

# GENRE

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# GENRE

FORMS OF DISCOURSE AND CULTURE

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## CHRISTOPHER SMART'S CROSS-DRESSING: MIMICRY, DEPROPRIATION, AND *JUBILATE AGNO*

FRASER EASTON, UNIVERSITY OF WATERLOO

At the end of his prophecy of a millennial regeneration of the Davidic horn in *Jubilate Agno*, Christopher Smart celebrates a very different sort of horn, a horn of plenty (see Appendix). As an autonomous matrilineal principle, this cornucopia serves as a countervailing force to the otherwise phallic power of the horn for Smart, and is a figure for the verbal power of women singers and poets of female conception such as Hannah and Mary.<sup>1</sup> What Smart recognizes symbolically in these verses is the possibility that poetic power—routinely figured by him in phallic terms—may have a female source. This recognition introduces an irreducible slippage into his desire for a millennial revirilization and reminds us that, long after his career as a female impersonator was over, Smart was still imitating women.

In this essay I will argue that Smart's various defences of and attacks on normative masculinity are closely tied to theatrical contexts, and, above all, to the depropriation of proper male being or identity threatened by sexual impersonation and the mimetic modalities of poetry as speech. Smart was always interested in cross-dressing as a mode of impersonation or mimicry, like acting, recitation, and dramatic speech in general, and to understand his handling of female poetic precedent in *Jubilate Agno* we must first consider his stage act as Mrs.

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I would like to thank Betty Rizzo and Camie Kim for their comments on an earlier version of this paper.

<sup>1</sup>I explore Mary's conception in relation to Smart's ideas about art more fully in "Mary's Key and the Poet's Conception: The Orphic versus the Mimetic Artist in *Jubilate Agno*" in Clement Hawes, ed., *Christopher Smart and the Enlightenment* (New York: St. Martin's, 1999).

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Mary Midnight. As we will see, Smart's gender impersonations occurred in the context of two important controversies over mimesis: (1) the association of sodomy and the mocking imitation of women in eighteenth-century accounts of homosexual cross-dressing, and (2) the Platonic view, reactivated by sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Puritan anti-theatricalists, of mimesis as a danger to masculine self-identity. In *Jubilate Agno* a similar mimetic problematic appears in conjunction with such themes as personal virility, public prayer, and national effeminization.

Smart's concern with his own virility dates from early in his career, before *Jubilate Agno* was written, and before he ever put on a petticoat or called himself Mrs. Midnight. His anxiety is humorously expressed as early as his first recorded poem, said to have been composed when he was four years old:

Madam if you please  
To hear such things as these.  
Madam, I have a rival sad  
And if you don't take my part it will make me mad.  
He says he will send his son;  
But if he does I will get me a gun.  
Madam if you please to pity,  
O poor Kitty, O poor Kitty!

According to his daughter, Smart

was very fond of a lady of about three times his own age who used to notice and caress him. A gentleman old enough to be her father to tease the child would pretend to be in love with his favorite and threatened to take her for his wife—"You are too old," said little Smart; the rival answered, if that was an objection he would send his son . . .<sup>2</sup>

Smart's response was to sue for pity from the girl herself, and, in addition to his characteristic stance as an erotic poet, these early verses reveal a powerful sense of romantic inadequacy. Even the son of his jesting rival is more than a match for Smart, unless opposed by force of arms. The poem ends on a self-indulgent, even self-pitying note that flirts with the feminization of the speaker: "Kitty" is usually short for Katherine, and if appropriate for a child as a diminutive of Christopher, we must recall that early childhood was traditionally a feminine, not neuter, stage of life, and it was only around the age of seven that male children were taken out of petticoats and put into breeches. The rival, in the charac-

<sup>2</sup>Christopher Smart, *Miscellaneous Poems, English and Latin*, ed. Karina Williamson, vol. 4 of *The Poetical Works of Christopher Smart* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987), 3, 411.

ter of a father (both husband and progenitor), represents an alien adult male virility, whereas Smart's speaker is puerile: in the last line he seems to seek maternal comfort as much as any other consolation. Thus although the poem takes the form of an erotic lament—his rival's threat is implicitly sexual in nature (he "threatened to take her for his wife")—Smart's youth gives his desires a pre-masculine expression. It is Smart's first encounter with the heterosexual gender system.<sup>3</sup> Generally, as in "Madam if you please," Smart makes light of his exclusion from normative images of masculine desirability—as can be seen in the title of "The Author Apologizes to a Lady for His being a Little Man" (1750), for example—although in *Jubilate Agno* a graver note will be struck. But in any case, throughout his career Smart was rarely, if ever, at home in his sex.<sup>4</sup>

Like his Oxford editors, those who wish to interpret Smart as a poet of orthodox, if eccentric, Christianity have found it convenient to view his confinements for madness between 1757 and 1763 and the serious religious verse which followed in terms of a sharp break with both the dissipated behaviour and facetious secular poetry of his early career.<sup>5</sup> The evidence is easy to adduce: from 1750 to 1756 Smart was mainly writing seduction verse, comic fables, and imitations of Pope, editing *The Student* and *The Midwife* magazines, and appearing on stage in women's clothes as Mary Midnight; but after 1763 he published high-toned odes to famous men, *A Song to David*, oratorios on Old Testament religious figures, books of hymns and religious songs, and verse translations of Horace, the Psalms, and the gospel parables. Among the problems with this division of Smart's corpus, however, is the fact that it echoes the periodization of his work by his contemporaries, who believed that Smart never recovered his poetic

<sup>3</sup>Mary McIntosh, "The Homosexual Role" (1968); repr. in *The Making of the Modern Homosexual*, ed. Kenneth Plummer (London: Hutchinson, 1981), 30-44; Alan Bray, *Homosexuality in Renaissance England* (London: Gay Men's Press, 1982); Randolph Trumbach, "Sodomitical Subcultures, Sodomitical Roles, and the Gender Revolution in the Eighteenth Century: The Recent Historiography," *Eighteenth-Century Life* 9 (n.s.) no. 3 (May 1985): 109-121; Eve Sedgwick, *Between Men* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985); Nancy Armstrong, *Desire and Domestic Fiction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987); and Thomas Laqueur, *Making Sex* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1990). The political implications of this system are explored in Kathleen Wilson, *The Sense of the People: Politics, Culture, and Imperialism in England, 1715-1785* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

<sup>4</sup>See Moira Dearnley, *The Poetry of Christopher Smart* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1968), 1-11. Clement Hawes considers Smart's troubled masculinity in terms of the rhetoric of Puritan enthusiasm in *Mania and Literary Style: The Rhetoric of Enthusiasm from the Ranters to Christopher Smart* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 179-205.

<sup>5</sup>See Betty Rizzo and Robert Mahony, eds., *The Annotated Letters of Christopher Smart* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1991), 41, 53, 67.

powers after his confinement.<sup>6</sup> It was in conformity to this contemporary view, and perhaps in agreement with it, that his wife and nephew suppressed *A Song to David* and all of the verse published after 1763 that was not characteristic of his pre-confinement, Grub-Street days when they published his collected poetry in 1791. Of course, after his release from confinement, Smart himself was anxious to appear neither dissipated nor overpassionate, and he changed the emphasis of his poetry in two key ways: he shifted the social orientation of his verse from satiric to prophetic modes, and he placed new importance on religious and elite, rather than secular and popular, forms of expression. In short, Smart responded to accusations of madness by modifying the speech situation of his poetry—a resource he was experimenting with as early as “Madam if you please,” where the child speaker of the poem is comically at odds with the adult persona of conventional erotic lament.

It is only in our own century that parts of Smart’s *magnum opus*, *Jubilate Agno*, written while he was confined, have resurfaced, and in this previously unpublished material present-day readers can trace how the concerns of Smart’s early comic poetry and satiric prose carry over, with differences, through his “madness” and on into his mature work.<sup>7</sup> This is especially true with respect to his life-long concern with his masculinity, and the way in which for Smart so many other issues of power and speech were condensed around the interrelated themes of imitation and virility.<sup>8</sup> In *Jubilate Agno*, Smart translates the *ressentiment* he felt over being confined for madness by his family into an affirmative meditation on horns and the signs of masculinity that draws on the work of his Grub-Street days. More than an idiosyncratic personal obsession or oblique theory of signification, as some have suggested, this meditation is a poetic response to an emerging heterosexual gender system.<sup>9</sup> To understand fully the

<sup>6</sup>Another problem is that Smart’s Seatonian poems on serious religious themes were all written before his confinement.

<sup>7</sup>For recent approaches to some of these continuities, see Lance Bertelsen, “Journalism, Carnival, and *Jubilate Agno*,” *ELH* 59 (1992): 357-384, and Hawes, *Mania and Literary Style*, 129-154.

<sup>8</sup>An early approach to Smart’s concern with power and virility is Albert J. Kuhn, “Christopher Smart: The Poet as Patriot of the Lord,” *ELH* 30 (1963): 121-136.

<sup>9</sup>On Smart’s horn-misogyny as a personal obsession, see Morris Golden, *The Self Observed* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1972), 25-28; on the horn verses as a theory of signification, see Alan Liu, “Christopher Smart’s ‘Uncommunicated Letters’: Translation and the Ethics of Literary History,” *Boundary 2* 14 nos. 1-2 (Fall 1985-Winter 1986): 115-146. In contrast, see Hawes, *Mania and Literary Style*, 179-205. Hawes draws on work in my doctoral thesis: *Bad Habits: Cross-Dressing and the Regulation of Gender in Eighteenth-Century British Literature and Society* (Ph.D. Diss., Princeton University, 1990), 226-270.

nature of this response, however, we need first to review Smart’s experiments with female personae and travesty acting.

## I

“Hum-buggers-bougres”:  
Mimicry and the Mrs. Midnight Fad

## Learning and Impersonation

Smart’s career as a female impersonator began as part of a joint magazine venture with the bookseller John Newbery called *The Midwife; or the Old Woman’s Magazine* (1750-53). Smart edited the magazine (perhaps along with Newbery) under the pseudonym of Mary Midnight, and contributed to it under both that name and several others, including “Fardinando Foot,” “Nelly Pentweazle,” and “Ebenezer Pentweazle.” The tone of this energetic mixture of prose burlesques, *Rambler* reprints, comic verse, and “letters” to Mrs. Midnight is captured by its title page:

Containing all the Wit, and all the Humour, and all the Learning, and all the Judgement, that has ever been, or ever will be inserted in all the other Magazines, or the Magazine of Magazines, or the Grand Magazine of Magazines, or any other Book whatsoever: so that those who buy this Book will need no other.<sup>10</sup>

Conceived as a vehicle for Smart’s talents as a comic writer, the magazine parodied the claims of general interest periodicals such as *The Gentleman’s Magazine* to represent the current state of learning. As Lance Bertelsen observes, in an important study of the relevance of *The Midwife* to Smart’s later work, the magazine affirmed “flux and paradox and incongruity,” in part by tapping into “the reservoir of folklore surrounding midwives and their nocturnal, gossipy, and mysterious activities.”<sup>11</sup> In addition to this folkloric reservoir, *The Midwife* also reached into the tradition of learned satire found in Rabelais and Swift: items parodying antiquarians, projectors, and other would-be aspirants to knowledge appear intermittently throughout the journal.<sup>12</sup> Mrs. Midnight herself is an

<sup>10</sup>[Christopher Smart, ed.,] *The Midwife; or the Old Woman’s Magazine* (1750-1753). Collected and reprinted in three volumes, *The Midwife* originally ran monthly from 16 October 1750 to 31 October 1751, and then appeared irregularly, with the last three numbers published on 7 January 1752, 4 August 1752, and 16 June 1753. See Robert Mahony and Betty W. Rizzo, *Christopher Smart: An Annotated Bibliography, 1743-1983* (New York: Garland, 1984).

<sup>11</sup>Bertelsen, “Journalism, Carnival, and *Jubilate Agno*,” 379, 365.

<sup>12</sup>Arthur Sherbo, *Christopher Smart: Scholar of the University* (Ann Arbor: Michigan State University Press, 1967), 71.

ambivalent representative of learning, serving sometimes as an exemplar and sometimes as a critic of false scholarship. In "A Letter from Mrs. Mary Midnight to the Royal Society. . . ." for example, she appears as the proponent of cruel and useless technical innovation by describing improvements to a harpsichord that uses cats instead of strings; in contrast, "A Letter from Mrs. Mary Midnight, to the Society of Antiquarians. . . ." employs an unambiguously ironic tone and the absurd comments of the antiquarians themselves to communicate her disgust over their interest in the discovery of a fossilized human excrement.<sup>13</sup>

In parodies such as these Smart has one eye on the assumed excesses of legitimate scientific enquiry: the cat-organ and the petrification are reminiscent of Jonathan Swift's satire of the Royal Society in *Gulliver's Travels*. But Smart's other concern is with the Grub-Street appropriation of elite learning: as a glance at the medley of interests in an issue of *The Gentleman's Magazine* suggests, Smart, like Alexander Pope before him, targeted the commercial popularization and commodification of knowledge. Bertelsen has developed some of the continuities between *The Midwife* and *The Dunciad*, especially the way in which Smart's Mrs. Midnight and Pope's Dulness embody the transgressive energies of commercial publishing through the figure of an unruly woman.<sup>14</sup> Yet the critical positioning of Mrs. Midnight as "a social misfit" may need to be qualified.<sup>15</sup> One reason is that she is not simply a folkloric figure (a point to which I will return below). Another is that women writers were far from marginal or unrewarded by 1750. Indeed, in a recent study Catherine Gallagher persuasively argues that new literary modes—especially the novel—actually encouraged market paradigms of female authorship.<sup>16</sup> Gallagher's evidence suggests that the changing status of female authorship (and authority) made the figure of the female writer and editor increasingly *normative* (rather than transgressive) to the literary market of mid-century. As a *female* authorial and editorial persona, then, Mrs. Midnight should be seen as a response to the emerging centrality of women writers, rather than to their residual marginality. It is this emphasis on female authorship that most clearly distinguishes the social orientation of Smart's satire from Pope's.

<sup>13</sup>*The Midwife* 1: 98-102, 151-154.

<sup>14</sup>Bertelsen, "Journalism, Carnival, and *Jubilate Agno*," 361.

<sup>15</sup>Bertelsen, "Journalism, Carnival, and *Jubilate Agno*," 364.

<sup>16</sup>Catherine Gallagher, *Nobody's Story: The Vanishing Acts of Women Writers in the Marketplace, 1670-1820* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 145-162.

Unlike Dulness, a mock-muse who is conceived as a tainted source of masculine inspiration, Mary Midnight and her unguarded tongue simultaneously appropriate and mock the emerging cultural power of the woman writer.

As a figure of false or exaggerated learning, Mrs. Midnight is closest not to Dulness but to the verbose and egotistical annotators of *The Dunciad*, Scriblerian personae that satirized legitimate scholars such as Richard Bentley and Lewis Theobald and served Pope as comic masks.<sup>17</sup> In this capacity she is an image of the compromises made by university men like Smart when they took their talents onto the commercial market. One account of her life adapts details from Smart's own experiences, placing her in London in 1748 after continental travels and a stint as a Sorbonne professor.<sup>18</sup> In another account she describes herself as the daughter of a secretly married Cambridge fellow from whom, she writes, ". . . I received my first rudiments of knowledge, and by him I was gradually led from one science to another, till I had made a considerable progress through the whole circle." With a mother to support, the impoverished Mrs. Midnight—"a perfect Swiss in writing"—is "forc'd to employ [her] pen, as others of [her] sex do their needle. . . ."<sup>19</sup> Here Smart makes the intellectual energy and disrepute associated with midwifery a comic metaphor for scholarly existence on the periphery of college life, and casts his satire as a mockery of legitimate as well as popular learning, university scholars as well as women writers.

On 3 December 1751 a marketing spin-off from *The Midwife*, advertised as "The Old Woman's Oratory; or Henley in Petticoats . . . conducted by Mrs. Midnight, Author of the *Midwife*, and her Family," saw its first performance at the Castle Tavern in Pater-Noster Row.<sup>20</sup> The show consisted mainly of music, songs, and speeches parodying Italian music and John "Orator" Henley, an

<sup>17</sup>In *The So Much Talk'd of and Expected Old Woman's Dunciad* (1751)—ostensibly by Smart but actually a hostile attack on him by William Kenrick—these Scriblerian implications are realized in a female annotator: "Margelina Scribelinda Macularia." As Robert A. Erickson observes, "Smart recognized the multifarious roles of the old 'midwife' as physician, wise woman, gossip, fortuneteller, bawd, whore, Gypsy, authority on sex, and put them all together into an effective Scriblerian persona for his 'Magazine'" (*Mother Midnight: Birth, Sex, and Fate in Eighteenth-Century Fiction* [New York: AMS Press, 1986], 277 n. 16).

<sup>18</sup>[Newbery or Smart, ed.,] *The Nonpareil* (1757), iii-v.

<sup>19</sup>[Christopher Smart and Bonnell Thornton, eds.,] *The Student, or, the Oxford and Cambridge Monthly Miscellany* (1750-1751). The "female student" (a.k.a. Mary Midnight) contributions begin with the issue of 21 November 1750 (2 no. 2: 49-52)—after *The Midwife* had begun publication—and continue for five further issues (2 nos. 3, 5, 6, 8, and 9). Quotations are from *The Student* 2 no. 2: 49, 52.

<sup>20</sup>Cited in Sherbo, *Christopher Smart*, 75.

eccentric lecturer based in Clare Market. Smart himself played the role of Mrs. Midnight in women's clothes.<sup>21</sup> The Oratory included different novelty acts from time to time, such as Benjamin Hallet, a nine-year-old violinist; Mr. Timbertoe, a wooden-legged dancer; and the "Animal Comedians, brought from Italy by Sig Ballard."<sup>22</sup> The show was a huge success and quickly became an ongoing feature of the London stage: on December 27th it opened at a larger venue, the New Theatre in the Haymarket; the second season saw over 68 performances under various permutations of the original title; and as "The British Roratory; or, Mrs. Midnight's New Carnival Concert" it monopolized the London stage for 18 off-season performances in July and August 1754.<sup>23</sup>

Horace Walpole saw the Oratory during its first season and was struck by the satirical and burlesque elements of the show:

it appeared the lowest buffoonery in the world even to me who am used to my uncle Horace. There is a bad oration to ridicule, what it is too like, Orator Henley: all the rest is perverted music.<sup>24</sup>

Walpole was especially annoyed by the "perverted music": flashy displays of irrelevant dexterity (playing "a violin and a trumpet together") and "low" humour (imitating "farting and curtseying to a French horn").<sup>25</sup> As Bertelsen has shown, the Oratory set the traditional instruments of popular "rough" or festive music—the marrow bones, the salt box, the cleaver and tongs—against the refined instruments of the polite orchestra.<sup>26</sup> What stands out to modern eyes, however, are the sexual and social dimensions of this ridicule. Smart muted the potentially subversive message of his festive music (which was often a component of plebian protest) by linking it to a populist and aggressively masculine English identity, as seen in "The PROLOGUE to Mrs. MARY MIDNIGHT'S Oratory":

But lest the manly Miss, or Female Beau,  
Shou'd think our Satire Nonsense, Stuff and Low;

<sup>21</sup>Sherbo reviews the evidence for Smart's stage career in an appendix, "Smart and Mrs. Midnight on the Stage," *Christopher Smart*, 269-272.

<sup>22</sup>Sherbo, *Christopher Smart*, 78; George Winchester Stone, Jr., ed. *The London Stage 1660-1800: Part 4: 1747-1776* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1962), 338.

<sup>23</sup>Stone, ed., *London Stage*, 281, 431-33; Sherbo, *Christopher Smart*, 78, 92-93. There were 36 performances in the first season (Stone, ed., *London Stage*, 257).

<sup>24</sup>Letter of 12 May 1752, in W. S. Lewis and Ralph S. Brown, Jr., eds., *Horace Walpole's Correspondence with George Montagu*, in *The Yale Edition of Horace Walpole's Correspondence* (London: Oxford University Press, 1941) 9: 131.

<sup>25</sup>Horace Walpole's *Correspondence* 9: 131.

<sup>26</sup>Lance Bertelsen, *The Nonsense Club: Literature and Popular Culture, 1749-1764* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986), 155-160.

Shou'd 'gainst poor Salt-Box arm their Critic Rage,  
And hiss the harmless Jew-Strump [*sic*] off the Stage.  
We between whiles ('tis hop'd without Offence)  
Shall introduce that honest Exile SENSE.  
Whom, tho' he's English, Beaus must needs prefer,  
He'll seem to them—so like a Foreigner.<sup>27</sup>

As Kathleen Wilson documents in *The Sense of the People*, members of a wide range of social classes and ranks in England embraced notions of a virile English Protestantism immediately after the '45 and united in defence of a "British" empire.<sup>28</sup> The confrontation that Smart sets up between "British Roratory" and Italian opera relies on this sexual-national context to heighten the already-commonplace equation of foreign music, especially the opera, and male effeminacy.<sup>29</sup> The equation of opera and male effeminacy is also the framework for Smart's female masquerade at the Oratory: not only was Italy famous for its castrati opera singers, such as the popular Farinelli (who were figures of both sexual ambiguity and license), but it was seen as a hotbed of sodomitical activity (associated in this period with male cross-dressing).<sup>30</sup> To put Henley in petticoats, then, was to brand him with the stigma of a suspect sexuality and loyalty. Of course, Smart wanted to take advantage of these prejudices without having them rebound on himself or his persona: by making his midwife a sponsor of English virility and fecundity, Smart attempts to draw a clear line between his persona and the degeneration, impotence, and homosexual cross-dressing of her targets.<sup>31</sup>

As the quasi-learned editor of *The Midwife*, Mrs. Midnight was ready-made to parody Henley's own unorthodox academic ambitions. John Henley received his B.A. from St. John's College, Cambridge in 1712 and was ordained after receiving his M.A. in 1716. Between 1719 and 1723 he pursued scholarly work, published *The Complete Linguist*, and engaged in a variety of the Grub-Street activities burlesqued in *The Midwife*. Apart from his role as a comic target, Hen-

<sup>27</sup>*The Midwife* 3: 57-58.

<sup>28</sup>Wilson, *The Sense of the People*, 165-78. On gender and Whig responses to the '45, see Jill Campbell, *Natural Masques: Gender and Identity in Fielding's Plays and Novels* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995), 137-59.

<sup>29</sup>*Satan's Harvest Home* (1749), 56.

<sup>30</sup>For example, in March 1753 the Oratory advertised the appearance of one "Sig Gapatoono, first cousin to Farinelli" (cited in Sherbo, *Christopher Smart*, 79). Jill Campbell discusses Farinelli's status as an object of women's desire—and of Fielding's satire—in the mid-1730s in *Natural Masques*, 28-36.

<sup>31</sup>For Mary Midnight as a figure of English fecundity, see "a Song in Favour of Matrimony," "deliver'd by Old TIME to Mrs. MIDNIGHT," *The Midwife* 3: 59, 60-61.

ley is remembered today as a precursor of the late eighteenth-century elocutionist movement pioneered by Thomas Sheridan.<sup>32</sup> Around 1726 he left the established church to form a sort of popular university and chapel called the Oratory of Right Reason, and he quickly became famous for his eccentric sermons and speeches. Henley insisted on the academic imperative behind his lectures: the first notice for his Oratory advertised "an Academy for teaching and propagating Oratory, Languages, &c."; and two years later he was promising a "Gentleman's Proper University" at the "Musaeum of the Oratory" in London.<sup>33</sup> Grandiose claims such as these played directly into the satires of learning that Smart was publishing in his "Old Woman's Magazine," and once proposed the idea of an "Old Woman's Oratory" must have seemed inspired: after all, clerical gowns were often compared to petticoats, and the label "old woman" was a byword for verbosity, indecision, and ignorance in men.<sup>34</sup>

Smart clearly meant to denigrate Henley by transferring the stigma against female speech to Henley's sermons:

there is much more Propriety in a Woman's turning Orator, than there can be in any Man's whatsoever. All Persons flourish most in those Pursuits for which they have the best Qualifications; and since *Oratory* is no more than the *Art of Speaking*, and consequently depends chiefly upon the *Exercise of the Tongue*; Women are allow'd to be the best qualified for it by the universal Consent of all Mankind.<sup>35</sup>

In other words, Smart sought to align existing characterizations of "dunces" like Henley as both Grub-Street scribblers and fanatic preachers with another Augustan satiric target: the voluble scold.<sup>36</sup> The temptation for Smart to treat Henley in this way would have been strong, if only because female speech had already been a frequent object of satire in *The Midwife* before the Old Woman's Oratory began—consider, for example, the opening lines of Smart's epilogue for a performance of *Othello*, to be spoken by Desdemona:

<sup>32</sup>Wilbur Samuel Howell, *Eighteenth-Century British Logic and Rhetoric* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1971), 193-203.

<sup>33</sup>Advertisements in *Mist's Journal* for 14 May 1726 and *Daily Gazette* for 3 July 1736; cited in Graham Midgley, *The Life of Orator Henley* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1973), 113, 116.

<sup>34</sup>See *A Learned Dissertation upon Old Women, Male and Female* (1720).

<sup>35</sup>"The Inauguration SPEECH of Mrs. MARY MIDNIGHT, at the opening of her Oratory," *The Midwife* 3: 37-38.

<sup>36</sup>On Augustan satire of women, see Felicity A. Nussbaum, *The Brink of All We Hate: English Satires on Women, 1660-1750* (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 1984); on the identification of hack writer and fanatic preacher in the hack persona of Swift's *A Tale of a Tub*, see Hawes, *Mania and Literary Style*, 103.

True Woman to the last—my *Peroration*  
I come to speak in spight of Suffocation;  
To shew the present and the Age to come,  
We may be choak'd, but never can be dumb.<sup>37</sup>

Henley soon realized what Smart was up to and attempted a rather cryptic retort in one of his advertisements, claiming "No Woman, an Orator."<sup>38</sup> But the retort rather confirms the misogynistic assumptions behind Smart's burlesque without protecting Henley from them: if women's speech is indeed verbose and ignorant (if women are no orators), then the verbose and ignorant speeches of John "Orator" Henley leave him open to a comic doubt about his sex. This is why Mrs. Midnight extends him a mock invitation to prove before "a Jury of Matrons" that he really is no woman.<sup>39</sup>

Smart's burlesque of Henley as an old woman probably served as a displaced outlet for some of his own literary resentments: when the *Midnight* magazine persona was introduced, for example, it was Smart who was accused of being dressed "in Petticoats."<sup>40</sup> In any event, Henley's career shadowed Smart's own interests and aspirations: both were men on the academic margins, Grub-Street professionals, students of languages and public oratory, and would-be religious reformers. Well before his incarceration for madness, Smart seems to have sensed in Henley's Oratory both a convenient object of satire and a distorted image of his own ambitions.

#### Pantomime and Antifeminism

Henley may have provided a pretext for Smart's engagement with heterosexual norms and female authority at the Old Woman's Oratory, but the roots of his career in female impersonation go back to his days as a Cambridge fellow. In 1747 Smart produced "A Trip to Cambridge; or, The Grateful Fair"—"a Comedy of his own Writeing, wch," according to his university colleague Thomas Gray, "he makes all the Boys of his Acquaintance act."<sup>41</sup> Gray was irked by what he saw

<sup>37</sup>*The Midwife* 1: 272.

<sup>38</sup>*The Daily Advertiser* (4 January 1752). "The Inauguration Speech—Mrs. Midnight" is listed in the programme for a 27 December 1751 performance of Smart's Oratory (Stone, *London Stage*, 281).

<sup>39</sup>*The Midwife* 3 no. 2 (7 January 1752): 50.

<sup>40</sup>Kenrick attacks Smart as "drest in Female Petticoat" in *The Old Woman's Dunciad*, 18.

<sup>41</sup>Pagey Toynbee, Leonard Whibley, and H. W. Starr, eds., *Correspondence of Thomas Gray*, 3 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971) 1: 274.

as Smart's exhibitionism, and he claimed that during rehearsals Smart "acts five Parts himself, & is only sorry, he can't do all the rest."<sup>42</sup> Energetic role-playing like this anticipates the numerous authorial personae Smart was to create as a contributor to *The Student* and *The Midwife*.<sup>43</sup> It also witnesses to his profound interest in dramatic literary forms, as seen in the competing voices of some of his comic fables (such as "The Tie-Wig and the Tobacco Pipe"). And it gave him indirect experience with travesty acting—a student, Richard Forester, played the female lead—and paved the way for his London debut four years later as Mrs. Midnight.<sup>44</sup>

Once in London, contemporary stage practice would have been an important influence on Smart's theatrical career. For example, the mimicry of an identifiable individual such as Henley follows a pattern popularized by Samuel Foote in the late 1740s.<sup>45</sup> Foote achieved great fame for his burlesques of popular actors and celebrities, including Margaret Woffington.<sup>46</sup> Robert Mahony and Betty Rizzo speculate that the Midnight persona came originally from the theatre, and they identify a 1725 revival of George Farquhar's *The Twin Rivals* in which the midwife-bawd role of Mrs. Mandrake, acted by a man, was rechristened Mrs. Midnight.<sup>47</sup> As a figure of false learning, Smart's persona may owe even more to another travesty role played by a man, that of Queen Ignorance in Henry Fielding's *Pasquin*. In Jill Campbell's words, Fielding "reimagines Pope's apocalyptic vision of Dullness's triumph as the triumph of cross-dressing."<sup>48</sup> Several elements of *Pasquin* re-appear in Smart's Oratory: the struggle between personifications of ignorance and common sense (Mrs. Midnight calls Henley "the Murderer of Common Sense"), the role of foreign entertainers like

<sup>42</sup>Correspondence of Thomas Gray, 1: 275.

<sup>43</sup>Walpole was struck by the mad-cap impersonation at the Oratory, noting "a man who speaks a prologue and epilogue, in which he counterfeits all the actors and singers upon earth"—although we can not be certain this man was Smart himself (*Horace Walpole's Correspondence* 9: 131).

<sup>44</sup>Sherbo, *Christopher Smart*, 53-54, 139.

<sup>45</sup>Walpole noted the similarity between the "mimicry" of Smart and Foote (*Horace Walpole's Correspondence* 9: 131-132).

<sup>46</sup>Philip H. Highfill, Jr., Kalman A. Burnim, and Edward A. Langhans, *A Biographical Dictionary of Actors, Actresses, Musicians, Dancers, Managers, & Other Stage Personnel in London, 1660-1800* vol. 5 (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1978), 324-359; Elizabeth N. Chatten, *Samuel Foote* (Boston: Twayne, 1980), 19.

<sup>47</sup>Mahony and Rizzo, *Bibliography*, #325.

<sup>48</sup>Campbell, *Natural Masques*, 45.

"Squeekaronelly," and the parody of learned professions.<sup>49</sup> The possibility of Fielding's influence on Smart is particularly intriguing because Fielding pioneered the sexual travesty of identifiable public figures, such as the auctioneer Christopher Cock as "Mr. Hen" (played by Charlotte Charke) in *The Historical Register* (1737). Fielding's theatrical legacy was reactivated in 1748 (immediately preceding Smart's move to London) when under the pseudonym of "Madame de la Nash" he briefly ran a puppet show in which he satirized a number of contemporary figures—including Samuel Foote.<sup>50</sup>

Smart's decision to take Mrs. Midnight on stage also drew on the contemporary popularity of sexual spectacle. Public displays of hermaphrodites, for example, were a common feature of London life: a "Parisian Boy-Girl" was exhibited in Carnaby Street in November 1750; and advertisements for a similar exhibition were ongoing in December 1751 as the Oratory began.<sup>51</sup> Perhaps Smart and Newbery were especially influenced by the commercial success of Hannah Snell, the female soldier. News reports in June 1750 that Snell was seeking a pension for her service in male disguise were quickly followed by the publication of her memoirs and a media blitz in which her image and story appeared in numerous periodicals, including *The Gentleman's Magazine*.<sup>52</sup> Mahony and Rizzo think that Smart's "female student" persona was named in response to Snell's memoirs.<sup>53</sup> Interestingly, Snell herself turned her real-life female soldiering into a dramatic entertainment by going on stage "at the *New Wells in Goodman's Fields*," where she portrayed "the jovial Tar, and the well-disciplined Marine."<sup>54</sup> Her representation of herself in men's clothes possibly lasted two seasons: *The Drury-*

<sup>49</sup>Henley is called "the Murderer of Common Sense" in "The PROLOGUE to Mrs. MARY MIDNIGHT'S Oratory," *The Midwife* 3: 57. In *Pasquin*, Queen Ignorance murders Queen Common-sense.

<sup>50</sup>Martin C. Battestin, "Fielding and 'Master Punch' in Panton Street," *Philological Quarterly* 45 (1966): 192-93; 200.

<sup>51</sup>M. Vacherie, *An Account of the Famous Hermaphrodite, or, Parisian Boy-Girl* (1750), title page; *The Daily Advertiser* (11 and 21 December 1751).

<sup>52</sup>For reports on Snell's pension, see *The Daily Advertiser* for 25 June and 28 June 1750. Her narrative was advertised in *The Daily Advertiser* as published 4 July 1750. Snell's story and image appeared in *The Gentleman's Magazine* 20 no. 7 (July 1750); advertised in *The Daily Advertiser* as published 1 August 1750.

<sup>53</sup>Mahony and Rizzo, *Bibliography*, #338.

<sup>54</sup>*The Female Soldier* (1750), 165. Her act was frequently performed throughout the summer and early fall: a performance by Snell for 29 June 1750 that was advertised on the 28th and 29th in *The Daily Advertiser* is the earliest I have found, one for 22 September 1750, advertised the same day, is the latest.



*Lane Journal* reports her "at Sadler's Wells lately" in 1752.<sup>55</sup> Smart's on-stage impersonation of an "old woman" exploited this well-established commercial market in real-life sexual spectacle by promising to present "Henley in Petticoats."

It is possible that Smart's choice of a *female* persona was a response to the centrality of *male* impersonation in the popular entertainment market of the day.<sup>56</sup> Stories of female cross-dressing, while perennial favourites, were especially common in the period of Smart's activity, and accounts of the female soldier Christian Davies, the martial cross-dressing of the legendary Jacobite Jenny Cameron, and Hannah Snell all appeared over the decade ending in 1750.<sup>57</sup> Concern with the impact of male impersonation can be found, of course, in the traditional world-upside-down motif in which a woman carried a sword and her husband a distaff and in the female warrior ballads recovered by Dianne Dugaw.<sup>58</sup> Hannah Snell, for one, drew a lesson from her cross-dressing and was "resolutely bent to be Lord and Master of herself" after returning to female garb.<sup>59</sup> Among male writers it was common to view the success of real-life women warriors as a symptom of the degeneration of male heroism: Fielding makes the point in a mocking fashion in "The Female Volunteer" (1746); the author of Hannah Snell's narrative opens her memoirs with the claim (1750); and it was on Smollett's mind when he based the character of Ferdinand Count Fathom's mother on Christian Davies (1753).<sup>60</sup> *The Midwife* responded to the

<sup>55</sup>[Bonnell Thornton,] *Have At You All: or, The Drury-Lane Journal* (1752): 30. In early 1751 Snell took her stage act on tour: see Matthew Stephens, *Hannah Snell* (London: Ship Street Press, 1997), 47.

<sup>56</sup>See my "Plebianizing the Female Soldier: Radical Liberty and the Narrative of Christian Davies," forthcoming in *Eighteenth-Century Life*.

<sup>57</sup>*The Life and Adventures of Mrs. Christian Davies, the British Amazon, Commonly Called Mother Ross*, 2nd ed. (1741); *A Brief Account of the Life and Family of Miss Jenny Cameron* (1746) and *Memoirs of Miss Jenny Cameron* (1746); *The Female Soldier* (1750). Other narratives of female cross-dressing include: *The Travels and Adventures of Mademoiselle de Richelieu* (1744); Henry Fielding, *The Female Husband and Other Writings*, ed. Claude E. Jones (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1960); *The Case of Catherine Vizzani* (1751); Sarah Scott, *A Journey Through Every Stage of Life* (1754); and the *Narrative of the Life of Mrs. Charlotte Charke* (1755).

<sup>58</sup>Dianne Dugaw, *Warrior Women and Popular Balladry, 1650-1850* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989).

<sup>59</sup>Snell, *Female Soldier*, 179.

<sup>60</sup>The modern editor of Fielding's *The True Patriot* (in which "The Female Volunteer" appeared) doubts its authenticity, since it appeared first in *The Daily Advertiser* (see Henry Fielding, *The True Patriot and Related Writings*, ed. W. B. Coley [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987], 426 n. 1); yet whether its author or not, the piece sufficiently appealed to Fielding for him to reprint it.

emasculating threat of the Amazon by spoofing female soldiering as akin to prostitution: Mrs. Midnight reports on "a Troop of *beautiful Females*" that is "kept in readiness to encounter either the Enemies of their Country, in the *Fields of Mars*, or their own Military Compatriots [male soldiers], in the more soft *Campaigns of Venus*."<sup>61</sup> As we will see, however, the fear of masculine degeneration will return as a central concern of *Jubilate Agno*.

Another factor shaping Smart's choice of a midwife persona can be found in the conventions of campus humour. As with clerical garb, the comparison of academic gowns to petticoats was commonplace: in 1750 William Kenrick attacked Smart and a presumed co-author of *The Midwife* in the following terms:

Pray Sirs, how came you to be found in so odd and suspicious a Situation, as the Petticoats of an *old Woman*?—For Shame!—Collegians too! But you are for searching into the Profundity of Nature I see! . . . was it because, that, in your *Student Gowns* you have so near a Resemblance to *old women*, that the difference was hardly perceptible?<sup>62</sup>

Kenrick's adolescent reference to "the Profundity of Nature" is, in its way, quite telling. Although here a knowing sexist joke, it was also the formula for a more complex male impulse. Do "old women" have a special relationship to sexual knowledge? And if so, is this knowledge something important (occult or hermetic) or is it merely fallen (Eve- or bawd-like)? These questions have a folkloric valence, of course, but they were energized in Smart's day by the contest for medical authority between traditional female midwives and the innovative man-midwives of mid-century (a contest memorialized by Dr. Slop in Sterne's *Tristram Shandy*). These professional struggles made Smart's choice of a midwife persona all the more fitting for his Scriblerian satires of literary-scholarly authority.

A rare series of three pamphlets published in 1748, around the time of Smart's developing interest in London literary life, may be more relevant still. A *Spy on Mother Midnight* purports to reproduce the letters of a libertine lawyer

<sup>61</sup>*The Midwife* 1: 192.

<sup>62</sup>[William Kenrick,] *The Magazines Blown Up* [1750]; cited in Roland B. Botting, "Christopher Smart in London," *Research Studies of the State College of Washington* 7 no. 1 (March 1939), 17.

<sup>63</sup>Anon, *A Spy on Mother Midnight: Or, the Templar Metamorphos'd* (1748), 8. See also *A Continuation of Mr. F——'s Adventures in Petty-Coats: Being the Second Part of the Spy on Mother Midnight* (1748) and *A Further Continuation of Mr. F——'s Adventures in Petty-Coats: Being the Third and Last Part of the Spy on Mother Midnight* (1748).

describing his use of sexual disguise in pursuit of his mistress.<sup>63</sup> Calling himself Miss Polly, the lawyer encounters Mother Midnight when she presides over a lying-in attended by his mistress.<sup>64</sup> But it is only in the first pamphlet that the midwife theme is prominent; the next two installments focus on "Mr. F——'s Adventures in Petty-Coats." These adventures are reminiscent of and expand upon Mr. B.'s use of female dress for one of his attempts to seduce Pamela—except that Mr. F., unlike Mr. B., succeeds.<sup>65</sup> Obviously the libertine associations of female disguise would have appealed to a poet of comic erotic verse like Smart. But the main relevance of *A Spy on Mother Midnight* for Smart's persona and stage act is its voyeuristic account of a forbidden world of female rites and rituals, such as "a lying-in conversation."<sup>66</sup> Many of these revelations have a satiric edge, as when the disguised Mr. F. discovers that his mistress's prudish response to him had been a mere pose: in private with other women "she laugh'd at a smutty Jest, however gross" and enjoys "double Entendre."<sup>67</sup> In addition to female speech, Mr. F.'s disguise gives him access to various supposed "truths" about female sexuality such as the use of "an Ivory Substitute of Virility" and the possibility of sexual relations between women.<sup>68</sup> This use of female disguise recalls the legend of Clodius, a Roman individual who dressed as a woman to satisfy his curiosity about the rituals of the festival of the Bona Dea, rituals that men were barred from observing. Richardson's Lovelace imagines that he would, "like a second Clodius, change my dress to come at my Portia or Calpurnia. . . ." even if the penalty were to be death.<sup>69</sup> The Clodius topos appears in the classical tradition (for example in Aristophanes's *Thesmophoriazousae*) and in many English texts (culminating with the harem episode in Byron's *Don Juan*). The topos also indicates a fascination with female experience in general; in this sense, observation of labour pains and of female sexual desire stand for forms of knowledge "between women" usually inaccessible to men.

Clearly many factors shaped Smart's decision to adopt a midwife persona,

<sup>64</sup> *A Spy on Mother Midnight* 1: 18.

<sup>65</sup> Samuel Richardson, *Pamela*, ed. Peter Sabor (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1980), 240-41; *A Spy on Mother Midnight* 1: 33-34.

<sup>66</sup> This "lying-in conversation," as it is described on the title page of the first pamphlet, is given dramatic form, too: see *A Spy on Mother Midnight* 1: 18-30.

<sup>67</sup> *A Spy on Mother Midnight* 1: 11.

<sup>68</sup> *A Spy on Mother Midnight* 1: 32; 2: 44-46.

<sup>69</sup> Samuel Richardson, *Clarissa*, ed. Angus Ross (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1985), 420.

but once on stage his impersonation took its place in a long line of travesty acts and pantomime dames.<sup>70</sup> Sometimes these roles emphasized the gap between the virile man and his petticoats. David Garrick, for example, was immensely popular in the role of Sir John Brute in the revised version of Vanbrugh's *The Provoked Wife*. In the revision, Brute wears female dress and mimics his wife while battling the watch (originally he had worn clerical robes), a scene memorialized in a portrait of Garrick by Johann Zoffini. More often, however, the male actor was a vehicle for the undesirably masculine characteristics of a passionate older woman. Like the unruly woman more generally, the pantomime dame role mocked the potential masculinity of the "one-sex" woman.<sup>71</sup> Grotesque, passionate, insubordinate, verging on masculinity and masculine energies, the one-sex woman could be *played* by a man, but she stood for a woman who threatened to *become* a man.

Samuel Foote became especially famous for one such travesty role, his take-off of Mother Cole, based on the real-life London procuress Mother Douglas, in *The Minor* (1760).<sup>72</sup> He responded to the Mrs. Midnight fad by creating the character of a vain and amorous "Old City Lady," Lady Pentweazel, in *Taste*. Foote's debt to Smart's midwife can be seen in the play's satire of both antiquarian connoisseurship and Lady Pentweazel's comic sexuality. Premiering on 11 January 1752, five weeks after Smart's Oratory began, Lady Pentweazel was first acted by James Worsdale.<sup>73</sup> Foote later made the role an important part of his own repertoire:

*Wednesday* 10 [July 1776]. Mr. Foote, at the Little Theatre in the Haymarket, appeared (their Majesties being present) in the character of Lady Pentweazel, with a head-dress stuck full of feathers in the utmost extravagance of the present mode, being at least a yard wide. Their Majesties laughed immoderately; and, to heighten the ridicule, the whole fabric of feathers, hair, and wool, dropped off as Foote waddled off the stage, which continued the roar for some time.<sup>74</sup>

<sup>70</sup> Studies of the subject, however, tend to gloss over or ignore eighteenth-century theatrical practice—see Marjorie Garber, *Vested Interests: Cross-Dressing and Cultural Anxiety* (New York: Routledge, 1992) and Roger Baker, *Drag: A History of Female Impersonation in the Performing Arts* (New York: New York University Press, 1994). Neither Garrick, Foote, nor Smart appear in the indices to these works.

<sup>71</sup> Thomas Laqueur elaborates his thesis of a historical shift from one- to two-sex models of anatomical sexual difference in *Making Sex*, 8 and *passim*. The one-sex model places male and female anatomy in a relation of hierarchical homology. By the mid-eighteenth century, the older one-sex model was declining in favour of an emerging two-sex model of incommensurable anatomy (and social spheres).

<sup>72</sup> Chatten, *Samuel Foote*, 56-57.

<sup>73</sup> *The Drury-Lane Journal*: 20. For performance information, see Mary C. Murphy, ed., *Samuel Foote's Taste and The Orators: A Modern Edition with Five Essays* (Annapolis: United States Naval Academy, 1982), lxi-lxii.

<sup>74</sup> *The Gentleman's Magazine* 46 (1776): 334.

"Ebenezer Pentweazle" was one of Smart's magazine personae, and whether Foote was borrowing from and echoing Smart in *Taste*, or if on the contrary Smart was inspired by Foote's earlier productions, the important point is that both men were operating in a shared context in which these travesty roles served to mimic and parody women according to traditional notions of them as an unruly and potentially masculinized sex.

It was this travesty context that caught the attention of Bonnell Thornton, Smart's friend and former collaborator on *The Student* magazine, as he prepared to edit *The Drury-Lane Journal* (begun 16 January 1752) under the pseudonym of Roxana Termagant. Like Mrs. Midnight, Termagant is said to be the beneficiary of an elite education; but following a sexual intrigue with her tutor she is thrown on her own, working first as an actress and a travelling player, and then as a translator and bookseller's hack in London. Compared with Smart's Mrs. Midnight, Thornton gives his persona a larger role in his magazine, and sharpens the misogynistic implications as well. For example, Thornton puts Mrs. Midnight and Roxana Termagant together in a "Disputant Society for the Female Sex" held at the "Silent Woman" tavern.<sup>75</sup> These meetings parody middle-rank clubs like the Robin Hood society and satirize female gossip, disorderliness, and desire. They invoke the Clodius topos: Mrs. Midnight opposes a motion to search for female impersonators at one meeting (a nod, of course, to Smart's stage act); while on another occasion the "manly voice" of a male "spy" reveals "his sex" and, according to Termagant, "What follow'd, Decency forbids me to relate. . . ."<sup>76</sup> And they participate in the tradition of satiric antifeminism: the "silent woman" in Ben Jonson's *Epicoene; or, The Silent Woman* is married by a man seeking a perfectly docile wife.

Lance Bertelsen has drawn attention to the social realism of some of *The Midwife's* and *The Drury-Lane Journal's* portrayals of degraded and exploited women, and relates Smart and Thornton's personae to the situation of real female hacks. As Bertelsen observes, these "irreverent, carnivalesque journals and the 'women' who supposedly conduct them speak to larger issues," and there is no denying the comic appeal of their frantic energy and satiric iconoclasm.<sup>77</sup> Yet far from authorizing resistance to the subordination of women, Termagant is repeatedly associated with debased images of prostitution—she is characterized

<sup>75</sup>*The Drury-Lane Journal*: 125.

<sup>76</sup>*The Drury-Lane Journal*: 127, 190.

<sup>77</sup>Bertelsen, *Nonsense Club*, 27-28.

as a denizen of the Drury hundreds and has a copy of Hogarth's *A Harlot's Progress* on her garret walls.<sup>78</sup> As Mary Russo cautions,

The carnivalized woman such as Lady Skimmington, [with her] comic female masquerade of those "feminine" qualities of strident wifely aggression . . . is an image that, however counterproduced, perpetuates the dominant (and in this case misogynistic) representation of women by men.<sup>79</sup>

Thornton's aim is clarified by speculation in *The Drury-Lane Journal* that Termagant is "that prolific inexhaustible authoress, who has lately oblig'd us with the history of Miss BETSY THOUGHTLESS" (Eliza Haywood) or "the Sister of a noted Justice" (Sarah Fielding).<sup>80</sup> On the one hand, Termagant is a comic mask for the fate of university men like himself (and Smart) on Grub Street, a figure for poverty, overwork, and literary dependence; while on the other hand, her sexually suspect and unlofty motivations deflate the authorial dignity of respectable women writers (and competitors) like Sarah Fielding and the later, reformed Haywood. Although the association of both men and women writers with prostitution was traditional, it was a more damaging accusation at mid-century when the profession of writing was becoming increasingly respectable and female modesty increasingly rigorous.

The response to Smart's persona by men like Thornton and Foote, who sought to cash in on the popularity of Mary Midnight by introducing their own female personae, underscores the wider cultural impact of Smart's energetic comic misogyny. In a programmatic statement in the first issue of the magazine, Mrs. Midnight promises that

As we have many more Male than Female Writers, it is not to be wondered at, that the Vices and Foibles of the Women are most maliciously satyized; it shall be my Province sometimes to give my Sex their Revenge, by laying open the Villainy of these our Masters, these Lords of the Creation.<sup>81</sup>

But apart from homophobic attacks on fops and frubbles that are predicated on a view of femininity as a stigma, it is a promise that remains largely unfulfilled. Mrs. Midnight shares little with contemporary women satirists of men such as Charlotte Charke or the fictional Mrs. Selwyn (in Frances Burney's *Evelina*); on the contrary, it is the mockery of women that is central to the Midnight perspec-

<sup>78</sup>*The Drury-Lane Journal*: 60-61.

<sup>79</sup>Mary Russo, "Female Grotesques: Carnival and Theory" in Teresa de Lauretis, ed., *Feminist Studies, Critical Studies* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986), 216.

<sup>80</sup>*The Drury-Lane Journal*: 29.

<sup>81</sup>*The Midwife* 1: 22.

tive. Indeed, much of the verse in the magazine adheres to the conventions of antifeminist satire that have been traced by Felicity Nussbaum, and such types as the whore, scold, Amazon, learned woman, and adulterous wife all appear.<sup>82</sup> Indeed on those occasions when *The Midwife* does offer a positive image of a woman as a respectable wife, learned person, etc., it is frequently undermined by being placed side-by-side with a piece of antifeminist satire. It is in this vein that a letter from a learned woman on the ruins at Herculaneum is followed by Smart's "APOLLO and DAPHNE":

The Nymph was (no Doubt) of a cold Constitution;  
For sure to turn Tree was an odd Resolution:  
Yet in this she behav'd like a true modern Spouse,  
For she fled from his Arms to distinguish his Brows.<sup>83</sup>

Smart writes with panache and wit, and he may well be engaged in such verse in a libertine pose, but there is clearly a dark, excessive side to his humour, too. In Nussbaum's view,

The satiric myth of the whore confirmed male superiority and patriarchal attitudes; men could generalize that unlike men, all women personified lust.<sup>84</sup>

When we read in *The Midwife* that "JOAN'S AS GOOD AS MY LADY IN THE DARK" or of a "True Female, that ne'er knew her Will," it is clear that a lamentable hostility to women energizes Smart's burlesque persona, much as it does those of Foote and Thornton.<sup>85</sup>

Compared to Thornton's Termagant, who is especially like the disreputable and outcast "Female Apologists" (the women writers of scandalous memoirs, such as Laetitia Pilkington) with whom she is identified, Smart's Mrs. Midnight pretends to social and literary standing:

Her wonderful abilities procured her, in spite of her teeth, the friendship, esteem and correspondence of the literati of all nations: nor were the politicians and unlearned, less her admirers.<sup>86</sup>

We have already seen that Smart gives this status to his persona because of the academic orientation of his satire. But Smart wrote at a time when it had become

<sup>82</sup>See Nussbaum, *The Brink of All We Hate*, 4 and *passim*.

<sup>83</sup>"Extract of a Letter from Mrs. Susannah Rowe, to her Sister M. Midnight," *The Midwife* 1: 127-136; "Ebenezer Pentweazle" [Christopher Smart], "APOLLO and DAPHNE," *Ibid*, 137.

<sup>84</sup>Nussbaum, *The Brink of All We Hate*, 15.

<sup>85</sup>*The Midwife* 1: 244; 3: 47.

<sup>86</sup>*The Drury-Lane Journal* 29; *The Nonpareil*, iv.

possible for certain women of privilege to become women of letters, too. He appears to be aware of the social prominence and elite learning of such cultural arbiters as Elizabeth Montagu, whose salons in Hill Street had begun by this time. These women were a little older than Smart, and by 1750 they were making their influence felt in literary circles. Elizabeth Carter had even enjoyed a brief career as a contributor to *The Gentleman's Magazine* some years before Smart's arrival in London, although she assiduously avoided celebrity. Midwifery certainly had its disreputable and even plebian side, but it was a legitimate profession, and one in which a woman's learning might be publicly recognized and published, as Jane Sharp's was in *The Midwives Book*.<sup>87</sup> Perhaps, then, in her learned capacity at least, the social pretensions of Mrs. Midnight were meant to reflect on the educated women of influence or fortune whose social milieu Smart was excluded from and resented.

#### "Woman-Hating" and Depropriation

Unfortunately for the coherence of Smart's masculinism, it was through the grid of "woman-hating" that eighteenth-century observers viewed male homosexuality. For example, a broadside account of a 1707 trial of a group of sodomites is titled "The Woman-Hater's Lamentation"; Alexander Smith's *Lives of the Highwaymen* (1719), a widely disseminated work, labels a supposed sodomite "a woman hater"; mollies are described as "loathing and contemning women" in *Memoirs of a Woman of Pleasure* (1748-9); and William Cowper writes of "womanhood despised" by "lady-like" sodomites in 1784.<sup>88</sup> The locus classicus for the interpretation of male homosexuality as woman-hating is Edward Ward's account of "The Sodomites, or Mollies Club" (1709).<sup>89</sup> Purporting to describe the strange transvestite rituals of these men, Ward asserts that

<sup>87</sup>Sharp herself carefully defends both female learning and the dignity of midwifery as a legitimate profession for women: Jane Sharp, *The Midwives Book* (1671), 2-4.

<sup>88</sup>"The Woman-Hater's Lamentation" (1707) facsimile reprint in Randolph Trumbach, ed., *Sodomy Trials* (New York: Garland, 1986); Captain Alexander Smith, *A Complete History of the Lives and Robberies of the Most Notorious Highwaymen* (5th ed., 1719), ed. Arthur L. Hayward (New York: Bretano's, n. d.), 578; John Cleland, *Memoirs of a Woman of Pleasure*, ed. Peter Sabor (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), 160; William Cowper, "Tirocinium," in Brian Spiller, ed., *Cowper: Poetry and Prose* (London: Rupert Hart-Davis, 1968), 372. A song said to have been sung by the mollies that expresses the wish that "The Devil may take the Froes" appears in *A Genuine Narrative of All the Street Robberies Committed since October Last, by James Dalton, and his Accomplices* (1728), 42.

<sup>89</sup>[Edward Ward,] *The Second Part, of the London Clubs* [1709], 5-6. Subsequent references to this work will appear parenthetically. A longer version of the account appears in Ward's *The Secret History of Clubs* (1709), 284-300.

"every one in his turn makes Scoff of the little Effeminacy, and Weaknesses, which Women are subject to: when Gossiping o'er their Cups, on purpose to extinguish that Natural Affection which is due to the Fair Sex . . ." (6). The equation of sodomy and woman-hating became so common that by the time Fielding's *Joseph Andrews* was published in 1742, the fop Beau Didapper could be economically distinguished from a molly by recording that he was "No Hater of Women."<sup>90</sup> Indeed, those accused of sodomy began to appeal to their love of women or their wives as a proof against the charge.<sup>91</sup>

What is most remarkable about Ward's account, and others like it, is the paradoxical claim that the mollies both emulate women (to the extent of habitually wearing women's clothes) and disdain them (because the desire for men is irreconcilable with respect for women). Ward himself is uncertain which relationship (emulation or disdain) predominates: the same men who "Scoff" (6) also "fancy themselves Women" (5). This uncertainty lived on in other accounts: for example, a character in *Memoirs of a Woman of Pleasure* describes the "monstrous inconsistency" of sodomites "loathing and condemning women, and all at the same time apeing, their manners. . . ."<sup>92</sup> Significantly, however, emulation and mockery are two modes of imitation. By linking the mockery of women (intended, in Ward's view, to "extinguish" [6] desire for women) with the loss of secure masculine identity (the mollies are "degenerated from all Masculine Deportment" [5]), Ward reproduces a view of the dangers of mimesis first articulated by Plato's Socrates and re-energized in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century anti-theatrical discourse:

Then, I said; we will not allow those for whom we profess a care and of whom we say that they ought to be good men, to imitate a woman, whether young or old, quarreling with her husband, or striving and vaunting against the gods in conceit of her happiness, or when she is in affliction, or sorrow, or weeping; and certainly not one who is in sickness, love, or labor.<sup>93</sup>

<sup>90</sup>Henry Fielding, *Joseph Andrews and Shamela*, ed. Douglas Brooks-Davies (Oxford: Oxford

As Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe has argued, Plato saw mimesis as a threat to the proper, unitary, and masculine being of the imitator.<sup>94</sup> Because the security of the republic depends on the heroic character of its guardians, imitation is a political danger, too: impersonation threatens to make the imitator another, "inferior" person (such as a woman), which is why the dramatic poets of the Greek travesty stage were to be banished.<sup>95</sup> Smart invokes the Platonic view of mimesis in *Jubilate Agno* when he repudiates the stage ("For all STAGE-Playing is Hypocrisy and the Devil is the master of their revels" [B345]) and links "players and mimes" (C93) with "degeneracy" (C90), "effeminacy" (B417), and "the people of Sodom" (B419).<sup>96</sup> Before his confinement, Smart countered the threat of mimetic effeminization by drawing a sharp distinction between the dramatic stereotype of the foppish man and the female burlesque of his own midwife persona. Thus when a purported reader of *The Midwife* writes in praise of Jemmy Gyp, an effete imitator of women, Mrs. Midnight angrily demands to know what is meant "by recommending me such a *Fribble*."<sup>97</sup>

The burlesque character of Smart's female persona did not however exempt her from affinities with the dramatic mockeries of the mollies themselves. After the appearance of Ward's account, trial reports, popular prejudice, pamphlet literature, and fictionalizations all linked gay men to the mimicry of women.<sup>98</sup> What I wish to underscore is that the network of expectations that surrounded

<sup>94</sup>Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe, *Typography: Mimesis, Philosophy, Politics* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989), 43-138. Lacoue-Labarthe calls this threat "depropriation."

<sup>95</sup>Plato is explicit about this: he exiles the dramatic poets, whom he calls "pantomimic gentlemen," from his republic because "human nature is not twofold" and ideally "one man plays one part only" (*Critical Theory*, 28); his list of "inferior" persons includes, in addition to women, "slaves," "cowards," "madmen," "artificers," and labourers in general (27).

<sup>96</sup>Christopher Smart, *Jubilate Agno*, ed. Karina Williamson, vol. 1 of *The Poetical Works of Christopher Smart* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980). References to this work appear parenthetically by fragment letter and line number.

<sup>97</sup>*The Midwife* 1: 207.

<sup>98</sup>For example, Alexander Smith refers to the mollies as those "who mimicked in their lewd and indecent amours, all the gestures and speech of a woman" and records at least one molly "dressed in woman's apparel" (*Lives of the Highwaymen*, 578, 579). Samuel Stevens, an informant for the reforming societies, described in court seeing men "mimick the Voices of Women" in a November 1725 visit to a molly house (*Select Trials* 3: 37). In a mid-century novel, Charlotte Charke presents a cross-dressing sodomite named Louman who, wearing "a female rich diabhille" attempts to induct the

sodomy increasingly focused on its purported nature as an exaggerated dramatization of femininity. Nor was this mimicry thought to be limited to using female names, wearing effeminate dress or women's clothes, or imitating women's speech or manners; it was reputed to involve ritual burlesques of female experience, too, including mock groanings or lying-ins (as well as mock marriages and baptisms). Ward gives an extended account of one such ritual:

When they are met together, their usual Practice is to mimick a Female Gossiping, and fall into all the impertinent Tittle Tattle, that a merry Society of good Wives can be sub'ect [*sic*] to: Not long since they had cushion'd up the Belly of one of their Sodomitical Brethren, or rather Sisters, according to Female Dialect, disguising him in a Woman's Night-Gown, Sarsenet-hood, and Night-rail, who when the Company were met, was to mimick the wry Faces of the Groaning Woman, to be deliver'd of a Jointed-Baby, they had provided, and to undergo all the Formalities of a Lying-in. The wooden Offspring to be afterwards Christened, whilst one in a High Crown'd Hat, [& an] old Beldams Pinner, representing a Country-Midwife, and another dizen'd up in a Huswife's Coif for a Nurse, and all the rest of an impertinent *Decorum* of a Christening. (5-6)

Other ostensibly first-hand accounts made similar claims about the secret rituals of the mollies.<sup>99</sup> Historians have tended to downplay the misogyny that is highlighted in these reports: Randolph Trumbach, for example, has argued that the burlesque groanings "were ceremonies mocking the connection of sex to marriage and childbearing," and that the molly "viewed himself, and was seen by others . . . as a species of outcast woman."<sup>100</sup> But Ward himself clearly asserts that it was the mollies who sought to cast out women; and he emphasizes that it is *female* speech ("a Female Gossiping") and *female* suffering ("the wry Faces of the Groaning Woman") that were singled out for mockery. It is, after all, the female contribution to reproduction that a mock lying-in enacts. Thus the grid through which these rituals were reported focused on how the mollies supposedly dramatized femininity as a stigma.

Henley immediately perceived an affinity between Smart's Oratory and the mock groanings of the molly clubs: in his chapel advertisements he denounced

<sup>99</sup>For example, a molly house "Lying-inn" is described in *A Genuine Narrative of All the Street Robberies*, 40.

<sup>100</sup>Randolph Trumbach, "The Birth of the Queen," in *Hidden from History: Reclaiming the Gay and Lesbian Past*, ed. Martin Duberman, Martha Vicinus, and George Chauncey, Jr. (New York: Penguin, 1990), 137. See also Rictor Norton, *Mother Clap's Molly House: The Gay Subculture in England 1700-1830* (London: Gay Men's Press, 1992), 99.

"Molly Smart" and "Molly Midnight," renamed the Castle Tavern (site of the first Oratory production) "Rump-Castle," and described the Oratory as the

Transformation of an empty Playhouse in the Hay-Market to a Lying-in Nursery: Men there lying-in for their Wives: A great Christening shewn there: The Child's Rattle, Drum, and Trumpet: Lullaby-Musick, Cradles, and Gossiping . . . .<sup>101</sup>

Henley was not the only one to question the sexual implications of Smart's burlesque show: Thornton's handling of the female disputants in *The Drury-Lane Journal* suggests that he, too, may have noticed the sodomitical connotations of Smart's Oratory.<sup>102</sup> Tellingly, however, Henley connects the pantomime elements of the molly rituals directly to Smart's stage show, as evident in the description of the Oratory as "a Lying-in Nursery." To reinforce this connexion Henley cleverly, if cryptically, reinterprets the musical instruments used at the Old Woman's Oratory, turning them into nursery toys ("The Child's Rattle, Drum, and Trumpet") and imagining the rough music of Smart's show as a molly-like burlesque of heterosexual ritual.

Henley did not, moreover, restrict his counterattack on the pantomime features of Smart's Oratory to a single molly topos. Consider the following mysterious comment: "Hum-buggers-bougres: New Way of Marriage and Un-Marriage at once."<sup>103</sup> A "humbug" was a practical joke such as the comic impersonation of an individual in the style of Samuel Foote; Henley punningly suggests that one who humbugs is a hum-bugger or bougre—that is, a sodomite.<sup>104</sup> The reference to "Marriage and Un-Marriage" invokes the burlesque heterosexuality of the molly rituals of marrying, the chapel, and the wedding-night.<sup>105</sup> Henley clearly saw the mockery of women as sexually suspect (suggesting, as it did, a form of woman-hating); but, more importantly, he followed Ward and others in viewing

<sup>101</sup>*The Daily Advertiser* (30 November 1751) and (26 December 1751).

<sup>102</sup>For example, when Mrs. Midnight opposes the search for female impersonators (*The Drury-Lane Journal*: 127). Kenrick even tried in 1750 to give *The Midwife* a sodomitical spin, asserting that it was "odd and suspicious" that its producers were "found" in the "Situation" of wearing "the Petticoats of an old Woman" (cited in Botting, "Christopher Smart in London," 17).

<sup>103</sup>*The Daily Advertiser* (30 November 1751).

<sup>104</sup>On humbugging, see *The Student* 2 (1751): 287-90 and Mahony and Rizzo, *Bibliography*, #1187.

<sup>105</sup>On marrying, see *Select Trials* 2: 363, 365; 3: 37; on the wedding-night and the chapel, see *Select Trials* 2: 370. *A Genuine Narrative of All the Street Robberies*, 37, records a wedding. A chapel and marriage are mentioned in Robert Holloway, *The Phoenix of Sodom, or the Vere Street Coterie* (1813), 10. Mahony and Rizzo (*Bibliography*, #1128) print "non-Marriage" for "Un-Marriage," losing the connotation of "un" as "anti" or "contra."

the theatrical imitation of women, and of heterosexual ritual in general (marriage, birth, christening), as a cause for sexual suspicion.

Unfazed, Smart seems to have courted Henley's denunciations: for example, Mrs. Midnight sends her regards to "Sister Henley"—a risky move since this was part of the "Female Dialect" of the mollies—and starting in May 1752 Smart advertises that "Mrs. MIDNIGHT will give CAUDLE."<sup>106</sup> The similarity between molly and pantomime dame was also exploited in an Oratory piece addressing Henley's attempt to "metamorphose" Mrs. Midnight into a man:

The Orator, who never by the Way was distinguish'd for his Delicacy, does see something in me, old as I am, that gives his Thoughts a Turn of a tender Nature, and has amorous Intentions upon my Person. This prompts him to change my Sex, with a View to put me upon demonstrating it to him, in a Manner a virtuous Woman must blush to think on.<sup>107</sup>

Smart's joke works best if we imagine him delivering it on stage in transvestite guise. The comic disavowal of masculinity lets him impugn, in superficially decent terms, Henley's interest in women (he desires an old woman), but it keeps open the accusation of sodomitical desire as well (the woman he desires is a feigned woman—really a man).

Smart clearly felt that he had little to fear from Henley's attempt to label him a sodomite. Many satires of women were *antimatrimonial* and some, following Juvenal, embraced homosexuality, but from the start of the Oratory Smart made sure to introduce to the Midnight persona a powerful *promatrimonial* orientation.<sup>108</sup> Smart's confidence may have found further support in the virile-English orientation of the rough music at the Old Woman's Oratory. This is the implication of a comment put in Henley's mouth by one of Smart's Grub-Street competitors: "Mother Midnight made Use of unfair Weapons—Salt-boxes! why does a Salt-box make her a better Man?"<sup>109</sup> Moreover, in everyday contexts, when rough music appeared with transvestite disguise, it generally served to police the

<sup>106</sup>*The Daily Advertiser* (28 March 1752); Ward, *London Clubs*, 6; Oratory advertisements in *The Daily Advertiser* for 20, 21, 22 and 23 May 1752. Caudle giving was a part of ordinary lying-in practice (see *A Spy on Mother Midnight* 1: 17), but it was linked to the mock groanings of the mollies as well. *Sodom and Onan* (1776) refers to "Their Christ'nings, Lyings-in, Abortions; / Their Caudle-makings, fifty foul Distortions" (cited in Norton, *Mother Clap's Molly House*, 97). Holloway, *The Phoenix of Sodom*, describes an incident from 1785 or 1788 in which a group of mollies "were seized in the very act of giving caudle to their lying-in women" (28).

<sup>107</sup>"Mrs. MARY MIDNIGHT in Defence of her own Existence," *The Midwife* 3: 49, 50.

<sup>108</sup>Nussbaum, *The Brink of All We Hate*, 77.

<sup>109</sup>From "A Specimen of True Oratory" in [William Kenrick,] *Fun* (1752), 23.

norms of female subordination.<sup>110</sup> That Smart was aware of this customary context can be seen from his use of skimmington forms in his poetry. For example, in the popular Oratory piece, "An Epilogue, Spoken by Mrs. Midnight's Daughter, Riding upon an Ass Dressed in a Great Tie-Wig," he adopts the key feature of the skimmington ride: the offender, or their proxy or effigy (often a man in women's clothes) were paraded around on a donkey or ass to the accompaniment of festive rough music.<sup>111</sup> In "Where's the Poker?," a comic fable about an illicit affair between a servant girl and her employer, Smart has a fellow servant put some household appliances—a poker, tongs, and salt-box among them—into her unused bed; when she belatedly discovers them, after accusing others of their theft, she is shamed by their silent reproach, a kind of visual rough music. In line with the sexual double standard, her accomplice (the master) is exempted by the "idle Joker" who mocks his unchaste fellow servant.<sup>112</sup>

What unites Smart's mockery of women with his attacks on Henley in the Oratory is male effeminacy. Male effeminacy opens the way for women warriors like Hannah Snell to usurp masculine courage; male effeminacy is what Smart's British concert of music seeks to exclude from England by mocking the opera and other supposedly effeminate foreign musical imports; and, finally, male effeminacy is what Henley is accused of when he is mocked as an old woman—or a molly. As it happens, the mock groaning was a component of popular protest sometimes used to shame suspected homosexuals. David Rollison has analyzed a well-documented case from the early eighteenth century in which many of the features of Ward's account reappear: according to observers, a man wearing "a mantua petticoat white apron & head clothes that he might look something like a woman . . . was delivered of a child, viz. a wad of straw made up and dressed with clothes in that form . . ."; another man "in a woman's riding hood" acted the midwife, and the "child" was declared to be "male" and bap-

<sup>110</sup>Especially in the skimmington, which asserted "a patriarchal notation of marital roles" according to E. P. Thompson, "Rough Music," in *Customs in Common* (New York: The New Press, 1993), 493. Thompson records that throughout the eighteenth century the skimmington was mainly directed against female speech and violations of the norms surrounding the female marital role (498-502); only from the mid-nineteenth century on do records of skimmingtons against wife-beaters become common (505).

<sup>111</sup>The ass was a proxy for John Hill. See Betty Rizzo, "Enter the Epilogue on an Ass—By Christopher Smart," *The Papers of the Bibliographical Society of America* 73 no. 3 (1979): 340-344.

<sup>112</sup>Smart, *Miscellaneous Poems*, 203-4.

tised "George Buggarer or Buggary."<sup>113</sup> The similarities between this account and Ward's are striking and should raise some concerns: were the accounts of molly-house activities by ostensible eye-witnesses like Ward unconsciously or deliberately shaped by the patterns of popular protest against sexual "deviancy"? How *can* one tell the protester from the protested? (Apart from the participation of women in the rural mock groaning, the main divergence between the events in Gloucestershire and London is something unrelated to sexual impersonation *per se*: rough music.) If Smart's Oratory did allude to or incorporate a mock groaning (something that the prominence of his transvestite midwife persona would suggest), it was obviously meant to follow customary precedent and shame Henley, not performers like Smart.

How stable was Smart's burlesque? Biographers record two anecdotes of Smart cross-dressing off stage, and in both cases he engages in practical jokes that bear an affinity with the pantomime and customary practices we have examined. In one of these accounts, after reading an article in *The Midwife*, David Garrick is reported to have asked to meet Mrs. Midnight:

Smart, "dressed as an ancient lady of the last age," met Garrick in the presence of another lady. While arguing about the stage and poetry Smart let out an oath that shocked the real lady and "stung the two gentlemen into violent fits of laughter."<sup>114</sup>

Like his stage show, Smart's off-stage impersonation evokes both the masculinity of the one-sex woman and, like Garrick's Brute, opens a comic gap between actor and role. Yet despite the seeming univocality of such anecdotes, the action of the Oratory satire was fundamentally unstable, not only because of the Platonic association of mimesis and effeminacy, but because the skimmington and related social rituals were clearly recognizable in the dramatic form of the mock lying-in of the mollies themselves (Ward even called it a "Theatrical [*sic*] way of Gossiping" [6]).<sup>115</sup> Only in *Jubilate Agno* will the embattled masculinity evoked in *The Midwife* and in Smart's early verse for comic purpose become the occasion for a new approach to gender and sexual impersonation. There what is ini-

<sup>113</sup>Cited in David Rollison, "Property, Ideology, and Popular Culture in a Gloucestershire Vil-

tially *between* men for Smart—femininity and female speech as a stigma—is reinterpreted as an internal condition of the masculine itself.

Eighteenth-century observers certainly thought that Smart had personal cause to be anxious about his masculinity: according to Frances Burney "not a grace was bestowed on his person or manners"; his daughter Elizabeth describes his "low stature" and "delicate arms and hands" in the context of his off-stage cross-dressing; and a counter-squib to Smart's *The Hilliad* addressed him as the "great Omnipotent of little Things."<sup>116</sup> In *Jubilate Agno*, he describes himself as "a little fellow" (B45), punningly associates himself with Kittim, "the father of the Pygmies" (B387), and generally worries about his physical as much as his mental standing:

For I have seen the White Raven and Thomas Hall of Willingham and am my self a greater curiosity than both. (B25)<sup>117</sup>

Henley, the object of Smart's Oratory satire, replied with remarks about Smart's size ("Dr. Small Smart"), played with a feminized form of his name ("Kitty Smart"), and, as we have seen, made accusations of homosexuality: "Ah MOLLY SMART! . . . Pimlico Molly Midnight translated to Rump-Castle: Hum-buggers-bougres."<sup>118</sup> These accusations would have hit home not only because of the cultural association of sodomy with male cross-dressing, but because of the continual evocation of effeminate fops, castrati, and hermaphrodites in the context of *The Midwife*, *The Drury-Lane Journal*, and the Old Woman's Oratory. They would also have hit home because of the similarity between the mock-groanings of the Oratory and of the mollies, and because, as the 1750s progressed, stage mimicry of male effeminacy became increasingly identified with the putative homosexuality of the actor.<sup>119</sup> Garrick, who played Fribble in *Miss in Her Teens* in 1747, chose to give the similar part of Daffodil to another actor in *The Male Coquette* in 1757. Looking back on his appearances as Mary Midnight after he was confined by his wife and family, Smart had ample reason to rethink his confident use of "woman-hating" mimicry; and it is in this connex-

<sup>116</sup>Sherbo, *Christopher Smart*, 61, 78; *The Smartiad, a Satire. Occasioned by an Epic Poem, intitled The Hilliad* (1753), 4 (line 20).

<sup>117</sup>Williamson's note to B25 explains that Hall was four feet high at age three; Smart is jokingly



ion that I believe we can best understand his “prophecy that we shall have our horns again” (C118) in *Jubilate Agno*.

## II.

“Subjecting the Woman”:  
Depropriation and *Jubilate Agno*

## Virile vs. Matrical Speech

When Smart asserts that he is “the Reviver of ADORATION” (B332) or prayer in *Jubilate Agno*, we should keep in mind that, like Henley, he sought to be a renewer of oratory (ad-oration) in the contemporary eighteenth-century sense of elocution, too:

For the Romans clipped their words in the Augustan thro idleness and effeminacy and paid foreign actors for speaking them out. (B417)

The elocutionist movement in eighteenth-century Britain, which came to prominence around 1761 with the London lectures of Thomas Sheridan, provided guidelines on such features of ordinary speech as accent, gesture, and intonation. It was a movement with obvious roots in the stage—Sheridan was an actor—but it was also part of a larger cultural shift towards the recognition of the distinctively oral features of public speech and language more generally.<sup>120</sup> Although critics have noted Smart’s turn against the stage in *Jubilate Agno*—a turn which suggests among other things a break with his own career as a female impersonator—his continuing interest in speech and elocution, defining features of the stage and of mimesis in general, has been neglected.

Of course, once noted, it is not hard to see the importance of the continuities between the Old Woman’s Oratory and the “adoratory” of *Jubilate Agno* as “schools” of proper delivery, one mocking, one serious. Like his Oratory, Smart’s poem links foreign actors and the misuse of language to a national effeminization. But whereas Smart’s stage act was satisfied with spoofing the misuses of language and learning, a stance continued by Samuel Foote, who mocked Sheridan in *The Orators* (1762), in *Jubilate Agno* Smart explores the nature of proper

elocution: the poem urges that children be taught correct pronunciations (B537), offers a guide to the sounds of the alphabet (B538ff), and, in a reference to natural philosophy, redefines the scientific process as a problem of oral communication: “For the method of philosophizing is in a posture of Adoration” (B268). Adoration or public prayer, as imagined by Smart, is both a revised mode of worship and a means to the revision of speech practices in general. What Smart’s Oratory and *Midwife* satirize in the manners and learning of Henley (his idiosyncratic attempt at a new mode of worship), *Jubilate Agno* seeks to promote, in a suitably redeemed and revirilized form, as part of Smart’s own national-religious project. As David B. Morris notes, it was a project centred on “the act of prophecy and praise,” that is, on verbal “communication.”<sup>121</sup>

Apart from Clement Hawes and myself, critics who have examined the movement of revirilization in *Jubilate Agno*, and in Smart’s excursus on the horn in particular (see Appendix), have tended to de-sexualize its importance for the poem. Perhaps they have been influenced by Smart’s biographers, who see little in the horn verses beyond an antifeminist mania. Christopher Devlin, for example, charges the poem as a whole with “a morbid preoccupation with horns and cuckoldry, coupled with extravagant misogyny,” and dismisses the horn section as “one of the most shockingly crazy of his passages.”<sup>122</sup> More staidly, Arthur Sherbo observes that

His fear that his confinement might give his wife the liberty to make a cuckold of him is expressed directly at least once and may lurk behind the numerous references to horns in the poem.<sup>123</sup>

At least one critic relates these biographical facts to a view of Smart’s poetry as an expression of personal resentment; but a more common response is to subsume the movement of virilization to other themes.<sup>124</sup> Allan C. Christensen assimilates what he calls the “sexual connotations” of the horn to Smart’s interest, in the C fragment, in the “technical problems of communication.”<sup>125</sup> Alan Liu develops

<sup>121</sup>David B. Morris, *The Religious Sublime* (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 1972), 172.

<sup>122</sup>Christopher Devlin, *Poor Kit Smart* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1961), 87, 122.

<sup>123</sup>Sherbo, *Christopher Smart* 136. Smart’s wife, who abetted his confinement and never sought

Christensen's insights in a deconstructive direction, arguing that the horn is the mark of a wished-for "virile 'writing.'"<sup>126</sup> Geoffrey Hartman, although he does not consider the horn sequence directly, is probably the critic most sensitive to the central—and fraught—role of engenderment in *Jubilate Agno*; but even he displaces Smart's interest in revirilization, viewing it instead as an allegory of vision and self-activity.<sup>127</sup> In contrast, Hawes examines the horn verses in relation to Smart's millennial hope for a virile regeneration of the English.<sup>128</sup>

Alerted by Smart's cross-dressing, I will argue that his treatment of engenderment builds on a career-long interest in definitions of masculinity and masculine speech. The passage on horns—"as multifarious as a fugue," in Liu's perceptive description—condenses and elaborates a series of anxieties about cuckoldry, women, sodomy, virility, and generation that are evident throughout *Jubilate Agno*.<sup>129</sup> Although meaning in this passage accrues mostly through paradigmatic linguistic functions such as puns, polysemy, and intertextuality, it also, like the verses on Smart's cat Jeoffry, coheres syntagmatically as well, telling a story about the horn from the time of David to the present. At stake is not only the relative priority of speech versus writing, or whether the one can embody the other, but more fundamentally the stability of enunciation itself.

The first half of this story is a myth of masculine trauma, involving (i) the horn's primordial appearance on men in the Davidic age (C118-123), (ii) its loss during the captivity of the Jews in Babylon (C124-127), and (iii) a prophecy that men will soon regain their lost horns, starting with the English (C128-139). In the second half, Smart explores the tension generated by his myth between masculine revirilization and sexual reciprocity: on the one hand, (iv) the horns men sport today are those of the cuckold, and only with the millennial return of Christ will men regain their true horns and their proper authority over women (C140-152); but, on the other hand, (v) the true horn is matrilineal as well as virile, a horn of plenty that unites such male and female principles as sky and earth (C153-162). Throughout the whole passage, which is cast as a prophecy of national redemption, Smart invokes the biblical ram's horn as an emblem of

<sup>126</sup>Liu, "Smart's 'Uncommunicated Letters,'" 120.

<sup>127</sup>Geoffrey H. Hartman, "Christopher Smart's 'Magnificat': Towards a Theory of Representation," in *The Fate of Reading and Other Essays* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985) 74-98.

<sup>128</sup>Hawes, *Mania and Literary Style*, 192-93 and *passim*.

<sup>129</sup>Liu, "Smart's 'Uncommunicated Letters,'" 119.

music, prayer, the last trump, and, in particular, the poet-prophet's virile "voice" (C151). As we shall see, however, the celebration of a Davidic horn in *Jubilate Agno* entails not only a retrospective synthesis of Smart's earlier encounters with speech and the heterosexual gender system, but an opening onto something beyond the mimicry of women as well. This "beyond" is the matrix as an autonomous power that is creative without being virile; a forceful Marian voice that can be a positive model for a male poet.

### Phallicizing the Horn

Conventionally, the horn has several referents in the Bible. It is a kind of bugle or cornet used for military purposes, and the term also refers to the horns of the altar; but its primary signification is as an emblem of strength or power.<sup>130</sup> In this last sense it is used figuratively of a king, the power of a nation, and of God.<sup>131</sup> As Clement Hawes points out, a raised ram's horn or *yobel* also figured the millennial overturning of social relations (the Jubilee).<sup>132</sup> The idea that men were once actually horned, in the time of the patriarchs, springs from a mistranslation in the Vulgate. When Moses descends Mount Sinai (Exodus 34:29-35) he is described in Hebrew as having a shiny face or forehead; but the verb in question can be pointed in two different ways: as *qaran* ("to send forth beams") or as *qeren* ("to be horned"). In Jerome's Latin version the original *qaran* 'or *panav* was rendered as *facies cornuta* ("horned face"), and Moses entered Christian iconographic tradition bearing horns (as on Michelangelo's statue).<sup>133</sup>

Smart constructs a legend of divine sexual sanction around the semantic indeterminacy initiated by Jerome:

For in the day of David Man as yet had a glorious horn upon his forehead.

.....

For it was largest and brightest in the best men.

<sup>130</sup>James Hastings, ed., *A Dictionary of the Bible* (New York: Scribner's, 1903) 2: 415-416.

<sup>131</sup>Eg. Numbers 23:22 "God brought them out of Egypt; he hath as it were the strength of an unicorn." Cf. verse A26 "Let Joshua praise God with an Unicorn—the swiftness of the Lord, and the strength of the Lord, and the spear of the Lord mighty in battle," which follows from Numbers 24:8. See Hastings, *Dictionary* 2: 416 and also John L. McKenzie, S.J., *Dictionary of the Bible* (London: Chapman, 1965), 370. Phallic power is not absent from biblical associations, for example in Psalms 132:17 and Jeremiah 48:25; see Mircea Eliade, ed., *The Encyclopedia of Religion* (New York: Macmillan, 1987) 6: 462-63.

<sup>132</sup>Hawes, *Mania and Literary Style*, 193-94.

<sup>133</sup>Eliade, ed., *Encyclopedia* 6: 462. The written Hebrew text lacks vowels (points), so the verb in question would appear as "qrn" in the unpointed Torah. Jerome's decision is significant for transmitting the slippage between written and spoken Hebrew to other languages.

For it was taken away all at once from all of them.  
For this was done in the divine contempt of a general pusillanimity.

For their spirits were broke and their manhood impair'd by foreign vices for  
exaction. (C119, 123-125, 127)

The use of the horn as a figure of God's pleasure or displeasure with an entire people or nation can be found in the Psalms, which Smart began translating before *Jubilate Agno* was finished: "All the horns of the wicked also will I cut off; but the horns of the righteous shall be exalted" (75:10). Like the Psalmist, Smart has a national allegory in mind: his "prophecy that the English will recover their horns the first" (C128) alludes perhaps to the recent English victories over France.<sup>134</sup> But unlike the Psalmist, Smart represents the nation's fall from God's blessing with the loss of a horn that is linked to military strength only in and through the unpusillanimous "manhood" of "Man." At first, Smart merely alludes to this phallic association, noting that the larger the horn the better the man (C123); but by verse C127 reference to the phallic power of the horn is explicit: out of "divine contempt" (C125) God removes the horn from men because "their manhood [is] impair'd" (C127). The phallic connexion is further underscored by Smart's reduction of the two Mosaic horns of the iconographic tradition to a single Davidic one (C119). As an emblem of masculinity, this Davidic horn is cut off or "amerced" (C156) by God from a degenerate nation as a proper sign of its impotence.

Smart notes the natal aspect of engenderment throughout his treatment of national themes in *Jubilate Agno*, but he always gives national regeneration a masculine embodiment in male seed, manly form, and patriarchal genealogy. Both the genealogies of the nations (B433-461), which the English lead as "the seed of Abraham" (B433), and the anthropomorphic geography of Europe (C101-105) in which ". . . England is the head of Europe" (C102) share a masculine embodiment. The latter verses revisit *The Midwife*, which proposed a similar geography a decade earlier, but made Europe an old woman and England one of her arms.<sup>135</sup> Smart's insistence on the embodiment of the nation in a masculine form is the rationale for such odd conjunctions as his prayer for "the seed of Vir-

gil" and "Joseph STUD" (B72): it is a logic of fecundity and national unity—"For the Romans and the English are one people . . ." (B434)—in a male body. Smart shows no interest in monarchical forms of national regeneration: on the contrary, "the house of Stuart" (D206) for which he prays is only one of the hundreds of houses of English patriarchy celebrated in the D fragment, and the route to national salvation is through the abdication of monarchical sovereignty:

For I prophecy that the King will have grace to put the crown upon the altar.  
For I prophecy that the name of king in England will be given to Christ alone.  
(C86-87)

In these lines Smart applies the foundational principles of his poem—"Rejoice in God, O ye Tongues; give the glory to the Lord, and the Lamb" (A1)—to George III; but he balances the weakening of kingly sovereignty with a corresponding heightening of the masculine power of individual men:

For I prophecy that men will live to a much greater age. This ripens apace God  
be praised.  
For I prophecy that they will grow taller and stronger.  
For degeneracy has done a great deal more than is in general imagined.  
For men in David's time were ten feet high in general.  
(C88-91)

To put the crown, in archaic times made of horns, on the altar is to re-horn a degenerate male populace. To put off sovereignty—to acknowledge the sovereignty of God—is to empower actual male bodies. Submission to God reverts to a fertility rite, and the destiny of a people is condensed into the fate of the male seed and masculine inheritance of individual men and their houses.

Smart's personal obsession with the generations of his seed and the vicissitudes of his masculinity is the direct image of his national thinking. Calling himself a son of Agricola and St. George and Thomas Becket, Smart draws the virility of his body and of the English nation together, as Albert Kuhn observes.<sup>136</sup> What is risked in his own body is also the stake of "the landed interest" (D17) and "the old houses of England" (D49)—not in an analogical relation, but as an instance of the fate of all men of estate, all houses. Thus the importance of the lines on

<sup>136</sup>"Let Japhia rejoice with Buteo who hath three testicles," he writes, "For I bless God in the strength of my loins . . ." (B80). Even as "a little fellow" Smart is "a dwarf that towereth above others" (B45) and "of the same seed as Ehud, Mutius Scaevola, and Colonel Draper" (B19)—all national military heroes. He is a son of Agricola and of St. George (B54, 58n, 231), thus "descended from the steward of the island" (B137) and not merely from his father, steward of Christopher Vane's Fairlawn estate. "[A] son of ABRAHAM" (B73), Thomas Becket is also his "father" (B134), and he writes, "For I bless the Lord JESUS for his very seed, which is in my body" (B144). See Kuhn, "The Poet as Patriot of the Lord," 125-27.

<sup>134</sup>In the Seven Years War. Quebec was taken in September 1759, and Pondicherry in early 1761 as Smart was writing these lines.

<sup>135</sup>". . . Europe itself, if we consider her Figure in the Map, will appear to be nothing else but an Old Woman" (*The Midwife* 1:137). She is also upside-down, so that Portugal and Spain are the head, Poland the genitals, and England her left arm (138).

Smart's own inheritance (B46-52), which serve to designate him as a patriarch and patriarchy as a sexual problem. The estate at issue here was that of his cousin at Staindrop Moor, to which Smart had a tenuous right as heir-at-law (his mother having already sold his father's estate in Kent).<sup>137</sup> Claiming to have made his "flocks" and "herds" and "lands" (B52) over to his mother, Smart plays "a fool for the sake of Christ" (B51) and pursues the logic of sacrifice: "For my grounds in New Canaan shall infinitely compensate for the flats and maynes of Staindrop Moor" (B23). What kind of "fool"? running what "hazards" (B50)? The "Platycerotes" and "Musimon" of the first and last LET verses of the passage mark the sexual stakes: Smart places the loss of his inheritance between the horns of the cuckoldry he feared from his wife—"they throw my horns in my face" (B115)—as he claims to make his cousin's estate over to his mother, another woman who abandoned him to a madhouse.

Of course, female adultery endangers more than male sexual pride, since the security of male property was predicated upon female chastity. In fact, the "degeneracy" (C90) Smart fears springs from his ambivalence towards the power of the matrical in general over men: like "the cradle," for Smart the womb and all things feminine are "for weakness" (B278). We can now see why he was drawn to impersonate a midwife (an obvious emblem for the matrical in general) and to "woman-hating" burlesques in the style of the mollies: far from always functioning as a "weaker vessel," the maternal matrix can appear as a source of male weakness. A man's seed is powerless apart from a woman's womb; and this matrix refutes the masculine fantasy of auto-production and self-sovereignty. The male bodies of Smart's masculinist fantasies turn out to be held in "jeopardy" (B1) like his own, tremulous and vulnerable:

For they work me with their harping-irons, which is a barbarous instrument,  
because I am more unguarded than others. (B124)

The "harping-iron," which evokes the harpoons used to hunt the "Whale" of the corresponding LET verse, sets both harping scold and harpy against the "unguarded" speech of the man of Wales (Smart's mother was Welsh) and his Davidic harp.

The threat of a mocking female sexuality, apparent in how women "have turned the horn into scoff and derision without ceasing" (C142), recurs at various points in the poem. Naming Michal in a LET verse, Smart recalls her mockery of David in the corresponding FOR verse: "For he that scorneth the scorner hath condescended to my low estate" (B61). Female speech and sexuality threaten masculine self-sovereignty (Smart was confined by his family for praying in public)—and figure both "Shears" (B179) and she-arse: that is, as Hartman suggests, the matrix as a castrating and mocking principle ("For I am safe, as to my head, from the female dancer and her admirers" [B140]).<sup>138</sup> A closer homonym for "Shears" might be "she-R's," which we can gloss using one of Smart's elocutionary guidelines for pronunciation (B538ff): "For R is rain, or thus reign, or thus rein" (B554). Elsewhere, Smart links rain with the power and blessing of God, who properly reigns over and reins in man (C110). But with the crown as a symbol of earthly male authority placed on the altar, Smart is evidently concerned with the proper source of masculine sacrifice: logos or matrix, Lamb or woman.

Smart's belief in the vulnerability of men to the maternal matrix leads directly to his desire for a stable hierarchy of gender identity and speech in the passage on horns. The health of a male nation is predicated on the self-identical status of the "male." Smart's phallic obsession has as its overt, stated aim the exercise of power (potency) over women and the exclusion of effeminacy (impotency) from power. Following the heterosexual norms of his time, this is articulated as the task of "subjecting the woman" (C140) to—and rejecting the sodomite from—the horn of a re-virilized masculine voice and prerogative. Unlike the Oratory of Mary Midnight, Smart's adulatory aims to foreclose on all forms of sexual confusion and impersonation, and comes close to excluding even the virgin Mary from her Magnificat. Bearing in mind his love of female personae and Henley's accusations, it seems clear that Smart is exorcising a part of himself, too. Precisely where he innovates and diverges from biblical symbolism by heavily phallicizing the horn, Smart produces a gender taxonomy which recapitulates the heterosexual gender system of mid-century.

Geoffrey Hartman has noted how Smart opens his text to the names of animals not in the Bible, such as "the Beavers" taken "alive into the Ark of the Testi-

species, plants, minerals, and so on, Smart adds at least one exclusion to biblical precedent: Noah's ark embraced the species in the form of male and female couples, but Smart tends to exclude woman from his poetic ark. Relatively few of the hundreds of proper names in the poem are female, and the clear principle is one of masculine preservation.<sup>140</sup> The *Jubilate* is a man's ark and a fantasy "child of man" (B278); a poem where the womb and its daemonic powers are meant to be subjected to a male law:

For the Longing of Women is the operation of the Devil upon their conceptions.  
 For the marking of their children is from the same cause both of which are to be parried by prayer.  
 For the laws of King James the first against Witchcraft were wise, had it been of man to make laws. (B297-299)<sup>141</sup>

Smart fears that even unadulterated sexual relations can be marred by the unruly longings of women—that the male principle can be usurped by the action of female "conceptions" within the womb. Thus the sexual enunciation of female thought must be regulated by men: women must be "cooped up and kept under due controul" (C67), and Smart even prays for "the restoration of the veil" (B103). Smart draws from the language of the common law in these lines: man, like his horn, should be *sole*, "uncovered" (C132); it is women who are properly *covert* or veiled (B103).

Smart's target remains the unruly, one-sex woman satirized in *The Midwife* and at the Old Woman's Oratory, and he follows late eighteenth-century satires of women by focusing on "the power of wives to control men."<sup>142</sup> The role of the horn in this is clear:

For it is instrumental in subjecting the woman.  
 For the insolence of the woman has increased ever since Man has been crest-fallen.  
 For they have turned the horn into scoff and derision without ceasing. (C140-142)

Without the phallic power for which God blesses man with a horn, the only horn a man is likely to bear will be the parodic sign of a woman's autonomy. "Man" is

<sup>140</sup>Hartman interprets the exclusion of the females of the species and the pairing of "unmatable *res creatae*" as a problem of reproduction: "If the ark into which these pairs enter cannot be that of generation, it must be that of regeneration." However his question—"whether sexual generation is being sacrificed or consecrated"—can only be answered by examining the position of woman in the poem. See Hartman, "Smart's 'Magnificat,'" 96.

<sup>141</sup>Smart celebrates this power under male control in a verse on Jacob and "his speckled Drove" (A6)—see Genesis 30:37-39.

<sup>142</sup>Nussbaum, *The Brink of All We Hate*, 88.

rightfully upright, lofty-browed, horned, and "uncovered," not "crest-fallen" or *covert*—above the woman, exercising his right erection. The same metaphor of phallic elevation or phallotropism appears in Smart's awareness of the priority of *qaran over qeren*. Although he follows the Vulgate reading, there are three references to the brightness of the horn in the first six verses of the passage. "For it was largest and brightest in the best men" (C123): phallic power and divine light are identified in the blessing of a sky-god (see C132-136 and Smart's love of praying in the rain [B384]). By recalling Moses's shining forehead from the Authorized Version, Smart deliberately associates light and horn, blessing and phallus, sky-god and male-principle through an absent slippage between written and spoken Hebrew.

Verse C127 gives the cause of the "general pusillanimity" (C125) for which "Man" (C119) lost his horn: "their manhood [was] impair'd by foreign vices for exaction." What vices? Why foreign? In Leviticus 18:22 male homosexual acts are represented as a confusion of sex ("Thou shalt not lie with mankind, as with womankind: it is abomination") and are identified with heathen abominations which have defiled Israel. Sodomy, viewed in the eighteenth century as imported variously from Italy or Bulgaria, and stigmatized from the late seventeenth century on as an effeminate practice, appears in Leviticus 18:22 and elsewhere as a source of God's disfavour. Smart himself links sodomy and national effeminacy:

For the Romans clipped their words in the Augustan thro idleness and effeminacy and paid foreign actors for speaking them out.  
 . . . .  
 For shaving of the beard was an invention of the people of Sodom to make men look like women. (B417, 419)

Smart plays on two senses of "clipping": the mispronunciation of words and the cutting or shaving of a beard. Presumably one type of mispronunciation Smart means by "clipping" is lispng, which was identified with molly speech.<sup>143</sup> (Perhaps a third sort of "clipping" lies behind these verses as well, that of the "Shears" of women like Delilah.) Verse B578 reiterates the connexion of shaving, sodomy, and sexual impersonation. Smart infers that in regaining a lost masculinity "a beard is a good step to a horn" (C131). The assumption seems to be that it is easier for men to "lie with mankind, as with womankind," when men

<sup>143</sup>*Select Trials* 3: 37; Nathaniel Lancaster, *The Pretty Gentleman* (1747), 15; Cleland, *Memoirs of a Woman of Pleasure*, 160.

look like women. The beard is a sign of adult heterosexual masculinity, and its removal or absence, for Smart, has the same effect as cross-dressing—a man can pass as a woman:

Nor can they tell his sex with truth,  
By reason of his looks and youth,  
And smooth ambiguous face.<sup>144</sup>

This may be why Deuteronomy 22:5 proscribes male and female cross-dressing; it is certainly a reason why the English travesty stage was attacked and eventually reformed. While there are no biblical proscriptions against shaving *per se*, the patriarchs are bearded, and shaving is identified with heathenism when Joseph must shave before appearing before pharaoh (Genesis 41:14).<sup>145</sup> Fearful of being cuckolded, linking the virility of the nation with that of himself and his voice, Smart gives expression to both personal and cultural anxieties in passages like this: sodomy, cross-dressing, and the lost horn are all promiscuous mixings of the signs of gender, threatening the self-identical status and stability of English men with depropriation.

#### Phallic Depropriation

As it turns out, however, Smart's attempts at a taxonomic defence of male self-identity are insufficient to hold off the depropriation of the phallosymbol itself. According to Lacoue-Labarthe, although Plato's view of mimesis is often understood in terms of either production or copying, it springs more fundamentally from the fear of self-division or depropriation, making it at root a problem of proper being, not truth. Plato banishes the poets from *The Republic* not because they are liars, but because they threaten the self-identity of members of the guardian-class (and therefore the stability of the polis) with their preferred mode of narration, mimesis (the dramatic presentation of other voices). Plato reserves his greatest disdain for the impersonation of particular kinds of voices, those outside masculine reason such as women and the mad. As Lacoue-Labarthe puts it, "The two major risks in Platonic mimetism are feminization and madness."<sup>146</sup>

The artistic implications for Smart are clear. As we have seen, both Smart's Scriblerian satires and the molly-club mockeries are vulnerable to the Platonic proscription of mimetic depropriation. Although Smart reiterates the Platonic exclusion of "players and mimes" (C93) in *Jubilate Agno*—even linking the stage with female insubordination (C67-68)—the problem of the de-constitution of identity carries over from the theatre to the womb or matrix, as sexual reproduction is also a principle of extra-phallic typing ("marking" [B298]) or re-typification, much like madness. As a poet—a poet who invokes the precedent of Orpheus, who was dismembered at the hands of women—Smart confronts the fact of male dependency on the matrilineal principle in all engenderment and all formation. As I have argued elsewhere, Lacoue-Labarthe's work suggests that the diacritical nature of language is internal to the act of enunciation itself, whether or not one speaks in another person.<sup>147</sup> Significantly, Smart's confrontation with the matrilineal occurs at the point in his poem where his antifeminism is least restrained.

Even though women are subjected by the horn (C140), as evident from their "insolence" when man loses his horn (C141), they also "have turned the horn into scoff and derision without ceasing" (C142)—they horn men by betraying the *coverture* of marriage and by cuckolding their husbands. Verse C142 shows that the very term "horn" as a self-sufficient sign of masculinity is undermined by female action: to be cuckolded means to be horned and, rather than the horn serving only as a sign of woman's subjection, it can be a figure of petticoat government and male impotence as well. Indeed, even the biblical patriarchs were not immune to such reversals: the image of the cuckolded Moses was traditional, as Hawes has shown.<sup>148</sup> As a form of social mockery, the appearance of cuckoldry in *Jubilate Agno* ironizes the Davidic horn and ties female sexuality to female satire and speech, evoking biblical women such as Michal and the satire of men largely absent from *The Midwife*. This reversal echoes throughout the horn passage. Confined for madness, fearful for his wife's fidelity, Smart says: "For the head will be liable to less disorders on the recovery of its horn" (C137); we hear: horn-mad, lunatic. If men once had a horn, Satan always has his: Smart writes: "For it is a strong munition against the adversary, who is sickness and death" (C139); we read: Auld Hornie, the devil

Instead of shoring up the univocality of the term, Smart's rehearsal of the horn's numerous enunciations expands the word, linking it to a series of contradictory referents: God and Satan, reason and madness, male and female. Above all, gender is confused—"horn" is not only the negative sign of male impotence, but a positive term for female potency (the matrilineal): "For the horn is of plenty" (C153). Used as a drinking vessel, rather than a military projection, the horn is available as a figure for the female genitals and fertile womb. We are reminded that the horn is an organ common to male and female animals, and that Zeus once took food from the horn of a goat-nymph named Amalthea (the original cornucopia). As Alan Liu observes, "'Horn' . . . has the resonance of a primal word such that it can turn at any moment into its opposite."<sup>149</sup> Clearly the sexual meaning of "horn," despite its deployment as a sign of heterosexual masculinity, is no exception to this feature of enunciation, and its derivation from *qaran/qeren* is fitting. Liu notes the opposition between the horn as a mark of virility and of sterility (cuckoldry) in men, but his main interest is in the dynamic between an aural and a visual horn (figures of voice and of writing respectively) and he does not distinguish between male and female potency.<sup>150</sup> Yet a sexual polarity between phallic and matrilineal horns is central to Smart's argument.<sup>151</sup>

It is the proliferation of the word "horn" that leads to the collapse of the phallotrope. Although opening with and briefly sustaining the conjunction of elevation and male potency that I am calling the phallotrope, the passage on horns concludes with a descent from heaven to earth, high to low, male to female, (Godly) light to (Satanic) earth ("filth" [C117]), solar David to chthonic Orpheus. Smart's "desire towards the most High" (B156) can be seen in his use of vertical terms in verses C128 to C146: the horn is a "tower" (C138), and although man is temporarily "crest-fallen" (C141), God and the angels still "have their horns" (C144). The men of England, the head of Europe, "will recover their

<sup>149</sup>Liu, "Smart's 'Uncommunicated Letters,'" 120.

<sup>150</sup>"Setting vision against hearing, the horn points finally to the parallel dialectic of writing vs. speech" (Liu, "Smart's 'Uncommunicated Letters,'" 119).

<sup>151</sup>Lacoue-Labarthe argues that at the root of the Platonic thought about mimesis is anxiety over the sexual relation; but this anxiety springs from "the necessary reversibility of the motifs of engenderment and of the figure, of conception, and of the plastic" (*Typography*, 128). The two discourses find their commonality in the problem of formation generally. Liu argues that "Christ's horn of translation, it turns out, is identical with the immanent horn of the growing world . . ." ("Smart's 'Uncommunicated Letters,'" 121), but leaves the matrilineal implications and the feminine associations of such a world unexplored. Hartman also excludes the matrilineal: "Even Mary's 'Magnificat,' when mentioned in B1, 43, exalts not the woman and mother but rather language in its creature-naming and creature-presenting function" ("Smart's 'Magnificat,'" 83).

horns the first" (C128) and "delight to go uncovered" (C132), opening their heads to the direct blessing of a sky-god. Hats and even roofs are obstacles "and therefore we pray on the house-top" (C136). It is interesting to note that the divine blessing is literalized in terms of "the blessing and virtue of the rain" (C110). Even with access to God's elevation, man's dependent relation is manifested as a de-virilization, the passivity of a feminine receptacle like the earth itself whose fertility depends on the seminal virtue of the rain.

The descent from sky to earth begins with verse C147: "For our Blessed Saviour had not his horn upon the face of the earth." Whereas "Man" in David's time was elevated by God's masculine blessing, Christ descends to earth as a horn-less man "in meekness and condescension to the infirmities of human nature" (C148) of another age. It is a new dispensation according to Christian doctrine; and in the horn of salvation and of Christ's second coming (C149-150) there is another implication to the restoration of man's horn: redemption from our fallen nature. But while Christ answers Smart "in the air as with a horn from Heaven" (C152), this virile, redeeming millennial sky- or solar-horn is immediately superseded by the cornucopia, an earth-horn (C153). Even the reassertion of masculine height in these verses deviates from a strict patriarchal law. When Christ descends "upon the face of the earth" (C147), the earth's face is revealed to be a female one in verse C156 (and B234: "For EARTH which is an intelligence hath a voice and a propensity to speak in all her parts"). A similar phrase appears at the start of the passage: God's blessing comes "upon the human face"—literally, upon the horns of men—"at morning prayer" (C122). "Human" in this case is a masculine modifier—the horn is upon a male face. But Christ descends, without a horn, upon the female face of the earth to be borne by Mary, and there is a clear movement over the course of the horn verses from solar reflection (*qaran* as an Apollonian light) to agricultural origin (*qeren* as a Demeterian fecundity).

With this prosopopoeia Smart gives the horn, which belongs on the face of man to proclaim his masculinity, its own face—a female face. After the brief excursus on Christ's horn-to-come (C147-152), Smart rings the changes on the horn as a matrilineal principle of "plenty" (C153): "fertility," "flowers," "milk," "honey," "Bees," "Beeves," "earth," and "Agriculture" are the terms of the last movement. We are reminded that before the son and his embodiment there was mother Mary, her conception, and her song in which the lowest is raised up and the empty are filled (Luke 1:46-55). Under the phallic sign of the masculine

Smart unearths an omphalos—the earth as a generative power—and the horn comes to cross-dress itself, as it were, like Hercules and Omphale exchanging clothes.

### The Ground Beneath His Speech

One can acknowledge that the horn verses never entirely leave their overarching masculinism: along with the emphasis on *Christ's* horn, the male principle reappears near the end of the passage: “For when Man was amerced of his horn, earth lost part of her fertility” (C156). Smart taps into archaic myth, associating fertility with the horn from its primitive use as a plough, when ploughing was analogized with intercourse as “the impregnation of Mother Earth.”<sup>152</sup> Moreover, the horn passage is immediately followed by the patriarchal paean of the D fragment.

But having granted these points, it is clear that Smart's aspiration to masculine power is in direct proportion to his alienation from it. It may not be too unusual for a man to adopt a militant patriarchalism as a form of self-consolation. More original, perhaps, is Smart's inclination in *Jubilate Agno* to re-include those who have been excluded by his patriarchalism, albeit with a place secured for himself, too. This pattern of exclusion-reinclusion is a feature of both Smart's poetic method and personal expression. We see it, for example, after his jealous reflections on his blonde-haired wife, when he writes: “Let Tabbaoth rejoice with Goldy Locks. God be merciful to my wife” (C128).

A similar pattern of exclusion-reinclusion appears with the fertility of the earth at the end of the horn passage. The lost horn of man can be associated with male potency, upon which the earth's fertility would depend; or it can be associated with “the face of the earth” itself, so that the impairment of the earth is a synonym for the loss of the matrilineal principle in general, including the loss of a “Davidic” cornucopia: “For the horn is of plenty. / For this has been the sense of all ages” (C153-4). If the horn is a cornucopia in “all ages,” then David's horn is a horn of plenty, too, and the unicornic, phallic horn is double, duplicitous, although in a different way than the parodic horns of the cuckolded Moses. Here the matrilineal power of mother earth is reincluded in Smart's prophecy of a millennial regeneration as a productive Demeterian principle rather than a destructive spirit of mockery. Indeed, the phalloscope is de-constituted by this elabora-

<sup>152</sup>Eliade, *Encyclopedia* 6: 462. The reverse analogy, in which sexual intercourse is represented as a type of ploughing, was a cultural commonplace; see, for example, Sharp, *The Midwives Book*, 18.

tion of the horn, and the language of elevation leads to the oxymoron that “earth will get it up again” (C160), a female erection, so that there is no longer any clear priority of sky-horn (“a tower upon an arch” [C138]) over earth-horn (“the horn is of plenty”).<sup>153</sup>

If the cornucopia is a symbol of a trans-temporal matrilineal power for Smart, having existed in “all ages,” it is also the sign of a present-day renewal of England's green and pleasant land:

For the art of Agriculture is improving.  
For this is evident in flowers.  
For it is more especially manifest in double flowers.  
For earth will get it up again by the blessing of God on the industry of man.  
For the horn is of plenty because of milk and honey.  
For I pray God be gracious to the Bees and the Beeves this day. (C157-62)

England's bees and cows (“Beeves”), the source of the “milk and honey” of biblical promise and part of the earth's fruitfulness in general, combine here with “the industry of man” in an image of humanity's reunion with nature. Such a reunion is an example of a pastoral “art,” one that a poet might speak to or further, but it is an instance of agrarian capitalism, too. “Improvement” was an especially rich word in the eighteenth century, serving as a term for innovation in horticultural techniques such as the development of extra-large or “double” flowers, a synonym for new kinds of privacy-promoting landscape practices adopted by the well-to-do, and a code-word for the expropriation and enclosure of common lands for large-scale agriculture.<sup>154</sup>

Is Smart betraying the roots of his song in these lines, reincluding a social hierarchy that is at odds with the millennial programme of the Jubilee and the Magnificat that Clement Hawes has shown is so important to this poem? Other verses suggest that Smart is certainly conflicted on this score: for example, elsewhere in the poem he evokes the notion of the biblical promised land via England's imperial mandate: “For I bless God in the honey of the sugar-cane and the milk of the cocoa” (B78). Certainly Smart's references to blackness as the mark of Cain and his neglect of slave labour in the manufacture of colonial produce are evidence of the political limits of his inclusive rhetoric, as Hawes demon-

<sup>153</sup>Hawes suggests that there is “a clitoral image” in this female erection (*Mania and Literary Style*, 204). My point is that, in the one-sex model, a woman's reproductive anatomy is imaged as an inverted internalization of the male genitalia.

<sup>154</sup>See Raymond Williams, *The Country and the City* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973), 60-67 and *passim*.

<sup>155</sup>Hawes, *Mania and Literary Style*, 220-21.



strates.<sup>155</sup> The point I wish to stress is that the perspective of these verses sets Smart's ideal of the patriot- and husbandman-poet, as described by Kuhn, in a new context, one at once commercial and matrilineal. The result is to connect the matrilineal vitality of the earth and the *poiesis* or art of eighteenth-century agrarian capitalism.

With this connexion Smart clearly distinguishes the matrix from a simple "natural-feminine" capacity as a merely vegetative or organic function and places it instead within a thematic of making, creating, and culturing. In doing so he adverts to a classical distinction between mimesis as a copy of nature and mimesis as a completion of nature: in Aristotle's words, "On the one hand, *techné* [art] carries to its end what *phusis* [nature] is incapable of effecting; on the other hand, it imitates."<sup>156</sup> We can thus distinguish two kinds of mimesis: productive or active, and imitative or passive. These kinds were commonly gendered as male and female: Diderot, for example, conceives of active mimesis as a virile mimesis.<sup>157</sup> Significantly, however, through his agrarian metaphor, Smart reframes female fertility as a form of active mimesis or *Bildung*: the she-arse ("Shears") is also a she-*ars* or female art, "direct as the life" (B179). In this way Smart both modernizes his biblical sources in terms of agrarian capitalism and implicitly links female fertility, creativity, and speech. The bees and the beehives of the land of milk and honey are near homophones, and as spoken words they materialize regeneration in the buzzing sound and type of the "B"—"a creature busy and bustling" (B514). This "B" enacts the material movement or pollination of pure sound as an instance of ur-enunciation and ur-speech. Beneath mother earth, the mother tongue.

In the Bible female fertility and speech are linked with the horn when Hannah thanks God for the son she has conceived:

And Hannah prayed, and said, My heart rejoiceth in the LORD, mine horn is exalted in the LORD: my mouth is enlarged over mine enemies; because I rejoice in thy salvation. (1 Samuel 2:1)

"Mine horn is exalted": the raised ram's horn here links Christ's *kenosis* (C147) and Hannah's conception and is transformed from a purely masculine agent into a female capacity—the womb.<sup>158</sup> Hannah's horn also analogizes her song, and

<sup>155</sup>Cited in Lacoue-Labarthe, *Typography*, 255.

<sup>157</sup>Indeed, Diderot, like Smart, was searching for a positive mimesis: see Lacoue-Labarthe, *Typography*, 265.

<sup>158</sup>Karina Williamson suggests that Smart is alluding to Hannah in her note to verse C149.

Smart picks up on this biblical celebration of female speech when he links Hannah and David as singers, and "the song of Hannah" (B458) with "Mary's key" (that is with Mary's Magnificat), in *Hymns and Spiritual Songs* (1765).<sup>159</sup> Hannah's fertility recalls Mary Midnight's sponsorship of Old Time's exhortations to "Marry and multiply" at the Oratory; but unlike *The Midwife*, the *Jubilate* embraces the female tongue (and not only female fertility) as a legitimate talent in and of itself and as a model of *masculine* poetic authority.<sup>160</sup> From verse C153 on, indeed, Smart invites Mary and her mother tongue back into his adoration and makes the principle of feminine origin part of his poetic address. Nor is this a passing interest: Smart's fascination with Hannah and Mary, evidence of his on-going interest in female speech and personae, continued after his confinement with the appearance of *Hannah* (1764), an oratorio dedicated to her and her song.

In addition to its function as a female figure for poetic inspiration, "Mary's key" clarifies the speech situation of Smart's poem which, although intended for public use, was written while he was imprisoned. Smart's encounter with his own misogyny in *Jubilate Agno* is complex, but it seems that in the very act of modeling his poem on Mary's Magnificat Smart saw himself as a feminized and silenced subject of poetry, a situation to which he responded with both hyper-masculine attacks on women and the adoption of female-inspired personae: "For the hour of my felicity, like the womb of Sarah, shall come at the latter end" (B16). Sequestered for insisting on his right to pray in public, Smart turns to biblical women like Hannah and Mary whose exercise of public speech and prayer was recorded and celebrated in scripture—just as women preachers of the period turned to similar precedents "to invoke scriptural authority for the right of women to speak in public."<sup>161</sup> As a consequence, Smart's adoption of "Mary's key" does more than reiterate the themes of masculine degeneration: *Jubilate Agno* is predicated, as *The Midwife* and Old Woman's Oratory are not, on a *valorization* of female speech and poetry as examples for male speakers. It is not a position we can imagine many of Smart's male contemporaries taking: at the end

<sup>159</sup>Christopher Smart, *Religious Poetry 1763-1771*, ed. Marcus Walsh and Karina Williamson, vol. 2 of *The Poetical Works of Christopher Smart* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983), 34 (hymn 1, line 37) and 48 (hymn 9, line 44).

<sup>160</sup>*The Midwife* 3: 59. In the same volume a letter from Apollo to Mary Midnight compares her literary creativity with her professional interest in "Conception" (54-55).

<sup>161</sup>Anne K. Mellor, "The Female Poet and the Poetess: Two Traditions of British Women's Poetry, 1780-1830," *Studies in Romanticism* 36 (1997): 262-63. See also Easton, "'Mary's Key' and the Poet's Conception."

of "An Epistle to a Lady," for example, the best that Pope can muster is to consider an exceptional woman like Martha Blount as a worthy *reader* of *his* poetry, lucky to have been granted by Apollo "... Sense, Good-humour, and a Poet."<sup>162</sup>

The concept of mimetic depropriation makes it clear why Mary and Hannah are so important to Smart's self-image as a poet, even as they seem to inhabit the margins of a poem in which the persona of the poet is usually male in the image of David and his "magnificent" harp (A41). Their importance is confirmed by the image of another male poet that appears, interestingly, in the C fragment:

For the story of Orpheus is of the truth.  
 For there was such a person a cunning player on the harp.  
 For he was a believer in the true God and assisted in the spirit.  
 For he play'd upon the harp in the spirit by breathing upon the strings.  
 For this will affect every thing that is sustain'd by the spirit, even every thing in nature. (C52-56)

Orpheus was famous for songs so compelling that even the rocks and trees were moved to dance. It is the re-animation of nature that most interests Smart about Orpheus; understandably so, given that *Jubilate Agno* itself seeks to re-animate the creation. But Orpheus's love for his wife, and his unwilling separation from her despite his poetic talents, is also relevant to Smart's expression of personal isolation in this poem. The sexual "story of Orpheus" is one of being *cut off*—first from his wife and then from the love of all women—and of being literally *cut up* by the Bacchae. Orpheus is said to have responded to the loss of Eurydice by rejecting the love of women altogether, and introducing the love of boys to Thrace, an event which Anne Finch alludes to in a riposte to some lines in Pope's *The Rape of the Lock*:

Yet vent'ring then with scoffing rhimes  
 The Women to incense,  
 Resenting Heroines of those Times,  
 Soon punish'd the offence.<sup>163</sup>

Orpheus's legend links "woman-hating" verse with homosexuality and castration, and brings us to an interesting juncture: to avoid the Orphic fate of dismemberment and sodomitical identity (according to the homophobic stereo-

types of the day), Smart must reject "woman-hating."<sup>164</sup> Paradoxically, it is only through the matrilineal or formative principle rejected by Plato that passivity and effeminate weakness can be held off. The singular Davidic horn turns out, again, to be not one. The poet's talent is anti-Orphic, "magnificent" in a female "key," requiring the return of the labial "Maiden Lips" (D236) of Mary, her conceptions, and her song.

It is for these reasons that the hierarchical measure of gender in *Jubilate Agno* collapses in the face of a register beyond "woman-hating," where "Man and Earth suffer together" (C155). In the midst of the systematic misogyny of the horn verses, Smart's exclusion of woman is de-constituted and she is invited back into the ark. "[T]edious accumulation" (C36) replaces the phallic exaltation of the horn and the Orphic attempt to suture solar and chthonic powers. The passage on horns thematizes both the substitution of metonymic for metaphoric patterns of discourse in *Jubilate Agno* and the interdependence of male and female speech. Smart's interest in modes of enunciation recalls the importance he gives to poetry as a speech act; indeed, the real break in his poetic career turns on his search for a new mode or "posture" of poetic address, rather than on the search for new themes.<sup>165</sup> The posture of adoration that Smart finally elects is one that celebrates national regeneration in the "female" keys of humility (kneeling), gratitude (the magnificent), and mimetic enunciation (the horn of plenty). Smart's meditation on horns, preceded by a verse about "filth" and concluding with the elevation of earth, figurally encapsulates a movement from depropriation understood as ad-versary (the spirit of duplicity and division, in which "the Devil is two" [C23], "an evil spirit male and female" [C24] evoking either gender binarism or its false resolution) to depropriation understood as ad-oratory.

<sup>164</sup>According to Plato in *The Republic*, Orpheus was reincarnated as a swan so as not to be reborn as a woman. The theme of matrilineal dismemberment also appears in Euripides's rendition of the Bacchic myth when Pentheus is torn apart by his own mother. As with Orpheus, the theme of misogyny is central. At the urging of Dionysus, Pentheus dresses in women's clothes to spy on the rites of the Bacchae. Dionysus then exposes Pentheus to the wrath of the celebrants with the following words: "O women, I bring the man who made a mockery of you and me and our mysteries; now take vengeance on him" (cited in Mark P. O. Morford and Robert J. Lenardon, *Classical Mythology* [White Plains, NY: Longman, 1995], 235). With this association, if it is not too farfetched, we see the

Despite his desire for the voice of a virile poet-prophet, the poetic persona of a national bard is finally withheld from Smart because of his devotion to the Demeterian voices of women like Hannah, Mary, and Mrs. Midnight.

## APPENDIX

THE *Jubilate Agno* PASSAGE ON HORNS  
(C118-162, FOR verses only)

- For I prophecy that we shall have our horns again. 118  
 For in the day of David Man as yet had a glorious horn upon his forehead.  
 For this horn was a bright substance in colour and consistence as the nail of the  
 hand. 120  
 For it was broad, thick and strong so as to serve for defence as well as ornament.  
 For it brighten'd to the Glory of God, which came upon the human face at  
 morning prayer.  
 For it was largest and brightest in the best men.  
 For it was taken away all at once from all of them.  
 For this was done in the divine contempt of a general pusillanimity. 125  
 For this happened in a season after their return from the Babylonish captivity.  
 For their spirits were broke and their manhood impair'd by foreign vices for  
 exaction.  
 For I prophecy that the English will recover their horns the first.  
 For I prophecy that all the nations in the world will do the like in turn.  
 For I prophecy that all Englishmen will wear their beards again. 130  
 For a beard is a good step to a horn.  
 For when men get their horns again, they will delight to go uncovered.  
 For it is not good to wear any thing upon the head.  
 For a man should put no obstacle between his head and the blessing of Almighty  
 God.  
 For a hat was an abomination of the heathen. Lord have mercy upon the Quak-  
 ers. 135  
 For the ceiling of the house is an obstacle and therefore we pray on the house-  
 top.  
 For the head will be liable to less disorders on the recovery of its horn.  
 For the horn on the forehead is a tower upon an arch.  
 For it is a strong munition against the adversary, who is sickness and death.

- For it is instrumental in subjecting the woman. 140  
 For the insolence of the woman has increased ever since Man has been crest-  
 fallen.  
 For they have turned the horn into scoff and derision without ceasing.  
 For we are amerced of God, who has his horn.  
 For we are amerced of the blessed angels, who have their horns.  
 For when they get their horns again they will put them upon the altar. 145  
 For they give great occasion for mirth and musick.  
 For our Blessed Saviour had not his horn upon the face of the earth.  
 For this was in meekness and condescension to the infirmities of human nature  
 at that time.  
 For at his second coming his horn will be exalted in glory.  
 For his horn is the horn of Salvation. 150  
 For Christ Jesus has exalted my voice to his own glory.  
 For he has answered me in the air as with a horn from Heaven to the ears of  
 many people.  
 For the horn is of plenty.  
 For this has been the sense of all ages.  
 For Man and Earth suffer together. 155  
 For when Man was amerced of his horn, earth lost part of her fertility.  
 For the art of Agriculture is improving.  
 For this is evident in flowers.  
 For it is more especially manifest in double flowers.  
 For earth will get it up again by the blessing of God on the industry of man. 160  
 For the horn is of plenty because of milk and honey.  
 For I pray God be gracious to the Bees and the Beeves this day.