we have *turned* from GOD; and with beholding them, our very *heart breaketh.* These two, are two distinct, both in *nature* and *names:* One, *Conversion from sinne*; the other, *Contrition for sinne.* . . . These two between them, make up a complete *repentance,* or (to keepe the word of the text) a *perfect revolution.*

Polyptoton saturates the rhetoric with the root of 'turn', the verbal recycling mirroring the repeated revolutions of the text itself: Andrewes' sermon is not concerned with a single cycle, but '*two turnings'*. Again, Andrewes plays with antanaclasis, the 'turn' invoking a sense of both a forward and backward trajectory, a look towards God and a reflective look back. This is essential, as it is through these two distinct turns that 'complete *repentance*' can be attained, a theological point realised through punning on *converti*. The repentant turn is shivered into two – 'conversion' and 'contrition' – yet even in their distinct fragments they retain a linguistic echo of the original turn: the former has, of course, its etymological roots in the Latin, whilst the latter, although not rooted in c*onvertĕre,* nevertheless has an undeniable morphemic kinship. '*Conver*sion' and '*Con*trition' (my italics), although distinct in nature and names, are fragments that are etymologically and morphemically part of the whole, of *converti.*

It is in the second part of the turn – contrition – where ashes and the sense of pulverising come into play. Taken from the Latin *conterĕre*, contrition was, etymologically speaking, an act of grinding into powder, as Andrewes himself observes in the second division when considering the necessary suffering of the repentant heart:

> And, what must it suffer? *Contrition:* It should even *conteri,* be *ground to powder. A contrite heart*, it should be: If not that, not *contritum*, yet *cor confractum*, a broken heart, broken in peeces, though not so small. If neither of these; yet with this qualifying heere, cor *conscissum*, with some rent, or cleft. . . *Grind to powder, breake in peeces,* at least make a *rent. Contritio, Confractio, Conscissio, Compunctio,* Somewhat it will be.

Grinding, breaking, tearing, remorse, *Contritio, Confractio, Conscissio, Compunctio:* Andrewes puns on a morphemic crumb – the prefix 'con-' – to reveal by degrees the spiritual progression of the repentant heart, the sense of pulverization being at the root of the wordplay. Decades later, the poet and fiercely anti-papal preacher Richard Crashaw makes clear the dusty nature of the humble and repentant heart. In the poem, 'Dies Irae', the poetic subject turns to God, his 'Judge' and 'Friend', and beseeches 'O hear a suppliant heart; all crush't | And crumbled into contrite dust.'[359] Crashaw makes the dustiness of contrition explicit, in a manner that Andrewes – uncaptivated by the matter of dust – does not. Whilst Andrewes plays with the sense of a crumbling, contrite heart, he is untempted to employ the image of dust his to achieve his theological intent.

The trope of ashes, however, is deemed a suitable edificatory instrument to use on his auditory. When the repentant soul, having completed the first turn towards God, turns backwards to look upon its past sins, it beholds 'the *wheele of our nature*'. The wheel turns 'apace', quickly reaching the body's end, in which Andrewes deploys the conventional biblical trope: 'we *turne* againe *to our dust.'* The '*last turne'* after death, once '*Mercie*' and '*Justice*' have had their *'turne'*, is the soul's definitive existence in ashes, as expressed by Psalm 9.17, when '*Convertentur peccatores in infernum,* the sinners shal be turned into hell, and all the people that forget, in time, to *turne* unto GOD.' Coming to this point, Andrewes observes that:

> There was wont to be a *ceremonie* of giving *ashes* this day, to put us in mind of this *converteris*. I feare with the *ceremonie*, the *substance* is gone too. If that *conversion into ashes* be well thought on, it will helpe forward our *turning*. This *returning* to our heart, the sad and serious bethinking us there, of *Nature's conversion into dust*; of *sinne's*, into *ashes* (for, ashes ever presuppose fire:) that the *wheele* turns apace, and if we turne not the rather, these *turnings* may overtake us: GOD's *Spirit* assisting, may so worke with us.[360]

Conversion may be achieved through *Contritio*, through a turn to the pulverized nature of the body and soul. Yet Andrewes feigns momentary doubt that the ashes of sin have lost their 'substance' in the reformed alterations to the liturgy, in which the annual performance of penitence– the

[359] Richard Crashaw, *The Poems, English, Latin and Greek, of Richard Crashaw*, ed., L. C. Martin, L. C., 2nd edn., (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1957), p.299.
[360] Ibid., p.206.

marking of ashes on the forehead – was expunged.[361] This doubt, however, is a theatrical ploy that sets up the ensuing rhetorical manoeuvre. Peter McCullough notes Andrewes's transformative habit of re-investing Catholic traditions with Protestant meaning through 'scriptural warrant.'[362] In his Good Friday sermons, Andrewes, McCullough observes, does not entirely shun Catholic rituals but rather re-forms material externals as 'word-objects': iconography such as the crucifix is not obliterated but instead becomes converted to images in the mind's eye, buttressed by scripture.[363] With his treatment of ashes, Andrewes can be seen to deploy a similar tactic: in the Catholic liturgy, the marking of ashes on the forehead made an outward show of penitence, a vestige of the more theatrical practice of exomologesis, yet Andrewes transforms this material manifestation into an internal act: ashes become resubstantiated in the mind's eye, as rather than being physically inscribed onto the forehead, they become impressed onto the imagination. Andrewes urges his auditory to 'behold[…]' their sinnes, so that if the '*conversion into ashes* be well thought on, it will helpe forward our *turning,'* the salvific potential coming not from material externals, but from the internal impression of the word. Thus, for Andrewes, the expression of the penitent self through ashes, demonstrated throughout scripture, is not forgotten. Through his rhetorical skill, Andrewes purifies ashes of what William Fulke might take to be a 'popish' stain, and instead re-imagines them as a verbal sign of repentance.

The theological point was a significant one for Andrewes, as he revisited it in a later Ash Wednesday sermon in 1623, again delivered before the King. Preaching on the impending wrath of God, Andrewes conflates divine anger and retribution with burning, as 'Ire and fire are but one thing.' In doing so, he recalls the Catholic ritual of giving ashes:

> upon this day they were wont, by the-*ceremonie* of giving *ashes*, to put men in minde of this *fire*. For, *ashes* were not given to putt men in minde of their *mortalitie*: *dust* had beene more proper to have done that. Our *mortalitie* is grounded upon *Pulvis es & in pulverem***.** But, ashes, they come not without *fire*: where they are, *fire* must have beene first. And so, they most meet to represent fire and make us thinke of it. The *ashes*, they be blowen away; but, not

[361] Cummings, *The Book of Common Prayer,* p.xxiv.
[362] Peter E. McCullough, 'Lancelot Andrewes's Transforming Passions', *Huntington Library Quarterly*, Vol. 71, (2008), pp. 573-589, p.576 & p.581.
[363] Ibid., p.578.

> the *memorie* of them (I hope.) Whatsoever becomes of the *ceremonie*, the *substance* would not be blowen away after it. Sure, these *ashes* laid well to the *root* of the *tree*, it hath beene thought, will make it *beare the sooner*. The *present feare of future wrath* for sinnes past, will putt some force into this *Igitur*: If this will not, nothing will.

Again, Andrewes finds in ashes a particular theological purpose, which dust, as a sign of mortality, cannot encompass. Ashes have a capacity to generate a full apprehension of God, of his fiery omnipotence and wrath. Significantly, in this later sermon Andrewes makes explicit the conversion he intends to engender with his rhetoric. Ashes were, in the past, the substance of '*ceremonie*'. Yet, through a markedly materialistic figure of speech, they become resubstantiated: the material, naturally volitant, stuff of ashes has been blown away, no longer an appropriate expression of Christian penitence, but its insubstantial trace, the *'memorie'*, remains. Andrewes expresses a real desire, a 'hope', that ashes can still retain their efficacy, yet only in a manner that accords with reformed sensibilities – as an impression on the mind, not a physical mark on the forehead.

ii Thomas Adams: Turning to Dust

On 29th March 1625, closely following the death of King James, the Calvinist clergyman Thomas Adams preached at Whitehall. Accommodating the sombre climate and penitential season, Adams focused his sermon on Job 42.6: 'Wherefore I abhorre my selfe, and repent in dust and ashes'. The homiletic approach to repenting in pulverized matter was, in many ways, distinct from the reimagination of ashes found in the sermons of Lancelot Andrewes. Adams did not, for example, relegate dust to the side-lines, and, as will be discussed below, he found a significant amount of figurative potential in the non-cinerous powder. At certain points in the sermon Adams does, like Andrewes, distinguish between the two particulate substances. Ashes, Adams observes, are specifically 'the leavings of the fire, the offalls of consumed substances' and thus can serve a different theological purpose to dust, as whilst dust shows 'that wee have deserved the dissolution of our bodies; *Ashes* put us in mind that wee have merited also the destruction of our Soules.' Adams' logic is built on the examples of characters in the Old Testament: on the Day of Judgment,

all of earth will be incinerated by fire, in which 'the remnants shall bee but *ashes*.' For this reason, 'the Ancients used to repent in *Ashes*; remonstrating to themselves, that they deserved burning in endlesse fire, more then those *Ashes* wherein they wallowed.'[364] Yet, for Adams, this perceived function of ashes did nothing to diminish his enthusiasm for dusty figures of speech. Whilst for Andrews, dust lacked theological textures, Adams relished the commonness of dust and the obviousness of its metaphorical meaning.

Yet the salient distinction to be made between the two preachers is the attention Adams pays to material qualities of dust and ashes. As he begins the sermon, Adams outlines three degrees of mortification implicit in Job 42.6:

> *I abhorre my selfe*, there sinne is sicke and wounded: *I repent*, there it is wounded and dead: *In dust and ashes*, there it is dead and buried. To *denie* ones selfe, maimes concupiscence, that it cannot thrive: to *repent*, kills it, that it cannot live: *in dust and ashes*, buries it, that it cannot rise up againe. I throw it into the Grave, I cover it with mould, I rake it up *in dust and ashes*.[365]

'Dust and ashes' are not abstract terms, but rather represent physical substances that can cover, be thrown and be raked. They make vivid and familiar Adam's theological point, the metaphorical burying of sin imitating the very real procedures laid out in the burial service. In realising this figurative potential, 'dust and ashes' are treated in isolation as textual 'crumbs' extracted from the verse. Yet, much like the shivering of scripture in Andrewes' sermons, this fragmentation does not shatter the verse into indiscriminate parts, but rather divides it to better illuminate the whole. As Adams himself declares, 'I will not pull the Text in peeces; only I follow the manuduction of the words'.[366] Adams appears to anticipate Herbert's criticism, yet redefines what constitutes the crumbling of scripture: the text can be taken in parts, only truly fragmented if it loses the literal sense of the verse.

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[364] Adams, *Five Sermons,* p.25.
[365] Ibid., p4.
[366] Ibid.

With this justification in place, Adams proceeds to divide up the verse into four steps. Adam's discerns in the syntax of the sentence the paradox of humility, in which exaltation is attained through lowliness:

> It beginnes as high as the glory of Heaven, and ends as low as the basest of Earth. The first word [Wherefore] respects an infinite God: the last words [Dust and ashes] declare an humbled man. The meditation of the former is the cause of the latter, and the condition of the latter is the way to the former. To study God, is the way to make an humble man: and an humble man is in the way to come unto God. Such a consideration will cast us down to dust and ashes: such a prostration will lift us up to glory and blessednesse.[367]

Using the image of Jacob's Ladder, Adams arranges his sermon to align with this exalting descent into humbleness, deploying the usual tropes of earth and humility. He begins at the highest rung of the ladder with the first word of the verse -- 'wherefore'. This word, explains Adams, 'referrs us to the motive that humbled him', that is God's majesty and mercy. He then moves down the ladder as the sermon progresses, through the steps of 'shame' and 'sorrow' – for 'no man can abhorre himselfe, without Shame; nor Repent, without Sorrow' – finally arriving, in the typically paradoxical manner of humble exhalation, at the climax, 'dust and ashes'. To remember Augustine: *elatio sit deorsum, et humilitas sursum.* Dust and ashes are the lowest point, but such lowliness will, as Adams observes, 'lift us up to glory.'

In this bottom step, the figures of dust and ashes are treated as fragments, and, like the exordium, it is in this state that Adams yields the full figurative potential of the base particles. By taking 'dust and ashes' in isolation, Adams's wordplay does not unearth the theologically sophisticated textures in the terms, which Andrewes punning on 'turn' can be seen to do. Nevertheless, Adams' strategy of taking Job 42.6 'in peeces' provides a concentrated focus on the image of dust, in which Adams can be seen to play with common dusty tropes in order to achieve his devotional intent. Throughout this final part of the sermon, Adams draws on numerous commonplaces that depend upon the physicality of dust and ashes. An image that Adams repeatedly returns to is that of dust and ashes apparelling the humble soul. Prompted by Job 16.15,

[367] Ibid.

Adams asserts that Job is clothed in sackcloth, with '*dust and ashes* the lace and embroyderie of it'.[368] He also recalls the King of Nineveh from Jonah 3.6, who in an act of repentance prostrated himself upon the ground: 'Hee throwes away Crowne, scepter, Maiestie, and all, and sits in ashes'.[369] Whilst the degradation of a King was of particular note, immersion in ashes was also practiced amongst the Jews in mourning: Adams retells how they 'sprinkled over with *dust*, and overstrawed with *ashes'* their sackcloth, in 'repentance returning to their first Image, in all prostrate humility'.[370] This scriptural detail was, of course, one that Andrewes avoided. Yet Adams relishes such theatrical displays of humility: indeed, the immersion in and acquaintance with dust and ashes is suggested to be efficacious, for 'they that sit in the *dust*, and feele their owne materials about them, may well renounce the ornaments of pride', the material quality of dust aiding spiritual conversion.[371]

Adams continues this attentiveness to the material through the fourth rung, also playing with the more secular image of common dust on the street, which, anthropomorphising, he gives a frisky, feminine edge:

> she so often borrowes wings of the winde, to mount aloft into the ayre, and in the streets and high wayes, dasheth herselfe into our eyes: as if shee would say, Are you my kinred, and will not know me? will you take no notice of your owne mother? To taxe the folly of our ambition, the *dust* in the street takes pleasure to bee ambitious.[372]

Drawing on the common adage, *Pulverem oculis offundere*, Adams again plays on the physicality of dust, using its volatile nature used as a prompt to humility: [373] the movement of dust gives it an anthropomorphic energy, so that it is 'as if' she is speaking. The imagined exchange is a meeting of kindred, in which the dust of the street forces the individual to acknowledge its own dusty heritage. As we shall see in Chapter Seven, in 'Church Monuments' George Herbert too plays on the idea of dusty acquaintances, the mind meditating on dusty remains presented as a 'fellowship

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[368] Ibid., p.21.
[369] Ibid.
[370] Ibid., p.24.
[371] Ibid., p22..
[372] Ibid., p.23.
[373] Erasmus, p.106-7. As we have already seen, this adage was also used by Henry More. See Chapter Three.

of dust.' In Herbert's poem, this encounter is also instructive; however it is a gentler form of schooling. In Adams' sermon, the teachings of dust are more aggressive, its ambitious flight brazenly confronting the unwitting soul.

This kinship with dust, which recognises dust as the essence of mankind, is a matter that Adam's attends to repeatedly throughout the section. Dust, Adams reminds his auditory, is 'the remembrance of [our] orginall . . . the matter of our substance, the house of our soules, the originall graines whereof wee were made, the top of all our kindred.'[374] In line with Calvinist commentaries on the subject, the body's original is depicted as the most degraded of substances: '*Dust*; not . . . Gold nor precious stone, was the matter of our bodies; but earth, and the fractions of the earth, *dust*.'[375] Mankind is literally broken earth – 'fractions' deriving from the Latin *frangĕre* to break – quintessentially and irrevocably dust.[376] Even Methusaleh, whose long evasion of mortality suggests a certain defiance to the fragility of 'mudde walles', has his lineage in dust: everyone can be traced back to Adam, 'who was the sonne of *Dust*'.[377] To emphasise the point, Adams draws on the simple repetition found in the burial service:

> Let the covetous thinke, what doe I scrape for? a little golden *dust:* the ambitious, what doe I aspire for? a little honourable *dust:* the libidinous, what doe I languish for? a little animated *dust*, blowen away with the breath of Gods displeasure. O how goodly this building of man appeares, when it is clothed with beautie and honour! A face full of maiestie, the throne of comelinesse; wherein the whitenesse of the Lilie contends with the sanguine of the Rose: an actiue hand, an erected countenance, an eye sparkling out lustre, a smoothe complexion, arising from an excellent temperature and composition: . . . O what a workman was this, that could raise such a Fabricke out of the earth, and lay such orient colours upon *Dust*! yet all is but *Dust*, walking, talking, breathing *dust:* all this beautie but the effect of a well concocted food, and life it selfe but a walk from *dust* to *dust*.[378]

Adams' continual reiteration of the dust throughout the passage impresses upon his auditory mankind's inescapable kinship with it, reducing all human existence and endeavour to a futile, pulverous heap. Adams' rhetoric bears a striking resemblance to Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. When

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374 Ibid., p21.
375 *Ibid.,* p.22.
376 OED n., 5.a, b & c.
377 Ibid., p.26.
378 Ibid. p.23.

Adams remarks 'O what a workman was this, that could raise such a Fabricke out of the earth . . . yet all is but Dust,' the phrasing echoes the despondent summation of the Danish prince, who figuratively pulverizes all of humanity: 'what piece of work is a man . . . And yet to me, what is this quintessence of dust?' (*Hamlet*, II.ii.255-9).

It can be said, therefore, that when Adams takes the 'peece' of 'dust and ashes' from Job 42.6 and squeezes from it an array of tropes to edify his auditory, he is not being innovative. The commonplaces are recurrent throughout: another familiar use of dust that Adams plays with is the idea of dust as a common leveller: [379]

> the onely compounder of differences, the absolver of all distinctions: who can say, which was the Client, which the Lawyer: which the borrower, which the lender: which the captive, which the Conqueror; when they all lie together in blended *dust?*[380]

The passage has distinct resonances with a sermon John Donne preached four years earlier in Whitehall, in which the dust of Patricians, yeomen and plebeians all lie together, unable to be sifted, in an indistinguishable heap.[381] The saturation of dust in the final section of Adam's sermon is in essence a tissue of rephrased dusty tropes, reflecting the commonplaces of dust found across literary genres. Yet whilst his homiletic rhetoric is not avant-guard, the emphasis that the sheer quantity of tropes place on mankind's dustiness makes evident the edificatory importance that dust plays for Adams in the matter of repentance. Whilst Andrewes may dismiss dust as 'plain', and so

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[379] See for example, James Shirley's *Contention of Ajax and Ulysses*, in which Calchas, leading the funeral procession of Ajax, says:
There is no armour against fate,
Death lays his icy hand on Kings,
Sceptre and Crown,
Must tumble down,
And in the dust be equal made,
With the poor crooked scythe and spade.
See James Shirley, *The Dramatic Works and Poems of James Shirley*, eds., William Gifford, William, Alexander Dyce, Vol.6., (London: John Murray, Albemarle Street, 1833), p.396-7.

[380] Ibid., p22-3.

[381] "the dust of great persons graves is speechlesse too, it sayes nothing, it distinguishes nothing: As soon the dust of a wretch whom thou wouldest not, as of a prince whom thou couldest not look upon, will trouble thine eyes, if the winde blow it thither; and when a whirle winde hath blowne the dust of the Church-yard into the Church, and the man sweeps out the dust of the Church into the Church-yard, who will undertake to sift those dusts again, and to pronounce, This is the Patrician, this is the noble flower, and this the yeomanly, this the plebeian bran". See Donne, *Sermons*, Vol. 4, p.53.

pays little heed to the matter in his sermons, for Adams, dust and its tropes prove a fertile salvific instrument, and one that plays a substantial part in his oratory.

As we have seen, the images from which Adams draws stress the material quality of dust and ashes: they are decidedly substantial, the stuff of the natural world that can be 'rake[d] . . up', 'sprinkled over' penitents, and 'dashe[d]' into unwitting eyes. Yet, whilst Adams appears to suggest the efficacy of physical acquaintances with pulverised matter, in the sermon's close Adams makes a distinctively Protestant reformation of repenting in dust and ashes. He beseeches his congregation to 'turne to God in *dust*, before hee turne us into *dust*.'[382] However, the dusty turn is not the ceremonial dusting found in the Old Testament nor is it acquired through the Catholic rites of Ash Wednesday:

> I call you not to casting *Dust* on your heads, or sitting in *Ashes*· but to that sorrow and compunction of Soule, whereof the other was but an externall Symbole or testimonie. Let us rend our hearts, and spare our garments; humble our soules, without afflicting our bodies. It is not a corps wrapp'd in *Dust* and *Ashes*, but a *contrite heart*, *which the Lord will not despise*.[383]

Dust and ashes are not materials to adorn the humble body: it is the heart that must be crushed to powder through an internal state of contrition. This turn at the sermon's close towards a minding of dust and ashes is salient, as it shows that whilst Adams and Andrewes handed the materials very differently in their homiletic rhetoric, for both preachers repentance in dust and ashes was of the reformed kind: it was decidedly neither performative nor ceremonial, but instead an internal act, an interior spiritual crumbling of the contrite heart. In sum, unassuming dust and ashes are figures of speech that, owing to their scriptural prominence, are embroiled in the period's religious controversies, and so become conspicuous through the theological discussions that seek to align them with reformed thinking. What is more, as both the writing of Adams and Andrewes reveals, dust and ashes were not always synonymous with each other but rather had distinct semantic textures. In the following chapter, the trope of ashes shall be further investigated in the works of

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[382] Adams, *Sermons*, p.24.
[383] Ibid., p.27.

Sir Thomas Browne. Yet, in his treatment of ashes, they are not shown to be the emblem of the sinful soul, distinct from dust, but rather supplant dust as the trope of posthumous remains.

CHAPTER SIX: THE ASHEN DEAD IN THE WRITING OF SIR THOMAS BROWNE

> *And lo I am but dust and ashes. Dust,* is plain: it refers us to *Pulvis es, & in pulverem:* He was that, by nature; by his very creation. But, why *ashes?* how come they in? *Ashes,* he was not made of; That, is not naturall: That (sure) refers to somwhat els.
>
> Lancelot Andrews, *XCVI. Sermons*[384]

The enigma of ashes, as we have seen, was compelling for Lancelot Andrewes, who prized them above the 'plain' figure of dust. Ashes, for Andrewes, were the figurative emblem of the sinful soul, and it was ashes, not dust, that engaged his creative energies. Thomas Adams, although the figure of dust was prominent in his sermon preached on Job 42.6, nevertheless observes that 'Ashes . . . are the Embleme or representation of greater misery: Dust onely shewes us, that wee have deserved the dissolution of our bodies; Ashes put us in mind that wee have merited also the destruction of our Soules.'[385] As discussed in Chapter One, ashes were often synonymous with dust: the memorable maxim of the Burial Service – 'Earth to earthe, ashes to ashes, dust to dust' – established an equivalence between the terms, and, what is more, in Hebrew the terms are verbally alike: when Abraham declares that he is עפר ואפר (dust and ashes), the two Hebrew words can be seen to differ only in vowels, and when spoken aloud, the pronunciation of these would be very similar. Nevertheless, both Andrewes and Adams draw attention to the theological distinctions between the two particles, both finding cause to explain the differing semantic properties of dust and ashes. Dust, in Andrewes's words, 'putt men in minde of their mortalitie. . . .our mortalitie is grounded upon *Pulvis es & in pulverem*.' Ashes, meanwhile, reminded mankind of their broken soul. Decades later, however, the semantics of ashes were reconfigured in the writing of Sir Thomas Browne, wherein ashes are often not regarded as 'somwhat else', and their meaning not distinct from dust: instead, they frequently replace dust as the metonym for posthumous remains. As this chapter will discuss, ashes, not dust, put Browne in mind of man's mortality, setting Browne apart from many writers considered in this thesis.

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[384] Andrewes, *XCVI. Sermons*, p.65.
[385] Adams, *Five Sermons*, p.24-5.

Browne's preference for the trope of ashes was unusual not only in comparison to other writers, but because of the importance that he himself places on dust as the product of death. In the first chapter of his meditation on funereal customs, *Urne Buriall*, Browne observes that whilst cremation was prevalent in Antiquity,

> Christians abhorred this way of obsequies, and though they stickt not to give their bodies to be burnt in their lives, detested that mode after death; affecting rather a deposiure than absumption, and properly submitting unto the sentence of God, to return not unto ashes but unto dust againe, conformable unto the practice of the Patriarchs, the interrment of our Saviour, of Peter, Paul, and the ancient Martyrs.[386]

Much of Browne's creative energies in *Urne Buriall* are drawn towards the various methods of disposing of the dead throughout history, and in particular the practice of burning. However, antiquity's habit of posthumous combustion was not the approved norm for Christian burials: whilst the sundry methods of fiery resolutions are compelling, they are resolutely not conformable with the dictates of the Bible. Browne's assertion that 'deposiure' is the proper 'sentence of God' marks 'dust' as the official stuff of death, insisting on the specific terms of the English rendering of scripture, rather than preferring the licence given by the Book of Common Prayer. Yet, despite this, despite an explicit acknowledgment of dust's significance, elsewhere in his work Browne allows the cultural force of ashes to reign, habitually recurring to the trope of ashes when considering posthumous remains: as expressed in *Religio Medici*, the flesh does not turn to dust in death, but rather it is 'a fabrike that must fall to ashes'.[387]

This chapter works to probe further into the relation between dust and ashes. The following section will thus investigate why Browne shunned the figure of dust in works such as *Religio Medici*, and why dust did not adequately convey for him the body's dissolved condition in death. It will consider how Browne's turn to similitudes in nature in order to explicate the esoteric workings of the resurrection shaped his figurative expressions, making ashes a more potent metaphor for the posthumous body than dust. This discussion provides new sources for *Religio*

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[386] Sir Thomas Browne, *'Hydriotaphia, Urne-Buriall'*, p.92-3.
[387] Ibid., p.36.

Medici, for his poetics, I will argue, was shaped by certain accounts of experiments on plant ashes that have hitherto not been fully investigated by criticism. This chapter will then move on to consider how Browne's poetics are inspired by antiquated urns in his later work, *Urne-Buriall*, and how, for this writer, inquiries into natural philosophy and antiquity worked to diminish the dustiness of death, making it instead an ashen affair.

i Resuscitated Ashes in Religio Medici

In *Urne Buriall,* a text inspired by the ash-filled urns discovered in Norfolk, ashes are unsurprisingly at the forefront of Browne's mind. Yet this work is the consummation of Browne's attraction to ashes that had been simmering in his earlier writing. In his first published work, *Religio Medici*, ashes serve the figurative role so often ascribed to dust. Browne, for example, makes a subtle catachrestic slip when he mentions the 'ashes' of John the Baptist, whose remains were explicitly entombed not incinerated, cremation not being a Jewish custom.[388] Browne wanders further from the specifics of scripture when considering the Day of Judgment, in which the dusty dead are recollected and resurrected. To recall Isaiah 26.19: 'Thy dead men shall live, together with my dead body shall they arise. Awake and sing, ye that dwell in dust.' For Browne, however, it is the 'ashes' of the virtuous 'that shall enjoy the fruit of our pious endeavours' on the final day.[389]

Yet it should be noted that Browne does not entirely deviate from Biblical understanding in his figurative use of ashes. Genesis may determine that they are not the substance to which the body returns to in death; however, as discussed in Chapter One, 2 Peter 3.10 contends that the material world will end in fire, all of God's work 'burned up' by the 'feverent heat'. Thus, ashes, as the residue of the conflagration, were the stuff of the eschaton. Early in *Religio Medici* Browne imagines the entire world to be disarticulated into ashes on the Final Day. When remarking upon the endurance of scripture, he writes that 'This onely is a Worke too hard for the teeth of time,

[388] Ibid., p.28. See Mark 6.29: 'And when his disciples heard of it [the beheading of John the Baptist], they came and took up his corpse, and laid it in a tomb.'
[389] Ibid., p.45.

and cannot perish but in the generall flames, when all things shall confesse their ashes'.[390] The image Browne constructs blends the sense of two scriptural verses, that of 2 Peter 3.10 and that of Genesis 18.27, in which Abraham confesses himself to be 'but dust and ashes'. In this layered allusion, Browne gives scriptural credence to ashes as the verbal signification of material remains. The reason behind Browne's predilection for ashes manifests itself in Section 48 through the figurative role they play in his discussion of the raising of the dead at the world's end. The mechanics of the resurrection were unknowable, validated not by empirical understanding but rather through assertions of belief, including the Apostles' Creed.[391] Yet the unknowability of the resurrection was not an obstacle for Browne's faith as he accepts that 'many things are true in Divinity, which are neither inducible by reason, nor confirmable by sense'.[392] Reformulating the official line – 'I believe . . . in the resurrection of the Body' – Browne asserts his faith in the credal statement:

> I beleeve that our estranged and divided ashes shall unite againe, that our separated dust after so many pilgrimages and transformations into the parts of mineralls, Plants, Animals, Elements, shall at the voyce of God returne into their primitive shapes; and joyne againe to make up their primary and predestinate formes. As at the Creation, there was a separation of that confused masse into its species, so at the destruction thereof there shall bee a separation into its distinct individuals. As at the Creation of the world, all the distinct species that wee behold, lay involved in one masse, till the fruitfull voyce of God separated this united multitude into its severall species: so at the last day, when these corrupted reliques shall be scattered in the wildernesse of formes, and seeme to have forgot their proper habits, God by a powerfull voyce shall command them backe into their proper shapes, and call them out by their single individuals.[393]

Browne depicts how the sundry vicissitudes of particulate remains are halted by the voice of God, and all integrity restored. Although the vocabulary is varied, ashes is the first image that Browne draws on, with dust secondary. Notably, the 'separated dust' of the above paragraph is the only mention of dust in the entirety of *Religio Medici*. Evidently then, dust is used as synonym for ashes,

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[390] Ibid., p.24.
[391] As Brian Cummings notes, No.8 of the Thirty-nine Articles established that the Apostles Creed, alongside the Nicene and Athanasian Creeds, 'ought thoroughly to be received and believed'. See *The Book of Common Prayer*, p.676.
[392] Similarly, in a marriage sermon in 1627 John Donne preaches that 'the Resurrection of the Body is discernible by no other light, but that of Faith'. See *Sermons*, vol.8, p.98
[393] Browne, *Religio Medici*, p.45.

rather than dust being the foremost image in Browne's mind. The figurative idiosyncrasies of the passage are thrown into relief when set against John Donne's account of the resurrection in his 1627 marriage sermon**.** Both Donne and Browne can be seen to reformulate the idea set out in Augustine's *City of God*, that although the body may fall to pieces – disintegrate into dust and ashes, dissolve into moisture, evaporate in the air – and become lost in a mass of particles, it is nevertheless inconceivable that God's omnipotence would not be able to restore the integrity of that body.[394] Yet the accounts are markedly different. Despite the eventual reprieve, the tone of Donne's is anxious, the idea of the body's disintegration provoking a succession of fraught questions:

> Where be all the splinters of that Bone, which a shot hath shivered and scattered in the Ayre? Where be all the Atoms of that flesh which a Corrasive hath eat away, or a Consumption hath breath'd, and exhal'd away from our arms, and other Limbs? In what wrinkle, in what furrow, in what bowel of the earth, ly all the graines of the ashes of a body burnt a thousand years since?[395]

For Browne, the body's dissolution elicits no such anxious response: instead, it is depicted as a 'pilgrimage', the phrase suggestive of an ameliorative journey. While he does not fret over the prospect of posthumous disintegration, there appears to be a struggle for Browne to express the resurrection of the crumbled body parts, however, which is not the case in Donne's writing. For Donne, there is specificity to the terms, the body becoming 'atoms of [flesh]' or 'graines of […] ashes', with all particulate matter ultimately becoming summarised in the figure of dust, as 'all dies, and all dries, and molders into dust.'[396] Dust, as we shall see, is Donne's favourite metaphor for

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[394] As Augustine writes in the City of God, 'as for bodies that have been consumed by wild beasts, or by fire, or those parts that have disintegrated into dust and ashes, or those parts that have dissolved into moisture, or have evaporated into the air, it is unthinkable that the Creator should lack the power to revive them all and restore them to life. It is inconceivable that any nook of cranny of the natural world, though it may hold those bodies concealed from our detection, could elude the notice or evade the power of the Creator.' See *City of God*, Book XXII, Chapter 20, p.1062. Browne's contemporary, Kenelm Digby, had no such faith in the body being made up of its original substance at the resurrection. In his commentary on *Religio Medici*, he refutes it, claiming it to be a 'grosse conception' that the body would be remade from the exact same matter of which it had previously consisted of. To be clear, for Digby, it is still understood to be a bodily resurrection, however the soul is what confers identity on matter, so that it is irrelevant what matter makes up the body at that point. See *Observations Upon Religio Medici* (London: Printed by R.C., 1643), p.78 -9.

[395] Donne, *Sermons*, Vol.8, p.98

[396] Ibid.

the dead. Yet Browne's language lacks Donne's metaphorical clarity: stemming from the opening line there ensues a knotty succession of metaphors, revealing Browne to be wrestling with the communicability of the resurrection. Initially, the images that Browne draws on are scripturally resonant, the posthumous body depicted as 'estranged and divided ashes' and 'separated dust'. But then the expressions of particulate remains become less comprehensible: ashes and dust are reconfigured as 'distinct individuals', conveying the sense of an atom-like indivisible**.** The cascade of metaphors concludes with the image of 'corrupted reliques . . . scattered in the wilderness of forms'. The description is complicated by the preceding statement, which envisions that at the eschaton God will re-join dust into its preordained form: there, form is the coherent structure of once distinct elements. Yet, in the final image, 'form' becomes the stuff of chaos.[397] Browne may have meant to erase one of the sentences, as suggested by L.C. Martin.[398] However, the result of its inclusion – a passage consisting of intricate and contradictory metaphors – suggests Browne to be contending with what language would be most suited to describe the mechanics of the resurrection.

This apparent grasping for the appropriate metaphor gives reason to Browne's recourse to the ensuing scientific analogy: to elucidate the incorrigibly enigmatic resurrection, Browne turns to a natural philosophical correlate, finding in mercury an 'artificall' model of the resurrection. Mercury, 'being mortified into thousand shapes, it assumes againe its owne, and returns into its numericall selfe.'[399] As L.C. Martin summarises, Browne is here alluding 'to the combination of mercury with other elements to form amalgams, from which it can be recovered in its "numerical" or individual condition.' Early modern alchemy understood mercury to be an elemental metal.[400]

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[397] The existence of form in chaos was undetermined amongst writers. Du Bartas writes of chaos as 'a most formelesse Forme', whilst Hutchinson speaks of chaos 'a rude congestion without form or grace'. Earlier in *Religio Medici* , chaos is also seen by Browne to be without form: 'there was never any thing ugly or mis-shapen, but the Chaos; wherein notwithstanding, to speak strictly, there was no deformity, because no form, nor was it yet impregnant by the voice of God.' See Du Bartas, *Divine Weeks*, p.118; Hutchinson, *Order and Disorder*, p.17 and Browne, *Religio Medici* p.16.

[398] Browne, *Religio Medici*, p.45.

[399] Ibid., p.46.

[400] Allen G. Debus, *The Chemical Philosophy: Paracelsian Science and Medicine in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (Mineola: Dover Publications, 2002), p.56-58.

Along with sulphur and salt, mercury was considered, in the French Alchemist Joseph Duchesne's words, to be one of the 'active bodies of beginnings', describing it as 'a most pure & Aethereall substantiall body: a substance ayrie, most subtill, quickning, and ful of Spirit, the foode of life, and the Essence'.[401] What is more, as Allen Debus observes, from late Christian antiquity 'the transmutation of metals was seen to be analogous with . . . the resurrection', a line of thinking that Browne draws on in order to provide a comprehensible correlate to the resurrection.[402] Interestingly, Donne had used similar phrasing to Browne in a sermon preached at Lincoln's Inn during the 1620's. He asserts the belief that at the resurrection 'Ego, I, I the same body, and the same soul, shall be recompact again, and be identically, numerically, individually, the same man'.[403] Yet, in this instance, no parallels are drawn with chemical elements, speaking to Browne's particular dependency on scientific analogy to substantiate and elucidate his theological beliefs.[404]

As the passage continues, Browne delves further into nature, locating a semblance of the resurrection in the incinerated particles of plants, and it is here that Browne's preference for the trope of ashes is explained. He writes that:

> A plant or vegetable consumed to ashes, to a contemplative and schoole Philosopher seemes utterly destroyed, and the forme to have taken his leave for ever: But to a sensible Artist the formes are not perished, but withdrawne into their incombustible part, where they lie secure from the action of that devouring element. This is made good by experience, which can from the ashes of a plant revive the plant, and from its cinders recall it into its stalk and leaves againe.

Again, Browne is inspired by alchemical inquiries into the natural world, the process described being the palingenesis of plants, which attracted significant attention in the seventeenth-century: as Allen Debus observes, stimulated by Paracelsus, 'the resuscitation of plants from their ashes held a special appeal for the chemical philosophers of the period of the scientific revolution.'[405] It

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[401] Joseph Duchesne, *The Practise of Chymicall, and Hermeticall Physicke*, trans., Thomas Timme (London, 1605), D2
[402] Allen G. Debus, *The Chemical Philosophy*, Vol. I (New York: Science History Publications, 1997), p.6.
[403] Donne, *Sermons*, vol.3., p.109.
[404] This is not to say that Donne is not equally likely to reach for alchemical images in his writing. However, with regards to the idea of being numerically the same at the resurrection, Donne does not lean on alchemical images. For the extent to which alchemy influences Donne's poetics see Ludmila Makuchowska, *Scientific Discourse in John Donne's Eschatological Poetry* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2014), pp.81-116.
[405] Allen G. Debus, 'A Further Note on Palingenesis: The Account of Ebenezer Sibly in the Illustration of Astrology', *Isis*, Vol. 64, (1973), pp. 226-230, p.226.

stemmed from the inquiry into the concealed signatures, or internal essences, of living organisms, which was believed to be uncovered with the use of fire. Retaining their signatures, cremated plant particles were understood to capable of reformulating. In Browne's words, 'the forms are not perished, but withdrawne', the ashes' subtlety retaining their distinctive aspects.

The phenomenon of vegetable resurrection was promoted by many scholars of natural philosophy including Joseph Duchesne, Kenelm Digby, and Athanasius Kircher.[406] The experiment invited theological parallels, and discussions of plant palingenesis repeatedly drew analogies with the resurrection of the dead body.[407] While the phoenix had been the traditional Christian emblem of resurrection, vegetable revivification became the seventeenth-century version, at least in scientific circles.[408] In his text on alchemical practices, Duchesne relates his experience of observing how the ashes of nettles returned to their proper form after having been placed in water and frozen overnight. This, he remarks, prompts him to think on his own body's return to powder and its eventual re-collection. Duchesne and his companions marvelled at the event, wondering

> How so excellent a thing coulde procéede out of Nature: wée all calling to minde this sentence of holie writ: Remember man, that thou art Ashes, and to Ashes againe thou shalt returne: considering that the forces of such things do lye hydde and abide in their ashes, from whence the Resurrection of our Bodies is most assuredlie to bée expected.[409]

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406 Allen G. Debus, *The French Paracelsians* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), pp.162.

407 Whilst Duchesne's experiment was at the start of the seventeenth century, the interest in palingenesis and its theological correlates continued decades later, well into the latter half of the century. Robert Boyle, for example, having evaluated the veracity of Duchesne's and Gaffarel's accounts of resuscitating plant ashes, tentatively concludes in his 'Essay of Holy Scriptures' that palingenesis 'may possibly hint an Answer to the Grand & boasted Objection against the Possibility of the Resurrection'. See Robert Boyle, 'Essay of the Holy Scriptures', in *The Works of Robert Boyle*, ed. Michael Hunter, Edward B. Davis, vol 2. (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2000), XIII, p.205. Kevin Killeen puts forward that 'seventeenth-century Europe was thoroughly wrapped up in […] questions of theological materialism, the nature of body, its relation to soul, and the curious memory of matter', which palingenesis typified. See 'When all Things shall confesse their ashes': Science and Soul in Thomas Browne' in *The Oxford Handbook of English Prose, 1500-1640*, pp.669-685, p.681-3.

408 As William Newman notes, 'Palingenesis would re-emerge in the service of natural theology throughout the seventeenth century'. See *Promethean Ambitions* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004) p.232.

409 Joseph Duchesne, *The Practise of Chymicall, and Hermeticall Physicke*, trans. Thomas Timme, (London: Printed by Thomas Creede, 1605), chap.10. In the original it reads 'Memento homo, quia cinis es & in cinerem reverteris, cogitatesque sub cineribus eiusmodi reru formas delitescere ac immorari, unde resurrectio nostri corporis certissime sit expectanda'. See Joseph Quercetanus, *Ad Veritatem Hermeticae Medicinae ex Hippocratis veterumque decretis ac Therapeusi* (Paris, 1604), p.197.

Duchesne draws not from scripture directly but from Roman Catholic liturgy:[410] in the Ash Wednesday service, the priest casts ashes on the penitent's forehead and recites 'Memento homo quod cinis es et in cinerem revertis'. One of the observers responds to the resuscitation of the nettle ashes by exclaiming in verse that 'this Secret proves, that, though the Body die, | The Forme doth Still within its Ashes lie.'[411] It is a neat summary of the correlation between palingenesis and the rising of the dead on the final day, and the verse form places the phrase at the intersection of literature, theology and natural philosophy. In its totality, Duchesne's account of the resurrection of nettles shows the scientific experiment to be a clear correlate for God's anticipated raising of the dead on the Day of Judgment.

Like Duchesne, in *Religio Medici*, Browne views palingenesis as a natural philosophical correlate to the resurrection: Browne theorises that if the 'art of man' can revive a plant from its cinders, then

> what blasphemy is it to affirme the finger of God cannot doe in these more perfect and sensible structures? This is that mysticall Philosophy, from whence no true Scholler becomes an Atheist, but from the visible effects of nature, growes up a reall Divine, and beholds not in a dreame, as Ezekiel, but in an ocular and visible object the types of his resurrection. [412]

Thus, for Browne, ashen remains held a special significance in his imagination, serving as a symbol rooted in empirical truth for the veracity of the resurrection of the fragmented posthumous body. However, while he may have read Duchesne's account of plant palingenesis, his inspiration for the figurative role of ashes was unlikely to have come straight from *Ad Veritatem Hermeticae Medicinae* or its English translation. Rather, Browne's poetics are likely to have been shaped by another French writer of the period. Duchesne's account of vegetable resurrection was retold by the

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410 In the relevant translations, there is not scriptural source for this phrase: The Louvain Bible has it that the body returns to 'la poudre', *La Saincte Bible nouvellement translatée de latin en françois* (Louvain: Grave, Bergagne et Uvaen, 1550). In the French context, the Vulgate would still be a strong influence too at this point, and, as we have seen, the body returns to dust in it translation of Gen 3.19.

411 In the original French is reads, 'Secret, dont on comprend, que, quoy que le corps meure; | Les formes font pourtant aux cendres leur demeure.' This translation is taken from Gaffarel's retelling of Duchense's story, the 1605 English translation*, The Practise of Chymicall, and Hermeticall Physicke*, not including the verse. See Duchense, *Ad Veritatem* . . . , p.1977 and Gaffarel, *Unheard of Curiosities*, p.138.

412 Browne, *Religio Medici*, p.46.

French scholar Jacques Gaffarel, in his *Curiositez Inouyes* (1629), translated into English in 1650. Gaffarel's reference to Duchesne's observation of the revivification of plant ashes was widely quoted in the period, and it is most probable that Browne was influenced by this.[413] It is almost certain that Browne had read *Curiositez Inouyes* prior to the 1650 English translation, and thus understood the process through Gaffarel.[414] He directly references the 'strange Cryptography of Gaffarell' in *The Garden of Cyrus* and in *Urne Buriall* echoes the phrasing of the English translation of *Curiositez Inouyes*. As critics have acknowledged, he also alludes to the book before the English translation was published in his 1646 *Pseudodoxia Epidemica*.[415]

What has hitherto been unacknowledged is Gaffarel's influence on the earlier *Religio Medici*. The potential influence of Gaffarel is significant, as it provides an explanation for the idiosyncrasies of Browne's poetics in *Religio Medici* and for his habitual recourse to the figure of ashes. Notably, Gaffarel's *Curiositez Inouyes* was not concerned directly with alchemical experiments: as Dmitri Levitin summarises 'Gaffarel's very popular work aimed to defend astrology by claiming to delineate a Jewish-Cabbalistic astrological tradition, most strikingly by reading the Hebrew alphabet in the stars. This in turn led him discuss in detail the history of pagan, especially Persian, talismans.'[416] In this discussion, Gaffarel defends the belief held by certain Persians in the secret power of figures. Figures were defined by Gaffarel as the essence or form, in the Aristotelian sense, of things: they were the 'Quality, and not Quantity' of matter.[417] In his defence, Gaffarel turns to examples that can be observed in the natural the world, which leads him to discuss the figures found in plants. In plants, Gaffarel maintains, even when they are broken down, they retain their 'Quality', for

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413 Debus, 'A Further Note on Palingenesis', p.227.
414 Neither Duchesne's nor Gaffarel's works appear in Thomas Browne's library catalogue. See Jeremiah Stanton Finch, ed., *A catalogue of the libraries of Sir Thomas Browne and Dr. Edward Browne, his son: a facsimile reproduction with an introduction, notes, and index* (Leiden: E. J. Brill/Leiden University Press, 1986).
415 See Martin, p. 120, p.142 and Dmitri Levitin in *Ancient Wisdom in the Age of the New Science* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), p.67.
416 Levitin, *Ancient Wisdom*, p.67-8.
417 Gaffarel, *Unheard-of Curiosities,* p.93.

> though they be chopt in pieces, brayed in a Mortar, and even burnt to Ashes; yet do they neverthelesse retaine, (by a certaine Secret, and wonderfull Power of Nature,) both in the Juyce, and in the Ashes, the selfe same Forme, and Figure, that they had before: and though it be not there Visible, yet it may by Art be drawne forth, and made Visible to the Eye, by an Artist.[418]

Gaffarel goes on to describe Duchesne's experiment, paraphrasing the original account and using it as evidence for how plant ashes retain their form and figure. Yet is the above passage, which is not a rewording of Duchene's text but rather Gaffarel's own phrasing, that correlates with Browne's writing. It is probable that Browne had this particular passage in mind when writing that when 'a plant or vegetable [is] consumed to ashes . . . to a sensible Artist the formes are not perished', the allusion to the senses and the mention of 'form' comparable. The description of the observer as an 'artist' is also striking, showing the phrasing of Browne to have some distinct resonances with that of Gaffarel.

Also of note is the fact that *Curiositez inouyes* and its English translation includes the axiomatic rhyming couplet of Duchense's *Ad Veritatem Hermeticae Medicinae* – 'this Secret proves, that, though the Body die, | The Forme doth Still within its Ashes lie' – which was elided in the 1605 English translation of Duchesne's text. The presence of this maxim, although not cited explicitly, can be felt throughout *Religio Medici* in Browne's language, wherein ashes are repeatedly used as a metonym for the posthumous body. Of course, in this instance, it is both Duchesne and Gaffarel that are the potential sources for Browne's use of ashes as a metaphor for the dead. In terms of whether natural philosophical discourse influenced Browne's thinking and writing, it is not essential to ascertain which writer Browne may have had in mind. However, in arguing for the influence of Gaffarel specifically, it can be suggested that the idea of plant palingenesis shaped Browne's expressions of thought not only in Section 48, when discussing it directly, but throughout the whole of *Religio Medici*. For even before the subject of plant resuscitation is

[418] Ibid., p.136.

broached in the text, Gaffarel's influence can be detected in Browne's writing and his figurative use of ashes.

Earlier, in Section 37, preceding his discussion of the fate of the incorruptible soul, Browne momentarily considers the material composition of the body:

> Now for these wals of flesh, wherein the soule doth seeme to be immured before the Resurrection, it is nothing but an elementall composition, and a fabricke that must fall to ashes.[419]

This assertion is left unqualified, as Browne swiftly moves on to the literalness of Isaiah 40.6: all flesh is indeed grass, Browne argues, 'for all those creatures we behold, are but hearbs of the field, digested into flesh in them, or more remotely carnified in our selves.'[420] Yet the passage is another example of Browne's tendency to misapply the figure of ashes. The image jars slightly, as the 'elemental composition' does not strictly *fall* to ashes: the decay of the flesh – decay taken from the Latin *cadere*, to fall – results in dust, ashes being the product of combustion. However, while the work has not yet broached the subject of palingenesis, Browne no doubt had the topic in mind when writing this section. When Browne moves on from the fleshy confinements of the soul to the soul itself, he takes to task the devilish deceptions of ghostly phantoms:

> those apparitions, and ghosts of departed persons are not the wandering soules of men, but the unquiet walkes of Devils, prompting and suggesting us unto mischiefe, bloud, and villany, instilling, & stealing into our hearts, that the blessed spirits are not at rest in their graves, but wander solicitous of the affaires of the world.[421]

This same topic directly succeeds Gaffarel's discussion of the resuscitation of plant ashes: like Browne, Gaffarel surmises that they are 'non pas l'ame', however he disputes the common opinion held by Browne that they are phantoms constructed by demons.[422] However, the thrust of his argument is 'qu'encore que le corps soit reduit en poudre, la figure pourtant ne se perd point'

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[419] Browne, *Religio Medici*, p.36.
[420] Ibid.
[421] Ibid., *Religio Medici*, p.36-7.
[422] Gaffarel, *Curiositez Inouyes*, p.212-3: 'D'icy on peuttirer ceste consequence, que les ombres des Trespassez, qu'on voit souvent paroistre aux Cimetieres, sot naturelles, estant la forme des corps enterrez enc es lieux, ou leur figure exterieure, non pas l'ame, n'y phantosmes bâtis par les demons, come plusieurs ontcreu.'.

(though the Body be reduced into Ashes, yet neverthelesse the Figure is not thereby destroyed), and the dictum's stress on the subsistence of figure in particulate remains can be felt in Browne's later discussion of form in the credo passage in Section 48.[423] The purpose of bringing these resonances to prominence is not to propose that Browne accords directly with Gaffarel's views on spectral forms. Rather, I am suggesting that the catachresis of Sect. 37's opening statement – that flesh is 'a fabricke that must fall to ashes' – does not arise through Browne's inattention to the specific qualities of ashes, but because at this moment in *Religio Medici* Browne's mind is attuned to contemporary debates on palingenesis. Through Gaffarel's *Curiositez Inouyes,* the endurance of the soul becomes imbricated with the correspondence between particulate remains and the regeneration of plants from its cremated particles. When Browne considers the flesh to be 'an elemental fabric that falls to ashes', the metaphor does not signify the ashes of Genesis 18.27 or the Burial service, which are synonymous with inert, base dust. Rather, they are the ashes that contain within their secret parts the signatures of the deceased, corrupted yet generative. Yet the expression is not without religious implication. Characteristically, Browne blends natural philosophy and divinity: whilst for Gaffarel the body is reduced to ashes, for Browne, it *falls*, retaining the theological sense of bodily decay as a postlapsarian condition of the flesh.

Browne's confidence in plant ashes to emulate the body's resurrection, although shared by some, was not universally accepted. Kenelm Digby, in his response to *Religio Medici*, doubts the effectiveness of Browne's account 'of reviving a plant (the same numericall plant) out of his owne ashes', although he was later to experiment with plant palingenesis himself, and the resurrection of crayfish, appearing to have more trust in the process under the assurances of Kircher.[424] What is more, Digby disputes Browne's faith in the integrity of individual particles:

> Methinkes it is but a grosse conception to thinke that every Atome of the present individuall matter of a body; every graine of Ashes of a burned Cadaver, scattered by the wind throughout the world, and after numerous variations changed peradventure into the body of another man; should at the sounding of the last Trumpet be raked together againe

[423] Ibid and Gaffarel, *Unheard-of Curiosities*, p.140.
[424] Digby, *Observations,* p.52 and *A Discourse Concerning the Vegetation of Plants* (London: Printed by J.G., 1661.), p.72.

> from all the corners of the earth, and be made up anew into the same Body it was before of the first man.[425]

Ashes lose their metaphorical edge in the words of Digby, as they are instead, properly, the particles of a 'burned Cadaver'. Indeed, Digby would find no affinity with Browne's trope as he disputed that an individual essence was retained within incinerated elements. It is not that Digby denies that the body is capable of being resurrected, but rather that the specific particles used to reconstruct it are inconsequential, as for Digby the soul informs the matter.[426] The disparity between the pair's beliefs is epitomised in Digby's criticism of Browne's faith in 'distinct individuals'. He takes issue with

> what our Author saith of a Magazine of Subsistent formes residing first in the Chaos, & hereafter (when the world shall have beene destroyed by fire) in the generall heape of Ashes; out of which Gods voyce did, & shall, draw them out & cloath them with matter. This language were handsome for a Poet or a Rhetorician to speake. But in a Philosopher, that should ratiocinate strictly and rigorously, I can not admit it, for certainly there are no subsistent forms of Corporeall things.. . .whensoever that compound is destroyed, the forme perisheth with the whole.[427]

Digby is partly right: Browne is being poetical, but that is the brilliance of his natural theology. Browne turns to nature to inform his theology, and in doing so it fashions his own idiosyncratic style of language. In Kevin Killeen's words, in his discussion of the resurrection in *Religio Medici*, 'Browne's is a poetics of the physics of the resurrection', not intending to be a coherent or complete natural philosophical or theological theory.[428] Owing to the impression palingenesis, and Gaffarel's writing, makes on Browne's imagination, ashes, I argue, are a crucial trope in this poetics, a potent metaphor for the subsistent forms that he believes endure in corrupted bodies. In essence, the resuscitation of plant ashes corresponded with Browne's fundamental trust in the resilience of material forms demonstrated throughout the text. To remember the words of 2 Peter, on the final day 'the elements shall melt with fervent heat'. Yet even in such a furnace, the body subsists: as

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[425] Digby, *Observations*, p.78.
[426] Ibid., p.83-4: 'Matter considered singly by it selfe, hath no distinction.' For a discussion of the distinction between Brownes's and Digby's theology on this matter see Deborah Shuger, 'The Laudian Idiot' in *Sir Thomas Browne: The World Proposed*, eds Reid Barbour and Claire Preston (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), p.46–52.
[427] Digby, *Observations*, p.878.
[428] Killeen, 'Science and Soul', p.843.

Browne writes in Section 50, 'the consumable and volatile pieces of our bodies . . ., though they suffer from the action of flames, they shall never perish, but lie immortall in the armes of fire.' Annihilation is not to be feared, remarks Browne:

> For the eyes of God, and perhaps also of our glorified selves, shall as really behold and contemplate the world in its Epitome or contracted essence, as now it doth at large and in its dilated substance. In the seed of a Plant to the eyes of God, and to the understanding of man, there exists, though in an invisible way, the perfect leaves, flowers, and fruit thereof: (for things that are in posse to the sense, are actually existent to the understanding.)[429]

In *Religio Medici*, for Browne, particulate matter is not corrupted in the traditional sense, that is, broken to the point of ruin. Rather it is epitomised, 'contracted' yet still retaining its essence.[430] Although not perceivable to the senses, only visible to 'the eyes' of God, it is nevertheless not considered entirely esoteric, as it can be comprehensible to the mind's eye, the 'understanding of man'. The pulverised end of the body does not evoke the tone of distress in Browne's writing that is evident in Donne's sermons. As Browne goes on to confidently assert 'God beholds all things, who contemplates as fully his workes in their Epitome, as in their full volume, and beheld as amply the whole world in that little compendium of the sixth day, as in the scattered and dilated pieces of those five before.'[431] The division of the body into ashes and its separation into dust is of little concern to Browne, as material bodies in their dispersed and crumbled form are the same in God's eyes as if they had been whole. This way of approaching the resurrection leads Browne not to grotesque mediations on the grave but rather to imagine correlates in natural philosophy: the issue for Browne is to render an esoteric theological concept comprehensible, rather than, as we shall in the case of Donne's sermons, to ameliorate its perceived horror. Yet, in reaching for these scientific correlates, the trope of dust proves not to be as artistically generative as it is for writers

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[429] Browne, *Religio Medici*, p.48.
[430] Here, such potentiality is encapsulated by the image of the seed. As Kevin Killen has noted, 'seminality is a subject that pervades [Browne's] writing', although they are not as prevalent an image as ashes in *Religio Medici.* For a discussion of seminality and the role of seeds, 'the principles of God's action in the world', in *Pseudodoxia epidemica*, see Kevin Killeen*, Biblical Scholarship, Science and Politics in Early Modern England: Thomas Browne and the Thorny Place of Knowledge* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009), pp.120-136, p.120.
[431] Browne, *Religio Medici*, p.48.

such as Donne and Herbert: rather, it is ashes, along with seeds, that capture the potentiality residing in particulate matter, and thus, in Browne's imagination, fittingly depict the epitomised quality of posthumous remains.

ii Antiquated Ashes in Urne-Buriall

The sparseness of the figure of dust and the prevalence of ashes apparent in *Religio Medici* is matched in *Urne-Buriall.* However, the figurative role of ashes alters in this later text. Whilst *Religio Medici* addresses the mystery of divinity, in *Urne-Buriall* the focus is on the funereal customs of antiquity, and in the move from the divine to the historical, ashes shift from the metaphorical to literal, concomitantly ceasing to represent the generative potential of particulate matter. In the opening dedication to his 'honoured friend' Thomas le Gros, it becomes apparent that particles of ash no longer embody concealed essences. Rather, they are obscure remains, subject to the world's mutations, for who, asks Browne, 'hath the Oracle of his ashes, or whether they are to be scattered?' 'Reliques' lie strewn across 'all parts of the earth', anonymous and indifferent to human intentions. Whilst their meaning can be interpreted by succeeding eras, such attempts do not establish interlocution across the gulf of time: the ashes are not purposely an enigma to be resolved by future observers, as Browne estimates antiquity was ignorant of the futurity of their particulate remains, 'little expecting the curiosity of future ages should comment upon their ashes . . . having no old experience of the duration of their Reliques.' [432]

Nevertheless, *Urne-Buriall* is, in part, an effort to resuscitate the ashes, to 'make the dead live.' As Browne reasons, his profession as a physician makes him apt 'to keep men out of their urnes,' and to 'discourse of human fragments'. Yet whilst in *Religio Medici* Browne had used the analogy of palingenesis to figure forth to his reader the capacity for ashes to be resuscitated, in his

[432] With regards to the urns themselves, Adam Kitzes has similarly noted the disjunction between the past and present: for Kitzes, the urns demonstrate a corrupted version of history that does not truly resurrect the past, and thus 'none of what they express ever is wholly decipherable'. See Adam Kitzes, 'Hydriotaphia, 'the sensible rhetorick of the dead'', *Studies in English Literature 1500-1900*, vol.42, (2002), pp.137-54.

consideration of antiquated urns and funereal practices, Browne is performing a different sort of figurative revivification. He re-animates the ashes through his discourse not to reveal generative individual essences, but to convey the dilapidation of mankind in death: in a paradoxical recounting of oblivion, the urnes 'silently express[…] old mortality, the ruines of forgotten times, and can only speak with life, how long in this corruptible frame, some parts may be uncorrupted,'[433] a sort of futile resilience.

In *Urne-Buriall*, ashes not only lose their reassuring particularity, but their metaphorical potency too. In the opening chapter, Browne, as discussed earlier, marked ashes as the product of cremation, dust of burial. The purpose of this distinction appears to have been to give Browne a licence to discuss cremation at length: having acknowledged the proper Christian method for disposing of the dead, it then leaves Browne free to expend the majority of his curiosity on antiquity's preferred, unchristian, practice of burning. He appears to assert the primacy of dust, so that it is not necessary to discuss it again. Indeed, the figure of dust only makes one other appearance in the text.[434] Yet marking ashes as the product of cremation also serves another function, as it asserts ashes as the literal stuff of death – not the metaphorical image of regenerative remains – showing them to possess a different figurative role than that in the earlier *Religio Medici*. Thus, in *Urne-Buriall* the focus becomes actual incinerated remains, although the object of Browne's curiosity is antiquated ashes. Browne could not discuss cremated remains with empirical understanding: no ashes were to be seen in the newly discovered urns, the earth having 'confounded the ashes of these Ossuaries'.[435] Furthermore, whilst Browne was able to discuss the realities of the grave in *Urne Buriall*, early modern burial tradition meant that cremation could not readily be understood through experience.[436] Thus Browne relies on figures of antiquity, the

[433] Ibid., p.83.
[434] Dust appears in the final chapter, a passage that will be discussed below. See Browne, *Hydriotaphia, Urne-Buriall*, p.118.
[435] Ibid., p.104
[436] For a full discussion of Browne's, and other early modern writer's, empirical understanding of the grave, see Chapter Two.

variable combustibility of Pompey and Plutarch. Yet whilst they are historical rather than observable ashes, Browne nevertheless considers the incinerated particles with a scientific scrutiny. He gives an almost alchemical evaluation of cremation, remarking that 'the bulk of a man . . . sink[s] into so few pounds of bones and ashes' and that 'even bones themselves reduced into ashes, do abate a notable proportion': this reduction of volume is, explains Browne, the result of the 'heavy principle of salt' being fired out', thus leaving behind 'a light kind of cinders'.[437] What is more, Browne, with the openness of an empirical investigator, acknowledges the variations in nature, being sensible to the diversity of carnal compositions: 'Some bones make best Skeletons, some bodies quick and speediest ashes,' the hydroptical Heraclitus not amongst the latter.

Once incinerated into a slender heap of ash, at times the burnt particles behave much like the depictions of dust that this thesis considers in other chapters. They are futilely demarcated by grand artefacts, as Browne comments that 'the fair and larger urnes contained no vulgar ashes, which makes that disparity in those which time discovereth among us.'[438] Whilst suggestive of a posthumous continuation of hierarchy, 'vulgar ashes' work much like Donne's 'dust royall', which will be discussed in the next chapter.[439] They defy descriptors, becoming indiscriminate outside of their ornate clay casings: the 'ashes of Marcellus were lost above ground', vanishing when, in the words of Plutarch, they were 'scattered' in a skirmish.[440] Such indiscrimination also caused the logistical issue of how to make the 'distinct separation of bones and ashes from fiery admixture', a problem that has no clear solution until the invention of incombustible sheets, which kept the body separate and thus distinguishable from the other materials of the pyre.[441] As we shall see, this indistinction of disintegrated posthumous remains horrified John Donne, who described it as 'the most inglorious and contemptible vilification, the most deadly and peremptory nullification of

[437] Ibid., p.108. As discussed earlier, salt, along with mercury and sulphur, was one of the three principles of practical alchemy.
[438] Ibid., p.101.
[439] John Donne, *The Oxford Edition of the Sermons of John Donne: Sermons Preached at the Court of Charles I,* ed., David Colclough, vol.3 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), p.171.
[440] Browne, *Religio Medici,* p.106. Plutarch, *The Lives of the Noble Grecians and Romanes* (London: by Thomas Vautroullier and John Wight, 1579), p.348.
[441] Browne, *Religio Medici*, p.107.

man'.[442] In *Urne-Buriall*, however, the interspersion of ashes is shown to be occasionally desirable, the ashes of antiquity disposed to posthumous intermixture: 'the ashes of Domitian', Browne remarks, 'were mingled with those of Julia, of Achilles with those of Patroclus', a passionate union rather than contemptible nullification.[443] Although unchristian, Browne also observed other benefits in the body's instantaneous combustion into particulate, unidentifiable matter. Such 'tragicall abominations' as having 'our sculs made drinking-bowls, and our bones turned into Pipes' by enemies was 'escaped in burning Burials.'[444] What is more, the contemptible process of vermiculation – which Donne viewed as 'another descent in this humiliation, and exinanition of man, in death' – is rendered inconsequential when the body is cremated: 'Urnall enterrments, and burnt Reliques lye not in fear of worms, or to be an heritage for Serpents.' Thus, on the one hand antiquated ashes are distinct from mouldered remains. Yet on the other, when the dead body is no longer bone and rotten flesh, but instead dry dust, ashes can be seen to behave very much like the pulverised product of a proper Christian burial.

In sum, Browne's discussion of ashes in Chapter III is in the manner of both an antiquarian and a natural philosopher. This style gives an academic and detailed survey of ashes, and treats them not as figures of speech but as literal cremated particles. The discussion of the reduction of incinerated corpses into light cinders, the fire expelling out the 'heavy principle of salt', demonstrates an alchemical understanding of the physical substance of ash: in comparison to his figurative treatment of mercury in *Religio Medici*, this is the more prosaic, more material way of handling the same issue of Paracelsian principles. Even when the subject shifts from the properties of ashes to their presence in Classical narratives, they nevertheless retain a literal rather than metaphorical presence in the text, as unlike the ashes of John the Baptist, in *Urne-Buriall* the remains of historical figures under consideration were actually reported to have been burned. Browne's attentiveness in Chapter III to incinerated posthumous remains momentarily suggests

[442] Donne, *The Oxford Edition of the Sermons,* vol.3., p.231 & p.238.
[443] Ibid., p.105.
[444] Ibid., p.109-110.

that there is profit in studying ashes. However, in the context of the entire text, this scrutiny works not to place value on ashes, but rather sets up its bleak climax, in which the discursive resuscitation of antiquated ashes is shown to be a paradox, a futile remembrance of oblivion. In the final chapter, the contents of the urns prove to be unresponsive: 'what bodies these ashes made up, were a question above Antiquarism'.[445] It is an enigma, Browne adds, 'not to be resolved by man', a subtle pun on the resolution found in dissolution, which can only be achieved through God's magnanimous act of re-joining the estranged ashes on the Last Day, not by a scrutiniser of relics.[446] As Browne continues, he proves how little the particulate vestige of antiquity reveals, the 'fallacy in duration':

> Vain ashes, which in the oblivion of names, persons, times, and sexes, have found unto themselves, a fruitlesse continuation, and only arise unto late posterity, as Emblemes of mortall vanities; Antidotes against pride, vain-glory, and madding vices.

Taken from the Latin *vānus*, meaning empty or void, to be an emblem of vanity is literally to be a symbol of nothingness. In this closing chapter, therefore, Browne's ashes are becoming less quantifiable and more like the nullified dust of Donne's sermons. They become not the trope of the eschaton, in which they are latent with the potentiality, but of empty oblivion.

Browne's condemnation of efforts to project significance onto expired bodies is based in theology. Attempts to maintain a posthumous reputation has a touch of the heathen, not being instructed by Christian doctrine. God, who

> hath assured our resurrection, either of our bodies or names hath directly promised no duration. . . to hold long subsistence, seems but a scape in oblivion. But man is a Noble Animal, splendid in ashes, and pompous in the grave, solemnizing Nativities and Deaths with equall lustre.

It is important to note here that Browne is discussing the body's 'duration', not its fate on the eschaton. He is not denying the eventual recollection of the body on the Day of Judgement.[447]

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[445] Ibid., p.119.

[446] 'Resolve' is a term that means both to answer, solve or determine something (*OED* n.III) and to cause to melt or dissolve (*OED* n., I). Thus 'resolve' is both constructive and destructive.

[447] Achsah Guibbory misreads this passage, understanding it to mean Browne denying the body's resurrection and using it as a further example of Browne's criticism 'of human dependence on and attachment to the body'. However, this ignores the distinction between diuturnity and the Final Day, which are fundamentally different

Rather, he is asserting that with regards to the oblivion of death – the interim between dissolution and resolution – there are no divine instructions that advocate the body's subsistence, and thus man's splendour in ashes during this period is unjustified by God.[448] What truly remains is unimpressive fragments, devoid of nomenclature and corporeal integrity. Indeed, diuturnity, that is, the temporal length of death, was itself envisioned by Browne as something particulate, as he goes on to write that his generation, who he believed were in the 'setting part of time', were 'necessitated to eye the remaining particle of futurity'.[449] This duration makes 'Pyramids pillars of snow, and all that's past a moment.'[450] Browne puns on 'moment', a word that means both a short period of time and a small particle.[451] This thinking of time as something crumbled into fragments is a rehearsed precept of Browne's: it is a re-articulation of the earlier remark that 'time. . . makes dust of all things' – which itself was a reformulation of the mixed metaphor in *Religio Medici*, in which 'the teeth of time incinerates all to ashes' – the moment between life and the resurrection proving to be for Browne a vision of the particulate.[452]

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moments in time that generate different expectations of the body. See *Ceremony and Community from Herbert to Milton: Literature, Religion, and Cultural Conflict in Seventeenth-century England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p.138-9.

[448] Whilst this chapter is concerned with the fate of the material body in the interim between death and the resurrection, it is of note that with regards to the destiny of the soul in this interim, Browne did not believe in the 'mortality of the soule', that is, he did not believe that the soul died or slept when the body died. Whilst in his 'greener' days he admits to being momentarily attracted to this heresy of mortalism, he refutes it in *Religio Medici*. See Browne, *Religio Medici,* p.7. For a discussion of the context of Browne's dalliance with the mortalist heresy see Phillip C. Almond, *Heaven and Hell in Enlightenment England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), p.41-7.

[449] As Claire Preston notes, Browne 'believed that the world was entering the final days of the years of Grace'. See *Thomas Browne and the Writing of Early Modern Science* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), p.13. See also Patrides, p.171.

[450] Browne, *Religio Medici*, p.120. Browne's image of monuments melting into snow is also part of the wider poetics of decay evident in early modern writing. To remember Thomas Adams' reference to Donne's *Devotions* during his commentary on the earth's fiery end: 'Man is the noblest part of the earth, and hee so melts and moulders away, as if hee were a statue, not of earth, but of Snow.' As discussed in Chapter One, in this image the body's dissolution in death is not a dry disintegration into dust, but a chemical melting, and one that recalls Hamlet's desire 'that this too too solid flesh would melt, | Thaw and resolve itself into a dew'. See Adams, *A Commentary or, Exposition Upon the Divine Second Epistle Generall*, p.1299; Donne, *Devotions*, p.11; Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, (1.2.129-30).

[451] *OED* n., 1 & 3.a. As will be discussed in Chapter 8, this dual sense had its roots in the translation of scripture, which creates a synonymity between 'atom' and 'moment': in 1 Cor. 15.52 it is said that at the Resurrection God recollects the dispersed particles of the body 'in an atom' (ἐν ἀτόμῳ). The Vetus Latina translates it as *in atomo*, yet in all sixteenth and seventeenth century English translations of this scriptural passage, atoms are elided: it is said to be done 'in a moment', showing 'moment' to be a suitable English equivalent to the Greek 'atom of time'.

[452] Ibid., p.118; p.24.

As Browne closes his argument, he gestures towards the purpose of ashes as an eschatological trope, tangentially revisiting the belief purported in *Religio Medici* of the ashen end of days: he writes that those living who have enjoyed a mystical union with God 'have already had an handsome anticipation of heaven; the glory of the world is surely over, and the earth in ashes unto them.'[453] However, these eschatological ashes are not the ashes that are strewn across the majority of pages in *Urne-Buriall*. Earlier in Book III, Browne does touch on the fragmented relics, which, under God's hand, transform into regenerate particles:

> Severe contemplators observing these lasting reliques, may think them good monuments of persons past, little advantage to future beings. And considering that power which subdueth all things unto it self, that can resume the scattered Atomes, or identifie out of any thing, conceive it superfluous to expect a resurrection out of Reliques. But the soul subsisting, other matter clothed with due accidents, may salve the individuality.[454]

The echoes of *Religio Medici* are evident, yet instead of 'divided ashes', the figure of speech Browne turns to is 'scattered atoms', a term used as sparsely as dust by Browne.[455] In this figurative shift, ashes, by their absence, are no longer shown to be the epitomised particles that are scattered then resumed by God's power as they were in *Religio Medici*, the term thus losing its correspondence with regeneration and the endurance of individual essence. Indeed, in his survey of ashes in the same book, finding hidden virtues in ashen relics is shown not to be the effective work of the 'sensible artist' but the fruitless attempts of the occult: 'what virtue yet sleeps in this *terra damnata* and aged cinders, were petty magick to experiment; These crumbling reliques and long-fired particles superannuate such expectations'.[456] In duration, relics are not be deciphered by mere mortals: 'Oblivion is not to be hired: The greater part must be content to be as though they had not been, to be found in the Register of God, not in the record of man.'[457] In another departure from *Religio Medici*, in his discussion of the resurrection of the body in Book III Browne does not

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[453] Browne, *Religio Medici*, p.124-5
[454] Ibid., p.111.
[455] In the texts under consideration, atoms, like dust, are rarely used by Browne to describe fragmented matter. In *Pseudodoxia Epidemica*, however, a text whose subject matter invites less poetic speech than the former two, both atoms and dust are invoked more frequently. There, they most often appear as literal stuff, such as the minute dusty filings of iron or atoms of crystal. See, for example, Browne, *Pseudodoxia Epidemica*, p.78, p.102 & p.111.
[456] Browne, *Religio Medici*, p.107.
[457] Ibid., p.121.

reach for a correlate in nature. Rather, it is to the past, to Biblical history, that Browne turns, not to current scientific thinking, as he concludes the passage on the possible topography of relics, leaning on the books of Genesis, Ezekiel and Joel.[458]

In his account of Thomas Browne's life, Samuel Johnson was to note 'the uselessness of all these enquiries' into funeral rites of antiquity and the substances found in the Norfolk Urnes.[459] Although somewhat disparaging, he is also correct: ashes in the context of diuturnity are an irrelevant substance and artefacts that seek to re-member relics – that is artificially create a subsistence for the deceased – are mere folly and indeed useless, as Browne's epigraph, borrowed from Lucan, makes clear: *Tabesne cadavera solvat | An rogus haud refert* (It makes no difference whether corruption or the funeral pyre dissolve the carcass).[460] This is Browne's theological point: cremation or burial, dust or ashes, such details are ultimately trivial: the material fragments that subsist in the interim between death and the resurrection belonging best to oblivion. Thus, whilst in Section 48 of *Religio Medici* ashes encapsulated the generative potential of posthumous remains in the context of the Resurrection, in the context of diuturnity, they serve a different function: ashes must instead convey the sense of material nothingness, their very futility making them theologically useful. In Browne's understanding, whilst the resurrection was certain, he was resolute that God 'directly promised no duration'.[461] It was part of his faith to recognise the inevitability of oblivion, and to pursue the proper kind of eternity. According to Browne, 'the sufficiency of Christian immortality frustrates all earthly glory. . . the most magnanimous resolution rests in the Christian religion which trampleth upon pride . . . humbly pursuing that infallible

[458] Ibid., p.111.
[459] Thomas Browne and Samuel Johnson, *True Christian Morals By Sir Thomas Browne, ... With his life written by the celebrated author of the Rambler*, 3rd ed. (London: Printed for, and sold by Z. Stuart, 1761), p.xxi.
[460] Browne, *Urne Buriall*, p.125.
[461] Browne, *Religio Medici*, p.123.

perpetuity.'[462] It is a life 'ingress[ed]' in the holy spirit, not an ashen existence in adorned urns, that the faithful must seek.[463]

Overall, Browne's poetics of ashes in *Religio Medici* and his attentiveness to cremated remains in *Urne Buriall* reveal that even though dust was known to be the proper Christian product of death, ashes, in both their figurative and literal form, could provide a creative stimulus for early modern writers, and replace dust as the image of dead. As this chapter has shown, trends in scientific experiment and archaeological discoveries made ashes for Browne a more intriguing image with which to work and to bend to his theological purpose, revivified plant ashes and the 'vain ashes' of antiquity stimulating his inquisitive mind over the apparently mundane subject of dust.[464] However, as the final two chapters will discuss, for George Herbert and John Donne, ashes were of little creative value, their handling of the figure of dust proving it to be the more artistically stimulating and theologically edifying of the two.

[462] Ibid., p.123-4.
[463] As Browne concludes, 'and if any have been so happy as truly to understand Christian annihilation, extasis, exolution, liquefaction, transformation, the kisse of the Spouse, gustation of God, and ingression into the divine shadow, they have already had an handsome anticipation of heaven.' See Ibid., p.123-4.
[464] Ibid., p.119.

CHAPTER SEVEN: DONNE'S DUST

> What's become of man's great extent and proportion, when himself shrinks himself and consumes himself to a handful of dust; what's become of his soaring thoughts, his compassing thoughts, when himself brings himself to the ignorance, to the thoughtlessness, of the grave? [465]

Writing in the midst of a potentially fatal illness, his mind tending towards his possibly imminent death, John Donne uses the image of 'a handful of dust' to express the anonymity and indignity of the grave. As discussed in Chapter Two, the dustiness of death was in part figurative, and in part literal, informed by the language of certain English Bibles and the BCP. Throughout the *Devotions*, Donne rehearses the conventional tropes of dust, acknowledging dust to be the primal ingredient of mankind and state of the body in death: 'man', Donne writes, 'is but dust, and coagulated and kneaded into earth by tears', and, in the end, 'our dust [is] blown away with profane dust, with every wind.'[466] In his poetry, mankind's kinship with dust is occasionally mentioned: 'all men are dust' (19) he disparagingly remarks in Satyre 5, going on to use dust as a marker of depravity by claiming that 'suitors' are 'worse than dust' (21).[467] In 'The Litany' he humbly identifies with dust, proclaiming 'O Holy Ghost – whose temple I | Am but of mud walls and condenséd dust' (19-20), and, in his Elegy on the death of Prince Henry, Donne writes how avoiding death vexes 'our great-grandmother, dust' (44), making explicit the dusty ancestry of humankind. Yet these poetic references to dust are fleeting, and never part of the main poetic conceit, and, in the *Devotions,* dust can by no means be said to saturate the text. Instead, it is in the richness of sermons that the image is most prevalent and developed, the dustiness of death engaging his creative energies and helping Donne to convey his theological point. Across his homiletic corpus, the trope of dust has a pervasive presence: in death, the body 'is no longer flesh, but dust;' it turns to 'ruine, to rubbidge,

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[465] Donne, *Devotions*, p.21.
[466] Ibid., p.41 & p.43.
[467] John Donne, *The Complete Poems of John Donne*, ed., Robin Robbins (London: Routledge, 2010), p.417. Subsequent references are to this edition.

to dust', the dead lie 'ingloriously in the dust'; 'all dies, and all dries, and molders into dust.'[468] These passages are only a sample, and as this chapter will demonstrate in full, in the sermons Donne's rhetoric repeatedly fixates on the dustiness of death.

Donne's preoccupation with the dissolution of the corpse has already been well documented by critics.[469] Yet, whilst the disintegration of the body into dust is invariably part of their discussion, previous scholars have not taken account of Donne's dust against the literary and cultural background assembled in this thesis, nor have they fully considered Donne's return to dust in the sermons as contributing specifically to the sermons, rather than just to a set of images which recur in all of Donne's different genres. This chapter will thus examine what distinguishes dust from other images of dissolution in Donne's sermons, considering how the trope of dust articulates for Donne the senselessness and indistinction of the posthumous body, speaking to his own anxiety of losing himself in death. More importantly, it will also examine how the image of dust is a significant and distinctive verbal tool in Donne's homiletic rhetoric, how – in keeping with the Christian virtue of humility discussed in Chapter Two – it serves as a salvific instrument with which to edify his auditory in ways that other products of putrefaction do not.

As is typical of pulverised stuff, dust is scattered throughout Donne's sermons, ubiquitous but dispersed, and, for the most part, not the focal image of any sermon. As a consequence, assaying the figurative use of dust in Donne's sermons comes with methodological challenges. The rhetorical scheme in one of Donne's own sermons provides a structure with which this chapter may handle such a fragmented and yet prevalent subject. To strengthen the mind of his congregation, so that they might approach the day of judgment with more 'chearfulnesse' and 'certainty', Donne focuses his discourse in his Easter Day sermon of 1626 on the assurance of the resurrection. He outlines '*Triplicem casum*, a threefold fall, and a threefold resurrection':

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[468] Donne, *Sermons*, vol.4, p.76 & p.63; vol.8, p.98. Donne, *The Oxford Edition of the Sermons of John Donne,* vol 3., ed., David Colclough (Oxford: Oxford University Press: 2013), p.238.

[469] See John Carey*, John Donne: Life, Mind and Art* (London: Faber & Faber, 2008), p.133-4, p.226 & 230; Achsah Guibbory, *Returning to John Donne* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2015), p.24; Schwyzer, p.137-45; Richard Sugg, *John Donne* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), p.190-206; Targoff, *Body and Soul.*

> For first, in naturall death, there is *Casus in separationem*, The man, the person falls into a separation, a divorce of body and soul; and the resurrection from this fall is by Re-union, the soule and body are re-united at the last day. A second fall in naturall death, is *Casus in dissolutionem*, The dead body falls by putrifaction into a dissolution, into atoms and graines of dust; and the resurrection from this fall, is by Re-efformation: God shall re-compact and re-compile those atoms and graines of dust, into that Body, which was before: And then a third fall in naturall death, is *Casus in Dispersionem*, This man being falne into a divorce of body and soule, this body being falne into a dissolution of dust, this dust falls into a dispersion, and is scattered unsensibly, undiscernibly upon the face of the earth; and the resurrection from this death, is by way of Re-collection; God shall recall and re-collect all these Atoms, and grains of dust, and re-compact that body, and re-unite that soule, and so that resurrection is accomplished.[470]

Donne outlines the three stages of the body's decline in death, in two of which dust plays a pivotal role: along with atoms, it is the end state of the process of dissolution, and, in this particulate state, allows the indignity of dispersion. Each of these falls into disintegration is then swiftly followed with an explanation of their consolatory ends, 'Re-efformation' and 'Re-collection'. This chapter will use Donne's two dusty falls, into dissolution and into dispersion, as its framework, exploring his reflections on dissolution and the part dust plays in it, before moving on to the dispersion, and then, finally, the re-collecting and re-forming of the particulate body.[471]

By working thematically and extracting particular instances of dusty prose from across the corpus, I begin then by going against recent scholarship on Donne's sermons, which has reasonably insisted upon 'the need to study each sermon in the context of its delivery.'[472] However, in order to expose the figurative role dust plays in Donne's discourse, it is at first necessary to deconstruct Donne's dust, isolating explications of the pulverization and dispersal of the body from the carefully formulated oratory of Donne's many sermons. However, once the dusty tropes of dissolution and dispersal have been anatomized, they will then be bought back into the context of the resurrection, to consider the 'Re-efformation' and 'Re-collection' of those grains of dust,

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[470] Vol.7, p.103.
[471] For Donne's treatment of the separation of the body and soul in the sermons and *Devotions*, see Targoff, esp. p.156; p.164-5 & 172-4.
[472] David Colclough, 'Introduction' in *John Donne's Professional Lives*, ed., David Colclough (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2003), p.12. See also Peter McCullough, *Sermons at Court: Politics and Religion in Elizabethan and Jacobean Preaching* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998) and Jeanne Shami, *John Donne and Conformity in Crisis in the Late Jacobean Pulpit* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2003).

for, as we shall see, the recompacting of the fragmented body is a fundamental part of Donne's discourse on dust: it is not a coincidence that dusty references accumulate around sermons written on, or close to, Easter Day. The horror of *Casus in dissolutionem* and *Casus in Dispersionem* is, I will argue, used by Donne to humble his auditory, and, through this emotional manipulation, enables him to bring them to the point of exaltation in the resurrection. What will then follow is a final close reading of an anomaly in Donne's homoletic corpus – a sermon in which Donne's chosen scriptural text, the *thema,* contains 'dust'. Bringing this chapter to a close, it will show Donne's interpretive abilities at full force, bringing to light the diverse imagery and theological speculation that Donne's mind could yield from 'a handful of dust'.

i Casus in dissolutionem

Thus we begin with the second of the three falls, the *Casus in dissolutionem*, in which the dead body, bereft of its soul, 'falls by putrifaction into a dissolution, into atoms and graines of dust'. It is the stage in which the corpse decomposes, until, ultimately, only disintegrated matter remains. In depicting this fall, there are a variety of images from which Donne draws. Putrefaction has its own, more literal, lexicon of worms and jelly designed to evoke disgust, whilst bones, atoms, and dust articulate the residue left after decay. As Chapter Two discussed, the body does not simply 'return to dust' in an instant; dissolution was a process, and it was one that engaged Donne's creative energies. As John Carey observes, 'when he imagines the body […] rotting, strength at once flows into his pen [. . .] processes of decomposition are detailed with unmistakeable relish.'[473] Ramie Targoff also proposes that this obsession with the horror of decaying corpses 'may reflect Donne's belief in the salutary effects of anxiety, but more likely reflects his preference for imagining horror over other forms of imagining'.[474] As this chapter will go on to show, the horror of the grave is

[473] See Carey, p. 134-5.
[474] See Targoff, *Body and Soul*, p.161 & p.169.

indeed used for salutary effect. Yet it cannot be denied that Donne shows a preference for the macabre and grotesque.

Indeed, Donne sketches the appalling course of dissolution in a wedding sermon in 1627, expounding that 'one humour of our dead body produces worms and those worms suck and exhaust all other humour, and then all dies, and all dries, and molders into dust.'[475] Dry dust is the eventual end, but before that come the worms. As Chapter Two noted, worm-riddled cadavers were often not observable in graves, but the image was popular in funerary art of the Middle Ages. Nevertheless, when Donne broaches the subject of the dead body in his sermons, worms often came into play. One of his most sustained contemplations of bodily corruption is in a sermon preached at Lincolns Inn on Job 19.26: 'And though after my skin wormes destroy this body yet in my flesh I shall see God', in which worms are repeatedly used to exemplify the degradation of the posthumous body: to be 'destroyed by wormes […] is another descent in this humiliation, and exinanition of man, in death.'[476] A philological problem with the text demonstrates Donne's devotedness to the language of dissolution, as the image of vermiculation is used to express the horrors of the grave despite Donne knowing the inclusion of 'worms' to be a misrepresentation of the Hebrew text. Although both the Geneva and King James Bible included the interpolation, both translating that 'after my skin, wormes destroy this body,' Donne nevertheless draws attention to the fact that 'in the Originall there is no mention of *wormes*.'[477] Yet he admits uses the image anyway, despite knowing it to be an error, to make 'the destruction the more contemptible'.[478] Commenting on the worms in Donne's final sermon, *Deaths Duell*, which 'feed, and feed sweetly' upon the posthumous body, Kimberly Johnson argues that 'the body *in extremis*, in decay, sweetly

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[475] Vol 8, p.98. Ramie Targoff comments that 'the fact that Donne chose to preach a wedding sermon on a text almost comically inappropriate speaks to the depths of his obsession with the subject of our posthumous fate.' See Targoff, *Body and Soul*, p.168-9.

[476] Vol.3, p106. For the potential of worms to embody both corruption and generation see Ian MacInnes, 'The Politic Worm: Invertebrate Life in the Early Modern English Body' in *The Indistinct Human in Renaissance Literature*, eds., Jean E. Feerick, Vin Nardizzi (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), pp.252-273.

[477] Vol. 2, p.106. As Alison Knight summarizes, 'the Hebrew does not support inclusion . . . but omission does not address the corruption of the Hebrew and makes little sense in an English idiom'. See Knight, p.461-2. For the various versions of the verse, see 'Appendix', p. 466-469.

[478] Vol 3, p.106.

in the mouths of worms, is obscenely corporeal, resisting symbolic significance, and as such it remains literal.' As Johnson concludes, 'the grotesque body forces our awareness of its objecthood, the image of vermiculation, in its obscenity rendering the posthumous body vivid.'[479] Ramie Targoff, meanwhile, concludes that it is the term 'vermiculation' itself, a Latinate neologism of the early seventeenth-century, that 'forces our attention upon the gritty details of the corpse's remains.'[480] Worms thus belong to a specific image of death, one in which Donne seeks to effectively convey the contemptibleness of putrefaction. This is an edificatory strategy, as Donne's uses vermiculation to mortify his auditory in order to make the sermon's concluding section all the more gratifying. For 'after all this, destruction before by worms; ruinous misery before;[…] there is something else to be done upon me after. God leaves no state without comfort.'[481] The body does not lie in contemptible decay, but is resurrected and brought into 'the presence of God, in which consists eternall blessednesse', Donne consoling his auditory by concluding the sermon on the promise of salvation.[482]

Bones also belong in Donne's vision of the grave, yet in the sermons they only play a minor role: most extended consideration of them is owing to the 'dry bones' discussed in Ezekiel 37:1-14.[483] At certain moments in the corpus, however, their place in the process of dissolution are attended to by Donne. As Chapter Two demonstrates, skeletal remains had a consolatory edge, as their form left a vestige of personhood. In *Urne Buriall*, Thomas Browne proposes that, to the scientific eye, bones can leave a semblance of identity: 'a critical view of bones', Browne writes, can suggest the composition of 'fleshy appendices', a 'distinction of sexes' and even 'colour,' and

[479] Donne, *The Oxford Edition of the Sermons of John Donne*, vol. 3., p.238. See also Kimberly Johnson, 'The Persistence of the Flesh in Deaths Duell', *Shakespeare Up Close: Reading Early Modern Texts,* eds., Russ Mcdonald et al., (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2012), pp. 64-89, p.68.
[480] Ramie Targoff, 'Facing Death', *The Cambridge Companion to John Donne*, ed., Achsah Guibbory (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), pp.217 -231, p.225.
[481] Vol.3., p.107.
[482] Vol.3., p.111.
[483] Donne, *The Complete Poems,* p.239-43. See also *Sermons*, vol.4, p.57 & vol. 7, p.272.

thus 'physiognomy outlives our selves, and ends not in our graves.' [484] In Donne's sermon preached on Job 19.26, he too considers the extent to which bones leave a trace of the human they once were:

> Thy skin shall come to that absolute corruption, as that, though a hundred years after thou art buryed, one may find thy bones, and say, this was a tall man, this was a strong man, yet we shall soon be past saying, upon any relique of thy skinne, This was a fair man; Corruption seises the skinne, all outward beauty quickly, and so it does the body, the whole frame and constitution.[485]

Even after centuries, 'one may find bones', and thus although corruption 'seises' the characterising flesh, the skeleton nevertheless leaves a vestige of the human form, allowing for some of level recognition. The body has not been rendered entirely incomprehensible, as the observer can speculate that 'this was a tall man, this was a strong man,' retaining some semblance of the man it was before. Enduring bone is thus not as horrifying as wormeaten flesh, which comes to 'absolute corruption', making it for Donne a less impactful image with to rouse his auditory.

Tellingly, Donne goes on to denigrate the effectiveness of bones in articulating the repugnance of death, admitting the incapacity of the skeletal emblem of *memento mori* to properly convey decomposition:

> Painters have presented to us with some horror, the sceleton, the frame of the bones of a mans body; but the state of a body, in the dissolution of the grave, no pencil can present to us. Between that excrementall jelly that thy body is made of at first, and that jelly which thy body dissolves to at last; there is not so noisome, so putrid a thing in nature.[486]

Pictorial representations of death are, for Donne, a dim attempt to encompass the revulsion of the posthumous body, the skeleton only able to portray 'some' of the 'horror'. Instead, his evocative language seeks to depict the 'noisome' and 'putrid' state of the grave, beyond what the pencil can manage. In this image, Donne makes vivid the grotesque process of decomposition, drawing on the 'excremental jelly' of male ejaculation and the rotting flesh that is yet to be sucked dry by

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[484] It should also be noted that this does not allow for a proper identification of personhood, as Shakespeare's Hamlet demonstrates in the gravedigger's scene. He 'knew' poor Yorrick, yet when holding his skull, he does not recognise that it is the remains of the much-loved court jester. See Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, (V.i.176).
[485] Vol. 3, p.104.
[486] Vol.3, p.105.

worms. As John Carey comments, 'the adroitness with which he manages to suggest here both that decayed flesh is as runny as human sperm, and that human sperm is as disgusting as decayed flesh, testifies to the imaginative energy with which he undertakes his task.'[487] Donne is determined to use his verbal dexterity to depict the physical horror of the grave, envisioning for his auditory the utter disgust of the decomposition. Bones, durable and dry, are not part of this, and nor is dust, the senseless matter not suited to the sermon's vivification of putrefaction and Donne's intent to physical repulse his auditory. However, unlike bone, dust is not imaginatively impotent for Donne. What will now be discussed is the way in which the indistinction of dust evokes what the emblems of worms, jelly and bones cannot: the metaphysical horror of oblivion.

The importance of dust as a motif of near-oblivion has hitherto been eclipsed by scholarship on the subject of atoms in Donne's sermons. David A. Hedrich Hirsch argues that *atoms* are for Donne 'the limit to the self's deconstruction . . . he stops just short of the abyss and rests upon the permanence of atoms.'[488] Yet in the sermons, atomic theory and the figure of the atom does not play the vital role that Hirsch suggests. Hirsch speaks of 'atomic dust' in the sermons, but a more accurate description would be 'dusty atoms': dust is not a synecdoche for atom, for Donne; rather, atoms are a synecdoche for dust.[489] Whilst atoms are comparable to dust in their indistinct minuteness, they are not a forceful image in their own right, but rather a verbal appendage to diversify Donne's lexicon of the particulate. We have seen already how Donne places atoms alongside 'grains of dust' in his outline of the *Triplicem casum*. Other mentions of atoms in the sermons are similarly used to supplement dust as the remnant of flesh, as Donne writes about 'every graine, and atome of our dust' and 'the severall dust, and atomes, and Elements of our scattered bodies'.[490] Even when not in proximity to dust, such as when Donne considers 'the

[487] Carey, p.135.
[488] David A. Hedrich Hirsch, 'Donne's Atomies and Anatomies: Deconstructed Bodies and the Resurrection of Atomic Theory' in *Studies in English Literature*, 1500 -1900, 31 (1991), pp.69-94, p.71 & 76.
[489] Hirsch, p.82.
[490] Vol 2, p.270., vol.9, p.108. See also, vol. 7, p.115.

Atoms of that flesh which a Corrasive hath eat away', atoms are amongst other fragmented forms of matter such as splintered bone and ashes.[491]

Furthermore, at the time Donne was writing, the image of the atom was less suited than dust to convey posthumous remains, especially in religious rhetoric: dust particles were authorized by scripture, yet, as Chapter Three notes, atoms had yet to be synthesised into Christian materialism at this point in the seventeenth-century, and were not part of scriptural vocabulary.[492] There is one exception. The atom has the sense of not only being the smallest unit of matter but also the smallest unit of time: in 1 Cor. 15.52, in the original Greek it is said that at the Resurrection God recollects the dispersed particles of the body 'in an atom (ἐν ἀτόμῳ), in the twinkling of an eye (ἐν ῥιπῇ ὀφθαλμοῦ)'.[493] Thus, there is an example of scriptural precedence for the idea of the atom. However, in all sixteenth and seventeenth century English translations of this passage, atoms are elided: it is said to be done 'in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye,' with the exception of the 1535 Miles Coverdale version, in which it is done 'sodenly.' It is only in the Vetus Latina that atoms make an appearance, where the verse reads 'omnes quidem resurgemus, sed non omnes immutabimur, in atomo, in ictu oculi, in novissima tuba'.[494] Hirsch and Gerard Passannante both note an atomistic pun in Donne's use of this bible verse in a Wedding sermon preached in 1627. After recounting how the body moulders into dust - a passage that will be discussed in further detail below – Donne goes on to reassure his auditory that the body will be collected up and resurrected 'in in the twinckling of an eye', quoting 1 Cor. 15 52. Because this reference occurs in

[491] Vol. 8, p.98. This is reflective of Donne's general use of atoms in the sermons. Donne uses the atom to depict the smallest thing conceivable, however, it is invariably placed amongst other minute things, mostly dust or motes, but also particles such as sand, ashes, a grain or the mathematical point. The atom for Donne is 'imaginary,' and he never elaborates on its significance. See vol 3, p.95; vol.6, p.170-1; vol.7, p.357 & vol 10, p.134.

[492] As discussed in Chapter Three, it was not until the mid-seventeenth century that atomism became popular in natural philosophy: Pierre Gassendi removed the impiety implicit in the ideas of Democritus, Epicurus and Lucretius and through Walter Charleton this more acceptable form of atomism became accessible in English.

[493] Hirsch, p.83. Gerard Passannante, 'On Catastrophic Materialism', *Modern Language Quarterly*, 78.4 (2017), pp.443-464.

[494] Significant religious writers, including Tertullian, Bede, Ambrose and Augustine, cited this translation of 1 Cor. 15.52 in their works, and so it would not have necessarily been unfamiliar to early modern theologians, but it certainly wasn't the dominant translation. Even the Latin Vulgate translates ἐν ἀτόμῳ as '*In momento'*.

the same passage in which Donne refers to 'the Atoms of […] flesh', both Hirsch and Passannante see Donne playing on 'a material and a temporal idea of the atom':[495] both critics assume that when Donne mentions 'the twinckling of an eye' he is alluding to an atom of time. However, this suggestion is highly speculative. When Donne references the passage in his sermon, not only does he not discuss the original Greek, but he does not cite the first 'atomic' part: 'he whispers, […] and in the twinckling of an eye, that body that was scattered over all the elements, is sate down at the right hand of God, in a glorious resurrection.'[496] ἐν ἀτόμῳ, the atomic 'moment', is elided. What is more, Donne refutes the idea that the reintegration of the body and soul happens in the smallest unit of time. In an earlier Easter day sermon preached in 1622, he puts forward that the Resurrection 'shall not be done in absolute instant . . . It shall be done, says he, *In ictu oculi*, In the twinkling of an eye; but even in the twinkling of an eie, there is a shutting of the eie-lids, and an opening of them again.' This, Donne concludes 'requires some succession of time.'[497] It is thus clear then that Donne did not hold much store by the original Greek, or at least, felt that the ensuing qualification 'in ictu oculi' negated the sense of ἐν ἀτόμῳ as the least moment of time. Consequently, it is incorrect to build an 'atomic economics' on such slim evidence for the imaginative significance of atoms in Donne's sermons, particularly when the plainly significant dust is neglected for it.[498] What Hirsch argues for the atom, is, in the sermons, in fact dust's role. It is dust that is 'the limit of the self's destruction', the material permanence on the cusp of oblivion, which the following discussion will now examine.

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[495] Passannante, *The Lucretian Renaissance*, p.455. See also Hirsh p.83.
[496] Vol. 8, p.98.
[497] Vol.4, p.75. Donne is here quoting the Vulgate translation of 1 Cor. 15.52*: in momento in ictu oculi*. Furthermore, Donne's viewpoint directly contradicts Augustine, who sees 'the twinkling of an eye' as a further explanation of the instantaneousness of the resurrection: 'What is the twinkling of an eye? Not the moment when we close or open the eyes with the eyelids—when we blink; no, by the twinkling of the eye he meant the emission of rays in order to observe something.' See *Sermons (341-400) on Various Subjects*, ed., John E. Rotelle, trans Edmund Hill (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 1995), p.257.
[498] Hirsch, p.83.

After the worms have vividly sucked the mouldering flesh dry, what remains begins to break down into an indistinguishable heap, and, in its incoherency, becomes in desperate need of re-articulation. In the *Devotions*, Donne writes that when soul departs from the body:

> that body hath lost the name of a dwelling house, because none dwells in it, and is making haste to lose the name of a body, and dissolve to putrefaction. . . Now all the parts built up, and knit by a lovely soul, now but a statue of clay, and now these limbs melted off, as if that clay were but snow; and now the whole house is but a handful of sand, so much dust, and but a peck of rubbish.[499]

In losing its identifiable physical form, in dissolution the body also loses its designation: a fragmented heap cannot be named a 'body'. Endeavouring to capture the exact moment of alteration, in the 'now', Donne grapples to find the new sign to communicate this altered state.[500] Particularization is in the forefront of his mind as he switches from the viscosity of clay and snow, to 'sand' and 'a peck of rubbish', small amounts of indiscriminate matter. And of course, there is 'so much dust'.

This concern of how to articulate the fragmented body in the *Devotions* also appears later in a sermon preached in 1626 at the funeral of Sir William Cokayne, in which Donne reflects on how to read the body in dissolution. Prior to death, the body is intelligible: 'the world is a great Volume, and man the Index of that Booke; . . .This body is an Illustration of all Nature; Gods recapitulation of all that he had said before'.[501] Mankind is a comprehensible manifestation of God's words, an articulate microcosm of creation. Yet the process of decomposition eradicates such distinctness. As Donne continues:

> yet this body must wither, must decay, must languish, must perish […] *Goliah* had armed and fortified this body, and *Iezabel* had painted and perfumed this body, And *Dives* had pampered and larded this body [. . .] *Iesabels* dust is not Ambar, nor *Goliahs* dust *Terra sigillata,* medicinall; nor does the Serpent, whose meat they are both, finde any better relish in *Dives* dust, then in *Lazarus.*

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[499] *Devotions*, p.92-3.
[500] Targoff argues that 'Donne wants to produce the effect of a simultaneous narration, as if these events were passing directly before our eyes.' See Targoff, *Body and Soul*, p.149-50.
[501] Vol. 7, p.272.

Any attempts in life to define or adorn the body are futile in the face of dissolution. Dust proves resistant to any identifying features, as Donne lists all the embellishments that it cannot incorporate: a pampered body, a perfumed body, an armoured body, are all reduced to the same indistinct substance, any distinguishing characteristics obliterated. Dust is defined by being undefinable: it is, in essence, a substance that stands in for the absence of substance.

Even the descriptors that Donne attaches to dust articulate it through negation. In a sermon preached at St Paul's on Easter Day in 1627, Donne indulges in the expressivity of the body's return to pulverised matter:

> When I consider what I shall be at last, by the hand of death, in my grave, (first, but Putrifaction, and then, not so much as putrifaction, I shall not be able to send forth so much as an ill ayre, not any ayre at all, but shall be all insipid tastlesse savourlesse, dust; for a while, all wormes, and after a while, not so much as wormes, sordid, senslesse, namelesse dust). When I consider the past, and present, and future state of this body, in this world I am able to conceive, able to expresse the worst that can befall it in nature, and the worst that can be inflicted upon it by man, or fortune; But the least degree of glory that God hath prepared for that body in heaven, I am not able to expresse, not able to conceive.[502]

Dust becomes paradoxically vivid in its nullity, as Donne defines it as 'insipid', 'tastlesse', 'savourlesse' 'sordid' 'senslesse' 'namelesse'. The repeated use of the suffix '-lesse' heightens the sense of dust as a negation of substance. What is more, the terms render dust unpalatable. More will be said on the consumption of dust; here it suffices to say that, for Donne, it lacks any nourishing qualities. Most important, however, is the idea of 'nameless dust'. Placed in proximity, the paradox is evident, as Donne names the nameless. Yet the contradiction demonstrates how, for Donne, the body will not be subject to complete oblivion in death. On the cusp of something and nothing, dust is the point at which corporeality is in its most reduced state, yet is still quantifiable, nameable. It leaves no vestige of identity, unlike bone, but it does leave a trace of the material, to which descriptors, however reductive, can be attached. The passage concludes with a different kind of namelessness: the namelessness of heaven, a glorious form of inexpressibility. Donne's proleptic imagination can conceive of 'the worst that can befall [the body] in nature,' and

[502] Vol.7, p.390.

in doing so paradoxically describes indefinable dust, but the 'glory' of heaven remains unwritten.[503] Inarticulacy is placed against inexpressibility, the futile expression of earthly nothingness further denigrated by the splendour of that which is beyond language.

ii Casus in dispersionem

Once the body has fallen into 'senselesse' dust, rendered inanimate and incomprehensible, a further indignity befalls the posthumous heap: the *Casus in Dispersionem*, in which 'this dust falls into a dispersion, and is scattered unsensibly, undiscernibly upon the face of the earth'. Donne stresses that this act is a punitive measure, reminding his auditory that 'God threatens, *Comminuam in pulverem*, I will break the wicked as small as dust, and scatter them with the winde.' The dissemination of dust worked to advance the incoherence engendered by dissolution, something, as we shall see, that Donne found contemptible. It has been argued by critics that this eradication of individuality is the reason behind Donne's fixation on the posthumous body: Richard Sugg, for example, has suggested that 'what produces all these memorable evocations of disintegrated humanity is ultimately the inability to quite accept that one has – at least temporarily – lost one's self.'[504] Yet scholarship has not underlined that it is the trope of dust that articulates this for Donne – not bone or putrid flesh – and, furthermore, that it is the dispersion of senseless dust that exacerbates and ensures this annihilation of identity in death.

In a sermon preached at court in 1629 on Genesis 1.26, Donne delves into the earth from which man was made, excavating tropes of 'shamefastnesse', evinced by its red hues, and humility, for 'it is a low thing to be but earth'. In addition, punning on the Hebrew for earth, אדמה (*adamah*), Donne stresses the egalitarian thrust of the body's terrestrial foundations, finding 'equalitie in

[503] In an earlier sermon preached on Easter Day in 1622, Donne puts forward that all attempts to express Eternity are 'impotent': in the context of everlasting life, rhetoric is seen as 'empty,' whilst poetry is 'weak', 'a counterfait Creation, and makes things that are not, as though they were.' See vol. 4, p.87.
[504] Sugg, p.194. See also Carey, p.226 & 230, Hirsch, p.70 & Targoff, *Body and Soul*, p.166.

Adam'. Yet, in order to provide another 'test' of mankind's universal earthliness, Donne overleaps origins, and projects his imagination into the 'grave', in which:

> all dusts are equall. Except an epitaph tell me who lies there, I cannot tell by the dust; nor by the epitaph know, which is the dust it speaks of, if another have been layed there before, or after, in the same grave: nor can any epitaph be confident in saying, Here lies; but, Here was laid: for so various, so vicissitudinarie is all this world, as that even the dust of the grave hath revolutions. As the motions of an upper sphere imprint a motion in a lower sphere, other then naturally it would have; so the changes of the life work after death. And as envie supplants and removes us alive; a shovell removes us, and throwes us out of our grave, after death. No limbeck, no weights can tell you, This is dust royall, this plebeian dust: no commission, no inquisition can say, This is catholick, this is hereticall dust.[505]

Again, Donne shows dust resisting identification as epitaphs prove incapable of accurately designating 'which is the dust it speaks of'. The inexorable mutability of the world unsettles even the inert dust, engendering the inanimate particle with motion: 'for so various, so vicissitudinarie is all this world, as that even the dust of the grave hath revolutions.' Although in dust the posthumous body has settled in its final, particulate form, the condition of dust is nevertheless changeable: the intrusion of a shovel disturbs its dwelling place, and such revolutions intersperse the already unspecified fragments, causing the most accurate measuring apparatus to prove futile.[506] The ineffectiveness of the 'limbeck,' an alchemical apparatus used for distillation, and 'weights' show that even empirical knowledge gained by experiment cannot distinguish the identity of dust. Instead, Donne reaches for the language of negation once more, as dust is defined through oxymoronic terms. It cannot be classified as either 'royall' or 'plebeian', 'hereticall' or 'Catholic', repelling social and religious trappings, as the very act of attaching a descriptor to dust proves its inarticulacy.

The egalitarianism of *casus in dispersionem* is foregrounded in the sermon preached at Lincoln's Inn on Job 19.26: 'Dust upon the Kings high-way', remarks Donne, 'and dust upon the

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[505] Donne, *The Oxford Edition of the Sermons of John Donne,* vol.3., p.171.

[506] Particularly during times of plague, graves were often broken up and thrown into disorder owing to the mass of corpses that needed to be buried. As Donne writes in a sermon preached at St Dunstans in 1625, 'in our later times. . . almost every Grave is oppressed with twins; and as Christs resurrection some of the dead arose out of their graves, that were buried again; so in this lamentable calamity, the dead were buried, and thrown up again before they were resolved to dust, to make room for more.' See Vol.6, p.362. See also F.P. Wilson, p. 43 & Neill, p.19 -22.

Kings grave, are both, or neither, Dust Royall, and may change places, who knows the revolutions of dust?'[507] The idea of dusty revolutions is semantically textured: dust is revolutionary both in it volitant motions and in its capacity to overthrow hierarchy.[508] In this sermon it is not actually dust but rather the putridness of decomposition – the worms that eat the flesh – that is the key image with which Donne chooses to both mortify and edify his auditory. Nevertheless, this passage speaks to Donne's fixation with the dispersion of dusty remains, and the levelling of both rank and annihilation of identity that it engenders.

In an earlier sermon, preached at Whitehall in 1621, Donne's attention was also captured by the incoherence produced by the revolutions of the grave. Citing Augustine's thinking on *Fortasse*, 'that word of contingency, of casualty, Perchance,' Donne contends that all is subject to happenstance except for death, which is an infallible certainty, and acts as a leveller: 'it comes equally to us all, and makes us all equall when it comes'. Donne continues that

> the dust of great persons graves is speechlesse too, it sayes nothing, it distinguishes nothing: As soon the dust of a wretch whom thou wouldest not, as of a prince whom thou couldest not look upon, will trouble thine eyes, if the winde blow it thither; and when a whirle winde hath blowne the dust of the Church-yard into the Church, and the man sweeps out the dust of the Church into the Church-yard, who will undertake to sift those dusts again, and to pronounce, This is the Patrician, this is the noble flower, and this the yeomanly, this the plebeian bran?[509]

Donne foregrounds many of the concepts that he was to elaborate on in his sermon on Genesis 1.26. No apparatus can discern the dust of the poor from the nobility. Once more, dust is

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[507] Vol.3, p.105 -6.

[508] *OED* n., 3 & 8.a. When Shakespeare's Hamlet observes the skulls of what had been lords and ladies being knocked about by the gravedigger's spade, he comments: 'Here's fine revolution, if we had the trick to see it' (V.i.). The dissolution of the body in grave levels out humanity, obliterating hierarchy: this revolutionary implication of the grave is apparent to those astute enough to notice. As Kiernan Ryan argues, 'the strict historicist scholar will hasten to point out that the word 'revolution' must be construed here as a reference to the wheel of fortune or the whirligig of time, and that to impute our modern political meaning to it would be anachronistic. It would indeed, but it would also be perfectly in keeping with Shakespeare's profoundly anachronistic imagination.' I propose that here Donne is also using the word 'revolution' in way that anticipates the future of meaning of overthrowing the ruling class (*OED* n., 8.c). It should also be observed that the word 'revolution' was being used in the sense of rebellion in the sixteenth century (*OED* n., 8.a): Thomas More, for example, in a letter to Cardinal Wolsey on that affair of Scotland writes that 'the archbishop of Saint Andrewis putteth all his possible power . . .to rere broilerie, warre, and revolution in the Realme.' See Kiernan Ryan, *Shakespeare's Universality* (London: Bloomsbury Arden Shakespeare, 2015), p.71 and Henry Ellis, *Original letters, Illustrative of English History*, vol.1, (London: Printed for Harding and Lepard, 1827), p.290.

[509] Vol. 4, p.53.

'speechlesse', unable to articulate or be articulated, owing to the effacing revolutions of the mutable world. Yet a different trope is also at play here: as Thomas Adams was to later do, Donne draws on the Erasmian adage, *Pulverem oculis offundere*. Yet Donne does not use it to play with friskiness of dust, as Adams did, but rather to highlight the obscurity of particulate remains.[510] Dust can be seen, brought into the eye through the volitant air, but not known, as the particle stays stubbornly unidentifiable, blinding the faculty of perception. Swept up by the wind and the broom, the little passive bodies are removed from the grave that marked the original body they composed, the vicissitudes of the world placing on them an incorrigible anonymity.

It is in his final sermon, *Deaths Duell*, where Donne is most explicit about the horrors of *Casus in Dispersionem*. Against the critical consensus, Philip Schwyzer argues that the circulation of the dusty dissolved body is 'a fundamentally positive process whereby the isolated private body is brought into communion with others. . . Melting for Donne is a metaphor for ... processes that join us unto others, that prove once and for all that no human being is an island.'[511] Yet there is no textual evidence in the sermons that mingled dust is a 'positive' phenomenon, and *Deaths Duell* shows Donne's unequivocal anxiety about it. Ramie Targoff is closer, noting that 'for Donne, nothing can approximate the horror of losing himself in the heaving mass of the dead.'[512] In the structural '*foundations*' of his sermon, in which Donne regards the issues of death as a deliverance from death, '*liberatio à morte*', Donne reveals the repugnance of the '*posthume* death, this *death* after *death*, nay this death after burial,' as he tells of

> That *Monarch*, who spred ouer many nations aliue, must in his dust lye in a corner of that *sheete of lead*, and there, but so long as that lead will laste, and that priuat and *retir*'d *man*, that thought himselfe his owne for euer, and neuer came forth, must in his dust of the graue bee published, and (such are the *reuolutions* of the *graues*) bee mingled with the dust of euery high way, and of euery dunghill, and swallowed in euery puddle and pond: This is the most

[510] Erasmus, p.106-7.
[511] Schwyzer, p.142-3.
[512] Targoff, *Body and Soul,* p.166. See also Neill, p.12: 'In this radical assault upon definition not even the most intimate distinctions of personal identity are immune from a universal bodily dispersion which reduces even the contemplative man 'that thought himself his own forever' to an indistinguishable dust . . .What for Donne is so obscene about death is the sheer commonness figured in those public highways, dunghills, puddles, and ponds.'

> inglorious and contemptible *vilification*, the most deadly and peremptory *nullification* of man, that wee can consider.[513]

In this moment of the sermon, Donne's prose engenders dread: anarchy is threatened, as the Monarch's dust is only contained 'so long as that lead will laste' and, worst of all, individual sovereignty disintegrates as 'that priuat and retir'd man, that thought himselfe his owne for ever' is 'published', uncomfortably projected into the community of dirt and debris. Donne explodes in superlatives, as he makes manifest that the mingling of the body's dust with the common dirt is '*vilification'* and '*nullification'* to highest degree. No body, bar one, was exempt from this fate, 'Even those bodies that were *the temples of the holy Ghost*, come to this *dilapidation*, to ruine, to rubbidge, to dust', even the most devout individuals dissolving into particulate, scattered debris. The only mortal who was immune to such indignity was Jesus: 'It was a *prerogatiue* peculiar to *Christ*, not to dy this death, *not to see corruption*'.[514]

The obliteration of identity is further impressed into the mind of his auditory as Donne continues:

> But in this death of *incineration*, and dispersion of dust, wee see *nothing* that wee call *that mans*; If we say, can this dust live? perchance it *cannot*, it may bee the meere *dust* of the *earth*, which neuer did live, never shall. It may be the dust of that mans *worme*, which did live, but shall no more. It may bee the dust of *another* man, that concernes not him of whom it is askt. This death of *incineration* and dispersion, is, to naturall *reason*, the most *irrecoverable death* of all.[515]

Again, dust repels any attempts of identification, as no trace of man can be discerned. Here, Donne brings the body to the brink of oblivion, near annihilation, envisaging for his auditory 'the most irrecoverable death of all'. '*Vilification*', '*nullification*', '*dilapidation*,' '*incineration*', all Latinate terms, typeset in italics, intensify the despicable alteration generated by dusty dissolution.[516] The former

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[513] Donne, *The Oxford Edition of the Sermons,* vol.3., p.231 & p.238.
[514] Donne, *The Oxford Edition of the Sermons*, vol.3., p.238 & 235. For Donne's explanation for this peculiarity (he dismisses Christ's lack of original sin as a reason), see p.235-7.
[515] Ibid., p.239.
[516] As Peter McCullough has noted, italicisation was 'the early modern equivalent of inverted commas, or quotation marks' and in Donne's sermons 'in print they give . . . a visual marker to the intensification of Donne's rhetoric. ... Just as vividly in delivery they would have been heard and recognized as quotations, deepening the tone, and enriching the register of thematic imagery.' See McCullough, 'Preaching and Context', p.235.

two are neologisms, in which Donne pushes language beyond its established bounds to make literal the way in which the return to dust converts the body into something base and vile, into an incomprehensible nothing.[517] The latter pertain to the horror of fragmentation, of the ruin instigated by scattering, the Latin *dīlapidāre* literally meaning 'to scatter as if throwing stones', and of the fiery reduction to ashes, which recalls the discomforting maxim of the Burial Service in the BCP. The body in the condition of dust intensifies the richness of Donne's vocabulary and imagery, producing affective visions of metaphysical horror that was no doubt purposed to move his auditory to a momentary state of despair.

iii 'Re-efformation' and 'Re-collection'

'& yet': the redemptive conjunction that retrieves his auditory from the precipice of oblivion:

> This death of *incineration* and dispersion, is, to naturall *reason*, the most *irrecouerable death* of all, & yet *Domini Domini sunt exitus mortis*, *vnto God the Lord belong the issues of death*, and by *recompacting* this *dust* into the *same body*, & *reanimating* the same *body* with the *same soule*, hee shall in a blessed and glorious *resurrection* giue mee such an *issue from* this *death*, as shall neuer passe into any other death, but establish me into a life that shall last as long as the *Lord of life* himselfe.[518]

Syntactically, the moment of absolute dissolution is also the moment of salvation, as the horror of the body's '*incineration* and dispersion' is consoled by a 'blessed and glorious *resurrection.*' The dust is 'recompact[ed]', restoring the '*same*' body, unaltered, Donne stressing the return of corporeal integrity.[519] Donne's fondness for the Latin prefix 're-', evidenced not only in this passage but across the sermons, is illustrative of his determination to articulate the body's material continuity after death. As we have seen, in the Easter Day Sermon of 1926 the fall into dissolution and dispersion is repaired by the act of 'Re-efformation' and 'Re-collection'. Donne's own neologism,

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[517] The *OED* cites this passage of Donne as its first source for vilification and nullification.
[518] Donne, *The Oxford Edition of the Sermons*, vol.3., p.239.
[519] The resurrection of the body is affirmed in the Apostles' Creed, one of the 39 Articles of the Church of England, and thus a necessitated item of the believing clergyman. Although Donne was convinced of its certainty, it did defy natural reason, 'discernible by no other light, but that of Faith.' See *Sermons*, vol.8, p.98; 'The thirty nine Articles of Religion' in *The Book of Common Prayer*, p.676; Targoff, *Body and Soul*, p.16- 19.

'Re-efformation', is a salient indication of his desire to express his faith that the body will retain its ipseity after the resurrection: attaching the prefix 're-' to a word denoting God's construction of the posthumous body explicitly signals that the act is not creative, but rather restorative, returning the body to its previous state. In doing so, Donne reclaims the pejorative return of Genesis 3.19, *In pulverem revertêris*, capturing the complete restoration of selfhood in his language.

The deconstructive peroration in *Deaths Duell*, in which Donne brings his auditory to dust and dispersion to then exalt them with the resurrection, is emblematic of all his elaborations on the metaphysical horror of dust. Whether ruminating on 'sordid, senslesse, namelesse dust' or on the speechlessness of dispersed dust, Donne always brings his oratory, either in the sentence itself or by the close of the sermon, to the point of resurrection.[520] In the sermon preached at the funeral of William Cokayne, for example, in the same portion in which the pride of Goliath, Jezebel and Lazarus is shown to disintegrate into the dust, Donne swiftly concludes that, owing to the 'goodnesse of God', that 'for all this dissolution, and putrefaction, he affords this Body a Resurrection.' The auditory are never left in the dust, only bought there to be humbled, before being exalted: it is rhetorical tool that enacts the humility paradox, and one that benefits from Donne's horrific descriptions of dusty death, which intends to bring his auditory to the depths of despair: for the lower the soul can be humbled, the greater the exaltation.

Critics have already noted Donne's habit of following disturbing depictions of bodily corruption with the reassurance of the resurrection.[521] But they have not attended to the unique function of dust in this practice. Nor have they considered to what effect the figure of dust is used in this context when it is no longer needed to articulate the horrifying nullification of the posthumous body. The following discussion will now seek to remedy these omissions. Following an older tradition in Western Christianity, rather than the contemporary doctrine of the protestant church, Donne was convinced of the material continuity of the self in the heaven.[522] As Ramie

[520] Vol. 4, p56 & p.62, vol.7, no.15, p.289-390.
[521] See Sugg, p.194-5 and Targoff*, Body and Soul*, p.161 & p.169.
[522] See Targoff, *Body and Soul*, p.18-19; p. 169-70. See also Augustine, *City of God*, p.1027-9 & p.1062-4.

Targoff notes, 'Donne's preoccupation with the material continuity of the self is unusual for a seventeenth-century Protestant minister, whose church did not emphasize in either doctrine or liturgy the significance of bodily resurrection.'[523] Instead, Donne owes his preoccupation to the Church Fathers: Augustine writes that 'as for bodies . . . that have disintegrated into dust and ashes. . . it is unthinkable that the Creator should lack the power to revive them all and restore them to life.'[524] As we have seen, Donne shares this conviction, yet, as Targoff summarizes, 'however much he claims to trust in the promise of resurrection, he is still fraught with anxiety about the logistics of his material reassemblage.'[525] What arises from this anxiety, in relation to dust, is the issue of how God handles particulate senseless matter. If we turn back to the anomalous yet critically popular example in the marriage sermon of 1627, in which Donne tangentially considers the unempirical nature of the resurrection, we shall see Donne's handling of fragmented matter in full swing:

> Where be all the splinters of that Bone, which a shot hath shivered and scattered in the Ayre? Where be all the Atoms of that flesh which a *Corrasive* hath eat away, or a *Consumption* hath breath'd, and exhal'd away from our arms, and other Limbs? In what wrinkle, in what furrow, in what bowel of the earth, ly all the graines of the ashes of a body burnt a thousand years since? In what corner, in what ventricle of the sea, lies all the jelly of a body drowned in the generall flood? What coherence, what sympathy, what dependence maintaines any relation, any correspondence, between that arm that was lost in Europe, and that legge that was lost in Afrique, or Asia, scores of yeers between? One humour of our dead body produces worms, and those worms suck and exhaust all other humour, and then all dies, and all dries, and molders into dust, and that dust is blowen into the River, and that puddled water tumbled into the sea, and that ebs and flows in infinite revolutions, and still, still God knows in what *Cabinet* every *seed-Pearle* lies, in what part of the world every graine of every mans dust lies; and, *sibilat populum suum,* (as his Prophet speaks in another case) he whispers, he hisses he beckens for the bodies of his Saints, and in the twinckling of an eye, that body that was scattered over all the elements, is sate down at the right hand of God, in a glorious resurrection.[526]

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[523] Targoff observes, for example, that the BCP's Burial Service dismisses the idea that individual body parts are retained: it 'includes the promise of a "sure and certain hope of resurrection to eternall lyfe, through our Lord Jesus Christ," but denies the material continuity of this resurrected body: Christ "shall change our vile body," the liturgy reads, "that it may be like to his glorious body."' See Targoff, p. 169 & Cummings, *The Book of Common Prayer,* p.172.
[524] Augustine, *City of God*, p.1062.
[525] Targoff, *Body and Soul*, p.167.
[526] Vol.8, p.98.

Quoted in full, the imaginative scope of this image is evident and impressive. Donne provides a surfeit of fragmented body parts, 'atoms' of flesh, 'splinters' of bone, 'ashes' of incinerated carcases. Of course, it is all summarized in the figure of 'dust', as all 'molders into dust' and then is dispersed in 'infinite revolutions' of the sea. But, as with *Deaths Duell*, syntactically, the recuperation comes at the moment of utter despair: the conjunctive pause – 'and still' – poised between humiliation and exaltation, marks the point of the crescendo. 'Still,' Donne repeats, moving his imagery upwards towards the climax, 'God knows in what *Cabinet* every *seed-Pearle* lies, in what part of the world every graine of every mans dust lies.'

This image had already been used in two earlier Easter sermons. In 1622 at St Paul's Cathedral, Donne preaches that 'God does not forget the dead. . . . As he puts all thy teares into his bottles, so he puts all the graines of thy dust into his Cabinet, and the windes that scatter, the waters that wash them away, carry them not out of his sight. *He remembers that we are but dust*.'[527] At the same location and same occasion in 1626, Donne reassures his auditory that God, 'that knows in which Boxe of his Cabinet all this seed Pearle lies, in what corner of the world every atome, every graine of every mans dust sleeps, shall recollect that dust, and then recompact that body, and then re-inanimate that man, and that is the accomplishment of all.'[528] In this metaphor, Donne assimilates the grand task of reassembling mankind's dusty corpuscles with the collection of fashionable embellishments, making the unfathomable task comprehensible to his auditory. Unlike the sordid dust of the grave, the dust under the care of God is reassuring, not used to evoke horror but rather is assimilated with precious, yet commonplace items, Donne's lexicon of the particulate switching from pecks of rubbish and atoms of flesh to the more appealing image of little seed-pearls. Every grain of dust is not contemptibly mingled in every highway, but carefully contained, placed in a 'cabinet' for safekeeping.

[527] Vol.4., p.66.
[528] Vol. 7, p.115.

Donne finishes the section with the instantaneous moment of resurrection, and at God's call, the scattered body miraculously reforms. The insensate nature of dust is here unproblematic, the dissolved bodies responsive to even the smallest 'whisper'. In an earlier Easter Sermon, Donne addresses the paradox: 'In the Grave, *They shall*; Though they be dead, and senslesse as the dust, (for they are dust it selfe) though they bring no concurrence, no cooperation, *They shall heare,* that is, They shall not chuse but heare.'[529] The miracle of the resurrection overpowers any physical impediment imposed by bodily corruption, as although 'senslesse', dust has the capacity to passively, inertly, 'heare' the call of God. The potency of dust to evoke metaphysical horror evaporates under God's omnipotence, all of the irrevocable horror proving to be revocable. Donne's imaginative energies are undoubtedly invested in producing a sense of dread and fear in his auditory: the structure of the passage above, in which two thirds of the rhetoric is dedicated to engendering a sense of despair, is an exemplar of this. This is where the trope of dust thrives, and where Donne endows the senseless particle with linguistic vivacity. Yet when Donne retrieves his auditory from the dust of dispersion and dissolution, the matter becomes more mundane, no longer subject to terrifying revolutions, but instead, kept safe, like little pearls, in the knowledge of God.

iv Dusty Appetites

Despite the myriad of dusty tropes circulating in Donne's sermons, only one is preached on a scriptural text that contains the word 'dust'. In a commemorative sermon preached at St. Dunstans for a deceased benefactor, most likely delivered in 1624, Donne commences with Genesis 3.14: 'and dust shalt thou eat all the dayes of thy life.'[530] 'This,' as Donne reminds the auditory in his opening, 'is Gods malediction upon the Serpent in Paradise.'[531] Whilst the dust itself is an anomaly

[529] Vol. 6, p.274.
[530] The sermon may have also been preached in 1626, 1627, or 1628. However Simpson agrees with Whitlock that 1624 is the most probable date. See *Sermons*, p.25 and Baird W. Whitlock, 'Donne at St Dunstan's', *Times Literary Supplement*, 16 and 23 September 1955.
[531] *Sermons*, Vol. 10, p.178.

in Donne's preaching, the general subject of the Serpent's punishment is also unusual. The occasion for the sermon was to commemorate a dead parishioner, and thus the proximate verse on mankind's return to dust may have been a more conventional choice. Donne selects a *thema* that does not have any obvious funereal or eschatological implications, but rather one that pertains to the dietary restrictions of the serpent. Yet, through a figurative reading of the scriptural passage, Donne deftly orchestrates his homiletic rhetoric so that the motif of dust encompasses not only the Serpent's meat, but also the posthumous body of the parishioner and the living flesh of his congregation, proving the text to be both relevant to the sombre occasion and edifying to his auditory.

After beginning with the restrictive diet of Catholic monks, Donne turns in his exordium to the subject of God's great 'arraignment of all the world', making manifest the relevance of his scriptural preference:

> And of that part of the Judgement, which was inflicted upon the Serpent, and Satan in him, this dead brother of ours who lyes in this consecrated earth, is an experimentall witnesse, who being by death reduced to the state of dust, for so much of him, as is dust, that is, for his dead body, and then, for so long time, as he is to remaine in that state of dust, is in the portion, and jurisdiction, and possession of the Serpent, that is, in the state which the Serpent hath induced upon man and dust must he eat all the dayes of his life.[532]

In understanding the judgement to be 'inflicted upon the Serpent, and Satan in him' Donne signals his intention of reading scripture figuratively. Donne's hermeneutics were founded on the literal sense; however, following Augustine and Reformed theologians, the literal sense included figurative interpretations.[533] As he explains in an Easter Day sermon in 1624, 'the literall sense of every place, is the principall intention of the Holy Ghost, in that place: And his principall intention

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[532] Vol. 10., p.179.

[533] Jeanne Shami, 'John Donne' on *The Blackwell Companion to the Bible in English Literature*, ed., Rebecca Lemon (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), pp.239-253, p.247-8. Donne's approach to preaching is, in Shami's words, 'difficult to classify', as Donne drew 'eclectically and idiosyncratically' from a complex tradition of preaching styles and interpretive theories, although Augustine and Erasmus are discernible influences. See Jeanne Shami, 'The Sermon' in *Oxford Handbook of John Donne*, eds., Dennis Flynn, M. Thomas Hester, Jeanna Shami (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), pp. 318 – 347, p.321-324. For the issues with critical classifications of early modern preaching styles, and for an outline of the central qualities of delivering sermons in the period, see Mary Morrissey, 'Scripture, Style and Persuasion in Seventeenth-Century English Theories of Preaching' in *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, Vol.53 (2002), pp. 686-706, p.686-93. For a synopsis of the styles that potentially align with Donne's preaching, which exhibit a 'fixation on the minute details of scriptural language,' see Knight, p.443-4.

in many places, is to expresse things by allegories, by figures; so that in many places of Scripture, a figurative sense is the literall sense'.[534] For Donne, then, to read literally was often to find figures and allegories in particular passages, according to the detected intention of the Holy Ghost. By understanding God's curse on the Serpent also to concern Satan, Donne evidently judged that in Genesis 3.14 the Holy Ghost was expressing God's malediction of the serpent 'by figures.'

There was a longstanding dispute regarding the literalness of Genesis 3.14 in biblical exegesis. In *De Genesi ad litteram* Augustine declared that, aside from the words introducing the speech of God, Genesis 3.14 was to be taken symbolically: 'the rest of the words are God's words, and they leave the reader free to decide whether they are to be understood in the proper or figurative sense.'[535] Augustine determines that when the sentence was pronounced, it was 'against the serpent', but also figurately 'against the Devil'.[536] There were divergent views among Renaissance commentators on how to interpret the verse. Some, like Augustine, extrapolate a curse on Satan from the literal meaning: Alexander Ross, for example, like Donne, understands that 'God cursed both: the Divell mystically, and the Serpent literally'.[537] Following the 'ancient fathers', Lancelot Andrewes in his exegetical reflections also concludes that 'there is a visible Creature called a Serpent, but so also there *an old Serpent, which is the Devill or Satan, […]* that is a spirituall and mysticall Serpent, as well as a naturall and bodily Serpent, and the Sentence is against both'.[538]

Others took the meaning purely in the literal sense, understanding the judgement to pertain only to the Serpent's diet. Alexander Willet asserts that 'this clause is properly referred to the

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[534] Vol.6, p.62.

[535] St. Augustine, *The Literal Meaning of Genesis*, trans. John Hammond Taylor, Vol II (New York: Newman Press, 1982), p.169; For the Latin see Augustine of Hippo, *De Genesi ad litteram*, p.449-50. He defends his figurative reading of Genesis at the start of Book 11 and in *On Genesis: Two Books on Genesis Against the Manichees* he is explicit in the necessity for not always taking scripture literally. See *The Literal Meaning of Genesis*, p. 134, De Genesi ad litteram, p.449-50 & Saint Augustine, *On Genesis: Two Books on Genesis Against the Manichees; and, On the literal Interpretation of Genesis, an Unfinished Book*, trans Ronald J. Teske (Washington D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1990), p.95; *De Genesi contra manichaeos,* p.197.

[536] Augustine, *The Literal Meaning of Genesis*, p.170; *De Genesi ad litteram*, p450.

[537] Ross, p.66. See also Ainsworth, p.16 and Gibbons, p.141.

[538] Andrewes, *Apospasmatia SACRA: or A Collection of Posthumous and Orphan*, p.307. The *Apospasmatia SACRA: or A Collection of posthumous and orphan lectures* are notes taken from lectures given at St Pauls and St Giles from 1590 to 1603. The claims of the original 1657 edition that challenge Andrews's authorship, asserting that the notes derived from an auditor, has been disproved. See P. G. Stanwood, 'Lancelot Andrewes's "Orphan Lectures": The Exeter Manuscript', *English Manuscript Studies*, 13 (2008), pp. 35– 46 and *Selected Sermons and Lectures*, p.xviii, Fn.18 & p. 347.

Serpent, who as he was Satans instrument, to cause man to sinne and returne to the dust, so that he should feed of the dust'.[539] Similarly, Luther took the punishment to refer only to the slithering creature, directly challenging Augustine's interpretative model: 'I do not agree that, like Augustine [...] we should allegorically apply to Satan those statements which fit well with the nature of the serpent.'[540] Although Donne cites Luther as an authority on the significance of his choice of scripture, reiterating his view that 'in all Moses his Books, God never spoke so long, so much together, as here, upon this occasion', he diverges from Luther on the literalness of the passage, and follows Augustine in taking a non-literal approach to God's malediction upon the serpent.[541] In opening up the figurative potential of the passage, taking it to pertain to both 'the Serpent, and Satan in him', Donne thus paves the way for dust to mean more than just its precise sense of arid, tasteless dirt.

Donne proceeds to exploit this potential. Constructing the foundation of his figurative reading, he makes explicit that the posthumous body is 'dust'. This dusty corpse consequently becomes edible fodder for the serpent, his diet including more than simply the general, particulate dirt of the ground but also the pulverized bodies of the dead**.** At the heart of this image is the dead parishioner, the ironic 'experimentall witnesse' whose dustiness prevents any acquisition of empirical knowledge: as we have already seen, dust is 'senseless.' Donne's use of irony calls attention to the figurative quality of his rhetoric: the corpse of the parishioner is not literally decaying in the grave – there is no mention of bones or 'excremental jelly' – but rather he is lying 'in the state of dust' in the 'possession of the Serpent', unknowingly giving testimony to the conceit that will unfold. In concluding his argument, the scriptural text becomes a refrain: 'he is to remaine [...] in the state which the Serpent hath induced upon man and dust must he eat all the dayes of his

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[539] Willet, p.43.
[540] Luther, *Lectures on Genesis; Chapters 1-5*, p.187.
[541] Vol 10, p.178-9. Aspects of Augustine's method of interpreting scripture were often integrated into Donne's preaching. For Donne's assimilation of Augustine's interpretive model generally, and pertaining to Genesis, see Katrin Ettenhuber, *Donne's Augustine: Renaissance Cultures of Interpretation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), p16-19, p.1101, p.192-4, p.197.

life'. The words of scripture interrupt the grammatical sequence, using anacoluthon to bring the auditory back to the *thema*, but this time, after Donne's explication, with a new understanding: the dust that the serpent consumes now metaphorically incorporates the dead benefactor.

Having established the foundational trope of the sermon, tying the *thema* to the occasion, Donne turns to the *divisio*, outlining the discussion that will unfold. The first part considers God's 'extensive' and 'intensive' anger towards the serpent, despite the creature having 'no voluntary, no innate, no natural ill disposition towards man, but [having been] onely made the instrument of Satan, in the overthrow of man.'[542] This enables Donne to edify his congregation on the severity of God's judgment for even minor transgressions, later entreating his auditory 'let no man set a low value upon sin.'[543] Yet it is in the second division, substantially longer that the first, that Donne's interpretative dexterity and the motif of dust both come to light, as he moves from God's austerity to his mercy. In this part, Donne addressees 'what man gained' by the Serpent's punishment, how the creature's consumption of dust becomes 'a great degree of mercy to man.'[544] He points to the text's salvific potential, as he states that 'so is it a great degree of mercy to man, that the serpent must eate dust, because mans best part is not subject to be served in at his table, the soule cannot become dust, (and dust must he eate all the dayes of his life)'. Because the serpent's meat is *only* dust, the soul is safeguarded, the stipulations of God's malediction thus proving merciful to man. Again, this additional figurative meaning is indicated by the refrain, as mercy now becomes implicit in Gen. 3.14 owing to the omission of the soul.

As the second division develops, Donne continues to load the passage with mystical sense. Unearthing the figurative meaning behind the Serpent's consummation of dust and the mercy implicit in it, he again details what dust means: 'He must eat dust, that is, our bodies, and carnall affections.'[545] In this definition, the dust of Gen 3.14 is shown to not only signify the posthumous

[542] Vol. 10., p.179.
[543] Ibid., p.182.
[544] Ibid., p.179.
[545] Ibid., p.185.

body, the 'experimentall witness' of the exordium, but also the sins of the living flesh. In a poem written in epistolary exchange with George Herbert, Donne briefly touches on this meaning: in recalling the image of his family crest, a sheaf of snakes, he is prompted to write that 'the serpent . . . feeds on dust, that's me'.[546] The phrase is clear in is pithiness: mankind, as dust, is food for the serpent, adding theological textures to the dust of Gen 3.14. Whilst he pays no further heed to the image of dust in his poem, in Donne's sermon on the verse, these textures are given a detailed explanation:

> the dust, the body, that body, which for all the precious ransome, and the rich, and large mercy of the Messias, must die, that dust is left to the Serpent, to Satan, that is, to that dissolution, and that putrefaction, which he hath induced upon man, in death. He eats but our dust, in our death, when he hath brought us to that; that is a mercy; nay he eats up our dust before our death, which is a greater mercy; our carnal affections, our concupiscencies are eaten up, and devoured by him.[547]

Donne's copiousness supplements the literal sense with the figurative – 'the dust, the body'; 'to the Serpent, to Satan'. Such verbal abundance is indicative of the complexity of the metaphor he is generating: Donne saturates the image in order to make explicit the idea that Satan not only 'eats but our dust, in our death' but 'eats up our dust before our death'. That the serpent eating dust in the grave symbolises bodily corruption is conceptually clear, especially as it resembles the process of vermiculation. In another sermon honouring the dead, delivered in 1626 at the funeral for Sir William Cokayne, it is used as a simple metaphor for the dead body bereft of the soul: 'Though the soule be at the *Table of the Lambe*, in Glory, and the body but at the table of *the Serpent, in dust* . . . they are not divorced; they shall returne to one another againe, in an inseparable re-union in the Resurrection.'[548] Yet in the sermon preached at St Dunstans, Donne enriches the image with a

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[546] John Donne, *The Complete Poems*, p.571.
[547] Ibid., p.185-6.
[548] Vol.7, p.257-8. Although the metaphor has a simple meaning, the passage itself is not simple: the image is one of many and part of what Peter McCullough sees as a passage with impressive 'syntactical length and imagistic richness.' See Peter McCullough, 'Preaching and Context: John Donne's Sermon at the Funerals of Sir William Cokayne' in *The Oxford Handbook of the Early Modern Sermon*, eds,. Peter E. McCullough; Hugh Adlington; Emma Rhatigan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), pp.213 – 267, p.235.

second meaning, as the trope of dust is extended to encompass the sins of the living flesh, 'our carnal affections, our concupiscencies'.

This was an unusual move for Donne, as in the sermons the figure of dust most often signifies the dissolved flesh of the posthumous body. Yet Donne had previously expounded on the dusty qualities of sinful flesh in a sermon delivered at Lincoln's Inn, likely in 1618, on Psalm 38.3: 'There is no soundnesse in my flesh, because of thine anger, neither is there any rest in my bones, because of my sinne'.[549] Whilst edifying his congregation as to why the flesh lacked 'soundnesse', he explains that 'all flesh is corrupted' owing to 'the sinne of Adam'.[550] Although the progenitor of mankind came into being through God's act of transmuting dust into flesh, the unfallen body was not intended to return to such a pulverized state, but rather was primed for its future heavenly dwelling: 'that flesh which was naturall to man, that which God gave man at first, that had health and soundnesse in it. . . That had been naturally enough, (if that had been preserved) to carry that flesh it selfe to heaven.' However, the sin of Adam and Eve prevented such soundness, as God's judgement on the disobedient pair altered the material quality of the flesh, reinstating its earthiness. As Donne explains:

> *Ecce defluens quotidie portamus lutum*, Behold God hath walled us with mud walls, and wet mud walls, that waste away faster, then God meant at first, they should. And by sinnes, this flesh, that is but the loame and plaster of thy Tabernacle, thy body, *that*, *all* that, *that* in the intire substance is corrupted. . . Thou pursuest the works of the flesh, and hast none, for thy flesh is but dust held together by plaisters; Dissolution and putrefaction is gone over thee alive.[551]

With echoes of the Vulgate, in which Adam is said to made 'de limo terrae', through 'sinnes', flesh is transfigured back into clayey matter, into 'wet mud' and 'loame and plaster.' Donne's image of argillaceous flesh is stimulated by St Gregory's *Moralia*, the source of the Latin quotation, in which the church father conceives of the body in a state of perpetual infirmity. After expounding on how

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[549] For the likelihood of the sermon being preached in 1618, see 'Introduction' in *Sermons*, Vol 2, p.13-4.
[550] Vol 2, p.82. This is a necessitated item of faith. In the Thirty-nine articles it is outlined that 'the fault and corruption of the nature of every man', the 'lust of the flesh' and 'concupiscence[s]', is engendered by Adam. See Cummings, *The Book of Common Prayer*, p.676.
[551] Ibid., p.83.

'the very state of our body . . . is straitened by its own sickness', St Gregory concludes with an edifying admonishment: 'Thus was presumption to be amended, thus was pride to be laid low. For whereas we once took us a high spirit, so every day we carry the mud that runneth down.'[552] Unsound flesh is conveyed as falling mud, as St Gregory brings his reader to a state of humility. Donne takes advantage of this metaphor, intensifying the rich imagery in the clayey nature of the body, yet ultimately concluding with the image of more friable earth: 'thy flesh is but dust held together by plaisters.'[553] In this sermon, for Donne, the sins of his forefathers taint the flesh with an earthly, dusty quality: 'we are all kneaded up in Adam'; 'we are the sons of Dust', particulate earth proving to be in the genetic make-up of mankind, a detail which, as St Gregory's *Moralia* demonstrates, was an important prompt to humility.[554]

In the sermon preached at St Dunstans, the dustiness of living flesh attained a new level of metaphorical significance. Donne's interpretive reach corresponds with Augustine, who in *De Genesi contra manichaeos* elucidates the metaphorical sense of the verse:

> "You will," it said, "eat the earth all the days of your life," that is, all the days in which you enjoy this power before that final punishment of the judgment. For this [power] seems to be the life over which he rejoices and boasts. Hence, "You will eat the earth," can be understood in two ways: Either you will own those whom you deceive by earthly desire, that is, sinners, who are signified by the word, earth, or these words surely symbolize the third kind of temptation, namely, curiosity. For one who eats the earth penetrates things deep and dark, but nonetheless temporal and earthly.[555]

Donne's thinking parallels Augustine's, as he understands the Serpent's meat to encompass mankind's susceptibility to the power of Satan. Donne's interpretation of the serpent eating the carnal desires of the living aligns with Augustine's first reading, in which the dust, or 'earth' signifies

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[552] Pope Gregory I, *Morals on the Book of Job*, vol.1 (Oxford: John Henry Parker, 1844), p.459. The Latin reads: Sic nimirum debuit praesumptio corripi, sic superbia sterni. Quia enim elatum semel sumpsimus spiritum, ecce defluens quotidie portamus lutum. See *Moralia* in *Patrologiae cursus completus: Series Latina*., vol. 75, p.835.

[553] Cf. 'A Litany': 'O Holy Ghost – whose temple I | am, but of mud walls and condensed dust.' See *The Complete Poems of John Donne*, p.499.

[554] Vol 2, p.76 & 87.

[555] Augustine, *On Genesis,* p.122. 27. *De Genesi contra manichaeos*, p.210: 'Et terram, inquit, manducabis omnibus diebus vitae tuae: id est omnibus diebus quibus agis hanc potestatem, ante illam ultimam poenam judicii; haec enim vita ejus videtur, de qua gaudet atque gloriatur. Terram ergo manducabis, duobus modis intelligi potest: vel ad te pertinebunt, quos terrena cupiditate deceperis, id est peccatores, qui terrae nomine significantur; vel certe genus tertium tentationis his verbis figuratur, quod est curiositas. Terram enim qui manducat, profunda et tenebrosa penetrat, et tamen temporalia atque terrena.'

the earthly desires of sinners. However, Donne pushes the image further than Augustine, not only in extending it to the posthumous body, but also by seeing the eating as a 'sweeping, a cleansing, a purging of us.' Donne takes the image of Satan feeding off the dusty sins of mankind and uncovers its soteriological potential:

> The sense, and the remorse of a sin, after I have fallen into it, puts me into a better state, and establishes better conditions between God and me then were before, when I felt no tentations to sin. He shall eat up my dust, so, as that it shall fly into mine eys; that is, so work upon my carnall affections, as that they shall not make me blinde, nor unable to discern that it is he who works . . . his tentations arm us, and the very falling exalts us, when after a sin of infirmity, we come to a true and serious repentance, and scrutiny of our conscience.[556]

Punning on the etymological sense of remorse to 'bite back,' the gnawing serpent unwittingly effects the potential for salvation, the 'tentations' of Satan overcome by the responsive bite of 'remorse'. Donne pushes the metaphor of dust, piling on another layer of dusty imagery. In '[h]e shall eat up my dust, so, as that it shall fly into mine eys', Donne subverts the Erasmian adage, *Pulverem oculis offundere*: the dust that blows into his eyes does not obscure his sight, but rather gives clarity, allowing him to 'discern' the work of Satan.[557] This discernment and acquaintance with sin, figured in dust, generates the possibility for salvation, as 'the very falling exalts us,' so long as 'we come to a true and serious repentance'.[558]

As Donne continues expounding the virtues of repentance, the image of dust becomes still more intricate:

> I may say to the Serpent, Your meat is dust; and I was dust; but *[…],* I have shak'd off my dust, by true repentance, for I have shak'd off my self, and am a new creature, and am not now meat for your Table . . . I am not now unsavoury dust, but I am salt. . . Salt is made of water and winde; I am made up of the water of Baptism, of the Water of Repentance.[559]

Here, dust is not matter to be re-collected or re-formed by God; instead it is invested with the capacity to transform through individual agency. Dust is closer to representing the pulverised

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[556] Vol. 10., p.186.
[557] Erasmus, p.106-7.
[558] As discussed in Chapter Two exaltation through humiliation, or falling, was a common Christian paradox that often found expression in tropes concerning the body's earthly or dusty qualities.
[559] Vol. 10., p.186-7.

substance that merely covers objects, rather than the sordid matter 'kneaded' into the flesh through the sins of Adam, as Donne 'shak[es]' off his dusty self through 'true repentance.' The image of transformation at first taps into the theme of eating, as the penitent turns from 'unsavoury dust', to a more palatable morsel, salt. Yet Donne moves on from this rapidly, his expansive metaphor reaching to not only the purifying water of Baptism, but also to a multitude of luscious biblical flora.[560] Donne concludes 'this Vine [branch of Christ], and this Rose and Lilly, and Pomegranats, of Paradise, and this Dew of heaven, are not Dust, *And dust must thou eate all the dayes of thy life.'* The conversion of muddied flesh into dew recalls Hamlet's desire 'that this too too solid flesh would melt, | Thaw and resolve itself into a dew'.[561] However, Donne is not echoing Shakespearean self-destruction, or the melting flesh induced by sickness in the *Devotions*, in which the thawing of the body is inherently pejorative.[562] Instead, Donne allows the normally stubborn figure of dust to transform into a set of radically different materials, in order to express how repentance can save a remorseful sinner from the jaws of Satan. Again, Donne's use of the refrain stresses the new, deeper meaning rendered from the scriptural passage, as through his imagery the serpent's consummation of dust has developed into the means of salvation.

Placed against the notes of Lancelot Andrewes's lecture on Genesis 3.14, the extent of Donne's dexterity in his figurative use of dust is thrown into relief. In Andrewes' notes, the dust that the 'mysticall serpent', or the 'devill', eats also corresponds to mankind. Yet, rather than understanding dust as pertaining to the sins of the flesh, it is analogised with 'ungodly' souls.[563] For Andrewes, those instilled with 'moisture', 'the dew of heaven', are not subject to the serpent's appetites. The 'dry' sinners, who 'being without moisture, turn[...] to dust' are, however, included in his diet: 'this drynesse is a cause of much evil . . .[and] the Devil delights in these dry souls and

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[560] Vol.10, p.187. For the corresponding bible passages see John. 15.5, Cant. 2.1, 4.13, 5.2.
[561] Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, I.ii.129-30, p.162. For the textual undertones of 'sullied' or 'soiled' flesh, see 'Appendix E', p.382-4 of this edition.
[562] *Devotions*, p.11.
[563] Andrewes, *Apospasmatia*, p. 677. Andrewes is his here inspired by scripture: using Genesis 13.16 as biblical evidence, and the authority of the church fathers, Andrewes concludes that 'of Abraham should come both a dusty and earthly generation, not expressing the faith and obedience of Abraham; and also a heavenly generation'. See p.677.

loose parts of the earth.' Morality and materiality coalesce as Andrewes plays on the material quality of dust to produce a simple metaphor, in which the dust the serpent consumes becomes the ungodly souls bereft of the grace of God. The metaphor does not however, generate the same salvific possibilities as Donne's. Instead, the figure of dust assumes its typical role as the emblem of human depravity, unyielding in its baseness. By contrast, Donne's hermeneutics are far more exorbitant, pushing dust to unfamiliar metaphorical realms through investing it with transformative potential.

Donne concludes his sermon with the consummate image of transformation, focusing not on the matter of dust, but on the ruddy earth from which Adam was formed:

> Since we are all made of *red earth*, let him that is red, be more red; Let him that is red with the blood of his own soul, be red again in blushing for that rednesse, and more red in the Communion of the blood of Christ Jesus; whom we shall eat all the days of our life, and be mystically, and mysteriously, and spiritually, and sacramentally united to him in this life, and gloriously in the next.[564]

'*Red earth*' perfectly encompasses for Donne the paradox of the Christian virtue of humility: it signifies both the baseness and shamefulness of mankind's condition and the soteriological efficacy of the blood of Christ, through which spiritual exaltation can occur. Donne switches from dust, the end matter of the body, to its primal ingredient, and in doing so completely transforms the *thema*: the consuming becomes not of dust, but of the salvific Eucharist, the 'Communion of the blood of Christ Jesus', which, Donne notes, deftly altering the refrain, 'we shall eat all the days of our life.' The motif of dust can only go so far in expressing the concept of salvation: having saturated the dry dust, Donne instead invokes for his conclusion the potent image of 'red earth', which allows for his humbled 'blushing' auditory the ultimate exaltation through the salvific consummation of Christ.

Donne's extraction of the non-literal sense from Genesis 3.19 thus diversifies the figure of dust in his sermons. His creative energies are not invested in the dust of dissolution and dispersion,

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[564] *Sermons,* vol. 10, p.190.

as we would expect from the scattered references prevalent elsewhere. Instead, dust, with its metaphorical layers, functions as a nexus between the commemoration of the dead and the edification of Donne's auditory towards the salvific importance of repentance and remorse. As Jeanne Shami has noted, 'Donne's strategies of scriptural engagement apply the Bible to individual Christians as a salvific instrument,' kindling the devotion and salvation of his auditory through 'the Bible's radically figurative language"[565] Donne's interpretation of God's judgement upon the Serpent acts as a 'salvific instrument', and in doing so Donne invests in dust a redemptive quality. Salvation comes not only from the re-collection of scattered particles but also from transubstantiating dust into the 'Water of Repentance,' the pulverized matter proving not just a marker of man's humility, but a means of exaltation.

Overall, dust is most artistically stimulating and theologically useful for Donne when it signifies posthumous remains. As this chapter has shown, dust in this context is a powerful figure: it is capable of conveying the utter horror of the nullification of death and it can be used to rhetorically enact the humility paradox. In this dusty poetics, Donne stands apart from preachers such as Thomas Adams, who, as discussed in Chapter Five, also used dust to humble his auditory. Adams's one sermon uses numerous dusty commonplaces and his theological point is made through a rhetorical play on the humble performance of lying in dust and ashes. Yet what the study of Donne's dusty poetics provides is a sustained and specific engagement with the stuff, as across Donne's sermons there is a clear trend in the figurative purpose of dust: for Donne, dust is a matter of death. In the subsequent final chapter, we leave the genre of sermon and turn to the poetry of George Herbert. For Herbert, the poetics of dust was also creatively and spiritually efficacious. Yet, for Herbert, dust was a far more variable figure of speech than it was for Donne. As will now be discussed, Herbert's poetics does not only depend on the commonplace of dust as

[565] Shami, 'The Sermon', p.334.

a metonym for the dead, but rather plays with the many and various textures of meaning invested in dust.

CHAPTER EIGHT: THE POETICS OF DUST IN GEORGE HERBERT'S *THE TEMPLE*

In his handbook on pastoral care, George Herbert criticised the preaching style that had a 'way of crumbling a text into small parts. . .since the words apart are not Scripture, but a dictionary.' Such an approach, in Herbert's view, fragmented scripture into a heap of particulars. He preferred 'observations drawn out of the whole text, as it lyes entire, and unbroken in the Scripture it self.'[566] Herbert was not alone in his disdain for scriptural crumbs: Thomas Hobbes in *Leviathan* similarly noted

> They that insist upon single Texts, without considering the main Designe, can derive no thing from them cleerly; but rather by casting atomes of Scripture, as dust before mens eyes, make every thing more obscure than it is.[567]

Hobbes' metaleptic wordplay, in which 'atomes of scripture' – an image itself semi-metaphoric – are likened to volitant motes, shows scripture in its fragmented form to have a potentially dusty quality, incoherent and obfuscating when set apart from its context. As we have seen preachers did concentrate on bits of Biblical verse: Adams breaks up Job 42.6 into parts in his sermon, whilst Andrewes had the habit of shivering single words into 'peeces'. Yet whilst these preachers worked with crumbs of scripture, they were not pulverising the Word in the way that Herbert and Hobbes condemn: Herbert and Hobbes are not concerned with isolated parts of scripture per se, but rather the worry is that the meaning of those words can easily become untethered from the 'whole text,' 'the main Designe'.

This chapter argues that, in his collection of devotional lyrics, *The Temple*, Herbert uses the image of dust in a way that keeps the sense of scripture 'unbroken'. Dust is scattered throughout the poetic sequence and, as we shall see, its usage is clearly inspired by biblical verse: Abraham's humble declaration in Gen. 18.27 – 'Behold now, I have begun to speak unto my Lord, and I am but dust and ashes' – provides a dusty paradigm of the way to address God, which the speaker of

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[566] Herbert, *A Priest to the Temple*, p.235.
[567] Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan* (London, 1651), p.331.

the poems often imitates and, while the presence of Genesis 3.19, which stipulates that 'dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return', shapes expressions of the posthumous condition throughout. Saliently, these biblically informed crumbs of dust do not work to fragment scripture: Herbert found a technique in which to condense the theological sense of biblical verses that allowed for the incorporation of isolated scriptural phraseology without the loss of coherence. This was part of a poetic style that Alison Knight has identified as a commitment to coherence and contexture fundamental to the Reformation's approach to scripture.[568] In the period the coherence of a particular verse meant its harmonious relation to the surrounding verses, whilst contexture describes, in Knight's summary, 'the weave of a particular passage, whether it is coherent or not'.[569] Essentially, fragments of individual biblical words or phrases were not to be understood in isolation. Rather, when scripture was quoted theologians generally meant the pieces of scripture to be understood as part of the tapestry of the Bible as a whole.[570] For Herbert, the interconnectedness of scripture meant that the entire Bible provided a rich store of meaning and resonance for biblical phraseology, not merely the adjacent passages.[571] As will be discussed below, Herbert's hermeneutics of coherence and contexture produced a unique depiction of the dusty human condition, informed by but not set within the dust-filled verses found in the books of Genesis, Job, Isaiah and the Psalms.

This hermeneutics, teamed with the simplicity of his writing – his aim for 'plain and evident' theological discourse – sets Herbert's poetical engagement with dust apart from other writers of the period.[572] The way in which he makes the simple word 'dust' attend to multiple scriptural passages shows the figure to be semantically charged and distinctly multivalent. We may recall Lancelot Andrewes' conclusion that dust's meaning 'is plain', referring to the literal 'flesh'.[573]

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[568] Alison Knight, "This verse marks that': George Herbert's *The Temple* and Scripture in Context' in *The Oxford Handbook of the Bible in Early Modern England, c. 1530 -1700*, pp.518-32.
[569] Knight, p.520.
[570] Knight, p.522.
[571] Knight, p.532.
[572] Herbert, *A Priest to the Temple*, p.325.
[573] Lancelot Andrewes, *XCVI. Sermons*, p.65

Yet, throughout *The Temple*, dust is rarely plain. Herbert's dust conveys varying states of animation: it holds the capacity to signify the frail human race and, more importantly, it becomes a persona, the passionate yet fragmented voice of the speaker. Conversely, it also holds metaphorical significance as the insensible dust of the posthumous body, the quality that John Donne found most creatively engaging and spiritually edifying. What this chapter will thus examine is the semantic textures of Herbert's dust, the way in which his use of the metaphor incorporates the many senses of dust found in the Bible.

It will also consider a wider sense of pulverization in *The Temple*, examining the way in which Herbert gives a dusty quality to language and to individual words. Notably, words were often considered as material entities in the early modern period. As Martin Elsky has observed, there was an 'increased awareness during the Renaissance of the material basis of language in its visibility as written marks and its audibility as spoken sounds.'[574] This was shaped in part by what Elsky has described as 'the Humanist interest in language as uttered speech transcribed in written letters, and the cabalist, Neoplatonic interest in words and letters as physical things with symbolic significance'.[575] Gerard Passannante has also argued that, in the Renaissance, Lucretius's 'elemental analogy between letters and atoms [was] realized in and through the work of readers and their texts':[576] more will be said on this atomistic quality of letters below, but, as we have already seen, for Thomas Hobbes, bits of scripture were thought of as atom-like. Critics have noted how this interest in the materiality of language is evident in Herbert's *The Temple*. Pattern poems such 'The Altar' and 'Easter Wings' show words to be, in Elsky's words, 'physical things, as plastic forms to be shaped through rhyme, line length, and the symbolic, hieroglyphic significance of letters themselves.'[577] Anagrammatical poems such as 'JESU' and 'Anagram of the Virgin Marie' also demonstrate the material quality of language: as Adele Davidson observes 'combining,

[574] Martin Elsky, 'George Herbert's Pattern Poems and the Materiality of Language: A New Approach to Renaissance Hieroglyphics', *ELH*, Vol. 50, (1983), pp. 245-260, p.245.
[575] Ibid.
[576] Passannante, *The Lucretian Renaissance*, p.5.
[577] Elsky, p.252.

recombining, and spatializing letters in their materiality, [Herbert's] acrostics and anagrams highlight processes of literary bricolage and remind the reader that in a temple built of poems, the building blocks are alphabetic bricks.'[578] In many of his dust-filled poems, Herbert can be seen to treat words as alphabetic bricks. Yet in this context, they are not shown to be constructive, but rather, like dust, they become something subject to crumbling, disintegration, and dispersal, proving that, for Herbert, the poetics of dust relates not just to the figure itself, but also to the very structure and form of his verse.

i Dusty Personae

Exegetes and preachers alike lay emphasis on the doctrine that man's origin from the dust of the earth was cause to humble him. As the ardent Calvinist Gervase Babington remarked in his commentary to Genesis 2.7, 'man was created of the duste of the earth, that so base a matter might ever worke humilitie of minde.'[579] Babington's view is representative of the period: as discussed in Chapter One, being mindful of dust, remembering that it was the stuff of the body's origin and end, was an important component to the necessary Christian virtue of humility needed to attain God's grace, and emphasised by many theologians of the age. For salvific efficacy, preachers impressed with vehemence the dustiness of mankind onto the minds of their auditory, in the hopes of inducing humility. As we have seen, particularly in the penitential sermon of Thomas Adams, this condition of mind led to the formation of a kind of dusty subjectivity: inspired by Job's repentance in dust and ashes (Job.42.6), Adams calls for his auditory to 'turne to God in *dust*, before hee turne us into *dust*.'[580] Dust becomes a condition for mankind to be *in,* a state to assume – dust incarnate. In a different literary form, that of the lyric poem, the dustiness of mankind is reimagined by Herbert. Personified through prosopopoeia, that is, the persona constructed

[578] Adele Davidson, '"A More Singular Mirror": Herbert, Acrostics, and the Biblical Psalms', *George Herbert Journal*, vol. 38, (2014), pp. 15-30, p.21.
[579] Babington, *[…] Notes upon Everie Chapter of Genesis*, p.9.
[580] Adams, *Sermons*, p.24.

through the poetic voice of the lyric, *The Temple* presents to its reader a richer, more resonant model of dusty humility.[581] Thomas Adams directs his auditory to 'turne to God in dust', but for the speaker of *The Temple*, no instruction is necessary – the doctrine is already internalised: 'I am . . . | thy dust that calls' (4-5) asserts the voice of 'Complaining', re-enacting Abraham's address to God in Gen 18:27: 'Behold now, I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord, which am but dust and ashes.' Yet the speaker is not the only persona to convey mankind's dusty nature in *The Temple*. As Gavin Alexander has noted, a single literary work may contain 'various shades of literary personation' and multiple 'simulated presences': 'prosopopoeia engages with, and is implicated in, many different degrees and forms of personation' and in his poetry Herbert can be seen to create various forms of dusty personation.[582] As the following discussion will consider, both the general population and the speaker himself are often figured forth by Herbert as quintessentially dusty, as Herbert reimagines dusty biblical tropes to achieve his theological point.

In 'Frailtie', a poem concerned with the weakness of human nature, the speaker maintains that those endowed with honourable titles or dressed in praise instead deserve the proper designation of dust:

> Lord, in my silence how do I despise
> What upon trust
> Is styled *honour, riches*, or *fair eyes;*
> But is *fair dust*!
> I surname them *guilded clay*,
> *Deare earth, fine grasse* or *hay;*
> In all, I think my foot doth ever tread
> Upon their head.
> (1-8)

The oxymoronic epithet 'fair dust' neatly encapsulates an important moral message: any adornment to humankind is meaningless, as no embellishment can work to transfigure what is intrinsically base. Fair or no, dust remains dust. This dustiness of self-pride corresponds with the moral of

[581] Gavin Alexander cautions against assuming the lyric "I" is the authentic voice of the writer. Furthermore, 'even if it is self-representation, that is still a fictive activity'. See 'Prosopopoeia: The Speaking Figure' in *Renaissance Figures of Speech*, pp. 96 – 112. p.111.
[582] Alexander, 'Prosopopoeia: The Speaking Figure', p.108.

Eccles.12.78: 'And dust return to the earth as it was, and the spirit return to God that gave it. Vanity of vanities, saith the Preacher, all is vanity'. In 'Frailtie', Herbert can be seen to play on this meaning of dust: the effect is elegant, the rendering of Eccles. 12.78 more poetic than an explicit citation. The ensuing 'surnames' drive home the lowly, earthly quality of the descendants of Adam, all of which too have biblical resonances.[583] Yet dust is the foremost title bestowed on humanity, its salience a reflection of the poem's title and central theme: 'frailtie' has the sense of crumbling at its etymological root, as fragility, a susceptibility to both material and immaterial weakness, is, etymologically speaking, a liability to fragment, taken from the Latin *frango,* meaning to shatter or break into pieces.[584] Thus, the human condition of moral weakness has the sense of the dustiness in its very semantic make-up. It is unsurprising then, when the subject of his poem is that of fragmentation, of crumbling, that Herbert finds the figure of dust so apposite to his poetic intent.

As Herbert moves into the second stanza, dust does not remain a static, abstract designation of the general population, for when the speaker's own fragility materialises, dust becomes more animated:

> But when I view abroad both Regiments;
> The worlds, and thine:
> Thine clad with simplenesse, and sad events;
> The other fine,
> Full of glorie and gay weeds,
> Brave language, braver deeds:
> That which was dust before, doth quickly rise,
> And prick mine eyes.
> (9-16)

Although the opening stanza was assertive in condemning the vanity of material concerns, the speaker reveals that he too is culpable of such human weakness, humble indignation replaced with

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[583] See especially Eccles.12.78: 'And dust return to the earth as it was, and the spirit return to God that gave it. Vanity of vanities, saith the Preacher, all is vanity'; Psalm 146. 3-4: 'Put not your trust in Princes, nor in the son of man, for there is no help in him. His breath departeth, and he returneth to his earth'; Isaisah 40.6: 'All flesh is grass' & [perhaps] Proverbs 27. 24-5: 'For riches remain not always, nor the crown from generation to generation. The hay discovereth itself, and the grass appeareth, and the herbs of the mountains are gathered.'

[584] *OED* n., 1.

proud and mistaken adoration. In the conceit of this second stanza, Herbert plays not only on the sense of dust as a spiritual condition, but as a material entity, the rising of royal authority and the display of pomp in the speaker's esteem imaged through its physical qualities. Volitant and revolutionary by nature, dust rising to irritate the sensitive sentinels of the internal self is a familiar occurrence of the physical world and provided a tangible image from which early modern writers could draw. As discussed in Chapter Seven, in a sermon preached at Whitehall in 1621, John Donne emphasises to his auditory the indiscriminancy of the posthumous condition: he notes how 'the dust', which 'will trouble thine eyes, if the winde blow it thither', is incorrigibly anonymous, sight unable to discern whether it is a 'wretch' or a 'prince' despite its intrusive visibility.[585] And as Donne continues, he further impresses the dreadfulness of the agitative nature of dust, for 'when a whirle winde hath blowne the dust of the Church-yard into the Church, and the man sweeps out the dust of the Church into the Church-yard, who will undertake to sift those dusts again, and to pronounce, This is the Patrician, this is the noble flower, and this the yeomanly, this the plebeian bran?'[586] In 'Frailtie', Herbert too plays on these physical, volitant characteristics of dust, yet, unlike Donne's sermon, the anonymity of dust is not the concern. Rather, Herbert is interested in dust's potential lustful energy.

In the first version of this poem, rising dust is 'troubling' to the eyes, yet in the revisions, this verb is changed to 'prick'.[587] Through this alteration, dust becomes not only irritating, but also arousing. Michael Schoenfeldt proposes that:

> the juxtaposition of prick and rise betrays Herbert's arousal by the resplendent world whose attractions he would piously dismiss. St Augustine suggests that postlapsarian corruption is signalled by the inability of reason and will to control the penis; Herbert's mortal "frailty" is likewise indicated by an erection beyond his volition.[588]

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[585] Vol. 4, p.53.
[586] Vol. 4, p.53.
[587] For a study of Herbert's revisions see, Janis Lull, *The Poem in Time: Reading George Herbert's Revisions of the Church* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1990), p.37-8.
[588] Michael C Schoenfeldt, "That Ancient Heat": Sexuality and Spirituality in The Temple' in *Soliciting Interpretation: Literary Theory and Seventeenth-Century English Poetry*, Elizabeth D. Harvey, Katharine Eisaman Maus, eds., (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1990), pp.273-306, pp.279.

Such sexual overtones in the verse have also been suggested by Janis Lull, and if we are to take this reading then Herbert's dust takes on the flirtatious quality somewhat akin to Adams' frisky, feminine dust, which 'so often borrowes wings of the winde, to mount aloft into the ayre, and in the streets and high wayes, dasheth herselfe into our eyes'.[589] In both Adam's and Herbert's writing, the encounter between man and volitant dust is revealing, exposed not only man's base nature but also, in its very rising, the lascivious characteristics of dust itself are also uncovered, an unexpected quality for such a mundane particle.

Saliently , along with 'trust' – which shall be discussed below – 'lust' is a popular rhyming partner of dust in *The Temple*.[590] Although not used in 'Frailtie', the rhyme is used in another poem containing a similar moral message, 'Charms and Knots': 'When th' hair is sweet through pride or lust | The powder doth forget the dust' (13-14). The aphorism, more overtly didactic than the conceit of 'Frailtie', teaches that prizing worldly vanities and carnal desires is an impious ignorance that neglects the fundamental baseness of mankind. Herbert sets the material against the abstract, playing on the particulate nature of contemporary beauty products, pitting literal 'powder' against the metaphysical sense of mankind as dust. In this poem, the rhyme enshrines the correspondence between dust and lusts of the flesh, a correspondence that is more subtly suggested by the 'prick[ing]' of the eye depicted in 'Frailtie'. The syllogism might read: dust is human nature, human nature is lustful, and so dust is lustful. Whether or not Herbert meant in 'Frailtie' for the rising dust to signify an erection, as Schoenfeldt believes, dust is nevertheless shown to be an arousing, wanton particle.

This lustful potential of dust in the poems is in contrast to Donne's sermons, in which dust is shown to be incorrigibly senseless. Indeed, the dust of Donne's sermons and the dust of Herbert's poems have very different figurative roles. For Donne, dust has very determined characteristics – it is sordid and inanimate, and a metonym for the dead – while, for Herbert, dust

[589] Lull, p.38; Adams, *Five Sermons,* p.23.
[590] See, for example, 'Star', 'Death' and 'Church Militant'.

is multivalent: in *The Temple*, through each individual use of the image, particular facets of the figurative potential of dust are revealed, making dust a variable trope with shifting and often ambiguous semantics. So, whilst dust is shown to have a wanton edge in 'The Frailty' and 'Charms and Knots', the association between dust and errant adoration is reconfigured to a different creative purpose in the contiguous sonnets 'Love (I)' and 'Love (II)'. In 'Love (I)', dust is again used as a metonym for mankind, but this time, more specifically, for the beloved:

> 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!
> (1-4)

The speaker's criticism is that the poets of the age have misdirected their adoration, throwing their loving verses on their beloved, rather than God. Dust metonymically depicts the beloved, and in this conceit, Herbert skilfully challenges the reader's expectations of dusty tropes. In the above passage, dust is being covered, an inversion of the conventional image of dust doing the covering: in the Burial Service a handful of fragmented earth is cast over the coffin, as the priest recites 'earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust'.[591] Another striking example of this is in Shakespeare's *Richard II*, when York recounts how 'rude misgovern'd hands from windows' tops | Threw dust and rubbish on King Richard's head (V.ii.5-6),' a moment in the play that, in Geoffrey Bennington's words, allows for a 'complex representation of the relationship between sovereign and subject . . . sovereignty here unduly subjecting itself to its supposed subjects.'[592] In Herbert's Love (I), however, something else is at play, as words coat dust. The inversion draws attention to how dust is figuratively functioning in this passage: here, it is not the besmircher of revered materials, but the very stuff of humankind. What is more, in this inversion of the image, the misdirected words of adoration themselves become almost dust-like: they are 'parcel'd out', dispersed like dust, the

[591] Cummings, ed., *The Book of Common Prayer*, p.172.
[592] Bennington, *Dust*, p.38-9.

word fragments coating the dusty beloveds. In this, Herbert endows words with a materiality, speaking to a kind of poetics of dust that exists outside of the word itself, and extends to all of language, as words become dust-like, capable of being crumbled and dispersed. As we shall see, this pulverisation of language appears repeatedly across *The Temple*, dustiness being a theme that proves to shape various aspects of Herbert's writing. The conceit of 'Love (I)' mirrors acts of the physical world, as when dust-like words cover the dusty beloveds Herbert subtly echoes the sentiment of the ceremonial act of the Burial Service, in which dust is thrown on dust, reconfiguring the religious performance into poetic verse.

In Love (II), dust continues to stand as a metonym for earth's inhabitants, yet, in this poem, Herbert instils it with more figurative energy, incorporating dust's material qualities into his conceit. When, the speaker relates, the heart and mind is turned to God, then:

> Our eies shall see thee, which before saw dust;
> Dust blown by wit, till that they both were blinde:
> Thou shalt recover all thy goods in kinde,
> Who wert disseized by usurping lust.
> (9-12)

The physical and metaphysical blend, as Herbert again plays on the volitant quality of actual dust, drawing on the now familiar proverb, *pulverem oculis offundere*.[593] Herbert's point is that the beloved, figured in dust, obscures the faculties of the perception, yet the conceit is complex. Playing on the alliteration between 'wit' and 'wind', Herbert has the material image of 'dust' agitated by the force of abstract 'wit'. In 'Love (I)', 'wit' is deemed to be the vanity of the human mind that causes the neglect of God: 'wit fancies beautie, beautie raiseth wit: | The world is theirs; the two play out the game, | Thou standing by' (9-11).[594] Wit rises and so dust rises – a transgressive elevation that results in the lack of God's grace, the 'goods'. It is a poetically dexterous image of the humility paradox, the idea that, in Augustine's words, *elatio sit deorsum*.[595] Markedly, the rhyming partner for

[593] For its use by Henry More, Thomas Adams and John Donne, see Chapters Three, Five and Seven respectively.
[594] Wit, in *The Temple*, is not always considered as a vanity. See especially the speaker's aspiration for 'constant wit' (25) in 'Dulnesse', p.411.
[595] *De Civitate Dei, p.421.*

'dust' in this poem is again 'lust', that is, 'usurping lust'. Thus, like the rising dust in *Frailtie*, elevated dust is here associated with human concupiscence. However, the moral message of 'Love (II)', does not dwell in the condemnation of mankind's frailty, the speaker offering a preferable mode of elevating the wit: 'all knees shall bow to thee; all wits shall rise, | And praise him who did make and mend our eyes' (13-14). Proper wit is attained not through the dust rising, but through dust, that is, mankind, lowering, as knees bow downwards in humble acknowledgement of God. Across both 'Love (I)' and 'Love (II)', Herbert artfully plays on the paradoxical notion of humility, negotiating both the physical and metaphysical senses of dust, whilst simultaneously playing on the behaviour of dust in the natural world**.**

Yet whilst this figurative use of dust is remarkable, Herbert's most innovative treatment of dust in *The Temple* is shown through his use of prosopopoeia, that is, through the speaker's own performance of selfhood. As we have seen above, the voice of the speaker creates personations of the general human race using the figure of dust. But the speaker himself, the most salient persona of *The Temple*, also enacts a form of dusty subjectivity, one that reveals another shade of the dusty human condition and evokes the humble declaration of Abraham in Gen 18.27: 'I am but dust and ashes'. Thus, while, as we have seen, dustiness could signify a transgressive and vain turn inwards towards the self, in the speaker's repeated expressions of his pulverized condition, Herbert shows, conversely, how dustiness can express a turn towards God.

ii The Dusty Subject

The speaker's identification with dust occurs in numerous poems throughout *The Temple*. One such poem is 'Denial', which presents the speaker in a state of distress and disorder at the apparent refusal of God to acknowledge his devotional address. In this poem, the image of dust plays into the entire poem's performance of a fragmented subject, which, as Summers has observed, is reflected even in its form: the stanzas 'picture the disorder which results when the individual feels

that God denies his requests.'[596] The form of the stanzas breaks up the verse, so that fragments of words are left suspended in the empty space of a four-syllable line. In the dust-filled fourth stanza, for example, the crying voice is left syntactically stranded:

> O that thou shouldst give dust a tongue
> To crie to thee,
> And then not heare it crying!
> (16-8)

Multiple systems of crumbling occur in this passage, the fragmented form working with the imagery of fragmentation. In this imagery, even dust itself, already pulverised, becomes broken up, as it is given a body part, a tongue. Helen Vendler has noted this bifold nature of disintegration in the poem, observing how, throughout, 'not only is Herbert broken into fragments, but his fragments themselves can be fragmented,' as 'thoughts' become brittle (6), and the heart 'broken' (3).[597] Yet whilst the figure of dust sits alongside these other fractions of the self in the poem, it is notable that with it Herbert performs some distinctly striking wordplay, subtly manufacturing a reinterpretation of the Genesis narrative. Strictly speaking, dust is not given a tongue on the sixth day. As we have seen, the miracle of the creation of Adam was that inanimate, base matter was transmuted into living flesh and blood: to remember Sir Walter Raleigh's clarification, it is 'not that God made an Image or Statue of Clay, but out of Clay, Earth or dust God formed and made flesh, bloud, and bone, with all parts of man.'[598] Thus, dust is *made into* a fleshy tongue, amongst other components of the body. However, Herbert's phrasing – the use of the verb 'give' – suggests that dust was endowed with a tongue, not transformed but adorned. Herbert thus blurs the distinction between two biblical narratives, that of Genesis 2.7, in which dust is mankind's literal ingredient, and Genesis 18.27, where dust is the articulation of humility. As Vendler has noted, the 'extraordinary derangements' in the poem produces 'a sense of the past and present so intermixed that they can scarcely be disentangled' and, indeed, Herbert's stylistic use of dust is temporally

[596] Joseph H. Summers, *George Herbert: His Religion and Art* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1954), p.136.
[597] Helen Vendler, *The Poetry of George Herbert* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1975), p.260.
[598] Raleigh, *History of the World*, p. 24.

hazy, compressing the sixth day of creation with the time of Abraham.[599] This condensation of scriptural moments into a single figure is owing to Herbert's hermeneutics of context and contexture: as discussed above, for Herbert the entire Bible was interrelated. As the speaker of the H. Scripture II exclaims:

> OH that I knew how all thy lights combine,
> And the configurations of their glorie!
> Seeing not onely how each verse doth shine,
> But all the constellations of the storie.
> (1-4)

The verses of the Bible are to be understood in their full context, that is, not as separate stars but as part of their constellation. Accordingly, when in 'Denial' Herbert depicts a crying, dusty tongue, it is not meant as a reference to a specific scriptural verse, but rather it is a biblical allusion that incorporates multiple meanings of dust that can be found in many places of scripture.

The speaker's sense of fragmentation is revisited all through *The Temple*, and in such poems concerned with disintegrated subjectivity, the figure of dust makes regular appearances.[600] In 'Complaining', the speaker is fractioned by his anguish, asking lamentably 'have I no parts but those of grief?' In this distracted state, the self is located in base, earthly matter:

> Do not beguile my heart,
> Because thou art
> My power and wisdome. Put me not to shame,
> Because I am
> Thy clay that weeps, thy dust that calls.
> (1-5)

The broken syntax between the assertion 'I am' and the qualifying statement 'Thy clay that weeps, thy dust that calls' heightens the speaker's fragmented sense of self, as syntactically the self becomes broken apart from its qualifying affirmation. Nevertheless, despite its broken form, it is an explicit assertion of subjectivity, and one in which dust is considered an integral part of the self.

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[599] Vendler, p.260.
[600] A notable poem in which dust is absent is 'Affliction (IV)', in which the speaker is 'broken in pieces all asunder'(1).

'Clay', a mixture of earth and water, is, appropriately, the weeping self. Yet 'Dust' is the speaking subject. Correspondingly, in 'Denial', the organ of speech – the crying tongue – is explicitly dusty, dust similarly becoming a synecdoche for the speaking voice. This figurative image ultimately depicts a personation of dusty humility, performing through poetic voice Abraham's declaration: 'Behold now, I have begun to speak unto my Lord, and I am but dust and ashes.' The patriarch's humble speech offers a paradigm for attempting a dialogue with God, in which discourse is achieved through becoming a pulverised interlocutor. Yet Gen. 18.27 is not the only verse with which the image resonates, as elsewhere in the Bible, the act of speech and the matter of dust are shown to be concomitant. In the book of Isaiah, after the people of Jerusalem have been chastised, the speaker prophecies that they shall 'be humbled, and shalt speak out of the ground, and thy speech shall be as out of the dust: thy voice also shall be out of the ground like him that hath a spirit of divination, and thy talking shall whisper out of the dust' (Isai.29:3-5). Much like Abraham's declaration, the humble voice is one that assumes a state of dustiness, and it is a stratagem that the speaker of *The Temple* frequently employs.

In 'Longing', for example, a poem in which, like 'Deniall', the fragmentation shapes the very form of the poem, the speaker assumes a dusty person when addressing God:

> Behold, thy dust doth stirre,
> It moves, it creeps, it aims at thee:
> Wilt thou deferre
> To succour me,
> Thy pile of dust, wherein each crumme
> Sayes, Come?
> (37-48)

The pulverization of the speaker's voice is encapsulated through the figure of consonance: the 'crumme' utters 'come', the latter a fragment of former, lacking the letters 'r' and 'm', but leaving a vestige of the original word through the remaining consonants. Yet the dust not only speaks, but moves, Herbert again playing on the physical qualities of the particulate matter with its unsettled nature which, owing to its lightness, is easily picked up by gusts of air. However, this is not the

passive volitant dust blown helplessly by the wind, an event recounted, with horror, in the sermons of John Donne, nor is it the general dust of humankind blown by 'wit', such as in Love (II). Here, dust is personified, incarnated, and moves of its own volition. It is a striking embodiment of dusty humility and one that marks dustiness as a form of personation in *The Temple*.

In 'Sighs and Grones', in which the speaker pleads to God for reprieve and relief, his address to God is again performed in a dusty state:

> O do not blinde me!
> I have deserv'd that an Egyptian night
> Should thicken all my powers; because my lust
> Hath still sow'd fig-leaves to exclude thy light:
> But I am frailtie, and already dust;
> O do not grinde me!
> (13-18)

The idea of crumbling again becomes central to the poem's persona, as, like 'Frailtie', human weakness is once more figured in dust. And, once more, this dusty frailty corresponds, through rhyme, with 'lust'. Yet, unlike the poem 'Frailtie', which pertains to the general dustiness of mankind, in 'Sighs and Grones', Herbert depicts a more personal performance of dusty subjectivity, as the speaker expressly identifies himself with the base substance: 'I am . . already dust'. The poem also stands apart for its acute depiction of the inevitable torment of living in a state of dust. The stanza's concluding line draws on dust's pulverized nature, although the supplication to not be ground into powder is not set amongst other images of fragmentation, like 'Deniall'. Instead, it is couched in images of corporeal punishment: the corresponding lines in the surrounding stanzas beg for God to not 'bruise' (7), 'scourge' (12) or 'kill' (24) the speaker. In this context, the agony of being 'already dust' becomes markedly clear. The speaker's repeated recognition of his dusty nature throughout *The Temple* demonstrates that, for Herbert, the acknowledgment and identification with dust was integral to communicating with God. However, 'Sighs and Groans' stresses the anguish of assuming such a humble position. While, as we shall see, Herbert might appear to be more at ease with lying in the dust of death than the likes of John

Donne, the dusty condition of mankind whilst alive was not such a comfortable idea for the poet. Turning to God in dust is not an effortless rotation, but rather a tortuous turn much more akin to the breaking wheel of early modern punishment.

In 'The Temper', the speaker again performs the agony of dustiness, exclaiming: 'Wilt thou meet arms with man, that thou dost stretch | A crumme of dust from heav'n to hell| Will great God measure with a wretch?' (13-14)? Here, Herbert plays on a different facet of dust's materiality – its size. Dust, as a small speck, makes the racking from heaven to hell even more tortuousness, pitting two extremes against each other – a minute fragment stretched across an immense space. The image is indubitably inspired by Isaiah 40.12, concerning God's power to estimate the fathomable elements of his universe: 'Who hath measured the waters in his fist? and counted heaven with the span, and comprehended the dust of the earth in a measure?' In this verse, dust is, quite literally, minute specks of dirt. Yet in 'The Temper' Herbert applies the context of the entire scripture, blending the idea of dust's measure with another, by now familiar, scriptural sense of dust – that of dust as the articulation of the base and humble human condition. Significantly, whilst the speaker's identification with dust across *The Temple* has its foundations in in Gen.18.27, the dust-filled Book of Job adds a further dimension to Abraham's assertion which informs Herbert's understanding. Job's complaint of his affliction to a seemingly inattentive God provides a potential model of the dusty subject, as the figure laments that God 'hath cast me into the mire, and I am become like ashes and dust. When I cry unto thee, thou dost not hear me, neither regardest me, when I stand up' (Job.19-20). Job's condition is markedly expressed through simile, he is *like* ashes and dust, the verse thus lacking the homogeneity between dust and man uttered through Abraham's assertive 'I am'. Nevertheless, it is a model of a dust-like subject in an abjected state from which Herbert's poetry repeatedly draws: as has been discussed, neglected or afflicted dust crying out to God is the condition of the speaker in numerous poems.[601] In 'The Temper',

[601] See 'Denial', 'Complaining', 'Longing', 'Sighs and Groans', 'The Temper'.

the influence of Job shifts the expected sense of Isaiah 40.12, so that rather than God's handling of dust being praiseworthy, it becomes something to bewail: omnipotent measuring turns to torturous stretching when the matter is no longer pulverised dirt but instead a sensitive subject.

Job's state of affliction, whilst the focus of the book, is nevertheless temporary. In the end, God answers, and Job learns to accept his lot: to know God's ways is not to understand them so one may justify oneself, but to remain in uncertainty, trusting in God's consummate wisdom. In 'Sighs and Grones', the speaker's unalleviated anguish corresponds with the middle chapters of Job, in which God's response has not yet been given: the poem's conclusion leaves uncertainty as to whether the speaker's torment will be assuaged, as God is 'both Judge and Saviour, feast and rod, |Cordiall and Corrosive' (27-8).[602] But in 'The Temper', the final stanza parallels the conclusion to the Book of Job, the speaker's sense of affliction also allayed :

> Whether I flie with angels, fall with dust,
> Thy hands made both, and I am there:
> Thy power and love, my love and trust
> Make one place ev'ry where.
>
> (25-28)

Herbert's manipulation of space in the final line, in which vastness becomes localised, as ev'ry where' becomes 'one place', mitigates the horror of the falling with dust, God's love and trust making the heaven and the dusty depths equal. Markedly, 'to fall with dust' is a deceptively complex phrase that suggests two potential images: dust may be, like the angels, an external form, with which the 'I' of the poem travels concomitantly, and thus the image is that of material dust. Yet, the assertion in the earlier stanza – that 'I am . . . thy dust' – locates dust within the subject of the poem, and thus to fall with dust also has the sense of falling in a condition of dust, the granular substance held within. This dual sense of dust as something both exterior and integral to the human race, working simultaneously in a single image, is typical of Herbert's wordplay, in which dust is incorrigibly multivalent. Yet, most significantly, in the final stanza of 'The Temper' reprieve is

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[602] As Vendler notes, the final stanza 'remains in doubt about which of his vials – justice or mercy – God will use'. See *The Poetry of George Herbert*, p.242.

given, as 'dust' is rhymed with 'trust', a word that picks the reader up from the floor of dusty despair. Much like the auditory of Donne's sermons, the speaker is not left to languish in dust in 'The Temper' but rather comforted through a firm belief in God's power and love.

The semantically charged quality of 'dust' is perhaps best summarised by the final lyric of *The Church,* Love (III). The speaker of the poem opens with:

> Love bade me welcome: yet my soul drew back,
> Guiltie of dust and sinne.
> (1-2)

The simple yet enigmatic quality of this opening invites the reader to unravel the meaning of the speaker's admission that he is 'guiltie of dust'. Strier notes the 'oddness' of the phrase, and it is my contention that the peculiarity is Herbert's invitation to interpretation.[603] The phrase jolts because a physical image – 'dust' – is placed against a discernibly spiritual and plain idea – 'sinne'. In pairing the two, 'dust' suddenly must work as an equivalent to transgressions against God. Reflecting back on dust's presence in *The Temple*, it is certain that to be guilty of dust is to be culpable of frailty and concupiscence. Yet Herbert's choice to not use these terms, but rather opt for the monosyllabic yet complex image of 'dust', speaks to the poet's conviction in its potency to encapsulate the human condition. It is tantamount to Shakespeare's Hamlet's 'quintessence of dust', and the metonymy more impressive in its understated deliverance.

What is more, the admission again shows the speaker giving a performance of dusty humility: as with many other poems of *The Temple*, the speaker embodies dust in order to communicate with God. Yet the opening of Love (III) stands apart from the rest in the composure of the utterance, which, in its simplicity, lacks the tortured tones found in the vocative dust of other poems. Significantly, the speaker's humble admission of dust and sin enables him to enter the presence of God. The structure of the poem enacts the humility paradox, starting in the depths with an acknowledgement of the speaker's dusty nature, but ending in the exaltation of sitting

[603] Strier, p.6.

before God in the reception of his love. The speaker of 'Love (III)' turns to God in dust, as he has repeatedly done throughout *The Temple*, and this time, is answered.

iii The Dustiness of Death

Hitherto, the focus has been on incarnated dust in *The Temple*, how the figure of dust signifies a variety of personas in the poems – the general human race, the beloved and, most significantly, the speaker – and how Herbert draws on dust's physical qualities – its volitant nature, minute size and fragmented state – to construct his imagery. Yet Herbert, as was commonplace, also used dust as a metonym for the posthumous body in his poetry.[604] Notably, when it signifies the dead, there is a discernible shift in how Herbert handles the figure of dust, which marks it not only from the personified dust of *The Temple*, but from other contemporary uses of the trope. The posthumous body's decay into dust is made explicit in the poem 'Death': after some time in the grave – 'six | Or ten yeares' (5 -6), the speaker estimates – 'flesh [is] turn'd to dust, and bones to sticks' (8). This dust of death is markedly distinct from the communicative and animated dust of other poems in *The Temple*: it is 'dry dust, which sheds no tears, but may extort' (12). The same image re-appears in 'Ephes.4.30' when, moved to weep by God's aggrievement at his transgressions, the speaker exorts himself to 'Weep . . . | And weeping live | For death is drie as dust' (8-10). In death, dust is a substance that is drained of emotive capacity, distinctly 'dry'. The sentiment is Biblical, reflecting David's line of reasoning in the Psalms, that, in the condition of dusty death, the self becomes inexpressive, unable to praise God: 'What profit is there in my blood, when I go down to the pit! shall the dust give thanks unto thee? or shall it declare thy truth?' (Psalm.30.9). In 'Doomsday', the insensate nature of dusty death is again made apparent, the speaker relating that only God's music will be able stir humanity's pulverized remains on the Day of Judgement: 'Dust, alas, no music feels, | But thy trumpet' (9-10). Thus, while it so often signifies the humble and

[604] Donne played far less on the sematic textures of dust in his sermons, the figure mostly functioning as a metonym for death. When Donne preaches on the subject of mankind's material origins and humility it induces, he often favours the image of 'red earth'. See, *The Oxford Edition of the Sermons of John Donne*, vol.3, p.169-72.

emotionally charged voice of the speaker in *The Temple*, there is also a trend across the text for dust to take on the entirely opposite traits, which, inspired by scripture, show dust to be insensate and thus inexpressive matter.

Concomitant to the shift in the behaviour of dust is the shift in its meaning, which the concluding stanza of 'Death' reflects:

> Therefore we can go die as sleep, and trust
> Half that we have
> Unto an honest faithfull grave;
> Making our pillows either down, or dust.
> (21-4)

The speaker displays utter faith that at Dooms-day, 'souls shall wear their new aray' (19) and that 'bones' will not be dressed in dust, but rather 'with beautie shall be clad' (20). Thus, the potential fear of 'dust' is ameliorated by 'trust', a belief secured by the association generated by rhyme. This is a marked difference from the rhyming pair Herbert uses in other poems concerning the dusty human race: as we have seen, with incarnate dust, the association drawn is that of human concupiscence, of 'lust'. Thus, it transpires that the insensate nature of posthumous dust removes the potential for any acts of concupiscence to be acted out, making it a very different matter for Herbert than living dust, which is disposed to frailty. This insipidness is made explicit in the concluding lines of 'Church-Monuments', in which, as prerequisite for preparing to die well, the speaker instructs the reader to observe the insensate dust of death: 'Mark here below | How tame these ashes are, how free from lust'. Ashes – here used simply as a synonym for dust – are distinctly cleansed from lusty defects, incapable of performing wilful deeds.[605] In the context of death, therefore, tamed and untethered from lust, dust can take on new meaning and be handled with a sense of ease.

In this fretless treatment of the posthumous body's disintegration into senseless dust, there is a distinctive optimism that sets Herbert's use of the trope apart from the work of other

[605] The inclusion of the synonym 'ashes' completes the partial reference earlier in the poems to the maxim of the Burial service, where the speaker figurately expresses meditating on mortality as: 'Comparing dust with dust, and earth with earth (11).'

contemporary writers, particularly that of another churchman who ruminated on the dust of death: to remember his explosion into privatives during his 1627 Easter Day sermon, for John Donne in death the body turns to 'insipid tastlesse savourlesse, . . . sordid, senslesse, namelesse dust'.[606] Critics have noted the disparity between the calmness of Herbert's mediations on death and the horror exhibited in Donne's, with Robert Shaw giving the reason that Herbert had more surety in the resurrection than Donne.[607] It is beyond the scope of this project to assay the theological certainties of both writers; however, it is unlikely that Donne did not have a firm trust in the prospect of the resurrection. What his writings do demonstrate is a deep consideration of the unfathomability and miraculousness of the event, which does not equate to disbelief.[608] The disparity may be better understood when viewed through both Donne and Herbert's handling of the figure of dust, and the attention they give to the word's various semantic textures. For the preacher Donne, it was dust's function as a metonym for the posthumous body that captivated his imagination, and it was an image that he used as part of his pulpit rhetoric to induce humility in his auditory. Conversely, for the speaker of Herbert's *The Temple*, it is the horror of dusty existence that receives poetic attention: as we have seen, embodying dust in life was a torturous experience, in which the speaker expressed himself to be racked, pulverized, and neglected. It was the capacity for dust to feel, rather than the insensibility of dust, that was problematic for the speaker of *The Temple*. And it is through the tortured dusty persona that Herbert presents to his reader an example of dusty humility, the edifying point of Herbert's writing achieved not through hyperbolic visions of pulverized cadavers, such as in Donne's sermons, but through expressive dissolution, the 'dust that calls'. Thus, both writers can be said to use the trope of dust to encourage the virtue of humility in their audience, yet it is created through playing on different facets of dustiness. Accordingly,

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606 Donne, *Sermons*, Vol. 7, p.272.

607 See Louis L. Martz, *The Poetry of Meditation: A Study in English Religious Literature of the Seventeenth Century* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1954), p.143-4; Robert B. Shaw, *The Call of God: The Theme of Vocation in the Poetry of Donne and Herbert* (Cambridge, MA: Cowley, 1981), pp.26-30; Bart Westerweel, *Patterns and Patterning: A Study of Four Poems by George Herbert* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1984), pp.190-1. For the ease with which Herbert broaches death, see also Arnold Stein, *George Herbert's Lyrics* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1968), pp.37-43;

608 For Donne's preoccupation with the resurrected body, see Targoff*, Body and Soul*, pp.16- 21& pp. 169-174.

Herbert's calmness towards death is not because he was more certain of the resurrection, but rather that he did not need to use horrific visions of the posthumous, pulverized condition to prompt his reader to a humble acknowledgment of their baseness – that was for speech of dust incarnate to elicit.

The capacity for dust to signify such disparate entities – a vocative, tortured subject and an inert, speechless heap – opens up possibilities for particular forms of dusty wordplay, namely antanaclasis and syllepsis.[609] In 'Church Monuments', this figurative potential comes to fruition, in a manner that reinvents conventional dusty discourse. It is a lyric with pulverization at its core, crumbling into dust reflected in its syntax: as Joseph Summers remarks, the very movement and sound of its sentences 'suggest[. . .] dissolution', as again Hebert's poetics of dust is shown to encompass more than just the word itself.[610] Moreover, it is a poem in which different forms of dustiness become contingent, where the dusty speaker of *The Temple* performs a meditative interchange with the inert dust of death. And it is through this meeting of dust that Herbert plays on dust's capacity to signify both an insensate particle and a cognizant character.

Before considering the poem and its dusty wordplay in further detail, it is necessary to consider a literary trend that Herbert both draws from and innovates in 'Church Monuments' – that of the popular genre of *ars moriendi* literature. These practical manuals advised their reader on how to die well and prepare for death in life, and an established tenet of the latter was that one's own mortality must be reflected upon. In Helen Vendler's estimate, 'there is not a notion in ['Church Monuments'] that is not a commonplace of the literature of *memento mori*; and nowhere in it is there any radical rethinking of a traditional view.'[611] However, such an assessment of the poem ignores the way in which Herbert re-invents certain dusty commonplaces of the literary

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[609] I follow Sophie Read's understanding of syllepsis, informed by Sister Mariam Joseph, which is defined as 'a type of pun where a single word or sound has two meanings.' See Read, p.82 and Sister Mariam Joseph, *Shakespeare's Use of the Arts of Language* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1947), p.166.

[610] Joseph Summers remarks how the subject of crumbling into dust is reflected in the syntax of the poem, the movement and sound of its sentences 'suggest[ing] dissolution'. Stanley Fish adds to this that the reader's perception of meaning in literature is also dissolved. See Summers, p. 131 and Stanley Fish, *Self-Consuming Artefacts* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974), pp.164-70.

[611] Vendler, p.196.

trend and the corollary nuance it adds to early modern expression of humility. Placed against the use of dusty tropes in the period's manuals on godly dying, Herbert's idiosyncratic treatment of dust in 'Church Monuments' is thrown into relief. Thus, the ensuing discussion will first survey the presentation of dusty tropes in certain examples of *ars moriendi* literature, before moving on to examine Herbert's lyric meditation on death against this backdrop.

iv The Dusty Art of Dying Well

Throughout the *ars moriendi* genre, there is recurrent emphasis on remembering humankind's dusty origins and ends as a means to prepare well for death. In William Perkins' popular *A Salve for a Sicke Man*, for example, it is noted that the 'meditation of death is of speciall use, and brings forth many fruits in the life of man . . . it serves to humble us under the hand of God. Example we have of Abraham, who said, Behold, I have begunne now to speake to my Lord, and I am but dust and ashes.'[612] In *Disce Mori,* the clergyman Christopher Sutton laments the absence of this practice, beseeching God to 'teach us to nomber our dayes' and asking 'where is that mindfullnesse of Abraham, so great a Patriarke, who confessed himselfe to bee but dust and ashes?'[613] As we have seen, Abraham's dusty mindfulness provided a model for living a humble and thus virtuous Christian life the period, yet as Perkins and Sutton demonstrate, it was also integral to the practice of dying well. Accordingly, George Strode in his *Anatomie of Mortalitie* – an early modern specimen of commonplacing whose contents are woven from a tissue of apposite citations – calls for a frequent minding of dust. The dusty fate of the flesh is a recurring *topos* in his chapter 'On the Meditation of Death,' and after the application of many dusty commonplaces, Strode summarises that 'with this key of meditation [on death] we should open the day, and shut in the night, and what befalleth others in the dust of their bodies, we must thinke will come to us.'[614]

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[612] Perkins, p.62.
[613] Sutton, p.73-4.
[614] Strode, pp.64 – 84, p.75.

Yet whilst *ars moriendi* can be seen to stress the importance of minding one's dustiness, the genre does little, in a literary sense, with the figure of dust. Take, for example, Thomas Becon's *The Sicke Mannes Salve*. Becon's text was seminal in presenting a reformed version of the Medieval Catholic prototype of *ars moriendi* literature, Ian Green observing its quasi-dramatic form to be a striking feature of the text: 'It is not a long moralizing essay or technical treatise, but a long dialogue between a number of characters'.[615] Thus, the text itself is of literary note, its major precept, that in order to die well a humble Christian life must be lived in preparation, rehearsed through the dialogue of its characters: the ailing Epaphroditus and the acquaintances who visit him on his death bed, Philomen, Eusebius, Theophilus, and Christopher. Throughout the dialogue, minding one's dustiness is shown to be of notable relevance to the discussion: as Philomen relates, man has cause to be humbled for 'his foundations are but dust' and because the body will 'returne unto vile dust'.[616] Furthermore, when assuring Epaphroditus of God's mercy, he explains that God is forgiving of mankind's frailty because 'he knoweth whereof we bee made, he remembreth that we are but duste.'[617] However, whilst articulated through fictional characters, these discussions of mankind's dusty condition are not intended to be individual flashes of wit, but rather are clear citations from scripture imbedded in the speech. Nancy Beaty notes how Becon's 'extreme scripturalism of style . . . testifies to the major role played by . . . literature in incorporating the diction and imagery of the Bible into the very substance of the English language.'[618] Becon's popular manual on the art of dying is thus an example of how the body's 'foundation . . . in the dust,' (Job.4.19), its 'return' to dust (Gen.319, Eccles. 12.7) and the idea that 'we are but dust' (Psa. 103.14) became part of the fabric of English discourse, establishing biblical tropes of dust as commonplace in discussions of death. It is not, however, remarkable for its creative handling of the figure of dust.

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[615] Green, p.360.
[616] Becon, p.49, p.325.
[617] Ibid., p.49, p.71, p.377, p.419.
[618] Beaty, p.112- 126.

Yet one *ars moriendi* manual is of note for the dash of personalisation it gives to the subject of minding mankind's dustiness: William Perneby's *A Direction to Death* (1599). The text presents its ideas in dialogic form, with the edifying conversation taking place between Regulus and Quirinus, the latter having had a near encounter with death that acts as a prompt for the ensuing discussion. Much like Becon's, it is a text peppered with biblical verses, including dusty commonplaces such as the body's 'return to dust' in Eccles. 12:7. What is unique to this text, however, is the representation of the progression of thought from the matter of dying well to the matter of dust:

> **Q.**
> *And what will this minding of death in the time of life, worke any good in him that liues?*
>
> **R[egulus].**
> It either will, or should.
>
> **Q.**
> *I speake not of the dutie, but of the vertue.*
>
> **R[egulus].**
>
> If so it doth, for first it humbles him that thinkes thereof, under the mightie hand of God remembering himselfe thereby to be but dust and ashes. Thus therefore said Abraham unto God: *Behold now I have begunne to speake unto my Lord, and I am but dust and ashes.* Thus did he humble himselfe unto God by remembering what he was. Thus no doubt will others doe and thinke as he did. *For what should dust and ashes be proude?* As it is one of the lowest things upon earth, so it is one of the lightest. It is troad under the foote of every thing, and blowne away with a small blast. What should it exalte it selfe against God? The clay is not to rise against the potter, neither is man to huffe against his maker: as the clay is in the handes of the potter; so is he in the hands of his creatour. As the clay therefore submits it selfe to the potter, so he must he himself to his maker. The clay, because it is clay; and because he is dust. *Dust of dust. . . and dust to dust.*'[619]

There is a sense in this conversation of what it meant for the early modern mind to comprehend its own dustiness, the nascent embers of a pulverised persona. For Regulus, the train of thought goes as follows: to live and die well, the mind must be moved to humility, which can be achieved by thinking upon one's own base dusty condition, which indeed, he proceeds to do. He meditates

[619] Ibid., p.55-6.

on the very materiality of dust, its light, airborne nature, and its intrinsic relation to humanity: man 'is' dust because he is 'of' the dust and will return 'to' dust. Whilst the characters of Becon's manual may cite scriptural passages that endorse mankind's dustiness, they do not meditate on the matter themselves. Perneby, however, creates a persona who actually enacts a minding of his dustiness. To return to Vendler's accusation, the moral thrust of 'Church Monuments' – that a preparedness for death involves an intimate acquaintance with dust – does indeed correspond with the period's *ars moriendi* literature. Yet, in the manuals this essential minding of dust is presented in a rudimentary fashion, mostly reiterating commonplaces. In 'Church Monuments', however, it is artfully wrought in a manner that far surpasses even Perneby's dramatic presentation of the practice and reformulates with nuance the conventional rhetoric of scriptural citations.

v Herbert's Dusty Mindfulness

'Church-Monuments' is, in essence, a poetic performance of minding one's dustiness, dramatizing the interchange between the dusty self and the dust of death, as the speaker of the poem takes 'acquaintance' with an imagined 'heap of dust' (3) residing beneath the church monuments, all with the purpose of humbling himself and thus fitting himself against his 'fall' (24), that is, death. In his depiction of this meeting, Herbert plays on the changeable semantics of dust. Even what constitutes the dusty self – a mostly fixed concept in the rest of *The Temple* – shifts throughout the poem. When the speaker humbly identifies with dust in other poems, dustiness encompasses his whole being: '*I* am . . . already dust; (17) he cries in 'Sighs and Grones' and in the 'Longing' the 'me' of the poem is defined as a 'pile of dust' (47). Herbert's use of dust in this manner, in which the speaker's *entire* fragile being is figured in dust, corresponds with contemporary theological debates regarding the fleshiness of concupiscence. Reformed theology argued against previous Catholic claims that the infirmities of the flesh were only in relation to the body's lasciviousness. In Romans, St Paul admits that flesh incarnate is affected by sin and that 'I know, that in me, that

is, in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing' (Rom. 7.5 & 18).[620] Luther – a figure with whom Herbert's theology aligned – had insisted in his 'Preface to the Romans' that when St Paul spoke of the 'flesh', he did not only mean bodily lusts:[621]

> Now as concerning flesh and spirit which often are used in this Epistle: you must not take flesh to be (after the common manner) the desires and lustes of the flesh onely, neither must you cal the spirit onely those things whiche are doone spiritually in the inwarde corners of the hart. For the Apostle Saint Paule . . . doo call flesh, whatsoever is borne of the fleshe, that is, the whole man bodye and soule, al mans reason wholy with all his cheefest and best powers: Because that all these things doo savour of nothing but fleshe, and seeke after nothing but fleshly things.[622]

Thus, flesh was 'the whole man bodye and soule', a doctrine espoused by Augustine that gained traction in the early modern period.[623] Calvin, in the *Institutes*, aligns with Luther in thinking that St Paul meant not that sin was located in the flesh but the 'whole nature' and maintained that wit, body, and spirit were subject to carnal desires: 'even from the understanding to the wil, from the soule to the fleshe, is corrupted and stuffed full wyth this concupiscence: or, to ende it shortelyer, that whole man is of hym selfe nothing els but concupiscence'.[624] Accordingly, when the speaker of *The Temple* speaks of his dusty fragility, when he pleads that he is 'already dust, do not grinde me', the dust refers to the 'whole man bodye and soule'.

However, in 'Church Monuments', dustiness appears to be a quality of the body alone. The poem opens with a fracture between the flesh and the soul:

> While that my soul repairs to her devotion,
> Here I intomb my flesh, that it betimes
> May take acquaintance of this heap of dust;

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[620] See Romans 7.5: 'For when we were in the flesh, the affections of sins, which were by the law, had force in our members, to bring forth fruit unto death.'

[621] For Herbert's alignment with Lutheran theology, and for a discussion of Luther's understanding of flesh, see Richard Strier*, Love Known: Theology and Experience in George Herbert's Poetry* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983), pp.29-31.

[622] Martin Luther, *A Methodicall Preface Prefixed before the Epistle of S. Paule to the Romanes*, trans., W.W, (London: for Thomas Woodcocke, 1594).

[623] Augustine describes 'flesh' as a synecdoche for mankind's essence: 'scripture does not confine the application of the term 'flesh' to the body of an earthly and mortal living being . . . [but] to denote man himself, that is, the essential nature of man, and example of the figure of speech known as 'part for whole'. See *The City of God*, XIV.II., p.548.

[624] Jean Calvin, *The Institution of Christian Religion*, p.4 - 5.

The two entities have separate purposes: the 'flesh' is 'intomb[ed]' in dusty meditations, whilst the soul is occupied in its address to God. In this, it is the flesh, not the soul, that becomes acquainted with dust. The chasm becomes more defined as the speaker continues, stating that:

> I gladly trust
> My bodie to this school, that it may learn
> To spell his elements, and finde his birth
> Written in dustie heraldrie and lines;
> Which dissolution sure doth best discern,
> Comparing dust with dust, and earth with earth.
> These laugh at Jeat and Marble put for signes,
> To sever the good fellowship of dust,
> And spoil the meeting.
> (6-14)

The speaker treats the body as an offspring, rather than a unified part of the self, sending it off to be educated as a parent would a schoolchild, and in doing so dust becomes the subject of the body, not the entire 'I' of the poem.

The conceit not only works to separate the body and soul, but also gives a new sense of what it means to be mindful of dust: it becomes a lesson in spelling and studying the quintessentially dusty condition of man. Casting the dust of death as a tutor makes the humble exercise of meditating on mortality more favourable: in Herbert's hands it becomes an education, not a degradation. What is more, the notion of studying dust plays on it being written matter and on the relation between letters, words, and physical particles. Words were recognised as having an elemental quality in the period: '*elementa*' was the Latin word that Lucretius used for both letters and atoms in *De rerum natura* and, as Gerard Passannante observes, a central analogy of the poem is one in which 'the letters of the alphabet are like the atoms of the universe. As individual letters are combined to form words, so atoms are combined in different arrangements to form things.'[625] This was picked up in the seventeenth-century by Francis Bacon, who in *Novum Organum*, writes that the subtleties of matter 'work exactly like the letters of the alphabet to speech and words:

[625] Passanante, p.3-4.

though useless in themselves, they are still the elements of all discourse.'[626] And, to remember Thomas Hobbes, isolated Biblical verses were considered to be like 'atomes of Scripture.'[627] As we have seen, throughout *The Temple* sentences and words are crumbled out into fragmented bits: this is not in line with the Lucretian analogy, which is focused on elements cohering, making up an intelligible body of matter. However, in the conceit of 'Church Monuments', dust does indeed come to at least resemble the atom-letters of *De rerum natura*, as dust, being the elemental make-up of mankind, 'spell[s]' the body. Yet this spelling is at once an act of rendering mankind's dusty essence intelligible, and, conversely, an act of pulverisation: as Barbara Harman notes 'spelling one's elements might mean naming, and thereby reconstituting, the parts of the whole; but it can also mean decomposing those parts, distinguishing them from each other, separating and dispersing them.'[628] For to spell out word inevitably means breaking it down into its individual letters, crumbling it out into its *elementa.*

The object of study is not, however, a simple text, as dust's meaning shifts throughout the passage: as critics have noted, what it means for the speaker's body to discover its foundations in 'dustie heraldrie and lines' is multi-layered, signifying simultaneously both the dustiness of the engraved letters on the monuments, and that which they signify – the dusty dead below.[629] As the conceit continues, the body's tutor does become more definitively the physical dust of the dead: the tombstones which hold the potentially informative inscriptions are, it emerges, obstacles that serve to obstruct the truly edifying interaction, the 'good fellowship' with pulverized remains. Yet what the image does in its entirety is to remind the reader of the discursive nature of dust: it is both the actual stuff of the dead, and also a word on the page, existing in 'lines' as well as heaps, adding a further layer to the dusty poetics of *The Temple*.

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[626] Francis Bacon, *The New Organon*, trans., Lisa Jardine, Michael Silverthorne (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p.21. In the original Latin it reads 'Sed ita prorsus se habeant illa ad res et opera que-madmodum literae alphabeti se habeant ad orationem et verba; quae licet per se inutiles eaedem tamen omnis sermonis elementa sunt'. See Francis Bacon, *The Works of Francis Bacon*, ed., James Spedding, Robert Leslie Ellis, Douglas Denon Heath, 14 vols, (London: Longman, 1857–74), 4:30; 1:142.
[627] Hobbes, p.331.
[628] Harman, p.115.
[629] Summers, p.130. Harman, p.115.

Central to the body's schooling is the concept that it itself is dust, the dust of the dead is comprehensible to the body because it is acknowledging its kin: dust is compared with dust. Yet despite the neat reflexivity of the phrase, the comparison is not precisely between identical entities. Certainly, the speaker is stressing the moral affinity between his base frail body and the base pulverized remains, but the dustiness of the former is metaphysical, the latter, as discussed in Chapter Two, somewhat literal. Thus Stanley Fish is mistaken in his summation that "'Comparing" becomes an exercise in tautology . . . his flesh is its own tombe, one more heap of dust, exactly like those that are the objects of its contemplation.'[630] Dusty flesh is not 'exactly like' dusty remains: the figure of repetition being used is not tautology, but rather antanaclasis.

Fish is not the only critic to overlook the multivalency of dust in 'Church Monuments'. As discussed above, the dust of the posthumous body is senseless, incapable of the lusty animation and lamentable cries of personated dust, and something that the conclusion of the poem asserts. Ceri Sullivan, however, mistakenly attributes a sense of vitality to the dust of death in 'Church Monuments'. In the opening stanza, the speaker considers the body's meditative focus:

> this heap of dust;
> To which the blast of death's incessant motion,
> Fed with the exhalation of our crimes,
> Drives all at last.
> (3-6)

Sullivan reads into this description a mobility in posthumous dust, arguing that here the speaker is 'not look[ing] forward to [burial] as a quiet settling into the ground, but as an opportunity for increased movement.'[631] Yet it is a misreading of the force at play in the image: the dust is not the spontaneously stirring dust of 'Longing', but rather it is the blast of death which drives all to dust: death is the motive, not wilful dust. In *The Temple*, when dusty death moves, death is always the agitator: in the 'The Church-floore', the speaker comments that 'Sometimes Death, puffing at the doore, | Blows all the dust about the floore' (16-17) whilst in 'Ungratefulnesse' he notes how

[630] Fish, p.167
[631] Sullivan, p.181.

'death blow[s] | The dust into our eyes' (16-17). The image is commonplace in the context of death. Indeed, Regulus, in *A Direction to Death*, observes how dust, as the lightest of matters, is 'blowne away with a small blast.' Notably, in 'Church Monuments', Herbert advances this notion, using the commonplace of blasted dust to figure forth a sophisticated conceit that conveys the cause of dusty death – human sin. The gusts of death that agitate dust are themselves fuelled by the 'exhalation of our crimes', presenting a complex image of the forces that drive the body to dissolution. Ultimately, then, what has hitherto been overlooked by critics is the fluidity of the semantics of dust in 'Church Monuments': the term may carry many possible meanings – living flesh, inscribed words, or dissolved remains – each signification carrying with it varying properties. Dust may be capable of being tutored, or of laughing at the vanity and futility of tombstones. But, conversely, it may also be resolutely incapable of such things, 'tame' and inert, roused only by external gusty forces.

Even meanings that at first appear distinct soon disintegrate, such as dust's meaning as the body, separate from the soul:

> Deare flesh, while I do pray, learn here thy stemme
> And true descent: that when thou shalt grow fat,
>
> And wanton in thy cravings, thou mayst know,
> That flesh is but the glass, which holds the dust
> That measures all our time; which also shall
> Be crumbled into dust.
>
> (17-22)

The division between body and spirit is made apparent when the speaker addresses the flesh: the poetic subject, the 'I' of the poem, prays whilst the flesh must engage in another pursuit, learning its dusty 'descent', a sylleptical term which conveys both origin – the sense of lineage from dust-born Adam – and end – the sense falling, or decaying into dust.[632] Yet such clarity of meaning quickly disintegrates in the succeeding line. The flesh is depicted not as dust itself, but as the hour-

[632] *OED* n., 1 & 2.

glass 'which holds the dust', thus making dust a referent to the interior self, something other than the flesh than contains it. Notably, and typically of Herbert, the image of the hour-glass is complex. It is evidently a reformulation of Isaiah 40. 5 -7:

> All flesh is grass,
> and all the goodliness thereof is as the flower of the field:
> the grass withereth, the flower fadeth

The verse portrays the flesh as earthly, transient matter and as we have seen in the poem 'Frailtie', the flesh as grass shares for Herbert semantics with dusty flesh: the speaker terms the human race 'fair dust' (4), to then 'surname them guilded clay, | Deare earth, fine grasse or hay' (5-6). Yet Herbert changes one consonant, leaving a vestige of scripture but alchemising 'grass' to 'glass', transforming a synonym of dust into the vessel of dust. The wordplay is itself an act of pulverisation, as it rests on a single letter, Herbert's poetics drawing on the *elementa* of language. What is more, through playing on the commonplace emblem of death – the hourglass – flesh as 'glass' is momentarily distinguished from the dusty self.[633] Yet that barrier soon collapses with the repetition of the conjunctive 'which' (21) in the succeeding line, as the speaker summarises that that the vessel too shall 'be crumbled into dust'. Dust containers turn to dust, reuniting the body and spirit in a crumbled heap**.** The affect is subtle and notably unanxious in tone: Herbert's wordplay accentuates the inexorability, yet it does not ostensibly work to elicit fear or feelings of utter degradation.

The poem concludes on a concise instruction that echoes the tenets of *ars moriendi* literature:

> Mark here below
> How tame these ashes are, how free from lust,
> That thou mayst fit thy self against thy fall.

The directive is for the reader to mind his or her dusty mortality in order to prepare well for death, a principle that resounds throughout the manuals. Yet there is a distinctive Herbertian

[633] The hourglass was a popular Renaissance image of death: as Nigel Llewellyn notes, in the engravings of Holbein, 'always there is the hour-glass, Death's emblem.' See *The Art of Death*, p.26.

idiosyncrasy: the speaker is not instructing us to observe, as Donne might, the horror of the grave, or the lowliness of the ashes, as Perneby did with dust, but instead, their 'tame[ness]', the only descriptor that the speaker attaches to particulate remains in the poem. Brian Cummings notes the elusiveness of Herbert's theology, commenting that the writer 'shows the difficulty of precise theological labels when no explicitly doctrinal literature survives'.[634] However, it is worth remarking that in 'Church-Monuments' there appears a distinctly un-Calvinist treatment of the body's return to dust. As discussed in the first chapter, Calvin's influential theology placed a great emphasis on self-degradation and, more specifically, the baseness of humankind's dusty condition, which shaped many theological ideas regarding the matter of dust. However, the 'tameness' of Herbert's ashes marks a departure from such an emphasis, at least in regards to the dust of death. Together with the depiction of dust as an educator, the final stanza offers a gentle route to the humble minding of dust, a less aggressive approach to performing humility. Thus, not only does Herbert present in the 'Church Monuments' a sophisticated enactment of dusty mindfulness – a personable model that goes beyond simple citations of scripture of commonplaces – but the poem also provides a method of preparing for death that works to reassure, rather than disturb, the reader.

Overall, Herbert's dusty poetics is distinctive amongst other literary handlings of dust assembled in this thesis. Unlike Lancelot Andrewes, Herbert saw beyond the 'plain[ness]' of dust, and, through attending to entire coherence and contexture scripture, his poetry exposes its intricate semantic textures. In addition, through his use of personification Herbert adds complexity to the much rehearsed trope of dusty humility: whilst preachers such as Thomas Adams called on their auditory to mind their dusty beginnings and ends, the speaker of Herbert's poetry internalises this doctrine and, through his speech, personifies what it means to be humble in dust. What is also remarkable is the scope of Herbert's dusty poetics, as in *The Temple,* the speaker's fragmented

[634] Cummings, *Grammar and Grace*, p.322.

condition is habitually reflected in the fragmented form and language the poems, pulverisation proving to be a vital aspect of Herbert's poetic style.

CONCLUSION

If this thesis has shown nothing else, it has demonstrated that dust is paradoxical. Dust is the least of substances yet anthropologically significant; it is barely visible and yet pervasive, and thus making itself noticeable by its prevalence. Indeed, as both Steedman and Marder have remarked dust has an almost stubborn permanency: 'it speaks of a grand circularity, of nothing ever, ever going away', it is a 'gentle refusal of complete evanescence'.[635] The early chapters of this thesis outlined these paradoxes, showing how such a minimal type of matter was in fact scattered across a broad range of early modern texts, from biblical exegesis to atomistic treatises and the extraordinary centrality of this dispersed, debased, almost negligible substance. It was theologically important to the condition of humanity and accumulated its own poetics, the matter of dust operating as a trope of repetition, interacting with poetic figures such as synecdoche, metonymy and simile and challenging the boundaries between the literal and the figurative.

The later chapters, centred on the studies of individual figures, delved deeper into the poetics of dust, showing both the trends and variations in the way in which certain writers handled the matter. As a literary figure, dust functions much like the physical stuff itself, for it is negligible yet pervasive: whilst dust is very rarely the main subject of a text, it nevertheless often surfaces at some point in a text or author's canon. Across Donne's 160 sermons, only one is centred on a dusty bible passage, and yet the word appears in more than half. Dust is indistinct: the return to dust is in Donne's words 'the most deadly and peremptory nullification of man'.[636] But conversely, as this thesis has shown, dust is also distinctive, it has a particular figurative role, as for many writers it stands apart from the other, almost identical powdered substance - ashes. For Adams and Andrewes, dust specifically signifies the concupiscent flesh, whilst ashes convey the sinful soul. For Browne, the distinction is more literal: dust is the product of burial, ashes cremation, dust proving to be not so indiscriminate a matter.

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[635] Steedman, p.166. Marder, p.46.
[636] Donne, *The Oxford Edition of the Sermons,* vol.3., p.238.

The biggest paradox of all however, is that dust – a mundane, base and insignificant substance – holds so much significance in relation to the human race, the figure playing a vital role in the expression of the early modern Christian identity. As we have just seen, the speaker of Herbert's *The Temple* repeatedly assumes a dusty persona in order to humbly approach God. Whilst such identification with dust is shown to be at times torturous and agonising for the speaker, this is ameliorated by the fact that such humble acknowledgements of his dusty nature allows him to enter the presence of God. Throughout this thesis it has been shown that degradation in dust leads to spiritual exaltation: it is evident not only in Herbert's poetry but in the homiletic rhetoric of Adams and Donne. Dust, in this light, is anything but a mundane matter.

Turning back to the text that began this thesis, Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, we may now see the disaffected prince's dusty reflections from a different perspective. It is critically acknowledged that Hamlet is a learned melancholic, and his mediations on dust – his summation that man is the 'quintessence of dust' and reflections on the 'base uses' that the dusty dead are subject to – are often seen as an expression of this.[637] Yet when placed against the other heaps of dust discussed in this thesis, Hamlet's musings are more matter of fact than morose. As has been shown, it was a commonplace that man is dust, a widespread trope of humility and certainly not confined to the utterances of the melancholic. What puts things out of joint in this play is the absence of exaltation. When Herbert's speaker acquaints himself with dust, it is explicitly edificatory: dust teaches the flesh to humbly acknowledge its true base essence, and, as established throughout *The Temple*, this recognition of dustiness is the path to God's grace. However, Shakespeare denies Hamlet any such relief: Hamlet's imagination can trace dust to a bunghole, yet it cannot, unlike Donne's, envision these particles of dust being recollected and treasured, like little 'seed-pearle[s]', by God. It may be concluded therefore, that whilst many critics see Hamlet as a kind of philosopher, a character instilled by Shakespeare with a prophetic wisdom, in the context of this thesis, he is in fact shown

[637] For a discussion of melancholy in Hamlet and the critical landscape on the matter see Douglas Trevor, *The Poetics of Melancholy in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp.63-86, p.79.

to be theologically and spiritually naïve, incapable of properly comprehending the complexities of the Christian humility paradox.[638] Hamlet may have been educated at Wittenberg, but he was an inattentive student in some respects, for his education did not teach him to comprehend the intricacies of mankind's dustiness in reformed thought.[639] Hamlet has only a tragic view of dust, not understanding the exalting, even comic, turn that Augustine, Donne, Andrewes, and Herbert give to the figure. For as this thesis has shown, the figure of dust is not simply a debasing expression of humanity. Rather it is salvific, evoking the quality of humility so necessary to attaining grace and in Donne's words, a 'glorious' life with God in heaven.[640]

[638] As Rhodri Lewis succinctly puts it, 'Hamlet's philosophical nature is a given'. See Rhodri Lewis, *Hamlet and the Vision of Darkness* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2017), p.238.
[639] Although this thesis has focused primarily on Calvin, Luther too emphasised mankind's dustiness.
[640] Donne, *The Oxford Edition of the Sermons*, vol.3., p.239.

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