CHARLOTTE SMITH'S LYRIC FORMS

by

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(Under the Direction of Roxanne Eberle and Casie LeGette)

ABSTRACT

This dissertation focuses on the historical and rhetorical constructions of modern lyric theory which emerge out of the Romantic period. I illustrate how, though modern lyric theory locates much of its foundational material in the critics and writers of the nineteenth century, it has not yet approached a wider variety of writers who were active in this period, especially women writers. I cite a specific example in the early Romantic writer Charlotte Turner Smith who reimagines the emergent lyric as a network in which the roles of speaker, auditor, and audience can be creatively blurred. Though Smith appears to work within definitions of the lyric, in both her poetry and her novels, she deliberately frames and reframes the lyric's foundational relationship between the reader, the speaker, and the audience. In turn, Smith's voice redefines the modern lyric not simply as an intimate encounter between reader and speaker, but instead a constantly negotiating set of encounters which allows every figure in the relationship to impact the text in important ways. This project argues for a revision of lyric theory which acknowledges Smith as a foundational figure.

INDEX WORDS: Charlotte Turner Smith, lyric, *Elegiac Sonnets*, *Emmeline*, *Celestina*, *The Emigrants*, sonnet

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to the memory of my grandmothers, Dorothy M. Schleck and Kathryn H. Sims. I know you have been with me every step of the way.

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CHAPTER ONE

CHARLOTTE SMITH AND THE STORIES OF THE LYRIC

> That these are gloomy, none will surely have a right to complain; for I have never engaged they should be gay
>
> - Smith in her Preface to the second volume of *Elegiac Sonnets* (1797).

> … and so reading she was ascending, she felt, on to the top, on to the summit. How satisfying! How restful! All the odds and ends of the day stuck to this magnet; her mind felt swept, felt clean. And then there it was, suddenly entire shaped in her hands, beautiful and reasonable, clear and complete, the essence sucked out of life and held rounded here – the sonnet.
>
> - Virginia Woolf, *To the Lighthouse*

1. A "melancholy disposition"

In 1827, about twenty years after the death of Charlotte Turner Smith, Catherine Anne Dorset published a biographical sketch of her sister in Walter Scott's *Biographical Sketches*. At the end of this lengthy sketch, Dorset adds: "I am induced to attempt a delineation of her character, which, I think, has been as much misunderstood by her admirers, as it has been misrepresented by her enemies" (53). Dorset's admission echoes her sister's in the first preface to what would become her immensely popular and influential sonnet series, *Elegiac Sonnets and Other Essays* (1784),[1] the publication of the series was, too, induced by the influence of the public: "Some of my friends, with partial indiscretion, have multiplied the copies they procured of several of these attempts, till they found their way into the prints of the day in a mutilated state; which,

[1] The first edition of Smith's collection had this title; subsequent editions were then titled *Elegiac Sonnets and Other Poems*.

concurring with other circumstances, determined me to put them into their present form" (3). Smith's "determined" publication and Dorset's "induced" sketch perform, over the course of decades, similar work in contextualizing both Smith's body of work and her public persona as an author. Each establishes an outward force making a public statement necessary; each, too, places the writer in an interesting position of already writing by her own desires, but publishing and making public this information from the desires of others. As such, Charlotte Smith becomes both an intensely public and private figure, negotiating the boundary between writing for herself and writing because of public attention.

Dorset's sketch extends the kind of contextual work that Smith initiates in her first preface. Because of the false, even "mutilated state" of information circulating about her sister's personality, Dorset provides the following clarification to both the admirers and enemies of her sister's work: "Those who have formed their idea of her from her works, and even from what she says … have naturally concluded that she was of a melancholy disposition." Of this conclusion, Dorset decides, "nothing could be more erroneous. Cheerfulness and gaiety were the natural characteristics of her mind" (53). The biographical sketch quickly takes on the tone of a conciliatory public relations press release, defending Smith from accusations of an entirely "melancholy disposition" by describing her sister's sense of humor as well as her quickness to judge and speak in the heat of emotion, which might lend a more dramatic cast to her words (54-55). I say public relations press release deliberately because, at least during the time Smith was alive and writing, her private business was quite public. Smith's prefaces to subsequent editions of *Elegiac Sonnets* established, as Dorset references, the real sufferings behind the "melancholy disposition" reflected in the subsequent poems. Trapped in an unhappy marriage with a capricious man who soon spent both of their fortunes, Smith composed poetry and novels to

support her large family as well as embarking upon what Sarah Zimmerman calls "two writing careers at once: her published works and a copious correspondence in which she tried to further the settlement of her father-in-law's estate" (493). Smith publicizes the prolonged nature of the legal tangle of her father-in-law's estate in her prefaces and in so doing, authorizes the sustained preoccupation with melancholy in the sonnets and she also encourages readers to support her in their continued purchase of her works. Smith's detailed and extensive performance of this position worked; it worked so well that Dorset felt the need to establish that her sister felt any other emotion other than melancholy.[2]

In her sketch, Dorset identifies that all readers of her sister's works, friends and enemies alike, understand the comprehensive melancholy of Smith's poems and novels to be a personality trait. Here, Dorset responds to an important Romantic-era conception about the relationship between the emotion presented in the poem and the poet's own personal disposition: readers assume Smith herself feels the overwhelming melancholy of her poems because she writes poems that preoccupy themselves with that same "melancholic disposition." Smith herself encourages this type of reading through her authorial posturing; the engraved portrait that opens *Elegiac Sonnets* and her elucidation of sorrows in the prefaces encourage readers to understand the confessional nature of the poems within. However, a closer look at the sonnets themselves actually reveals very little of a personal nature. Take for example the middle six lines of Smith's "Sonnet 39: To night:"

> In deep depression sunk, the enfeebled mind
> Will to the deaf cold elements complain,
> And tell the embosom'd grief, however vain,

[2] Both Deborah Kennedy and Sarah Zimmerman point to contemporary reviews that directly read Smith's biographical information into her poetry and respond in sympathetic tones.

To sullen surges and the viewless wind.

Tho' no repose on thy dark breast I find,

I still enjoy thee – cheerless as thou art; (5-10)[3]

These lines appear to reflect all of the emotions that someone of a "melancholic disposition" would experience; the isolated speaker on the brink of madness from "deep depression" (5) turns to nature for an emotional release and, finding no succor, still experiences a kind of "cheerless" enjoyment from the scene. It seems clear that this poem reflects Smith's own isolation from the life she should have led, her lack of succor from the lack of resolution of her father-in-law's estate, and her tireless work without repose to support her family due to her husband's spendthrift nature.

However, a closer examination of the lines reveals an objective, removed tone that belies the intense emotion conveyed here. Jacqueline Labbe argues that "despite what we think we know about 'who' the speaker is, the sonnets hold themselves aloof from such identity questions" (102). Smith's use of "the enfeebled mind" rather than "my enfeebled mind" generalizes both the desire to turn towards nature for relief and the experience of a lack of reason caused by intense emotions. Even the "sullen surges and the viewless wind" take on a desultory tone; unlike a poem of pathetic fallacy where the waves crash and the wind howls to reflect the speaker's lack of reason, the wind here is blind and the waves sullen. Placing the poem back in its original context, in Smith's first novel, *Emmeline* (1788) further troubles a confessional reading. In the novel, the hero, Godolphin, narrates this sonnet to the moon because he believes his beloved has married another man. This short reading demonstrates the ways in which Smith's actual poems often belie or confuse the confessional reading she encourages in her prefaces and

[3] All subsequent citations of Smith's sonnets come from Stuart Curran's *The Poems of Charlotte Smith* (1993).

paratextual apparatus. As Jacqueline Labbe explains: "Smith's poems show, the identity of the 'I' can never be assumed" (98) and Stuart Curran points out that "even the most cursory reading across the sonnets reveals … how seldom they relate to the actual terms of her existence" (72). Smith's objective tone and lack of detail in this sonnet provide little to no actual demonstration of her own nature and yet readers respond to these sonnets, and indeed to all of Smith's work, as though they are deeply confessional.

This type of confessional reading of Smith's poetry emerges, as Susan Rosenbaum argues, because of a confluence between eighteenth-century concerns about sincerity and authorship. Rosenbaum identifies "a long-standing culture of sensibility (extending from roughly the mid-eighteenth century to the present) in which the practice of writing for a literary marketplace generates a recurrent anxiety about whether authors can be trusted" (5). The culture of sensibility, which Smith both participates in and deviates from, demands these poses of sincerity which are most successfully established through a practice of confessional reading. However, as Stuart Curran argues, Charlotte Smith "was the first poet in England whom in retrospect we would call Romantic" (xix) and, as such, Smith occupies a position in which her work deliberately negotiates between the demands of confessional sincerity coming from the eighteenth century and the different type of emotive subjectivity that Romantic writers would come to highly value.[4] Smith's own description of her heightened sensibilities in "Sonnet 1: The Partial Muse" demonstrates both her place in literary history and her own specialized subjectivity: "Ah! then, how dear the Muse's favours cost, / *If those paint sorrow best – who feel*

[4] Zimmerman argues: "As Mill's definitions make clear, paradigms of Romantic lyricism have always comprised more than formal features, or even a set of common practices: they have encoded a certain view of the period, a version associated with a poetics of privacy, which is now understood to be fundamental to the Romantic ideology. (2). Zimmerman extends her critique to encompass the ways in which Smith's turn away from her audience actually has a real rhetorical strategy.

it most" (13-14).[5] Citing Pope, Smith prefigures Wordsworth's 1801 Preface to *Lyrical Ballads* when he describes the poet as "a man, it is true, endowed with more lively sensibility, more enthusiasm and tenderness, who has a greater knowledge of human nature, and a more comprehensive soul, than are supposed to be common among mankind" (740). However, as Smith's citation from Pope demonstrates, the boundaries of her ideas about poetic subjectivity and the expression of emotion are quite different from those of her inheritor Wordsworth. Smith rejects a singular equation between her authorial persona and the speaking subject in her works and instead explores a network of subjectivities made possible through her hybrid forms. As her sonnet "To night" argues, Smith deliberately courts confessional readings through her paratextual apparatus, only to later undercut those readings in her sonnet sequences. For Jacqueline Labbe, Smith's performances of these roles indicates, too, her performance of gender: "Smith creates a fictive situation in her sonnets wherein the speaker is both 'self,' as attested by the frontispiece and the title-page, and a variety of 'others' … she is offering a specific group of roles and personae" (3). Whereas Labbe illuminates the way Smith plays with gender across her sonnets, I want to investigate how Smith demonstrates her "thoughtful approach to the notion of selfhood and subjectivity during the period" (5) through the forms she uses.

My project brings together many connected, though oftentimes separated, conversations about modern lyric theory, the work of women writers in the Romantic period, and historical genres. In this dissertation, I illustrate how, though modern lyric theory locates much of its foundational material in the critics and writers of the nineteenth century, it has not yet approached a wider variety of writers who were active in this period, especially women writers. I cite a specific example in the early Romantic writer Charlotte Turner Smith who reimagines the

[5] Labbe offers an instructive close reading of the complex gender relations at play in this sonnet; see *Charlotte Smith: Romanticism, poetry and the culture of gender*, pp. 99.

emergent lyric as a network in which the roles of speaker, auditor, and audience can be creatively blurred. I respond to Sarah Zimmerman's call for "A more circumspect view of Romantic lyricism [that] would acknowledge its capacity for solipsism and sympathetic identification, privatization and historical consciousness" (3); my reading of Smith's use of Romantic forms argues that she creates a hybrid network of subject positions. Though Smith appears to work within definitions of the lyric, in both her poetry and her novels, she deliberately frames and reframes the lyric's foundational relationship between the speaker, the auditor, and the audience. In turn, Smith's voice redefines the modern lyric not simply as an intimate encounter between reader and speaker, but as a constantly negotiating set of encounters which allows every figure in the relationship to impact the text in important ways. Though Smith has taken her place among the echelon of important Romantic writers, her influence has not yet been firmly established in modern lyric theory. Instead, her poetic and prose works have been evaluated according to longstanding paradigms of lyric theory that were generated around the male writers of the period. This project calls for a dual revision: first, that modern lyric theorists turn again to the types of lyrics written by Smith in this period for definitions, and second, that these new definitions are used to accurately place Smith as a foundational figure for modern lyric theory. I argue that Smith rejects a singular equation between her authorial persona and the speaking subject in her works, rather exploring instead a network of subjectivities made possible through her hybrid forms. In her hybrid apostrophe-sonnets, Smith recalibrates the triangulated positions of speaker, auditor, and audience to extend agency to each position, elevating the auditor and audience positions so that instead of being subordinated to the speaker, they too have potential inside the poetic form. As the original title to *Elegiac Sonnets* suggests, Smith sees her poems as essays,

attempts, and experiments that allow her to imagine the potentialities, both political and literary, of expanding the subject position.

2. Stories of the Lyric

Charlotte Smith's focus on the diverse gradations of sorrow lends her poetry the same "melancholic disposition" (53) that Dorset argues against in her sister's biographical sketch. For Smith, sorrow colors each of her poetical interactions but she does not always use the same shade to paint each one. At times, sorrow appears as a "Partial Muse" who strews her poetic path with difficulty and at others a nightingale who provides temporary companionship. In her poetry, and at points in her novels, Smith seems to know sorrow so well that it becomes a kind of friend; at others, sorrow restricts her mind and poetic ability so that it becomes her personal burden. For Smith, sorrow appears as a poetic mirror, but one which does not show always the same reflection. These gradations, these scales of change, demonstrate her commitment to an incomplete and nonlinear relationship with her emotions. Sorrow changes over time and, as Smith seems to argue in her poems, may last through the course of her life and into the beyond. Sorrow is nonnarrative, its experience at times brief and painful, but poignant, nonetheless. Smith's detailed and prolonged exploration of sorrow has been described as "everlasting lamentables" (Seward 286), "REAL WOE" (A "Constant Reader" in August 1786 *European Magazine*), and "a strain of wild, yet softened sorrow … breathes a romantic air" (Polwhele 18) by contemporary readers. For literary critics, Smith can be "extreme, even according to Romantic standards … relentlessly, morbidly introspective explorations of suffering" (Robinson 192) and "gloomy" (Pinch 55). A brief review of a small portion of Smith's *Elegiac Sonnets* produces an almost-overwhelming repetition of the intense emotions of sorrow or melancholy.

Smith, too, adapts the sonnet form, a short poem of fourteen lines, to catalog these emotional utterances. Smith's sonnet cycle, though it captures a diversity of experiences and contains, at times, other figures alongside the speaker, does not operate on a narrative level. Smith meditates on sorrow at different points, but never imagines a kind of narrative happy ending. Even the imagined movement of the speaker as she wanders along cliffs and sea-sides is, as Trish Bredar has argued, almost entirely figurative.[6] Smith's sonnets are intensely emotional, brief, and non-narrative; they feature a speaker who, as I have established, functions both as a biographical image of Smith and reveals very little personal knowledge. Each of these qualities define Smith's poetry and they, too, define the lyric.

A simple definition of the contested genre of the lyric can be difficult to find. M.H. Abrams' and Geoffrey Galt Harpham's *A Glossary of Literary Terms*, used by students and instructors of literature, initially defines the lyric as "a fairly short poem, uttered by a single speaker, who expresses a state of mind or a process of perception, thought, and feeling. Many lyric speakers are represented as musing in solitude" (201). Abrams and Harpham echo what is perhaps the only point of agreement on the lyric in modern lyric theory: the lyric is short and non-narrative.[7] Many critics, like Scott Brewster, agree that the lyric presents "heightened emotion and authentic sentiment … as a (usually brief) moment of intensified awareness" (4);

[6] Bredar, "Wild Wanderings: Gender and Pedestrian Travel in Charlotte Smith's *Elegiac Sonnets*:" "Smith's ambiguous positioning of her speaker complicates such an interpretation. For instance, Labbe claims that "the speaker is out alone, moving quickly to occupy a traditionally masculine space" (Charlotte 15), yet Smith does not actually commit her speaker to any material movement" (156).

[7] Scott Brewster in *Lyric*, Patricia Parker in Introduction to *Lyric Poetry: Beyond New Criticism*, Jonathan Culler in *Theory of the Lyric* (as well as other chapters), and Heather Dubrow in "Lyric Forms" all mention the brevity of the lyric, and its non-narrative elements as essential in identifying the lyric. Sometimes, as in Herbert Tucker's reading of the dramatic monologue, a reference to the lyrical elements of another genre often indicates a shorter portion of a longer text. A contemporary lyric essay, like Claudia Rankine's *Citizen*, contains non-narrative and brief moments of elevated language, which grant her work its hybrid status somewhere between the lyric and the essay.

Helen Vendler argues that "the lyric offers us the representation of a single voice, alone, recording and analyzing and formulating and changing its mind" (1); Anne Williams emphasizes the lyric's play with its own representation: "lyric mode, in fact, is balanced on a paradox: it is a representation of an act of self-expression" (13). This definition might appear rather too simplistic to explain why the lyric, as its own mode or genre, or even as a byword for all of poetry, has become a dominant critical discourse. It could be because, as Virginia Jackson explains in her essay on the lyric for the *Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics*, the lyric never had a clear definition, even in its classical moment of inception: "Indeed, before the early modern period, one often finds that lyric is a rather abstract term" (827). To take the approach of defining the lyric by what it is not, too, proves slightly less helpful. To argue that the lyric can contain no other elements of other genres, like epic or dramatic elements to maintain Aristotle's division, means that, necessarily, one genre must dominate over the other. Even Johann Wolfgang von Goethe in 1819, attempting to maintain the Aristotelian tripartite division between dramatic, epic, and lyric, finds play between the genres necessary: "One can combine these three elements [lyric, epic, dramatic] and get infinite variations on the poetic genres; that is why it is so hard to find an order by which to classify them side by side or in succession" (830). Rather than removing the lyric from its sister genres, Goethe recommends that "One … extricate oneself from the difficulty by setting the three main elements on a circle" (830); this circle, Goethe explains, will close when one finds enough texts which blend each part together. The lyric's ability to blend with other forms, and to complete Goethe's genre circle, thus makes it both a desirable form and a difficult one to define in opposition to these other forms.

The lyric's ease of hybridity, and its chameleon-like shifts across centuries, grants it a particularly elevated but also elusive status in modern poetics. Jackson argues that, despite "A

persistent confusion—among verse genres, between historical genres and natural "forms," between adjective and noun, between cognitive and affective registers, between grammar and rhetoric, between privacy and publicity, and among various ideas about poetry" (826) the lyric holds a high status as a critical object because "the story of the lyric charts the history of poetics" (833). This confusion, Jackson claims, "may be the best way to define our current sense of the lyric" (826). Lyric's ability to slip between generic identifications, to wed itself to other poetic genres, is thus one of its most integral aspects.[8] This ability is also, however, the one first forgotten by interpretations of lyrics which attempt to restrict the lyric's associations with "the representation of a single voice, alone, recording and analyzing and formulating and changing its mind" (Vendler 1) to biographical readings of the poet who wrote the lyric. Abrams and Harpham, as well as Jackson, mention the association between the lyric and the confessional mode, which emerges through lyric's association with the subjective mode. As Abrams argues of the lyric, "The majority of lyrics consist of thoughts and feelings uttered in the first person, and the one readily available character to whom these sentiments may be referred is the poet himself" (140). Jackson locates this association with the writings of Hegel, who assigns the lyric the difficulty of representing the subjective mode, in which the poet must remain at the center: "for Hegel was that what was at stake in the lyric was no less than the achievement of subjectivity" (831).

John Stuart Mill connects the elevated emotional tone of poetry with the poet's own subjective experience of emotion when he argues: "Poetry is feeling, confessing itself to itself in moments of solitude" (349). For Mill, poetry emerges from emotion, the poet writes with those emotions in mind, and real readers of poetry will also, in turn, experience those emotions. Mill's

[8] See G. Gabrielle Starr's *Lyric Generations* for a thorough exploration of the eighteenth century's interest in the lyric and the novel.

choice of poets, William Wordsworth and Percy Bysshe Shelley, literally embody the poetry of emotion and write out of their own personal experiences. Of Wordsworth's "his smaller, and especially his lyrical poems" (360), Mill writes that they "are obviously written to exhale, perhaps to relieve, a state of feeling" (360). Mill thus makes an important connection between these "lyrical poems" and the state of personal emotions exhaled within them. For Mill, revising paradigms of eighteenth-century poetics, the lyric, "more eminently and peculiarly poetry than any other" is "the poetry most natural to a really poetic temperament" (359). Shelley's poetic temperament translates, "the thoughts and words in which emotion spontaneously embodies itself" (357) into lyric poetry. Mill's essay thus cements a Hegelian vision of the poet at the center of the lyric, turned away from society, confessing his own emotions into the listening night. Mill's pervasive image of a poet turned away from his audience, "confessing itself to itself" (348-9) and his association between Wordsworth and Shelley's personal bodily and poetic maturation, thus creates an important correlation: in lyrics, the poet confesses his own emotions to an audience who overhears him. Under this construction, all poems from this period, or in this mode, should be read as the personal confession of Wordsworth, Shelley, or any other poet who writes Mill's type of true poetry.

Mill locates both the emergence of the true poetic temperament and the poetry which captures the product of the poet's unmediated experience of his own emotions during the Romantic period. Mill allows, as M.H. Abrams argues, "those elements in a poem that express feeling [to] become at once its identifying characteristic and cardinal poetic value" (143). Mill canonizes two male poets, Wordsworth and Shelley, and elevates their visions of subjectivity and the confession of emotion not only as the defining characteristics of all poetry, but of all Romantic lyrics, as well. This particular type of subjectivity, as Jonathan Culler defines the

poetic temperament as optative, and vatic in its pretensions, emerges out of the Romantic period, "when a more vigorous and highly developed conception of the individual subject made it possible to conceive of lyric as mimetic: an imitation of the experience of the subject" (1). Culler continues, "Distinguished by its mode of enunciation, where the poet speaks *in propria persona,* lyric becomes the subjective form… The lyric poet absorbs into himself the external world and stamps it with inner consciousness" (1-2). Culler's reading of Hegel and Mill, here, defines the Romantic lyric in one particular way; by repeating Mill's characterization of the lyric through a narrow vision of Romantic subjectivity, Culler rejects the more complex vision of each of these poets, as well as ignoring their other work in longer, narrative, and thus, nonlyric forms. Romantic critics have long since questioned the type of subjectivity and confessional mode that Mill reads in the poetry of Wordsworth and Shelley; Virginia Jackson calls Mill's essay "the most influentially misread essay in the history of Anglo-American poetics" (8) and critics like Zimmerman, Anne Janowitz, and David Duff each seek to define the various views of subjectivity present in the works of Wordsworth, Coleridge, Burns, and others.[9] Modern lyric theorists, however, have not been so quick to revise these paradigms. I call for a similar revision of the model of the Romantic lyric itself, which Heather Dubrow argues has "shaped – and misshaped" the lyric "by their positing the Romantic lyric as the normative model" (115).[10]

I argue that the normative Romantic lyric model must be reinvestigated because it does not reflect the actual contributions of a variety of female Romantic writers. When, in *Romanticism and Feminism*, Anne Mellor asked "What happens to our interpretations of

[9] Judith Thompson makes a similar claim of John Thelwall's poetry in *John Thelwall in the Wordsworth Circle: The Silenced Partner* (2012) as well as in her introduction to Thelwall's *The Peripatetic* (2001).
[10] For specific discussions on the overheard confessional mode, see T.S. Eliot's "The Three Voices of Poetry," Northrup Frye's *Anatomy of Criticism*, W.R. Johnson's *The Idea of Lyric*, and Allen Grossman's "Summa Lyrica" from *The Sighted Singer.*

Romanticism if we focus on the numerous women writers who produced at least half of the literature published in England between 1780 and 1830?" (1), she called for an entirely new vision of the writing of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, a revision of centuries of literary theory and practice, and a reevaluation of the precise terms upon which texts, newly discovered, should be incorporated into the canon.[11] I pose a similar question: What happens to our interpretations of the lyric if we revise the normative Romantic lyric mode according to models from that period?

Recently, Virginia Jackson and Yopie Prins inquired how a "properly historical approach to the lyric would entail imagining the terms of subjectivity as themselves quite lyrically generic" (532) and pointed towards the vast number of understudied women writers who, in the figure of the poetess, "perform lyrical reflections on the conventions of subjectivity attributed to persons and poems" (532). Though Jackson and Prins cite the poetess figure, a Victorian conception, as the site of many of these explorations, I argue that the hybrid work of Romantic writer Charlotte Turner Smith provides a useful and foundational place for a revision of the Romantic lyric model. By locating this revision with Smith, and the time in which she was writing, I argue for a renewed exploration into the historical efforts and explanations of the lyric model.

The Romantic period, what Marion Thain refers to as a "high point" (3) of the lyric, sees a crystallization of many important ideas about the lyric which have been overly streamlined by the association between the lyric and the confessional mode. In order to correct this streamlining, Virginia Jackson points to the "uneven developments" of the lyric over this period of time. During the eighteenth century, as discussions about genre and poetics emerged alongside

[11] Mellor's call was echoed by Jackson and Prins in "Lyrical Studies" and Paula Backscheider in *Eighteenth-Century Women Writers: Writing Agency, Writing Genre* (2003).

neoclassicism, critics like Joseph Trapp attempted to bridge the gap between these divergent ideas. Trapp argues that the lyric, as "the most ancient kind of poem" (203) "is the boldest of all other Kinds, full of Rapture, and elevated from common Language the most that is possible" (203-4). Trapp associates the lyric's ancient foundations with the extreme emotion of the ode, and thus, as M.H. Abrams argues, cements the association between the two forever: "There was conspicuous tendency, for example, to identify as 'pure poetry,' or the 'most poetical poetry' … those particular poems or passages which were thought to be peculiarly the product of passion and rapture" (141). Aspects of the Pindaric Ode, as the product of passion and a revival of a neoclassical model, became aspects of the "pure poetry" of the lyric. As poets like Collins, Gray, and Wharton continued to use odal aspects in their sonnets and other forms, the lyric mode comes to be associated with brevity, and, like the ode and elegy, a spontaneous overflow of powerful emotion. Jackson, as Abrams and Harpham do later in their definition, names the genres that "romantic poets were mixing … (ballads and hymns, odes and songs, epistles and elegies) under the sign of the lyric" (831). Even Wordsworth, writing in *Poems* (1815), defines lyric as a type which includes 'the Hymn, the Ode, the Elegy, the Song, and the Ballad.' (141). Critics looking back at the Romantic period, like Mill, focus on a singular version of the lyric utterance and transform this hybrid genre from, as Jackson argues, "an idea attached to various verse genres into an aesthetic ideal that eclipsed or embraced other verse genres" (830).

However, before this aesthetic ideal emerges in the ideas of J.S. Mill, as Abrams argues in *The Mirror and The Lamp*, there were many Romantic writers who responded to this conversation by producing a variety of lyrics. The work of critics like David Duff, Sarah Zimmerman, and Anne Williams establishes that this particular kind of lyric subjectivity was not

the norm.[12] Zimmerman locates a powerful rhetorical capacity in Charlotte Smith's turn away, and Williams uncovers an entire series of lyric aspects and modes present in the eighteenth-century lyric. "Instead … there was," Jackson describes, "not one kind of poem in the romantic period that could be definitively named *the romantic lyric*" (831). Jackson echoes poet James Montgomery's 1830-1 Lecture "Various Classes of Poetry" when he argues: "'It would be impossible to define the limits, or lay down the laws, of what passes in our own country under the title of Lyric Poetry', a classification now so broad as to be utterly 'nondescript'" (135). Thus, during the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, the lyric becomes elevated, as Clifford Siskin argues, as it undergoes a series of changes and generic gradations. Indeed, there was no one Romantic lyric, but rather shades of lyricism as diverse and engrossing as Smith's shades of melancholic sorrow.

Trans-historical readings of the lyric as a genre tend to, sometimes necessarily, elide the Romantic lyric's fundamental diversity in favor of a focus on the subjective exhortation of the speaker. Some generic arguments for the lyric, like Jonathan Culler's seminal *Theory of the Lyric*, repeatedly cite Romantic contributions without focusing on the print culture which produced them, nor the diverse set of hybrid forms present in them. The removal of the lyric poet from her scene of production in terms of publishers, journals, and readership, as well as from her own formal concerns emerges out of J.S. Mill's revision of Romantic lyric. Mill describes an ideal lyric poet, who embodies a poetic temperament and produces emotive, lyrical poetry at a remove from her own social scene: "Great poets are often proverbially ignorant of life" (346). This proverbial ignorance extends to an awareness of any other presence during the time of poetic conception, "no trace of consciousness that any eyes are upon us must be visible in the

[12] See also: David Duff, Lindsay Eckert, and Anne Janowitz for other arguments about subjectivity in the Romantic lyric.

work itself" (349); and, also, results in a rejection of a poet beginning a poem with an awareness of its eventual future as a product: "A poet may write poetry not only with the intention of printing it, but for the express purpose of being paid for it; that it should *be* poetry, being written under such influences, is less probable" (349). Mill's reading of Wordsworth's lyrics enforces this reading because often in poems like, "Tintern Abbey" for example, the poet Wordsworth and the speaker in the poem cannot be disconnected. "Tintern Abbey" describes a process of repeated emotional encounters that the speaker experiences alone; he repeats them to his auditor, Dorothy, so that she, too, can experience the same emotions that he has had. To argue alongside Mill, if Wordsworth ever meant to publish this poem, he has "succeeded in removing from his work every vestige of such lookings-forth into the outward and every-day world, and can express his emotions exactly as he has felt them in solitude" (349); thus, this poem represents Mill's specific type of Romantic lyric in which the social has been entirely relegated into the reader's experience of the poem, rather than the poet's elucidation of his personal emotions.

However, as Wordsworth's own poem reveals, the lyric mode in the Romantic period is inherently social. Although Romantic lyrics, read alongside Mill's arguments, often pretend as though the speaker muses in solitude, other Coleridgean "companionable forms" appear and exist during that same utterance. Even Culler's foregrounding of "what is most singular, most mind-blowing" (1) about lyrics, the "to the optative character of poems" (38), which he argues is represented in the vatic voice of the poet attempting "to create the impression of something happening now" (37), turns necessarily towards the social. Culler highlights the apostrophe as the height of the lyric because it helps to enact the lyric's single speaker attempting to create presence: both in terms of the present moment and the presence of others. "What all lyrics of apostrophe," Helen Vendler argues, "offer us are tones of voice through which they represent, by

analogy, various relations resembling those that we know in life … Such lyrics reveal the social relations in which the speaker is enmeshed" (3). This lyrical aspect which represents the social even as it pretends to be removed from it, is a vital aspect which Romantic lyricists understood. In their blending of other genres, including the ballad and the hymn, Romantic lyric modes often adapted genres more associated with the social with a genre that was increasingly, as M.H. Abrams has shown, associated with the singular voice singing to nature.[13]

The presence of these more social genres, like the ballad and the hymn, also brings to the Romantic lyric a gradation of the human voice. This aspect of the lyric associates it with its historical tradition of song and grants it, along with the lyre implied by lyric, a sense of a lost voice. Virginia Jackson notes that "lyric was from its inception a term used to describe a music that could no longer be heard" (826), referencing the ancient lyres which used to accompany classical lyricists like Horace and Sappho. For the Romantic lyric, in which lyres often appear as instruments of natural song or as metaphors for the poet, the speaker of the poem functions at times like the lyric singer who repeats a musical utterance for a crowd. Romanticism's emphasis on the lyre as an image and as a metaphor for the poet thus implies a tension between the communal ballad or hymn singer and the singular, subjective poet who sings alone. Romantic lyricists, like Burns, Wordsworth, and Smith, capitalize on this tension. In Smith's individual sonnets, for example, she establishes a variety of subjective voices who all 'sing' during the poem. To bring modern lyric conversations about the voice of the lyric to bear on the historical

[13] As David Duff argues, the song and its singer become deeply important to other versions of the Romantic lyric tradition which include the contribution of Robert Burns. For critics invested in the ballad tradition more generally, the lyrical aspect of *Lyrical Ballads*, for example, imbues the communal strain with the singular voice in conversation; it is the tension between the communal ballad and the singular lyric which prompts some of Romantic lyric's most interesting contributions. Duff argues that "Introspective lyricism led not (or not only) to amorphous effusion but to rigorous experimentation with the formal and linguistic resources of lyric" (140). These experiments include Romantic lyric's hybridization with forms that emerge from poetry's relationship with song.

reality for many Romantic writers and readers, too, establishes an important difference between the period's practice of reading poetry and our current practices. Though the voice of a lyric might now only echo in the reader's own voice inside her head, Romantic readers of poetry read their poems aloud, granting an actual voice to the sonnet.[14] Thus, for Romantic writers like Smith, the voices represented in the poems had an actual human component and were sung aloud to a listening audience of friends. Smith, in her historical context, therefore achieves Helen Vendler's ideal lyric mode: "The act of the lyric is to offer a script to say … One is to utter them as one's own words, not as the words of another" (18).[15]

As the various discussions about the lyric from Joseph Trapp, Wordsworth, and M.H. Abrams have shown, this period's actual conversations about the lyric mode during this time of change actually lean closer to Goethe's image of the circular play between genres. This historical positioning of the Romantic lyric as simultaneously a genre, a mode, and a type, responds most accurately to the ways in which women writers, in particular Charlotte Smith, responded and contributed to her period's distillation of traditional poetic conversations. Smith's first collection of poems, initially titled *Elegiac Sonnets and Other Essays* (1784), reflects her interest in mutable genres and in the attempt (*essayer* in French means "to try") of hybridization in general. Smith's sonnets blend the elevated emotional concerns of the ode, the diverse speaker positions of the sonnet, the triangulated relations of the apostrophe, and the solitary wanderer of the lyric in order to investigate the potentialities of these hybrid forms. Smith does not title her poems as lyrics. Yet, she participates in conversations about the lyric. Smith's example helps to revise

[14] Further elucidation of this practice can be found in Amanda Vickery's *The Gentleman's Daughter*; for a more literary treatment, see Backscheider's *Eighteenth-Century Women Poets*, especially her chapter on Smith's sonnets.

[15] For a review of the real ways in which readers responded to Smith's sonnets, see Zimmerman and Michael Gamer's chapter on Smith's revisions of *Elegiac Sonnets* from *Romanticism, Self-Canonization, and the Business of Poetry* (2017).

conceptions of the Romantic lyric because she writes in a hybrid mode, an aspect which, once vital to the lyric, has been elided by a focus on the confessional speaker. Romantic lyrics, indeed, allowed for more experimentation in form, in the types of subjectivity imagined in them, and for more interesting ideas about how communities can be created. Lyrics read in the dominant Romantic model have often been read as insular and private, but Smith rejects an entirely private situation through her figuration of apostrophe-sonnets. Smith blends poetry and prose, too, and this hybrid act thus likens itself more to Tilottama Rajan's reading of works "which are commonly taken to interiorize or lyricize received forms [that] can be more appropriately be seen as objectifying and thereby complicating pure subjective discourse by situating it in the world" (195) than it does to Mill's figuration of "emotion confessing itself to itself" (349). Smith, too, extends her lyric vision from poetry into prose, inserting poems into her novels and making the preoccupations of the poet part of her novel's plots. In so doing, Smith closes Goethe's generic circle between the narrative and lyric aspects of her work and grants a far greater flexibility to the lyric than has previously been conceptualized.

3. Lyric's Networks: "To a nightingale"

Having established the dominant stories of the lyric which persist, and do not include Smith as a foundational figure, I want to sketch out here the primary stakes of a new lyric narrative in which Smith stands at the center. Smith's influence provides a few key correctives to modern lyric theory and helps further the project of recalibrating our ideas about Romanticism itself around the contributions of women writers. Smith, as I have demonstrated, was writing during a period which interested itself in the mutable qualities of genre. Writers in the Romantic period also thought deeply about the implications of those genres on expressions of subjectivity; Smith

herself blends the Italian sonnet form, traditionally associated with Petrarch's confessional and distant courtly love of Laura, with the elegy. Smith herself, as critics have shown, participated in the play with genres that allows her to adopt different types of subjectivities and to fashion her authorial persona in various ways.[16] However, as I discussed earlier, modern lyric theory insists upon reading the Romantic period as a time in which to write lyrically was to imagine oneself as overheard, and thus elides the poetic experiments of the period.[17] Smith provides an important corrective to this view, because she often does portray a subject overheard through her use of the apostrophe, but she also embraces generic fluidity by hybridizing that apostrophe with the sonnet form, which allows for further investigation of how sonnets, and apostrophes, can be manipulated to investigate various subjective positions.

An apostrophe, in forensic rhetoric, captures the moment when the orator turns away from his original audience and speaks to a distant or absent figure; the apostrophe differs, for some rhetoricians, from the address, which involves speaking to a person who can respond, and prosopopoeia, which involves apostrophizing a dead auditor, who can never respond.[18] This act of turning away from the audience echoes Mill's 1833 figuration of poetry as "*over*heard" and has, through critics who follow Mill, become a hallmark of the transhistorical lyric mode, which can be, as Jonathan Culler claims, resurrected by poets during any period. When a poet turns away from her original audience to apostrophize, the audience, who never abandons the scene,

[16] See especially Judith Staunton's *Romantic Theatricality*, Jacqueline Labbe's *Charlotte Smith and the Culture of Gender*, and Sarah Zimmerman's *Romanticism, Lyricism, and History*.
[17] See Mellor's *Romanticism and Feminism*, Jackson and Prins "Lyrical Studies," Backscheider's *Eighteenth-Century Women Poets: Inventing Agency, Inventing Genre*, Lindsey Eckert's "Reading Lyric's Form," and Janowitz's *Lyric and Labour*.
[18] For a forensic rhetoric treatment of the apostrophe, as well as a discussion of the critical aversion to it, see Douglas Kneale. *The Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics* has three helpful definitions of these terms, attending to their important overlaps and intersections, written by William Waters. For a discussion of prosopopoeia in terms of arguments by Culler and Paul de Man, see Michael Riffaterre.

overhears the contents of her apostrophe. The poet's utterance, to follow Mill's formulation, becomes a lyric because of this quality. In his seminal work on the lyric, Jonathan Culler argues that this turn away from the audience and the turn towards an entity that cannot, and will not, respond, represents the height of vatic poetic intention: "it is a figure of all that is most radical, pretentious, and mystificatory in the lyric" (190). Echoing Joseph Trapp's equation with the lyric as the "most poetical" type of poetry, Culler argues that the apostrophe is the most lyrical type of lyric.

Culler's definition necessarily builds on the work of earlier critics of the apostrophe, who link the apostrophe's construction of different positions, the poet, the audience, and the auditor, as a way in which the poet creates his own subjectivity. Northrup Frye argues that the apostrophe depends upon "the hypothetical form of what in religion is called the 'I-Thou' relationship" (250) in which the poetic 'I' constructs herself in relation to the un-answering divine 'Thou.' Barbara Johnson explains how the poet/speaker's apostrophe functions as "a form of ventriloquism through which the speaker throws voice, life, and human form into the addressee, turning its silence into mute responsiveness" (30). Culler explains that this poetic ventriloquism necessitates a vatic poet, who wills action to occur; by creating life through the apostrophe, the poet/speaker grants a kind of subjectivity to the apostrophe's auditor. The apostrophe, thus, constructs a situation of "triangulated address' – speaking to listeners through an apostrophic address to an absent power" (15-6) which Culler argues, "provides a model for lyric" (15-6). Many of Smith's sonnets often prefigure their status as apostrophes with titles like "To the moon" and "To the north star" and play out the apostrophic turn away from the audience as Smith's speakers apostrophize absent or silent auditors. Sometimes, as I will show in future chapters, Smith's apostrophes play out like addresses, where the auditor moves or acts in a

blatant response to her speaker's call. The apostrophe form grants Smith the structure to experiment inside the form of the triangulated address, which incorporates, as Culler argues, not only the silent auditor but the listener as well. Sarah Zimmerman concludes that Smith's work "illuminates the relationship between lyric poet and reading audiences as a dynamic exchange, a different account from predominant paradigms, which generally characterize the lyric's auditor as passive and silent" (40-41). Whereas Zimmerman connects the terms of Smith's exchange with the actual responses of her reader, I am interested in investigating how Smith performs that same work in her poems and novels. In these works, Smith extends the speaker's subjective power into these auditor positions so that they too can hybridize the lyric. Smith's formal play between poetic and narrative forms is one of her key interventions in the lyric mode; she extends the lyric from the poetic into the narrative.

Romantic women writers like Smith constructed subjectivities that have hitherto been elided from accounts of the lyric, and thus modern lyric theory about the sonnet, as well as other forms, is incomplete. Though the sonnet receded from poetic favor by the end of the Romantic period with the appearance of longer, narrative poems of P.B. Shelley, Byron, Keats, Hemans, and Landon, among others, the early Romantic resurrection of the sonnet form plays an important role in modern lyric theory's conceptions of subjectivity. Smith, among contemporary writers like Anna Seward and Mary Robinson, led the sonnet revival and, especially in Smith's case, dictated its new terms as an English form, as many critics have noted.[19] However, the particularities of the type of subjectivity, and formal characteristics that Smith adapts in her hybrid sonnets, and their relevance to modern lyric theory has been awarded less critical

[19] See especially Stuart Curran's chapter on the sonnet from *Poetic Form and British Romanticism*, Stephen Behrendt's *British Women Poets and the Romantic Writing Community*, and Paula Feldman and Daniel Robinson's *A Century of Sonnets*.

attention. Here, I want briefly to establish the ways in which Smith's hybrid sonnet forms, stemming from her involvement in the Petrarchan tradition, help to create our ideas of Romantic subjectivity, and, more importantly, help to place Smith's contributions to the lyric back in their context in literary history.

The epigraph of the second volume of *Elegiac Sonnets* signals directly Smith's place in what Roland Greene identifies as a "post-Petrarchan" tradition:

> Non t'appressar ove sia riso e canto
> Canonze mio, nò, ma pianto:
> Non fa per te di star con gente allegra
> Vedova sconsolata, in vesta nigra.[20]

This epigraph, from Petrarch's Sonnet 268, only highlights what has been, for Smith in all editions of *Elegiac Sonnets*, a deliberate placement of herself as Petrarch's English heir. Though, as Daniel Robinson notes, this familial relationship involves a series of rejections, Smith nonetheless highlights the work of the Italian Renaissance poet as a guiding influence, albeit one that she adapts for a new era, earning her the praise of Coleridge among others.[21] As a post-Petrarchan, Smith uses the sonnet-cycle, like Petrarch's *Canonziere*, to establish a particular kind of subjectivity: one that invests itself in the emotional experience of denial, and, as Patricia Myers notes, "gave Smith her model for forging her own virtual community of poems and readers" (239). Roland Greene, in defining the post-Petrarchan model, identifies the shared "idea of a broadly scaled, self-oriented poetry for present circumstances" (3) which characterizes the work of any poet who enters into the Petrarchan tradition. Petrarch's own focus, from the

[20] Curran's translation: "Flee serenity and renewal; approach not, my song, where there be smiles or singing, no, only tears: it will not do for you to remain among happy people, disconsolate widow, clothed in black" (1)
[21] See Coleridge's introduction to *Sonnets from Various Authors* (1796).

Canonziere, of a "dialogue among its autonomous constituent parts through repetitions and echoes" (Myers 242) allows for Smith to embody, as Myers argues, "the thoughtful Petrarchan solitary wandering endlessly in search of connection and compassion" (250). Smith's use of Petrarchan lyric sequences, as Jonathan Culler argues, "project[s] a complex speaker and, despite the sense of conventionality produced by the subsequent tradition of love poetry, could be used to support the romantic model of lyric as intense expression of the subject's inner experience" (*Theory of the Lyric* 22). Thus, Smith, like Thomas Gray and Edward Young before her, contributes to and innovates on the figure of the poetic wanderer, the subjectivity which fills the sonnet form with her emotion, and, in so doing, helps to construct "a lyric subject that is both distinct from and related to its creator yet also generic enough to invite participation in its lyric "I" from a community whose members are self-selected through shared affect" (Culler 251). If this particular subjectivity sounds much like the kind adopted by poets working in the lyric mode, like Wordsworth in "Lines Written a Few Miles Above Tintern Abbey," then it is because Smith helped to reintroduce this figure in her sonnet revivals.

In order to best exemplify the ways in which Smith hybridizes both the apostrophe and the sonnet form, I move now into a test case, featuring Smith's sonnet "To a nightingale." In "To a nightingale" Smith embeds a poetic speaker who first observes and then participates in the triangulated structure of the address before finally interpreting each position and establishing her ongoing desire to experience that structure. At points, the speaker aligns herself with the audience from whom the poet turns to speak to another, the poet who apostrophizes a silent auditor, and the reader of the apostrophe, who yearns to have a position in that complicated network. In this poem, as with her other apostrophe-sonnets, Smith inhabits the role of each of these positions and by doing so, explores their complications and potentialities. Because of the

circular structure of Smith's sonnet cycle overall, which maintains a complex but still-identifiable emblematic speaker throughout, Smith establishes important nodes of connection between that speaker and each figure in the triangulated address. In so doing, Smith rejects an apostrophe structure which privileges the speaker above all else, and continually promotes reading and re-reading in order to again enter the network of the apostrophe sonnet. I quote the sonnet in full:

III. To a nightingale

Poor melancholy bird – that all night long
Tell'st to the Moon thy tale of tender woe;
From what sad cause can such sweet sorrow flow,
And whence this mournful melody of song?
Thy poet's musing fancy would translate
What mean the sounds that swell thy little breast,
When still at dewy eve thou leavest thy nest,
Thus to the listening night to sing thy fate.
Pale Sorrow's victims wert thou once among,
Tho' now released in woodlands wild to rove?
Say – hast thou felt from friends some cruel wrong,
Or died'st thou – martyr of disastrous love?
Ah! songstress sad! that such my lot might be,
To sigh, and sing at liberty – like thee! (14-15)

This sonnet begins almost immediately with a pause after "Poor melancholy bird" (1). Because Smith sets this traditional description aside almost immediately, through the visual pause of the

em-dash, the apostrophe itself becomes highlighted and becomes the topic of this sonnet. Smith immediately establishes that not only is this poem an apostrophe *to* the nightingale, it is also an apostrophe *on* the nightingale through her use of the em-dash.[22] And, as such, this sonnet becomes not simply an address to a bird, but a sonnet on apostrophes. This movement allows Smith to place her speaker in each position of the apostrophe, beginning with the position of the auditor.

The speaker's initial description of the bird should set her up as the speaker in her own apostrophe, but the lines after the em-dash complicate this notion. Rather than interpreting the bird according to her own ideas, or calling on the bird to act, the speaker finds herself instead observing an already-ongoing apostrophe between the nightingale and the Moon. The nightingale, the speaker describes, "…all night long / Tell'st to the Moon thy tale of tender woe" (1-2). The speaker, then, must listen to the nightingale's song to the Moon, becoming the auditor of the address. The subsequent lines, "From what sad cause can such sweet sorrow flow, / And whence this mournful melody of song?" (3-4), represent the speaker's interpretation of the song she hears the nightingale sing to the Moon. The next quatrain of the poem begins with the speaker, still in the position of auditor, wondering how another poet might translate the song that the nightingale sings to the moon: "Thy poet's musing fancy would translate / What mean the sounds that swell thy little breast" (5-6). When Smith designates the speaker's imagined poet as "Thy poet" (5) she makes a subtle allusion to other poets who have written sonnets to and on the nightingale. The question of what the nightingale's poet might have to say in translation remains

[22] In his notes to this poem, Stuart Curran highlights this poem as a potential translation of Petrarch: "The idea from the 43rd Sonnet of Petrarch. *Secondo parte*. "Quel rosigniuol, che si soave piagne." [With so highly traditional a subject, the specific influence of Petrarch's verse on this sonnet is at most slight]" (14). I would argue that, through this slight reference, Smith deliberately means to invoke Petrarch as "thy poet" of the nightingale. Regardless of whether this poem is a translation of Petrarch or not, Smith still writes in the Petrarchan tradition here, as she does throughout *Elegiac Sonnets*.

unanswered, as the speaker reiterates the nightingale's ongoing address to the moon: "Thus to the listening night to sing thy fate" (8).

In the third quatrain of the poem, the speaker resigns her role as the nightingale's auditor and steps into her role as the speaker in an apostrophe when she begins to demand a response from the bird. The entire third quatrain is composed of two questions, each spanning two lines, which visually mimic the question that ends the third and fourth lines of the poem. In this quatrain, the speaker asks the nightingale to tell her of her past actions, before she was "released in woodlands wild to rove?" (10) Did the nightingale suffer under the privations of "Pale Sorrow" (9) or "friends" who inflicted "cruel wrong" (11)? The speaker continues, "Or died'st thou – martyr of disastrous love?" (12). Each of these exhortations to the nightingale marks the speaker as the commanding voice of her own apostrophe, directed to the nightingale. By asking the nightingale to respond to her questions, the speaker attempts to enact an empirical impossibility: no nightingale would turn and answer a human who asked it questions. According to Barbara Johnson, the speaker's demands for impossible action are the hallmark of an apostrophe; for Jonathan Culler, this moment serves as the vatic height of poetry, a kind of poetic arrogance that imagines words can make the wind blow, seasons halt their change, or a bird answer a question.[23] In Smith's apostrophe-sonnet, these questions signal the speaker's active ability: instead of listening and interpreting the nightingale's song, she now calls for a response to her specific questions. She becomes, in this moment, the lyric poet who can demand nature react to her wishes. And react it does.

The final couplet of this poem marks two important movements, which Smith highlights through caesura. The first, "Ah!" indicates a pause, indeed, a response to the speaker's cries.

[23] See Culler's chapter on "Lyric Address," from *Theory of the Lyric*, pp. 190.

Though unheard, the pause of the caesura demonstrates that the speaker goes silent, in fact in response to an answer from the nightingale. The nightingale, which was the silent auditor of the speaker's apostrophe, responds to the speaker, causing the speaker to pause to listen and sigh in answer. The second exclamation point after "songstress sad!" (13) marks a further shift in the poem, when the speaker deliberately distances herself from the nightingale. She, unlike the bird, cannot sing of her own sorrows in full-throated ease. Now separated from the nightingale, the speaker can only wish that she, too, had the same freedom: "… that such my lot might be / To sigh and sing at liberty – like thee!" (14). Here, at the close of the poem, the speaker differentiates herself from the bird and establishes her own desire. This desire, in the context of the poem, places the speaker in a dual position of her own making. She envies the nightingale's ability to sigh and sing freely; she envies the nightingale's ability to apostrophize to the moon. In the terms of her own interpretation from the beginning of the poem, then, the speaker envies the nightingale's ability to participate in this network of apostrophe.

"To a nightingale" functions because of a series of named desires: the speaker first desires to enter the apostrophic situation between the nightingale and the moon, she then desires a poetic interpretation of the song, then for the nightingale to answer her, and then for the same freedom to sing that she interprets in the bird itself. The poem closes without a consolation for these desires because solace can only be found when the speaker again enters the apostrophic situation. So, as with so many of Smith's poems, the only solution for the emotion is more poetry, to again experience the network of apostrophe promised in Smith's apostrophe-sonnets. Rereading this sonnet reveals the ways in which Smith establishes this network, and the speaker's ability to connect to different roles in this poem becomes more visible. The speaker never loses her identity as the guiding force of the poem, and so when she takes on the role of the

audience who listens to the apostrophe and the reader who envies the nightingale its ability to sing, she connects each of those roles with herself, and thus with each other. Because of the poem's cyclical nature, and of the closing desire to again experience this network, Smith constructs a constantly moving apostrophe where the discrete roles of speaker, auditor, and audience are connected, operate simultaneously, and can be adopted by different figures in the poem. When the speaker listens to the nightingale's song, her subjectivity embodies the audience, and gives it agency. So too does she perform the same role for each of the other positions.

In this sonnet, Smith explores each different position in the triangulated address, but because each tends to connect to the other, she formulates it as a network, where each position can be inter-connected. By the close of the poem, the speaker separates herself from alignment with the bird in order to establish her lack of freedom, her inability to sing, which allows her desire to again enter the apostrophe network to persist after the close of the poem. The persistence of this desire not only demands that the speaker enter again the apostrophic situation, but that readers interpret her presence across the poem and across the sonnet cycle. This, perhaps, is why, in the third quatrain of the sonnet, the speaker interprets the nightingale's song along the very same lines readers of Smith's other sonnets may use to interpret those poems:

> Pale Sorrow's victims wert thou once among,
>
> Tho' now released in woodlands wild to rove?
>
> Say – hast thou felt from friends some cruel wrong,
>
> Or died'st thou – martyr of disastrous love? (5-8)

The speaker's assumption of the nightingale's source of woe could indeed be used to characterize many of Smith's other sonnets. This type of interpretation, which echoes across the

sonnets in *Elegiac Sonnets*, and which Smith deliberately encouraged to be associated with her own authorial personality, binds these sonnets together. It also, further, creates a framework through which she would read Smith's other apostrophe-sonnets, not as the creation of a singular speaker, but as the interconnected network of figures which can and do adopt a kind of subject or active position in the poems.

4. Charlotte Smith's Lyric Forms

The following three chapters take their cue from the subject positions Smith establishes in her network: speakers, auditors and audiences. The first, "Speakers," examines three of Smith's apostrophe-sonnets in order to examine the ways in which Smith works to both establish her own identity as the speaker in her sonnets and to constantly question and undo that confessional connection. Responding not only to her own identity as a female writer in the public eye and as a participant in Romantic-era discourse, Smith adapts both the sonnet and the apostrophe form to explore how identity can be created as fundamentally unstable, and to push that instability to political and social ends. The second chapter, "Listeners," puts a finer point on the other figure in the apostrophe-sonnet: the auditor. This chapter explores Smith's awareness of her audience in her novels, where she creates fictional characters who perform as audience members for the poems of other characters. I argue that Smith provides a canny interpretive key to unlock the problem of the audience: she writes an audience into her poems and novels and follows their interpretations of her poems as they experience them. The final chapter, titled "Echoes" puts forward Smith's theory of allusion, which depends on a particular figuration of voice in the echo, which she deploys through quotation and allusion. This chapter explores echoes on the poetic and political level, as allusions that become disembodied, as echoing voices which carry through

the poem and extend beyond it, resolving themselves only at the close of the volume, when Smith sends them back to their possessors in the endnotes. These echoes demonstrate Smith's unique conception of how Romantic solipsism, deployed as echoes which resonate in the sympathetic bodies of others, can have political and social ends.

CHAPTER TWO

SPEAKERS

> You know that when in the Beech Woods of Hampshire, I first struck the chords of the melancholy lyre, its notes were never intended for the public ear! It was unaffected sorrows drew them forth: I wrote mournfully because I was unhappy – And I have unfortunately no reason yet, though nine years have elapsed, to change my tone.
>
> – Smith's Preface to the sixth edition of *Elegiac Sonnets and Other Poems*, 1792

> Never were poetical whipt syllabubs in black glasses so eagerly swallowed by the odd taste of the public
>
> – Anna Seward in a letter to Theophilus Swift, 9 July 1789

In the Preface to her sixth and expanded edition of her blockbuster *Elegiac Sonnets and Other Poems*, Charlotte Smith describes a conversation with a friend who wondered if a change in tone for the new sonnets Smith added to the collection would be appropriate. Smith's answer, "I see no reason to change my tone" (5), establishes an important aspect about her sonnets and her own approach to their composition.[24] Smith's response, that she first wrote poetry because she was

[24] In the extended preface, Smith transcribes her friend's comments as: "… perhaps, some of a more lively cast might be better liked by the Public – "Toujours perdrix," said my friend – "Toujours perdrix," you know, "ne vaut rien." – I am far from supposing that *your* compositions can be neglected or disapproved, on whatever subject: but perhaps "toujours Rossignols, toujours des chansons tristes," may not be so well received as if you attempted, what you would certainly execute as successfully, a more cheerful style of composition.'" (4-6). Among the various allusions Smith herself invokes in this preface, Stuart Curran notes both Biblical and poetical; the choice of her friend to associate her poems with the nightingale places Smith not only in a Greek poetical tradition, but also in a feminine one. For a more thorough discussion of the nightingale figure in terms of women's poetry, see Elizabeth Fay "The Nightingale Talks Back." Smith's tone was well-known and appreciated by her readers; see Appendix B in Claire Knowles and Ingrid Horrocks' edition of *Charlotte Smith: Major Poetic Works* for Broadview Press 2017.

unhappy and has, despite the passing of nine years, no such reason to "change my tone" (5), draws attention not only to the sincerity of Smith's verse but to her commitment to her own melancholic tone. Smith's emphasis in her prefaces on personal information meant to contextualize her sonnets, and also, as critics have noted, perform her persona as an author, tends to override any non-biographical interpretations of her statement.[25] Though this preface points to Smith's continued disenfranchisement in her tangled legal battle, it also, too, points to her ongoing intellectual project of exploring the contours of melancholy in her sonnets. Perhaps because of her investment in this emotion, her own self-presentation in her prefaces and poems, and the ongoing placement of works written by women into the categories of amateur, noncanonical, and ephemeral, like Seward's "whipt syllabub in black glasses" (*Letters of Anna Seward*, 2:287), Smith's sonnets have not been always seen as experiments in poetic voice, subjectivity, and perspective. However, Smith's diction of "change my tone" in the preface invites an acknowledgment not only of her own commitment to her own intellectual project, but also, too, encourages a further elucidation of exactly what that tone continues to provide to her work.

In titling her collection *Elegiac Sonnets and Other Poems*, Smith makes a bold claim for the tonal quality of her poetry; her sonnets are, as Daniel Robinson argues "a complex play on literary terms" which depends upon the "defining metrical feature of the sonnet" (189). For Robinson, the elegy serves as this feature. The adjectival *elegiac* modifies her sonnets, describing their tone, placing them in a particular literary tradition, and emphasizing the kind of

[25] For a thorough reading of Smith's authorial posturing in her prefaces, see Jacqueline Labbe's *Charlotte Smith and the Culture of Gender*. Trish Bredar argues that "… the perceived sincerity of the sonnets, bolstered by the autobiographical allusions in Smith's prefaces and by a growing public awareness of her personal struggles, exists in a careful balance with the highly artful, contrived, and self-aware construction of the sonnet form" (150).

subjectivity she explores in them. Stuart Curran argues that in elegiac sonnets like Thomas Gray's *Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard* "the suppressed record of this unfulfilled secret life" becomes "the motive force underlying the entire Romantic revival of the sonnet" (30); Gray's "unfulfilled secret life" serves as "a model for hundreds of poets, whether or not they had a secret life of their own" (30). Thus, after Gray, Romantic poets who wrote elegiac sonnets expressed their feelings of mourning as deeply personal. The Romantic elegy innovates on the elegy's classical status as a public poem and becomes both directed generally and personally. Smith's own *Elegiac Sonnets,* and her repeated references both indirect and direct to churchyard poets like Gray and Young, build on the elegiac sonnet's hybrid form, though Smith innovates in her own "playful and disruptive" way (Roberts 554).[26] Smith adopts from this elegiac tradition the positioning of the speaker as mourner, an individual experiencing an emotion which, at times, removes her from her empirical landscape and suspends her in the space of that emotion. Smith adopts this position in her preface, and elsewhere in her sonnets, in order to perform a traditional kind of emotional sincerity which, as Susan Rosenbaum argues, becomes increasingly important as poets during the eighteenth and nineteenth century associate the lyric with subjective experience.[27] Smith embeds her sonnets with this elegiac tone and, in so doing, places

[26] Smith directly alludes to Gray in her own footnotes in "Sonnet V: To the South Downs:" "your turf, your flowers among" (2), "Sonnet IX:" "And laugh at tears themselves have forced to flow" (10), "Sonnet LXXXIV: To the Muse:" "Where Pity and Remembrance bend and weep!" (14), "Ode to Despair:" "Grim visage, comfortless Despair!" (6), "Elegy:" "And fruitless call on him – who cannot hear" (32), and "Written on the death of a distressed player, detained at Brighthelmstone for debt, November 1792:" "His lisping children hail their sire's return!" (61). Smith also mentions the sonnets of Young and Wharton as direct inspiration for her character Celestina's own sonnet on the graveyard of a young girl, which becomes "Sonnet XLIX: Supposed to have been written in a church-yard, over the grave of a young woman of nineteen" in the sixth edition of *Elegiac Sonnets and Other Poems*.

[27] See especially M.H. Abrams' *The Mirror and the Lamp*, Jonathan Culler's *Theory of the Lyric* as well as his chapter on "Apostrophe" from *Structuralist Poetics*, Käte Hamburger's reading of Hegel in *The Logic of Literature,* Susan Rosenbaum's *Professing Sincerity: Modern Lyric, Commercial Culture, and the Crisis in Reading*, and Anne Williams' chapter on "What is Lyric?" from *Prophetic Strain: The Greater Lyric in the Eighteenth Century*.

herself in a lyric tradition. As Gordon Braden and Alistair Fowler note, the elegy has long been connected to the lyric, and often contains hybrid aspects that modern critics associate with lyrics, like the subjective experience of personal emotion, the apostrophe to other objects asking them to join in the mourning, and the encouragement of biographical readings which allow the elegy to not only become personal to the poet but also to the reader as well.[28] Smith's refusal to "change her tone" not only functions as further biographical contextualization but as a statement of her ongoing commitment to the formal potentialities of that tone, which include the possibilities of hybrid forms to create and explore different kinds of subjectivities associated with the experience of a singular emotion.

Reading Smith's sonnets not simply as her own personal experience of emotion, but as formal experiments through which Smith explores the potentialities of those forms to erect subject positions, encourages a new genealogy of modern lyric theory.[29] Smith, like other women writers in this period, was simply placed inside an existing narrative of the Romantic period which prioritizes the type of poetic subjectivity and project put forward by male poets like Wordsworth and Shelley. This type of subjectivity, characterized by the poet's dominant subjective, his vatic desires, and his support for the egotistical sublime vision, has been long incorporated into theories of the modern lyric. As Culler argues, this vatic desire is created through the apostrophe: "a device which the poetic subject uses to establish with the object a relationship that helps to constitute the subject itself as poetic" (217). Though Romantic critics

[28] Braden and Fowler's essay on "Elegy" from the *Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics* (2012) also cites some instances of readers making personal elegies written by others: "The emotions represented by the poem and the emotional experience that the poem offers to the reader are distinct; their trajectories need not coincide. They can, of course – as when, in a practice shared by other contemporary readers, Queen Victoria and George Eliot annotated the text of Alfred, Lord Tennyson's *In Memoriam* (1850) so that it referred to their own lost loves" (398).

[29] Daniel Robinson refers to Smith's "formal paradoxy— the deliberate yoking of seemingly disparate forms that has become such a characteristic feature of Romantic poetry" (185).

have questioned Wordsworth's and Shelley's commitment to this type of subjectivity, it has become integral to identification of lyrics, and to critical definitions of lyrical aspects in a variety of poems. Smith's example prompts a reevaluation of this narrow set of identifiers for lyric poetry, bringing attention to the work of popular female authors, and encouraging an identification of what important Romantic writers actually conceived of as literature's potential for different types of subject positions. I argue here that Smith uses the apostrophe to create the poetic subject without extending into the territory of the vatic that has been so often associated with Romantic poets.

In the previous chapter, I discussed Smith's development of her apostrophe-sonnet, and explored the ways in which Smith's speaker explores the situation of the triangulated address in "To a nightingale," briefly embodying, and thus granting subjectivity to, the position of speaker, auditor, and audience. In this chapter, then, I want to more closely investigate the intricacies of Smith's experiments in the speaker position in three apostrophe-sonnets from *Elegiac Sonnets and Other Poems*. In the first sonnet, "To melancholy. Written on the banks of the Arun, October 1785," Smith demonstrates a process through which the speaker becomes disembodied once she enters the poetic realm of the apostrophe. Smith emphasizes the disembodied speaker's associations not with her own subjective authority, but instead with swirling mists and ghastly voices. This poetic speaker, as Smith reaches the end of her process, claims an emphasis not on immediate experience but on the influence of memory, on remembered echoes and long-dead influences. In this poem, Smith situates the ideal Romantic embodied speaker into a network of relations which depend upon the sighing echoes of the sonnet's form. "The return of the nightingale" explores the next aspect of Smith's experimentation into the affordances of the apostrophe-sonnet's speaker position: the absent presence. In this apostrophe-sonnet, Smith's

speaker investigates the apostrophe's construction of the speaker through the auditor by exploring an auditor who never arrives or appears in the poem. The spectral presence of the nightingale, who denies the speaker's requests for her appearance, allows Smith to explore the ways in which absence troubles the apostrophe's relationship with the speaker. By removing the auditor from the equation, Smith experiments in how the speaker can form herself through an absence. The final sonnet in this section, Sonnet LV "To hope" assumes the instability of the speaker in the apostrophe-sonnet and explores instead what that unstable speaker can do. In this poem, the vatic demand of the speaker is undercut by the fleeing auditor. By rejecting the speaker's demands, Smith puts forward a new desire in the apostrophe-speaker and turns towards the relevant subject position of the auditor. In each of these apostrophe-sonnets Smith creates an unstable speaker, constructed inside the deliberately poetic space of the sonnet, who both reflects and denies a relationship with others that, traditionally, helps them to comprehend her. In so doing, Smith advances a concept of the subjective position, and indeed of the poet herself, that is fundamentally hybrid, multiple, and fluid. Smith's lyric speaker, then, rejects the solitary demands of the vatic poet, and instead advances an interrelation between each subject position in the poem.

1. Unstable Speakers: "Sonnet XXXII. To melancholy. Written on the banks of the Arun, October 1785"

Charlotte Smith's thirty-second sonnet, "To melancholy. Written on the banks of the Arun, October 1785," explores a process by which a stable speaker, once entering the realm of poetry, can be reconstituted as an ephemeral, unstable presence. This presence rejects the embodiment of the wandering figure and embraces instead a component structure created

through sighs and echoes. At the close of the poem, when Smith again apostrophizes Melancholy, she cements the speaker's relationship with misty memory and reminds us that the speaker's presence can only be adequately explored and formulated through the echoes of memory and the apostrophe. I quote the poem in its entirety below:

To melancholy. Written on the banks of the Arun, October 1785

When latest Autumn spreads her evening veil,
And the grey mists from these dim waves arise,
I love to listen to the hollow sighs,
Thro' the half-leafless wood that breathes the gale:
For at such hours the shadowy phantom pale,
Oft seems to fleet before the poet's eyes;
Strange sounds are heard, and mournful melodies,
As of night-wanderers, who in their woes bewail!
Here, by his native stream, at such an hour,
Pity's own Otway I methinks could meet,
And hear his deep sighs swell the sadden'd wind!
O Melancholy! – such thy magic power,
That to the soul these dreams are often sweet,
And soothe the pensive visionary mind! (34-5)

This sonnet's loco-descriptive title immediately establishes both the linear time of the poem and the sonnet's exact location in a specific landscape.[30] This landscape, familiar to Smith

[30] Keith Hasperg argues: "Indeed, a great part of why Smith is so important is that she commemorates her English literary heroes and relocates the scenes of memory and despair into specific spots in the English landscape" (118)

herself from her own childhood and adult life, feeds into an introductory image of Smith walking along the banks of the river on an autumn day.[31] The initial guiding image of this sonnet is thus Smith's figure by the riverbank; the loco-descriptive title of the poem cements this association for us by lending the poem, as all loco-descriptive titles do, the trappings of empirical reality. These details aid in the initial encounter of this poem not as an apostrophe but as a spontaneous confessional meditation prompted by the poet's walk along the river "When latest Autumn spreads her evening veil" (1). In terms of Romantic poetry, this poem could not stand on firmer ground.[32] Smith aids the poetic grounding of this sonnet in the initial lines when she introduces the speaker almost immediately: "I love to listen to the hollow sighs" (3). The introduction of the speaker in the third line of the first quatrain provides, in contrast to the dream-like poetic landscape of Autumn's "evening veil" (1) represented by the "grey mists" (2) rising from the Arun, a solid, and familiar, presence. Adela Pinch argues that "The speaker of this poem is much more palpably present in the scene than in most of Smith's nature sonnets" (66). For Pinch, the repeated self-identification through pronouns and the familiar landscape create an image of stability in terms of the speaker's identity and of her body. This speaker constructs herself with all of the familiar trappings of the Romantic lyric: a biographically familiar place, an embodied speaker present as the poet, and the apparently spontaneous effusion of emotion.

[31] Trish Bredar has recently eloquently argued for Smith's treatment of the wandering pedestrian figure in Elegiac Sonnets; see Bredar, "Wild Wanderings: Gender and Pedestrian Travel in Charlotte Smith's *Elegiac Sonnets*."

[32] Hasperg calls this sonnet "arguably [Smith's] signature sonnet" (106) and claims that this sonnet, along with Smith's other sonnets centered on the Arun, "are in large part responsible for her resurgence in the years since Curran's edition of her poetry was published in 1993, helping to establish her as a precursor to Wordsworth's notion in the Preface to *Lyrical Ballads* that poetry should originate "from emotion recollected in tranquility." Key to Smith's status among critics as an important pre-Romantic is that in her sonnets recollection is the result of the poet's experience in the landscape" (111).

As the poem continues, however, the speaker's important aural sense must constantly shore itself up against the visually obscured and obscuring landscape as the poem moves from the empirical riverbank into the ghostly, echoing realm of Poetry. In the first quatrain, the metaphoric landscape crystallizes as the real landscape of the Arun river becomes obscured by mist; indeed, by the fourth line of the first quatrain, the speaker has abandoned the realm of the empirical entirely. Autumn's misty veil drapes over the speaker and the "dim waves" (2) that lift off the river's surface cover the reality of the landscape, obscuring any visual signs of the true location. Already by the end of the first quatrain the assumed stability of the loco-descriptive phrase, and even the foundational image of the figure of Smith herself walking along the river fades into the foggy and obscured edges of the poem. By this point, the poem abandons the empirical details of the speaker's subjective experience of nature and turns towards the constructed realm of poetry.

The fourth line of this sonnet marks a moment of deliberate poetic construction which indicates a complete removal of the speaker from the empirical landscape of the river Arun into the realm of the imaginary, metaphorical, and poetic. Once the speaker mentions her travel "Thro' the half-leafless wood that breathes the gale:" (4), she imagines the wood as the wind's lungs, creaking in and out with the gale's rhythmic inhale and exhale. In these lines, this sighing assonance of "half" and "that" mimics the wind's noise. As readers inhale and exhale in reading these words aloud, they mimic the rhythm that the wind breathes through the woods in these lines. As M.H. Abrams has investigated in "The Correspondent Breeze," the "greater" Romantic lyrics often involve the presence of the wind: "not only are nature's breezes the analogue of human respiration, they are themselves inhaled into the body and assimilated to its substance" (129); like her Romantic inheritors, Smith invokes this "metaphoric fusion" (129) not only in the

breath of the wind but the breath of our lungs in this line.[33] Smith compounds this metaphoric and embodied performance in her complex phrasing of "half-leafless wood that breathes the gale" (4) and further asks her reader to become aware of their own breath as they read these lines. The fourth line of this poem establishes the total abandonment of the natural landscape of the riverside in favor of the poetic realm of visionary mists. With this abandonment of empirical nature, and too spontaneous emotion prompted by that natural landscape, this apostrophe-sonnet must reconstruct its speaker in an entirely new realm.

Once the speaker becomes associated with her ear, instead of with her cloudy vision of the "shadowy phantom pale" (5), she becomes less of a whole body and more the metonymic representation of her poetic potential.[34] In fact, the only times in which the speaker references herself come in terms of her sight, which only functions in a visionary way, and through her ear. The double-identification, then, of line ten's "I methinks could meet," underlines the mental, rather than physical, in this poem. The double reference to the self, already misty and unclear in this poem, shifts responsibility for the meeting with Otway's ghost back onto the speaker herself; and, as "methinks" (10) demonstrates, the medium of this meeting is mental rather than physical

[33] Abrams continues: "This is air-in-motion, whether it occurs as a breeze or breath, wind or respiration – whether the air is compelled into motion by natural forces or by the action of human lungs. … The rising wind, usually linked with the outer transition from winter to spring, serves as the vehicle for a complex subjective event: the return to a sense of community after isolation, the renewal of life and emotional vigor after apathy and spiritual torpor, and an outburst of creative inspiration following a period of sterility" (113-114). We can see how Smith uses the wind in this stanza to work oppositely from the paradigm outlined by Abrams; her speaker moves away from community rather than into it. The movement represented by the wood-lungs of the forest signal the speaker's movement deeper into what is, ironically, greater visionary space.

[34] Pinch finds this disembodiment interesting in terms of the ways in which emotion works in this poem: "I am most interested, however, in the way that "Melancholy" enables Smith's encounter with a past poet, allowing her to "hear" him. Imagining another poet's misery, the sonnet concludes, is sweet to the melancholy soul, and soothing to the pensive visionary mind. Melancholy has the magic power to make one imagine other poets' misery in the landscape, and hence allows an imagined relation to other poets" (65-66).

or conversational. The speaker has already self-identified as a listener; by this point the sonnet reveals that listening in this poem references an experience of a past memory rather than a present physical act. By the tenth line, signaled by line four's "half-leafless wood that breathes the gale" (4) the solid foundations of the loco-descriptive river bed are replaced by a visionary, mental experience which de-emphasizes the body in favor of the poem's reliance on the visionary and on the audible. The poem moves away from the speaker's stable body to create a corollary between the obscuring mists of the landscape and the ghosts which haunt it. As the speaker fades into these mists, she becomes a shadow, a memory of her physical body walking along the riverbank.

Because the speaker exists through her senses, the visionary aspect of this poem, enforced by the obscuring mists, helps us to understand that the speaker's identity as liminal, transitory, unstable. Only after the exit from the empirical reality of the riverbed can the speaker access not only the visionary "shadowy phantom pale," (5) who turns out to be Otway, but she can also hear "mournful melodies, / As of night-wanderers, who their woes bewail!" (7-8). This visionary riverbed, created and reinforced through poetic diction, contains a variety of sounds which mimic the natural world which she has left behind; here, Smith demonstrates the ways in which this speaker constructs the poetic world so that it slips between the empirical and the poetic. Otway too is a shadow of his physical self, "the shadowy phantom pale" (5) which "Oft seems to fleet before the poet's eyes;" (5-6). The infinitive "to fleet," again reinforces the constructed nature of the poem. Smith's usage of the word to mean "to glide away like a stream; to slip away, change position imperceptibly or stealthily" (OED) is the tenth available definition for this verbal usage and was just about to go out of style when Smith used it in 1785. Thus, the stream-like quality of Otway's movement not only comes from the river that so inspired his mind

when he was alive but again reinforces the breathy, transitory nature of the speaker's vision of him. Smith's speaker here deliberately chooses a word that mimics the river's movement to discuss her ghastly visitation which adds a further structural layer to the speaker's vision. At this moment, the poem re-centers its emphasis away from those more stable constructions provided by the imagery of the riverbed and turns towards the poetic sounds of Melancholy's visionary world.

Far more stable than her misty vision, the poem explains, are the "Strange sounds … and mournful melodies, / As of night-wanderers, who their woes bewail!" (7-8). The speaker's self-identification as a listener in this realm where listening must be a mental experience rather than a physical one underlines the poem's emphasis on sound, especially on its own aural quality. These sighs and echoes function as a kind of quasi-solipsistic set of images, familiar to all readers of Romantic poetry, in which the speaker's own conception of herself creates the environment of the poem. In this case, the echoes and sighs of Melancholy's vale only reinforce the unstable quality of the speaker, since a sigh operates somewhere between a sound and a breath and an echo is a reverberation of an original noise. The sounds that populate this poem, including the spoken sounds of the poem itself, are often whispers or echoes, frequently embodied or bolstered by the sound of the wind. Not only does the wind breathe through the "half-leafless wood" (4) but it also amplifies and carries the ghastly sighs of Otway's ghost: "I … hear his deep sighs swell the sadden'd wind" (10-11). The wind's sighs whisper through the rest of the poem, picking up on the sibilance of "strange sounds" (7) and "sighs swell the sadden'd wind!" (11). Even the puffed sounds of "Pity's own Otway" (10) echo the sound of the gale creaking through the "half-leafless wood" (4). Thus, the poem's diction reinforces the breathed sounds that populate the visionary riverbed itself; the overall impression is of a

breathing, echoing vale where ghosts and spirits walk equally with the speaker. Because she herself so easily slips across the boundaries of visionary, aural vessel, and ghost, the speaker loses the firm contours of her identity. The speaker becomes much like the ghost of Otway himself, haunting the grounds of Melancholy's vision.

The final section of the poem, a sestet that Smith has structurally broken into two tercets, rhyming *cde cde*, first imagines the ghastly visitation of a literary ghost; the final tercet of the poem acts like many of Smith's closing heroic couplets by casting a metaphorical veil over the entire poem and reframing it in terms of the speaker's personal emotional experience. By the end of the poem, the speaker reveals the previous words to be a reverie brought about by Melancholy's "magic power" (12). At this point, the poem reveals its status as a vision; this dreamy, poetic landscape is inspired perhaps by the landscape near the Arun, but it has never been empirically real. The sonnet reveals that each scene described has been a "dream" (13) granted by Melancholy's "magic power" (14). In a characteristic Smithian twist, the sonnet is given new context through which to explain the initial experience and to influence future re-readings. In this case, the final twist reinforces the poem's status as an apostrophe with the speaker's breathed exhortation, "O Melancholy!" (12).

As Jonathan Culler has argued, the apostrophe helps to create the subjectivity of the speaker in the poem via its vocal apostrophe to the auditor, "a turning aside from supposedly real listeners to apostrophe to someone or something that is not an ordinary, empirical listener, such as a nightingale, an urn, or one's own poem" (86). In the apostrophe, the speaker turns away from the realm of the empirical to invoke the distant auditor. The apostrophe is also a singularly poetic form and the subjectivity it creates in the speaker also a poetic subjectivity. In "To melancholy" Smith indicates the poem's status as an apostrophe from the title, but as I have

shown, what stands as solid in the title does not always come out of the poem unquestioned. When at the close of the poem, with the last tercet that functions like Smith's usual heroic couplets, Smith establishes the poem's previous eleven lines as a protracted apostrophe to Melancholy: "Oh Melancholy! – such thy magic power, / That to the soul these dreams are often sweet, / And soothe the pensive visionary mind!" (12-14). Because Smith maintains an Italian sonnet form throughout, however, this means the final twist comes in the last tercet, placing the volta firmly at the point of exhalation to the object of the poem's apostrophe: "Oh Melancholy!" (11). The exhaled breath and the em-dash that follow the interjection highlight Melancholy as a figure and indicate the speaker's pause or exhortation. The breathed pauses that bracket the subject of the apostrophe emphasize again the poem's interest in soft sighs and echoes as a way to demonstrate praise or to make up an apostrophe. The breathiness of this moment, too, underlines the poem's negotiation with the speaker herself: unable perhaps to escape her Melancholic visions, she can only praise Melancholy's power through her sighs and her breath. Or perhaps, as Smith will argue in Sonnet XXII, the language used to apostrophize distant auditors must only be soft sighs. Either way, the final tercet argues that the apostrophe should be the main focus of this poem and should serve to indicate the identity and subjectivity of the speaker. Smith continues to undercut the expectations of this form by providing an example of the form's rules while not following them.[35]

[35] Anna Seward famously complained about Smith's hybrid forms in a 20 July 1786 letter to Miss Weston: "You say Mrs. Smith's sonnets are pretty; — so say I; — "pretty" is the proper word; pretty tuneful centos from our various poets, without anything original. All the lines that are not the lines of others are weak and unimpressive; and these hedge-flowers to be preferred, by a critical dictator, to the roses and amaranths of the two first poets the world has produced!" Daniel Robinson argues that Seward's dislike of Smith's sonnets comes from their illegitimacy: "For Seward and for many others, the sonnet claim is a claim to canonical inclusion by deferment to those established literary giants. But what Smith seems most actively to be doing in her sonnets is trying something new with the form, rather than imitating the styles of previous poets … Thus, Smith's sonnets are 'bastardized' because she opts to give them her own name without identifying a father, as Seward so obviously does" (110-1).

Because the apostrophe functions to create the speaker's identity, and Smith references the apostrophe at the close of the poem, Smith encourages readers back into the poem itself, either through rereading or in the recollection of the poem. Through rereading, with the new knowledge that all that will pass is only a fancy brought about by Melancholy, readers encounter not, as the apostrophe should suggest, a solid speaker set up in opposition to the auditor, but a Smithian figure as ephemeral as the mist that steals through this visionary world. Lines seven and eight are the most relevant here: "Strange sounds are heard, and mournful melodies, / As of night-wanderers, who their woes bewail!" Because this poem has always been in a visionary realm, the speaker was never solid or real at all. She makes up one of the number of these night-wanderers. The only wails audible in this poem are the wails of the speaker; her own emphasis on her aural capabilities underlines the importance of the sounds she makes, not only in the visionary world of Melancholy but also in the constructed world of the poem.

As I mentioned before, the sighs and echoes of this poem not only help create the aural world of the poem but also work as a solipsistic metaphor for the speaker; her unstable identity creates itself metaphorically through the breathy, whispered sounds. Unlike a firm call to the auditor which should, as Culler argues, "make something happen" (154), Smith's speaker sighs and breathes, filling the space with air which reinforces the image of the "half-leafless wood that breathes the gale" (4). The something which happens in this poem is the construction of the poem itself, and thus also the creation of the poetic speaker inside of it. The poem's pointed emphasis on the apostrophe of the poem, highlighted at the close of the poem, re-centers attention back on the speaker's position as subject. Her unstable identity never fully created in opposition to the auditor, or with a clear statement of intent, makes space to imagine a variety of

different identities, including, of course, Smith's own authorial persona and the persona of the speakers from the images in her *Elegiac Sonnets*.

Indeed, some of the other images from *Elegiac Sonnets* work to enrich that assumption by providing yet further readings of this poem's speaker. Readers of "To melancholy," depending on their edition of *Elegiac Sonnets*, would have seen a number of images that simultaneously depict a particular image from a sonnet and also depict images from a number of sonnets. In the images which feature a single figure, especially the figure paired with Smith's sonnet "To the moon," readers imagine that, regardless of the poem's lines quoted below, this figure also finds herself lost in a melancholic fancy. Because of this connection, readers, too, might recognize the speaker of "To Melancholy" as one of the "night-wanderers" (8) whose voice echoes throughout the poem. The imagery of this speaker in this poem remind readers of other "woes bewail[ed]" (8) throughout the *Elegiac Sonnets*. Thus, Smith maintains a kind of instability on the part of her speaker because she points to a variety of identities, all which match up easily into the poem. Readers might also recognize from the familiar depiction of the speaker as composing and walking alone, a visual connection with two emblematic images that decorate *Elegiac Sonnets*. Smith operates in this fashion because the point of her apostrophes is not to make the speaker stable but to imply that many identities can be embodied because the fundamental instability, created by her apostrophes, must remain in play. She provides so many options through which to conceive and comprehend the speaker's identity and as such, Smith resists impulses to simply assign one identity to the speaker.

I have been arguing that the speaker in *Elegiac Sonnets* can be quite complex, bringing in details of Smith's personal life, but also invoking a chorus of other voices, all without stark differentiation between the variety of notes. I believe that the lack of stark definition, the

emphasis on the sigh and echo in this poem, and even the reference to Otway and Smith's beloved river, combine to form a complex argument about the Romantic speaker and the types of subjectivity that can and should work in Smith's sonnet. In this sonnet, Smith works through a scene of transcendence brought about by the speaker's own memory. Smith launches the sonnet into the realm of the visionary in this poem without ever truly setting foot on solid ground, even as the title refers directly to the river Arun.This apostrophe functions without strong oratories; neither does Smith clearly state the speaker's self in opposition to either the ghastly figure of Otway or the allegorical figure of Melancholy. Instead, the speaker exists only through her ears, fading in and out of the other figures who populate the poem, seeming to experience Melancholy's power just as the speaker experiences it in the poem. This poem, then, represents a complicated argument about the ways in which poems form and transmit identity and, too, how that identity exists as an assumed stability. Smith begins her sonnet with a clear statement of place and follows it by a statement of subjectivity, only to conceive of a path of the metaphorical, poetic, and visionary which only seems to obscure and make malleable those strong foundations. She reveals the poem as a work of fancy, and as an apostrophe to Melancholy, at the end of the poem, thus undercutting the important *I-thou* structure that forms many apostrophes. Thus, the identity of the poet, and of the silent auditor, whether that figure is metaphorical or actual, exist in a constructed world ringing with echoes and soft sighs, liminal sounds that mimic the veiling mists of the imagined riverbed.

2. Presence through Absence: "The return of the nightingale. Written in May 1791"

In "To Melancholy" Smith reveals at the close of the poem that one key aspect of her apostrophe has been the granting of a particular vision; Melancholy embeds this vision in the

speaker's memory. In this way, the speaker's aural sense, and the experience of her disembodied voice among the ghostly voice of Otway and other sentimental sounds, occur deliberately inside Melancholy's construction. This construction is the apostrophe-sonnet form itself. If a speaker is constructed, as Smith argues in "To Melancholy" inside the particular formulation of the apostrophe, as part of a series of echoes in relation to the literary and her personal past, what happens when the object of the speaker's apostrophe never arrives? How can a speaker construct herself, and be constructed in the poem, when the object of the apostrophe does not appear, and might not be heard if it did? What possibilities are there for the apostrophe form as a hybrid form? How can the affordances of the apostrophe be extended to include the unstable speaker in a different poetic situation? In answer to these questions, I propose a reading of Smith's sonnet "The return of the nightingale. Written in May 1791" as a quasi-apostrophe, through which I read the ways in which Smith herself perceived the possibilities for the speaker inside the form. I read this poem as a formal experiment with the apostrophe in which Smith troubles the form's assumed stability in order to argue for its efficacy: when she provides a truly absent auditor, Smith showcases the apostrophe's potential for creating and supporting an unstable speaker.

The return of the nightingale. Written in May 1791

Borne on the warm wing of the western gale,
How tremulously low is heard to float
Thro' the green budding thorns that fringe the vale,
The early Nightingale's prelusive note.
'Tis Hope's instinctive power that thro' the grove
Tells how benignant Heaven revives the earth;
'Tis the soft voice of young and timid Love

That calls these melting sounds of sweetness forth.
With transport, once, sweet bird! I hail'd thy lay,
And bade thee welcome to our shades again,
To charm the wandering poet's pensive way
And soothe the solitary lover's pain;
But now! – such evils in my lot combine,
As shut my languid sense – to Hope's dear voice and thine! (49-50)

This poem operates on the hope for a future moment of transcendence signaled by the longed-for return of the nightingale. In anticipation of this moment, the speaker describes the calling of the nightingale, by the abstracted figures of "Hope" and "young and timid Love" (5,7), which will signal this eventual reunion. The potential satisfaction related here, however, will never come to fruition because the speaker reveals that, now, she will not be able to hear the nightingale's song: "such evils" (13) have destroyed the speaker's auditory powers so that her "languid sense" (14) is "shut" (14). The injury to her senses leaves her no ability to understand the nightingale's song, let alone the echo of that song carried by "the warm wing of the western gale" (1). Despite the poem's presumed desire for the return of the nightingale, it would not matter because the speaker cannot hear the bird's song. This poem thus compounds the absence of the nightingale: the bird remains absent in the poem itself and its song forever absent from the speaker's experience, since she will never again be able to hear it.

The primary resonance of the metaphorical nightingale occurs in the speaker's memory. In previous seasons during the nightingale's migration back to "our shades" (10), the speaker could hear the notes of "melting sweetness" (8) which for her spoke to "Hope's instinctive power" (5) and "the soft voice of young and timid Love" (7). Because no present or future

moment is available to the speaker, the speaker turns to reflect on when she could hear the song: during the past. In the octave, the speaker reveals that her present auditory sense is "shut" (14); thus, the whispered remnants of the nightingale's song are memories for the speaker; she can hear no such new signaling: "As shut my languid sense – to Hope's dear voice and thine!" (14). The breath of the bird supposed by this poem, carried along by the breath of the wind, reaches not the ear of the poet, but rather the ear of her memory. This poem, then, operates not only in the anticipatory time before the event but also within the speaker's past experience of that event. Her memory allows her to have an impossible experience again in the present time of the poem. The inspiration for this poem exists entirely in the speaker's memory and it is her memory which reactivates her feelings and emotions, allowing her to again hear the nightingale's song despite her deafened physical senses. The speaker's memory in this poem functions much like the poem itself does. Readers, deaf to the nightingale's song, experience with the speaker again her emotions before the nightingale comes. The speaker's relationship with memory, as I will demonstrate, is especially poetic and constructed, again shedding light on the poem as an enumeration of process.

The poetic nature of the speaker's experience is exemplified by the eye rhyme at line seven. "The return of the nightingale" is an English sonnet and appears to contain none of Smith's usual hybridization between the English and Italian forms until the eye rhyme between "grove / Love" (5, 7). Like all eye rhymes, the pair works only when read silently; the endings of both "grove" (5) and "Love (7) match if readers disregard their pronunciation. However, when read aloud, the lack of verbal rhymes prompts a pause at that very pair. Of course, it is significant that this eye rhyme comes around the usual place of the Italian volta, implying perhaps some of Smith's usual structural play. Much like a volta in the Italian form, this eye

rhyme signals a shift in the process of the poem itself. Broken out of the lockstep pattern inside the familiar English sonnet, the eye rhyme “grove / Love” (5,7) forces a pause, and, with it, a reexamination of the poem as a poetic object, rather than a narrative about Smith’s delayed moment of future transcendence. In the same way as the eye rhyme breaks the rhyme scheme of the poem, the revelation of the speaker’s shut senses asks readers to question the speaker’s role in the poem as a function, not as a character. If, as the speaker claims, she cannot hear the nightingale’s song even should it come, how can she function in her role in a poem that anticipates that very transcendence? The speaker’s revelation in this sonnet encourages a reading of the poem as an investigation of the process of apostrophe itself, and the function of the speaker, rather than a narrative drama starring a cipher for Charlotte Smith.

In this poem, Smith investigates what her speaker as a function can do and how that speaker simultaneously is created by and creates the poem itself. When Smith makes the reader the object of the poem as well as the subject, she imagines the necessary instability of the apostrophe to be reflected in the speaker who creates and is constituted by the form. The poem emphasizes this process through the speaker’s relation of the scene in her memory. In the present time of the poem the speaker imagines the arrival of the nightingale, but unable to look forward to the physical experience of that song, the speaker constructs the song again out of her memory. This construction mirrors the process by which apostrophe creates poetic discourse: first the speaker turns away from her empirical reality where the nightingale does not arrive and second, she frames the song in abstracted language which stands in for the absent bird and allows her to experience its presence metaphorically. When the apostrophe, and the speaker, turn into the

realm of language for her experience, the poem creates the nightingale's metaphorical presence out of its absence.[36]

Outside of the world of the poetic, the speaker has no ability to experience the song of the nightingale; inside the poetic world, the speaker can construct an experience for herself which allows her to again return to her past, before her closed senses, and imagine that transcendent moment again, at the moment before it happens. The first line's openly constructed alliterative "warm wing of the western gale" (1) and the following passive phrase "tremulously low is heard to float" (2) signal a removal into the world of the poetic and represent the speaker's turn away from the empirical world, which makes sense considering her current predicament. The speaker constructs this turn and the result of it by and through language addressed to her object: note the deliberate repetition of "sounds of sweetness" and "sweet bird!" (8, 9) which help the speaker solidify the wind-carried song into the object of her address. Despite the delayed identification of the object of her address, the nightingale's song, the poem makes clear that this song still holds the speaker's focus and thus functions as the object of address. But, as the speaker explains, the nightingale's song has not yet arrived, and so she turns her attention towards imagining the actions that will incite this anticipated echo. Here, the speaker compounds the poetic construction of the apostrophe through her insertion of abstracted, almost allegorized, figures who people the poem: "'Tis Hope's instinctive power that thro' the grove / 'Tis the soft voice of young and timid Love" (5, 7). The speaker places the burden of the calling of the nightingale onto the abstracted figure of Love, which serves not only to remove the speaker from the action of the poem but to place those actions in the realm of allegory, again emphasizing the constructed world of language. The speaker also revises the song of the nightingale through the

[36] See especially Barbara Johnson on the ways in which apostrophe creates subject out of object.

abstracted figure of Hope, describing the nightingale's song as a heralding of Spring: "Heaven revives the earth" (6). These abstractions, along with the poem's turn into the constructed realm of poetry, signal a removal from the empirical entirely and reinforce the sonnet's status as a constructed object, created by the speaker through language.

In much the same way as the speaker constructs the poetic world, and her experience of the nightingale's song, through language, she also supplies the presence of the nightingale through poetic metaphor. As I have shown, despite the poem's address to the literary bird, no such bird ever appears in the poem. In Jonathan Culler's discussion of the apostrophe as a form, the act of apostrophe creates the speaker's identity in opposition to the silent auditor. Culler argues that the apostrophe signals a removal into the poetic space because, in the empirical world, a person would not turn away to apostrophize a bird, let alone the remnants of that bird's song carried along on the breeze.[37] Here, Smith compounds the apostrophe's inherent foundation in the constructed language of poetry by not only addressing an entity that cannot answer but addressing that entity's whispered voice, an echo of that which makes the bird so important as a figure for poetry. Smith's choice here to define the song as an echo has an especially Romantic aspect, and as in Percy Bysshe Shelley's 1819 "Ode to the West Wind," this summer breeze signals the eventual return of poetic inspiration. Because the speaker cannot hear the actual voice of the nightingale, she interprets that lost song as a poetic metaphor. Echoing breezes and faint birdsong are not unfamiliar to readers of Smith's poems, but Smith does not simply use these breaths and echoes as a convenient vocabulary pool; in fact these whispering sounds and half-

[37] Culler, reading Blake's "Sick Rose" argues that apostrophe "does not correspond to any everyday speech act, and the simplest answer to what the speaker is doing is something like 'waxing poetical.' Address to the rose, which personifies it as a sentient creature with a life of its own, creating an I-thou relation between poetic subject and natural object, works to create the poetic 'I' as a bardic, visionary voice, inscribing the poem in the tradition of poetry that seeks to make things happen by acts of naming" (223).

heard melodies provide a contextual foundation for the breathy alliteration of the "warm wing of the western gale" (1) and the whispered sibilance at the end of the second quatrain: "calls these melting sounds of sweetness forth" (8). The nightingale's voice comes to the poem as a knotted chain of relations, which only reveals itself at the end of the poem. When the speaker describes the nightingale's voice, she hears instead the sound of "the warm wing of the western gale" (1) which carries the nightingale's song. Though the speaker assigns this sound a heavy metaphorical weight by calling it "Hope's instinctive power that thro' the grove / Tells how benignant Heaven revives the earth" (5-6), the wind is not the song of the nightingale. In a sense, then, the voice of the nightingale itself cannot carry itself to the speaker's ear; it must be joined with the west wind in order to reach the deafened ears of the speaker. The song, like the speaker's experience, must be mediated to be effectual. In terms of the bird's song itself, because it is both absent and present, anticipated and already lost, the song becomes yet another poetic construction. The nightingale, like the rest of the figures, is an abstraction, representative of an idea, rather than a physical being. The nightingale's song, then, is a linguistic construction rather than an echo of a sound.

Two final points of discussion in terms of the ways in which this poem mirrors the creation of poetic discourse: the use of passive voice and the rhyme scheme of the final quatrain. The second line of the poem reads: "How tremulously low is heard to float" (1-2); this passive construction demands the modifying "by me" to identify who hears the low wind. An easy answer for Smith's use of passive voice here could be her commitment to sonnet form and rhyme scheme; she very well might need to slide her verbs into passive voice in order to maintain the *abab* rhyme scheme in this quatrain. However, as the rest of the verbs in this poem attest, Smith has no problem using active verbs while maintaining her rhyme scheme: "I hail'd thy lay / And

bade thee welcome" (9-10). Smith's use of the passive voice in the first quatrain is deliberate, as is her choice to restrict the speaker's use of subject pronouns until the octave of the poem. The use of passive voice locates the action away from the speaker; no speaking subject hears the tremulous notes of nightingale, rather, they *are heard* to float. This deliberate dislocation of the impetus of action away from the speaker reinforces the presence of the poet who constructs the poem and maintains the sonnet form, independent of, yet related to, the speaker.

Another indicator of the poem's preoccupation with poetic issues relating to apostrophe and the creation of subjectivity through a specific form, and perhaps a further consequence of the speaker's inability to hear the real nightingale comes in the sestet. Specifically, in the rhyming pair in lines 10 and 12: "And bade thee welcome to our shades again … And soothe the solitary lover's pain" (10,12). On sight, this rhyme works because the words share the same three end letters. However, depending on accent, *pain* and *again* do not rhyme. If, for example, a reader decides to enunciate *again* like *uh-gain*, lengthening the ay sound, the words form a rhyming pair. But when if the sound is lengthened to *ay*, two earlier rhyming pairs now come in to play: the "lay" of line 9 and "way" of line 11. The elongation of that sound creates, instead of an octave rhyming *efefgg*, an octave rhyming *eeeeff*. The connection of these three end rhymes makes this series of six lines read as a third quatrain followed by a heroic couplet.

This inward construction belies the outward appearance of this section of the poem: visually, the poem appears as a sestet separated from two quatrains, but to follow this new rhyme scheme creates either four lines rhyming *efef* followed by a heroic couplet or four lines rhyming *eeee* followed by that same concluding couplet. Setting aside for the moment the kind of internal argument about Smith's deliberate confusing of the English and Italian sonnet forms using visual cues, Smith here innovates on the sonnet in a jarring way. The connection between these four

lines, marked by their potentiality to all have the same end rhyme, creates a sense of unity and connection between these four lines. Could it be that the speaker here rhymes these four lines together because she can no longer hear the echoes of the nightingale's inspirational voice? Perhaps it is because the nightingale's voice exists only in memory that the speaker falters in her construction of the sonnet form. Without her senses the speaker falls back onto a simple rhyme scheme, not unlike the "lay" (9) of the "sweet bird" (9), a song that the speaker can no longer hear, and further, only exists in the echoes carried by the summer wind. Smith again argues for this experience as a mediated poetic event which is relayed through the construction of memory and language.

Through this discussion, I have argued for the ways in which this poem focuses on aspects of the apostrophe form, the construction of the speaker in relation to the auditor and the repeated address to that figure, in order to expose their instability. I have also drawn attention to the ways in which this poem preoccupies itself with issues of the speaker's role and examined how that role establishes itself through poetry. Interpreting the poem not as an apostrophe to a nightingale but rather as an apostrophe on apostrophes reveals the inner workings of the form. In this poem, the speaker becomes an object of the apostrophe, as well as the subject of it. The speaker's intentions and impossible actions preoccupy the poem; the speaker's very instability in the face of its absent auditor reflects the ways in which the speaker resists a singular identity. This poem establishes a speaker who exists only in her memory of a past event, and because of this influence, reveals herself as unreliable based on her lack of senses, a vital quality of the Romantic lyric poet. Lyric poets emphasize their subjective experience, and Romantic poets especially foreground the experience of nature through their senses, in this poem Smith directly engages with both of these issues. Smith's speaker, as the object of this poem, uses her memory

to construct her poetic world, placing emphasis on the verbal construction of the poem as a metaphor for that process. Thus, the liminal space of the poem, doubly established by the non-empirical address and the longing for a moment that will never occur, gives the speaker room to create from her memory but also gives the poem space to create the speaker. In this poem, Smith, metaphorically, turns her sewing project inside out, exposing its seams, the process by which the apostrophe itself becomes unstable, allowing for this speaker to create a mirroring unstable identity.

"The return of the nightingale," for all of its complication and delay, ends with a final subjective statement. This poem's closing couplet: "But now! – such evils in my lot combine, / As shut my languid sense – to Hope's dear voice and thine!" (13-14) serves to relocate the emphasis of the poem back on the speaker and on the object of her apostrophe. This final couplet establishes the status of the speaker's memory; the indexical "now!" (13) set off by the exclamation point and the em-dash which indicates an observed, silent pause in the lines, establishes that the speaker's experience of memory has come to an end. The speaker divulges the cause behind the shutting of her "languid sense" (14) and contextualizes these experiences as her own, which separates them from the abstracted calls of Hope and Love found in the earlier sections of this poem. The final line of the poem highlights the apostrophic figure in the poem, the nightingale, and cleanly marks the relationship between the speaker's identity and the nightingale's voice. These lines place the apostrophe firmly in the hands of the speaker and allow her to continue to make abstract the content of her sorrows. Thus, this poem, despite sometimes functioning outside of the apostrophe, closes on the reminder of one. In this closing couplet, Smith reaffirms the speaker's role in this poem after the barrage of interrogation which makes up the previous twelve lines. Because the poem ends with the speaker's present statement, makes

reference to the abstracted figures, and affirms the apostrophe form, Smith argues here that, despite the speaker's failure to hear the echo of the nightingale and thus to function as a traditional speaker, the speaker can still fulfill the apostrophe form. Thus, the troubling instability of the speaker, and sonnet's engagement with her role, form an important aspect of the apostrophe itself. This poem holds itself together because of, rather than in spite of, the unclear role and identity of the speaker. Rather than falling apart because of its own form, or its own speaker, the apostrophe continues to work as a poetic object.

3. The Affordances of Instability: Sonnet VI "To hope"

Now having established the ways in which Smith imagines both the apostrophe form and the speaker who emerges inside of it as fundamentally unstable, I turn to another one of Smith's *Elegiac Sonnets* to help address the issue of what these unstable speakers are capable of doing. For lyric theorists, the power of the lyric poem and thus the lyric poet comes from the power of the vatic. Jonathan Culler argues: "to apostrophize is to will a state of affairs, to attempt to call it into being by asking inanimate objects to bend themselves to your desire" (154) which highlights both the ego of the speaker in believing that her words can change objects, and the important becoming into subject that the apostrophe makes necessary. Culler defines the apostrophe's unabashed interrogation into inciting action: "What is really in question … is the power of poetry to make something happen" (155). Echoing the first portion of Auden's proclamation in "In Memory of W.B. Yeats": "For poetry makes nothing happen" without including the final portion of the line: "it survives" (36), Culler connects the apostrophe with the poet's desire to renew the relation between the speaker and the auditor, to create or remind readers of the subjectivity of others, including objects, and to "identify his universe as a world of sentient forces" (154). As

Smith has already demonstrated, the subject tasked with making this "something happen" and becoming vatic, can be unstable and not-easily identifiable through a single name or marking. In this section of the chapter on unstable speakers, I want to explore the ways in which Smith imagines the power of her unstable speaker to presuppose Auden's summation: "For poetry makes nothing happen / it survives" (36).

A close engagement with Smith's sonnet LV "To hope" helps to access Smith's intervention into the discourse about the apostrophe as a vehicle for poetic action because this poem, unlike other apostrophes, contains a particular type of turn away which involves the exit of the auditor from the poem entirely. "To hope" tracks Hope's exit not simply away from the speaker but out of the poem itself which places emphasis back on the speaker, for she must reckon with the apostrophe form without an auditor. This turn away also creates a powerful instability on the part of the speaker as Smith investigates the potentialities of an apostrophe to multiple entities. Hope's flight in this poem grants insight into the poet's intervention because Smith uses this flight to examine the presuppositions of the apostrophe: namely the ways in which the speaker gains power to incite action, and to create poetry out of her unstable identity. My previous discussion of Smith's speakers demonstrates that they are always unstable, liminal, and contain multiple different identities which encourages different levels of comprehension and identification. If, as Smith has established, her speakers are fundamentally unstable, how do they perform this most poetic of actions: the apostrophic invocation to action? In this poem, Smith answers the question of what her unstable speakers can do by capturing the anticipation of the event, the denial of it, and what follows as her speaker reckons with Hope's flight. Unlike other apostrophic speakers, the speaker in "To hope" neither asks the wind to blow nor mountains to move; rather, what she wants is for her *auditor* to influence her environment. When that

relationship is denied “To hope” imagines this rejection as a breach of the traditional apostrophe form, in which, for example, the West Wind does blow. Smith utilizes this breach in traditional form to examine the apostrophe’s inner dynamics as they are created through a collaboration between the speaker and the auditor, rather than from the speaker’s egotistical demands.

Sonnet VI. To hope

O Hope! thou soother sweet of human woes!
How shall I lure thee to my haunts forlorn?
For me wilt thou renew the wither’d rose,
And clear my painful path of pointed thorn?
Ah, come, sweet nymph! in smiles and softness drest,
Like the young Hours that lead the tender Year,
Enchantress! come, and charm my cares to rest: –
Alas! the flatterer flies, and will not hear!
A prey to fear, anxiety, and pain,
Must I a sad existence still deplore?
Lo! – the flowers fade, but all the thorns remain,
“For me the vernal garland blooms no more!”
Come then, “pale Misery’s love!” be thou my cure,
And I will bless thee, who, tho’ slow, art sure. (16)

Culler’s discussion of the apostrophe argues that part of what makes the apostrophe weird and potentially embarrassing is the act of vatic action: the poet believes in her own power to make something that is impossible in the empirical world possible in the poetic one. For vatic poets, this action happens through a simple invocation through the language of the poem. For

Culler, the poetic event of the apostrophe is the process by which the poet places those desires into language through the apostrophic turn. For Barbara Johnson, the apostrophe calls down the auditor for a different, yet related task. In an analysis of Shelley's "Ode to the West Wind," Barbara Johnson argues that " the poet addresses, gives animation, gives the capacity of responsiveness, to the wind, not in order to make it speak but in order to make it listen to him – in order to make it listen to him doing nothing but address *it*" (31). If an apostrophe serves to make something happen through the act of turning away from the empirical to invoke desires poetically, Smith's apostrophe here, as Shelley's will do later, desires the approach of an ever-absent entity. The tension of an apostrophe comes from the anticipatory quality of it: the speaker never knows if the auditor will respond to her desires, to her demands. Smith extends that anticipatory quality to its breaking point and presents a complication: what if the auditor, upon hearing these invocations, turns and runs away?[38]

Hope's movement away reveals the speaker's desire in this poem: she wants her invocations to work. Barbara Johnson, analyzing Baudelaire, links the speaker's desire for a response to the apostrophe as a trope: "a trope which, by means of the silvery voice of rhetoric, calls up and animates the absent, the lost, and the dead … what the poem ends up wanting to know is … whether its own rhetorical strategies can be effective" (31). When the speaker of Smith's poem asks Hope "How shall I lure thee to my haunts forlorn?" (2) the speaker expects an answer: an answer not only to her question but to know, as Johnson points out, if her rhetorical invocations have a chance of success. This answer, as the speaker describes it, will serve as the first indication of a future action, that Hope will eventually arrive to soothe the

[38] This sonnet's description of the consequences of the auditor's action connect it to a poem quite important in readings of the lyric, Sappho's *Hymn to Aphrodite* in which, as some critics argue, Aphrodite responds to the speaker.

speaker's pains and "clear my painful path of pointed thorn" (4). When Hope flees, Smith questions the speaker's rhetorical strategy which ultimately fails in her call. She finds that the rhetorical strategy of the speaker functions as a series of invocations, each increasing in their poetic intensity, until the exact moment in which the poem captures Hope's turn away. I want to highlight especially here the terms by which the speaker both describes and calls to Hope. The first line's "soother sweet of human woes" (1) increases to "sweet nymph!" in line five and finally Hope becomes an "Enchantress!" (6) just before her exit. Smith's repeated invocations create an increasingly heightened exhortation as well as description of Hope's powers. The increase of classical descriptions, "Like the young Hours which lead the tender Year" (5), and finally the depiction of Hope's mystical qualities match the level of apostrophizing in this poem; as the speaker increases her flattery to Hope, she also increases her apostrophe in terms of their relationship to each other. If Hope is an Enchantress, the speaker asks Hope to "charm my cares to rest" (7), particularizing that power to solve the speaker's own problems.

The speaker's persuasive language obviously fails in this poem in terms of calling Hope to her side. However, it succeeds on another level: the speaker's series of invocations help to create Hope's presence in the poem through the constructed nature of the language of the poem. Hope can truly only flee the poem because, in a sense, she was present. Where these invocations fail to entice Hope, they succeed in giving Hope a material presence through the speaker's linguistic relationship to her. The speaker explains Hope's poetic presence in the poem when she describes Hope as she flees: "the flatterer flies" (8). This alliterative phrase links Hope irrevocably as she "flies" (8) and helps to emphasize the poetic nature of Hope's construction in this poem. The alliteration draws attention not only to the connection between the words but the construction of the sentence in which these words appear. The speaker provides another

indication of Hope's poetic presence, constructed by the speaker's language, in her repeated requests for Hope's presence. The speaker twice asks Hope to appear: "Ah, come, sweet nymph! in smiles and softness drest, / Enchantress! come and charm my cares to rest" (5,7). This rhyming pair which begins the second quatrain of the poem also shares the repeated "come," which functions in this poem as more of a demand than of a request. The speaker softens this demand with the breathed "Ah" of line five and the complimentary descriptive "Enchantress" which ends on a softened whisper, but these are, nonetheless, anticipatory demands. As I mentioned earlier, the speaker of this poem, until Hope flies, believes that Hope will arrive because of her persuasion. These invocations then depend on a delicate control of language which depends on poetic construction and awareness of rhetorical strategy. These effects are only possible because Hope's presence is requested and becomes possible through language.

Because the speaker creates Hope's presence through her invocations, Hope's flight touches the pulse of the poem by demonstrating the liminal quality of that presence. The poem works to further establish this liminal quality by implying that Hope's flight is an ongoing process in the poem itself. The speaker's call to Hope, unanswered until Hope flies in the eighth line of the poem, indicates indeed that Hope has never truly been present as an auditor in the poem. In this poem, the abstracted figure of Hope appears only in her movement away from the speaker; she is always already fleeing during the course of the poem. When the speaker interjects "Alas!" (8), this exhortation demonstrates perhaps a frustration or resignation when Hope "flies, and will not hear!" (8), potentially ignoring the speaker's ongoing pleas for Hope to "Ah, come, sweet nymph!" (5). Line ten, "Must I a sad existence still deplore?" (10) further bolsters Hope's ongoing flight with the internal pun on "still" (10). "Still" indicates the speaker's inability to move forward, perhaps due to the brush that she wishes Hope to "clear my painful path of

pointed thorn" (4). The pun on "still" also indicates an action that remains ongoing, her movements continue to be restrained by those thorns. Zimmerman argues for the complicated status of Sharon Cameron's "lyric time" in Smith's poems: "A sense of the poet's remove from the ordinary is augmented by the establishment of a different temporality in the sonnets" (52). The speaker, stuck in her path without Hope to aid her, maintains this position, a suspended movement, as Hope turns to flee. Hope's ongoing flight gives Smith a space of ongoing action, of liminality inside which she can explore her poetic speaking voice.

In the non-empirical world of poetry, Hope does not have to appear in the poem to be the auditor of the address and in fact, through her exit, the speaker works to establish her own presence without the benefit of Hope in order to help constitute herself. The speaker in "To hope" constructs presence through language inside the relationship between the speaker and the auditor in the first two quatrains. Then, after the flight of the auditor, she takes the focus onto herself and crafts the poem around her own singular presence. The poem marks this shift in the inverted structure of lines nine and ten: "A prey to fear, anxiety, and pain, / Must I a sad existence still deplore?" (9-10). These inverted lines place the emphasis of the poem solely on the speaker and, for a brief but important moment, mark a shift in the poem. In poems of apostrophe, particularly those which use the *I-thou* pattern of apostrophe, the silent auditor functions as the mirror through which the speaker can create their own subjectivity. However, in "To hope," the auditor turns away from the speaker after the first two quatrains of the poem. Hope's exit places focus back on the speaker and her own conception of herself. In answer to Hope's flight from the poem, the speaker appears to rely on the words of others to encapsulate her feelings, almost as if she needs another presence to aid her in conceptualizing the poetic moment. In the remaining six lines of the poem, two of them have been taken up by allusion to

other works and are not explicitly in the speaker's own voice. These allusions, and the fleeing presence of Hope, create an unstable subject who appears to search out other voices or presences from which she can bolster her own sense of self. Because Hope, the auditor, turns away from the speaker and because of the presence of these other voices, Smith uses the apostrophe to create not only an unstable auditor but also an unstable speaker.

In the last few lines Smith introduces another important aspect to her overall argument in this poem: the speaker's use of allusions to other literary texts. Because Hope flees the speaker, the speaker must, either due to frustration, resignation, or perhaps acceptance of Hope's movement away, turn inward and focus on her future without Hope's presence. Of the last six lines in the poem, two rely conceptually on the quotations of others, with the final allusion forming an integral part of the poem's final statement. In this close of the poem, Smith presents a decided argument in support of a speaker with a fluent literary style, who quotes freely, and who sees these allusions and quotes as a necessary aspect of her renewed apostrophe. After the inverted lines which signal that the focus of the poem returns to the speaker, the speaker contextualizes her present emotions in terms of sentimental language: "Lo! – the flowers fade, but all the thorns remain" (11). As the speaker works to reframe her poem without the explicit presence of the auditor, she leans heavily on the language of the sentimental as a way to work through her personal feelings. As Erinç Özdemir argues, one of Smith's main innovations on the sonnet form, and indeed one of her most lasting influence on the form itself, come from the ways in which she unifies the sentimental with the sonnet: "Smith is the major poet whose work reveals how deeply and inextricably the Romantic tradition is rooted in the sentimental" (437). In "To hope" Smith speaker reckons with her new world through the filter of the sentimental, which

allows her to interpret not only her emotions without Hope but also her apostrophe without an auditor.

Smith's speaker also uses the sentimental framework of line eleven to contextualize the citation of Pope that comes in the following line. The speaker's "flowers fade" (11) provides a particularized image to counter Pope's more general "vernal garland" (12). Indeed, the speaker's citation of Pope works so well here that, without the note below, readers might assume that this quote is the speaker's own invented exhortation. Further, it is clear that Smith the poet has conceptualized Pope's citation as an integral part of the quatrain itself as "blooms no more" (12) fits perfectly into the previous pattern set up by "existence still deplore" (10) after the shift away from Hope as the auditor. This pattern of contextualization and structural dependency characterizes the speaker's approach to the other citation in this poem. The final allusion, to Shakespeare's *King John*, provides the new object of the speaker's apostrophe while still fitting into the overall structure of the poem. Shakespeare's poetic description of Death as "pale Misery's love" fits more firmly with the abstracted language of the poem overall and gives a more sentimentalized vision of Death than could be encapsulated by mentioning the name directly. Smith's vision here, of Death as a final cure to sorrow, underlines the poem's use of sentimental language, especially in the eleventh line of the poem: "Lo! – the flowers fade, but all the thorns remain" (11) and places Smith in a long line of poets who equate Death's finality with the solution to their present and past sorrows. Of course, Smith expects a certain type of literary background from her readers. One only knows that "pale Misery's love" describes Death if one has read the dialogue between Constance and her husband in *King John,* which she makes clear that Shakespeare's Death is the object of that romanticized description. And where one might assume that this citation only works to establish Smith's own literary pedigree, the

contextualization of the sonnet depends on an identification of Death as the new auditor. Indeed, without the allusion to Shakespeare, the final line of the poem would make no sense because without her citation, readers would not know to whom the speaker now turns.

Readers of other Smith poems even just those that prefix "To hope" in *Elegiac Sonnets* would be familiar with the speaker's final turn towards Death as the cure for the present troubles. As such, her embedded allusion which obscures Death's presence in "To hope" stands out. The final line of this poem, "And I will bless thee, who, tho' slow, art sure" (14) emphasizes the final two words "art sure" (14) through , the use of the commas, the poetic "tho'" (14), and the inversion which places the verb at the end of the sentence. Smith further makes a connection, through the heroic couplet, the between "cure" (13) and "sure" (14). However, in this poem, Smith puns in those final two lines, by using commas to set them off by themselves. Considering Smith's earlier allusions to Pope and to Shakespeare, as well as directly citing those familiar phrases of sentimental literature, perhaps this final phrase "art sure" (14) could have a double meaning and argue for the place of art, and Death, before an abstracted figure like the capricious, always-fleeing, Hope. The art of Shakespeare, Pope, and the sentimental language so popular in eighteenth-century literature soothe the speaker and provide substance to her verses once the object of apostrophe has vanished. And perhaps Smith mimics part of the appeal of Death, its sure slowness, in her measured and equal English sonnet form.

In taking the speaker's final turn towards Death and its different pacing as her new auditor in "To hope" and accepting the pun on "art sure" which closes the poem, Smith turns towards the aesthetic which characterizes this new auditor. In a comparison to Hope which "flies, and will not hear!" (8), the speaker decides to "bless" Death for "tho' slow, art sure" (14) which alludes, as I have mentioned, to the measured rhythm of the English form in this poem. This final

heroic couplet reads as a type of aesthetic argument. Instead of the quick-fleeing Hope, the speaker turns to Death and with this shift, alludes to art which will outlast even the slow surety of Death. Here Smith makes a subtle statement of her own ideas about her art and makes an argument for the kind of relationship between the speaker and the auditor after the flight of Hope. Smith argues for a kind of measured solipsism: her speaker creates the presence of her auditor out of her own words, which does construct a worldview based on the speaker. However, as Smith demonstrates, this worldview offers no surety in terms of a stable, identifiable speaker who can be marked as a single voice. After the overtly constructed language of the first two quatrains, this speaker turns to a different type of constructed language, one that she bolsters with the citations and allusions to other discourses and literary works. So, despite the solipsism of the apostrophe form, Smith's speaker here argues for the powerful instability of her own speaker as she encounters and responds to a poetic issue. The allusions to Pope and Shakespeare do not solve her instability by clearly identifying her voice as either Shakespeare or Pope, nor do they rectify the inverted structure of the ninth and tenth lines which signals this instability. Instead, these citations help construct the closing of the poem, adding support to the speaker's new relationship with her auditor and to Smith's ideas about her own art. Adela Pinch, when discussing Smith's use of citations and their historical contexts, pointedly establishes the normalcy of these citations: "We must insist not on the scandal of Smith's 'plagiarisms' but on the lack of scandal, the sense that her sonnets announce a relationship to poetic language and literary tradition that seemed appropriate" (61). The appropriateness of these citations comes from the way in which Smith integrates them into the very structure of the poem itself, authorizing their place not only as citations but as versions of the speaker's own voice. Pinch continues: "Smith's sonnets are like echo chambers, in which reverberate direct quotations,

ideas, and tropes from English poetry" (59). In this case, "the artful, pathetic phrase" around which "Smith's sonnets seem to be built" (59) comes from a particular literary tradition which Smith combines with the language of sentimental literature. I want to emphasize that it is the combination of these voices that is important to Smith as her speaker never abandons her original voice for the citations but threads them into the very fabric of the poem itself. And while Smith's use of two other male authors in her poems may prompt critique, feeling as though it shifts the power balance away from her own voice, I argue rather that these allusions fold into Smith's larger argument about the power dynamics of the apostrophe in this poem. If the apostrophe form sets up a relationship between the auditor and the speaker in which each vies for power over the other, depending on the point of the relationship, Smith inverts that dynamic by interrogating the failure of the speaker's persuasive power. Once that relationship has been jettisoned, Smith inserts a speaker who uses her allusions to other authors to recover the apostrophe and direct it towards a more inspirational figure. This turn makes an argument for the necessity of a multi-voiced speaker who can speak through the voices of others and who can use those voices to further establish her own identity as an unstable figure. Smith's speaker neither speaks simply as Charlotte Smith, nor Pope, nor Shakespeare but rather in the space between all three.

CHAPTER THREE

LISTENERS

> *I shall be sorry*, if on some future occasion, I should feel myself compelled to detail its causes more at length; for, notwithstanding I am thus frequently appearing as an Authoress, and have derived from thence many of the greatest advantages of my life, (since it has procured me friends whose attachment is most invaluable,) I am well aware that for a woman – "The Post of Honor is a Private Station."
>
> - Smith's Preface to the sixth edition of *Elegiac Sonnets* (1792)

Forlorn over the shared loss of their respective beloveds, siblings Lady Adelina and Captain Godolphin in Charlotte Smith's *Emmeline*; *or, the Orphan of the Castle* (1788) turn to poetry to express their deep feelings. In a scene that parallels Godolphin's later recitation of his sonnet "To night," the novel describes a scene where Lady Adelina transposes one of her brother's sonnets to music: "Her voice, and exquisite taste, he loved to employ in singing the verses he made; and he would sit for hours by her piano forte to hear repeated one of the many sonnets he had written on her who occupied all his thoughts" (314). In this scene, and others throughout the novel, lovelorn characters share their poetry with others in order to again experience their emotions in a new form. The text describes the time Godolphin spends, not in composing the poems, but in "sit[ting] for hours to hear repeated one of the many sonnets" (314) that he has written about Emmeline. The focus of this scene depends on Godolphin hearing his sonnets recited aloud rather than imagining a scene of solitary inspiration and composition. Later in the novel, Smith replicates this scene when Godolphin's sister, Adelina, recites one of her poems to Emmeline, saying: "which, if it was pleasant to repeat one's own poetry, I would read

to you" (430).[39] This passage establishes an important aspect of Charlotte Smith's conception of the function of her poetry: that it can and should be shared with an audience. Though Smith later describes her emblematic speaker wandering alone in order to create poetry, those scenes provide no succor for the character. In this scene, when the sonnet and pain is shared with an audience, Godolphin can at least find some relief and enjoyment. In this brief example, Smith here revises the lyric's paradigm of a solitary speaker unaware of her audience to include the generative and indeed necessary figure of the audience, who interacts with the speaker and changes the sonnet.

In the previous chapter, I discussed three of Smith's apostrophe-sonnets, and argued for the particular kind of unstable speaker that she creates inside of them. In this chapter, I want to explore the third figure, following the speaker and the auditor, in Smith's apostrophe-sonnets: the audience. In classical forensic rhetoric, the apostrophe represents a turn away from the original audience towards a new auditor. This turn away, which gives apostrophe its name, has also been used by modern lyric theorists like J.S. Mill to grant lyric poetry's status as overheard: the auditor overhears the utterance meant only for the speaker and his objectified auditor. Thus, the lyric becomes the private and subjective confession from an emotional speaker, which is never meant, as Mill argues, to be "printed on hot-pressed paper and sold at a bookseller's shop" (349). Mill places an awareness of the audience on the side of eloquence, which is not poetry, and therefore, not lyric. He writes that "when he turns round and addresses himself to another person; when the act of utterance … is tinged … by that desire of making an impression upon another mind, then it ceases to be poetry, and becomes eloquence" (349). For Mill, though the poet may choose later to print the poetry, the initial impulse should always be guided inward towards a relief of the poet's own emotions. However, as Sarah Zimmerman argues, Romantic

[39] This poem becomes "Sonnet XL" in the fifth edition of *Elegiac Sonnets* (1790).

poets like Smith who wrote during a time where ideas about poetry were constantly developing, embraced a vision of the solitary poet which, rather than removing the audience from the scene, encouraged the audience to lean closer: "the poet's prominence in lyric poems is also an important site of the mode's rhetorical power, because the reader is tacitly invited to sympathize with the poet, as that figure articulates private thoughts, emotions, and memories" (33). Zimmerman, interpreting Smith's theatrical turn away from her readers, thus connects Romantic lyricism with soliloquy, "another genre with silent listeners" (30). For Zimmerman, and indeed for Charlotte Smith herself, the audience of her apostrophe-sonnets never disappears, even as much as she may seem to ignore them. In fact, Smith's awareness of her audience extends beyond her relation to them in her sonnets; in her novels, Smith explores the different responses listeners will have to her poetry by creating characters who lean closer to hear the performance of a sonnet. Smith writes both active and silent audience members; Smith imagines audiences who interact with her poems and also explores the consequences of having an active readership. Smith's experiments with the apostrophe-sonnet form, thus, extend not only to the diverse types of speaking positions but also to diverse types of listening positions.

In modern lyric theory, the question of the lyric's listener presents a unique and generative issue.[40] Here is where Smith's use of the apostrophe aids in a more precise discussion.

[40] Some accounts of the modern lyric focus only on the subjectivity of the speaker as representative of the poet as in Vendler's Introduction to *The Art of Shakespeare's Sonnets*. For critics who focus on Greek lyrics, the position of the listener is implied in the apostrophe itself. Davis Gregson argues: "It is part of the necessary fiction of this dyadic lyric model of communication that the poet "sings" to a "hearer," single or multiple … The proper name in the vocative case that punctuates the ode, usually in the opening strophe, *ipso facto* selects and compliments an amicus, while effectively serving to define that person as a worthy member of a lyric audience (6). In his definition of the apostrophe, Quintilian ascribes it with the quality of increasing emphasis, which enhances the rhetorical positioning of the speaker in terms of her audience. Following Ralph Johnson, who claims that "the person addressed (whether actual or fictional) is a metaphor for readers of the poem and becomes a symbolic mediator, a conductor between the poet and each of his readers and listeners" (4), modern lyric theorists like William Waters, Bonnie Costello, and Helen Vendler have tracked the ways in which lyrics use second-person address.

Smith's use of apostrophe, in which her speaker turns away from an empirical audience in order to address an absent figure, not only helps to create the speaker's identity in association but also implies the continued presence of a listening audience. Smith's apostrophes erect instances of triangulated address, which Jonathan Culler defines as "speaking to listeners through an apostrophic address to an absent power" (16) which means that, even as Smith turns away from her initial audience, they still remain present in the situation of the address.[41] And, just as Smith grants agency to her objectified auditor in her apostrophes, she also grants agency to her listeners in these situations of triangulated address. Zimmerman explains, "Smith … illuminates the relationship between lyric poet and reading audiences as a dynamic exchange, a different account from predominant paradigms, which generally characterize the lyric's auditor as passive and silent" (40-1). Zimmerman's work on contemporary responses to Smith refocuses arguments about Smith's contribution to lyric theory because, as Zimmerman and other critics have shown, Smith always conceived of her project as an exploration of lyric potentialities, which include both the solitary speaker and the gesture towards the social mode implied by the lyric's ability to stage private emotion.[42] Whereas Zimmerman directs her attention towards contemporary responses to Smith's sonnets, I focus on the ways in which Smith embeds this "dynamic

[41] Alan Grossman, in *Summa Lyrica*, also defines the triangulated address in terms of desire and displacement: "in the most primitive terms, the presence of a poem involves a complete triadic state of affairs, in which there is a self, and the beloved of that self which always has a transcendental character ascribed to it, and a third – the third being the audience, the ratifier, the witness, and the inheritor of the drama of loving relationship to which the poem gives access" (418)

[42] Reading Smith's letters, Nichola Deane has tracked the ways in which Smith performed different postures depending upon the person she was writing to. On the topic of Smith's particular efforts to persuade Hayley, Deane cites instances from Smith's letters to Sarah Rose and her tactic of "writing *to* Rose and *at* Hayley" (408). Judith Staunton's collected edition of Smith's letters showcases these performances in all of their multiplicity. For a nuanced reading of Smith's epistolary performances and their connection to her poetry, see Zimmerman's "Varieties of Privacy."

exchange" (40) in the formal structure of her poems and novels. To that end, this chapter investigates Smith's lyric listeners in two novels and one sonnet.

I argue that Smith provides a canny interpretive key to unlock the problem of the audience: she writes an audience into her poems and novels and details their interpretations of her poems as they experience them. I explore three instances of the listening audience in Smith's *Elegiac Sonnet* "To night," the context of the same poem in her novel *Emmeline*, and her exploration of an unwelcome auditor in her novel *Celestina*. In these moments, Smith narrativizes the character of the audience in order to study it, she also imagines complicated scenes of reading which depend upon the tension which emerges when the audience of the poem is neither fully acknowledged nor fully ignored. These characters participate as welcome listeners (as in the case with Godolphin and Adelina), accidentally overhear poems, and deliberately hide from view so that they can continue to hear poetic utterances. In her novels, Smith solves the problem of the changeable audience by creating multitudes out of her characters. Once these characters become audience members, Smith places them in particularly lyric situations, and in doing so, helps to conceptualize the audience as an active participant in the poems themselves, and thus, as viable figures in the same network which contains the auditor of the apostrophe and the speaker.

1. Acknowledging the audience in "To night" and *Emmeline*

To make the transition between Smith's exploration of the speaker's potential for diverse subject positions in her apostrophe-sonnets towards her experiments with the subject position of the audience, I begin with one of Smith's most canonical poems, "To night." This sonnet lives in two different, and yet related, positions in Smith's canon: the sonnet becomes "Sonnet XXXIX

To night" in Smith's sixth edition of *Elegiac Sonnets* (1792) but also can be found in her 1788 novel *Emmeline*. When Smith places "To night" in *Elegiac Sonnets*, she provides little contextual information about the sonnet, allowing it to be read, alongside her other sonnets, as a confessional poem about her own personal sorrows. As I previously discussed, in the first chapter, this sonnet's objective voice undercuts a confessional reading and instead prompts an interpretation of this sonnet not as a confession of personal emotion, but as Anne Williams argues of the lyric, an experimentation in a confessional voice that "consists of words so arranged as to create a simulacrum of human experience, not the experience itself. The lyric mode, in fact, is balanced on a paradox: it is a representation of an act of self-expression" (13). As I will demonstrate, this sonnet actually rehearses a conversation between different voices, some unheard and some heard, which creates an implicit audience. Next, I take an important turn towards the poem's original context inside Smith's 1788 novel, *Emmeline*, in which the hero of the novel, Captain Godolphin, recites the sonnet aboard a boat traveling between France and England. Placing the sonnet back in its original context allows for a recognition of the sonnet's original male speaker as well as demonstrating the ways in which this sonnet negotiates between an apostrophe to the moon and an address to an unseen audience. [43] In *Emmeline*, the sonnet demands a preexisting audience in order to create the illusion of lyric privacy, of turning away,

[43] Literary critics and rhetoricians disagree on the difference between the terms *apostrophe* and *address*. In the most recent *Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics*, William Waters advises "Some poetry critics have treated the term *apostrophe* as interchangeable with the term *address*, so including speech not only to unhearing entities but to the listening beloved, friend, or patron or to contemporary or later readers. The narrower term is more useful, but, as with all varieties of poetic address, it is best to think in terms of prototypes rather than of sharp-edged categories" (61). For my purposes here, I argue that Smith's sonnet "To night" encapsulates the benefits of considering prototypes. Smith's sonnet exists as both an apostrophe and as an address depending on the context in which Smith presents the poem. Because Smith herself changed this context, I believe this framing between apostrophe and address is deliberate. For an in-depth discussion of the apostrophe, see Michael Riffaterre and Paul de Man, also Jonathan Culler.

which highlights the necessary subject position of the listening audience. Thus, "To night" represents a transitional point as I move from an exploration of the speaker-auditor relationship in the apostrophe-sonnets and enter into an investigation of the audience present in each of these poems.

Undoubtedly one of Smith's most canonical poems since her rediscovery in the early nineties, Sonnet XXXIX "To night. From the same" often seems to be the sonnet by which most readers come to know Smith's hybrid forms, use of figurative language, and conceptualization of poetic voice. For many readers, this sonnet encapsulates more than the others Smith's creation of a recognizable authorial voice: the forgotten lover who enters into Nature to find a solace that never arrives. In its context in *Elegiac Sonnets*, this sonnet initially seems to operate in a confessional mode; however, as the sonnet continues, its use of a distant, objective voice undercuts this reading by presenting two different speakers in an implied conversation; this debate is resolved only by the introduction of other listeners who make up the audience. The sonnet, which I will quote fully, follows below:

To night. From the same

I love thee, mournful, sober-suited Night!
When the faint moon, yet lingering in her wane,
And veil'd in clouds, with pale uncertain light
Hangs o'er the waters of the restless main.
In deep depression sunk, the enfeebled mind
Will to the deaf cold elements complain,
And tell the embosom'd grief, however vain,
To sullen surges and the viewless wind.

Tho’ no repose on thy dark breast I find,
I still enjoy thee – cheerless as thou art;
For in thy quiet gloom the exhausted heart
Is calm, tho’ wretched; hopeless, yet resign’d.
While to the winds and waves its sorrows given,
May reach – tho’ lost on earth – the ear of Heaven!

The first quatrain of this sonnet establishes the terms of the speaker’s apostrophe to Night; she also describes her auditor with qualities that help the reader to understand the speaker’s particular psyche. Night’s “mournful, sober suited” presence in this poem could just as easily describe the speaker herself. The solitary presence of the moon, too, “lingering in her wane” could also represent the speaker’s uneasy repose which she describes at the close of the sonnet. Even the “pale uncertain light” of the moon (2-3) could very well describe the speaker’s own uncertainty about the possibility of finding succor through her apostrophe to night. In this first quatrain, then, the speaker creates her own identity as mournful, solitary, and uncertain in relation to the object of the apostrophe. This posturing would have been familiar to readers of Smith’s *Elegiac Sonnets* as indicative of her emblematic speaker, which Smith encouraged readers to read as herself. Taking Smith’s own authorial clues, the speaker of this sonnet in this first quatrain resembles not only the various solitary female figures depicted in the engraved images in *Elegiac Sonnets*, but Charlotte Smith herself. However, in the second quatrain, the poem makes a shift from the subjective “I love thee” (1) of the first line into a more objective, removed voice. Despite the first quatrain’s establishment of the speaker’s identity, the speaker does not use any possessive pronouns when discussing her own feelings or desires. Rather than relate her personal reasons for telling the Night of her woes, she places emphasis on impersonal,

though definite, articles to discuss "the enfeebled mind" (5) which "… to the deaf cold elements complain" (6). Though the poem diverges from this pattern in the third quatrain when the speaker refers to herself, "Though no repose on thy breast I find / I still enjoy thee – cheerless as thou art" (9-10) she immediately switches back to the definite article "For in thy quiet gloom the exhausted heart / Is calm" (11-12). Never once does the speaker indicate that "the enfeebled mind" or "exhausted heart" (5, 11) belong to her, choosing instead to speak generally of these strong emotions that find imagined future relief in speaking to Night. The use of generalized "the" rather than "my" or "mine" undercuts the speaker's foundational identity through her professed love for the object of her apostrophe while simultaneously making an argument for the universality for her claims.

Thus, in the first two quatrains of this poem, Smith establishes two different viewpoints on the action of the poem. The first quatrain contains a subjective, almost spontaneous exhortation to Nature, which describes the speaker as she extends her own subjectivity into nature. The second quatrain undercuts the solipsism of the first quatrain by inserting an objective voice, which speaks of a generalized sorrow, and uses indefinite and definite pronouns rather than personal or possessive ones. In this way the speaker simultaneously speaks of a deep personal sorrow but also a general one. Any attempt to directly assign emotions to the speaker slips away due to the universality of her language. The third quatrain of the poem unifies the subjective and objective viewpoints; the subjective voice begins this quatrain "I still enjoy thee" (10) and the objective ends it: "the exhausted heart / Is calm" (11-12). As Anne Williams has argued about the lyric, each represents not the actual experience of emotion, but a constructed artistic object that "is a representation of an act of self-expression" (13). In this apostrophe-sonnet, Smith creates a unity between the assumed confessional in the first quatrain and the

generalized objective voice in the second, which establishes that this poem functions as meditation on the confessional apostrophic mode and its efficacy in relieving strong emotions.

The presence of both the confessional "I" and the objective "the exhausted heart" in the third quatrain knits the two modes together and resists their separation. Smith cements this important unity in the structure of the poem itself. This poem's hybrid structure adapts both quatrain styles from the English and Italian form, contains a volta, and a closing heroic couplet. Smith structures the first quatrain's confessional voice in the English mode, *abab*, but then continues to use the *b* rhyme ("wane" "main" "complain" "vain") in the second quatrain which takes the Italian structure. The third quatrain, with its unity of content between the subjective and objective, reflects this blending with its shared Italian structure but a new rhyme scheme. This new rhyme scheme reflects the shift in the poem after its volta, towards a resolution to the poem's inherent questioning of which mode will award the most emotional release. Thus, this poem, both in content and structure, establishes two different modes but links them together, making them impossible to separate. Here, Smith links the confessional and objective modes together so that this apostrophe-sonnet becomes a meditation on both modes themselves, rather than simply a confession of emotion or a generalized recitation of a universal experience.

This sonnet, then, functions as an imitation of a conversation between two different modes: the confessional and the objective. Smith extends this imitation of a conversation with two different viewpoints into the structure of the poem itself in the eighth line, where the volta usually occurs in Italian sonnets. A scan of the rhyme scheme of the sonnet reveals Smith's usual hybrid form: the English *abab* in the first quatrain switches to a hybrid *cbbc* in the second, followed by *cddc* in the third quatrain and ending with an English heroic couplet, *ee*. However, a closer look at line eight reveals an eye rhymed pair which provides a slight skipping in the

flowing rhythm of the rhyme scheme. Line eight's "viewless wind" (8) should match up with line five's "enfeebled mind" (5); though these rhymes work visually, they do not sound the same when spoken aloud. Here, the reader must make a choice that effects the rest of the sonnet itself. Should the reader choose to accept "wind" as the rhymed pair with "mind" (8, 5), then the next line rhymes exactly, creating a double *c* rhyme between lines eight and nine. Of course, "mind" (5) does not rhyme with "wind" (8), so the reader could choose to maintain correct pronunciation, leaving the "… sullen surges and viewless wind" (8) out by itself as a *d* rhyme, which changes the markup of the rest of the passage, as well as marks out line eight as being a turning point, volta, or just a sore thumb of the entire poem. Smith deploys eye rhymes from time to time, but this eye rhyme comes at a crucial, poetic part of the poem, matching up with "the viewless wind" (8) that prefaces this eye rhyme. A listener to this poem, for example Emmeline in the novel, would not realize the pun here between the "viewless wind" (8) and the eye rhyme between "mind / wind" (5, 8) which only works when the reader looks at the poem.[44] This poem, though written as if spoken, functions on the page as well as it functions to the ear. Thus, the poem indicates an awareness of its own status as a written object, and, too, indicates an awareness of a future audience who may read the poem in *Emmeline, Elegiac Sonnets*, or both.

The sonnet reflects its own awareness of its audience in the final quatrain, when the speaker, now unified between the objective and confessional approaches, turns away from her initial auditor and imagines other auditors. The final couplet depicts the speaker turning "to the

[44] Bishop Hunt, Jr. notes that Smith's evocative phrase "viewless wind" (8) makes a reappearance in Wordsworth's *Prelude*: "Charlotte Smith's "viewless wind" may turn up in the concluding lines of *The Prelude* Book V: "visionary power / Attends the motions of the viewless winds / Embodied in the mystery of words" (82). Abrams, in his discussion of Wordsworth's phrase, does not mention Smith but highlights the tension later adapted by Wordsworth between the visionary sense and the other senses: "But above all, Romantic writers made imaginative use of one or another which had earlier been noted incidentally, or not at all, and which made the wind peculiarly apposite to some major preoccupations of the age. Thus, Wordsworth's wind, he specifies, is 'viewless' (129).

winds and waves" (13) to address her sorrows, despite her awareness that while they will be "lost on earth" they will in fact reach "the ear of Heaven!" (14). The speaker newly mentions the wind, waves, earth, and Heaven in this final couplet, thus extending her apostrophe not simply to the original object, Night, but also to other familiar Smithian scenes of the crashing waves and howling wind. When the speaker places these auditors together, they form a kind of natural audience who listen to the speaker's voice. The final auditor, and member of this audience, "the ear of Heaven" (14) has the potential to create a future relief for the speaker's sorrows; the final couplet implies that by directing her utterances to Heaven's ear, the speaker will know some kind of relief in unburdening herself to this audience of listeners. Thus, the poem closes not only with a confirmation of the apostrophe's form but also the implication of an audience to whom the speaker turns for support.

The sonnet's original context, inside Smith's 1788 novel *Emmeline*, further confirms and complicates the rhetorical salience of the audience's position, implied by the natural figures to whom the speaker turns in the final couplet. In the novel, the heroine Emmeline, escaping the attentions of a would-be suitor, travels through Calais on her way back to England. Desperate for a sighting of her true love, Captain Godolphin, she fears that she may never see him again and boards the boat to England with her companion, Mrs. Stafford, in a mood of profound ennui. Unaware that Godolphin has booked passage on the same ship, Emmeline and Mrs. Stafford take seats on the deck, both anxious to catch their first glimpse of Dover in the night. Smith showcases her power for subtle description in the passage that foregrounds the sonnet, and it is worth quoting in full:

> By eleven o'clock, every thing insensibly grew quiet on board. The passengers were gone to their beds, the vessel moved calmly, and with very little wind, over a gently

> swelling sea; and the silence was only broken by the waves rising against its side, or by the steersman, who now and then spoke to another sailor, that slowly traversed the deck with measured pace.
>
> The light was dark; a declining moon only broke thro' the heavy clouds of the horizon with a feeble and distant light. There was a solemnity in the scene at once melancholy and pleasing. Mrs. Stafford and Emmeline both felt it. They were silent; and each lost in her own reflections; nor did they attend to a slight interruption of the stillness that reigned on board, made by a passenger who came from below, muffled in a great coat. He spoke in a low voice to the man at the helm, and then sat down on the gunwale, with his back towards the ladies; after which all was again quiet. (385)

Smith captures a scene of immense tranquility that belies the strong emotions of the characters who experience it. With her subtle command of description, Smith's description appears almost as quiet and sparse as the boat ride seems to Emmeline and Mrs. Stafford. Smith's diction mimics the gentle voices, and "measured pace" (385) of the steersman, later duplicated in the sonnet's even rhythm, with each line measuring ten syllables. Indeed, this moment drawn as it is with a light and elegant hand, contains many of the same emblems that grace Smith's *Elegiac Sonnets*. The "declining moon" that just barely sheds "a feeble and distant light" (385), a popular Smith emblem that also appears in the engraving for "To the moon" as well as other sonnets, including "To night." And finally, at the end of the descriptive paragraph, the solitary figure who sets himself off, alone, and addresses himself to the night. Were the genders switched, and

Emmeline recited this poem, she would look remarkably similar to the engraved image from "To the moon" with its solitary woman turning to gaze at the moon as its light reflects in water beneath her feet.[45] Thus, the novel fully anticipates the later poem's questioning of the speaker's identity and, here, gives two potential answers for those questions.

This scene, importantly, emphasizes the illusion of privacy felt by Godolphin, but

betrayed by the presence of Emmeline and Mrs. Stafford. Readers of the novel know that the speaker has an audience, but the speaker himself remains unaware. In this scene, Smith establishes his position in space related to the ladies, his all-important ignorance of them, the direction of his gaze, and his style of dress. She delays the revelation of his identity until after he has finished his poem. When Godolphin utters his emotional sonnet, he faces away from the ladies who do know him, and remains entirely ignorant of their presence:[46] "In a few moments a deep sigh

[45] Zimmerman argues: ""To the moon" (Sonnet IV) is an especially apt example because it is accompanied, in some editions, by an engraving featuring a solitary female figure, one hand on her heart, the other extended before her as she gazes on the moon … The engraving visualizes, in the upward tilt of her head and the expressive position of her arms, the stylized verbal gestures of Smith's poetry, an unsurprising congruence given that she was closely involved with the production of her volumes and provided instructions for the plates commissioned for *Elegiac Sonnets*" (44).

[46] Keith Hasperg contextualizes "To night" within a larger context of Smith's sonnets through an earlier scene from this same novel: when Emmeline envisions Godolphin standing with her on the shores of Lake Geneva, a few chapters before she meets him on the boat during this scene. Hasberg explains: "The passage describes a consoling vision of a beloved, and as the voices on the wind and imagined presence

was uttered by this passenger; and then, after a short pause, the two friends were astonished to hear, in a voice, low, but extremely expressive, these lines, addressed to Night" (385). Smith captures the silence, followed by Godolphin's pained exhale, narratively in this passage, removing the necessity for her usual poetic placeholders, the exhaled O! or em dash. Regardless, placed as it is right before a poem, this description still emphasizes the importance of the silence and the exhaled breath even though it does not show up in the poem itself. The silence of this scene lends an air of privacy to the entire encounter which, as Mrs. Stafford describes, becomes necessary for the creation of poetry:

> "Do you," reassumed Mrs. Stafford – "do you not recollect the voice?"[47]
>
> "Yes," replied Emmeline. "I think – I believe – I rather fancy it is – Mr. Godolphin."
>
> "Shall I speak to him?" asked Mrs. Stafford, "or are you disposed to hear more poetry? He has no notion who are his auditors." (386)

Mrs. Stafford's second question: "… or are you disposed to hear more poetry?" and her following statement: "He has no notion who are his auditors" (386) certainly reveals that she knows the identity of the speaker, although she might pretend not to in front of Emmeline. It also, however, contains an important argument about the status of privacy in terms of the creation of the lyric moment. Undoubtedly, Godolphin rehearses here Mill's later formula for the lyric: "feeling confessing itself to itself" (97). Preempting Mill, Smith provides an important

of Godolphin banish Emmeline's apprehensions, the young woman's moment alone recalls Otway's visitation in Sonnet XXXII, "To Melancholy." In this, we can see the personal longings for companionship that underlie Smith's memorials" (128).

[47] Zimmerman highlights Smith's play with voice: "She omits the fourth line … but this is the line that, I would argue, underlies her poetic strategies: 'But tell me yet, dost thou not know my voice?' Because Smith articulates private sorrows in the sonnets, readers come to feel as if they knew her, and so might respond to her familiar face in future volumes" (44).

elucidation of that formula which, importantly, includes the presence of the audience. As Sarah Zimmerman will point out, despite the lyric poet's ignorance of the audience, they indeed "remain on the scene" (43). Smith acknowledges the audience while also arguing for the necessity of presumed privacy. Mrs. Stafford worries that if they alert Godolphin to their presence as auditors, he will cease reciting his poems. Smith argues here for the necessity of the presumption of privacy to make the lyric moment happen. For Smith, unlike Mill later, the fact of the auditor of the poem matters less than the actions of that auditor. Smith's auditors prefigure the lyric instance, regardless of if they overhear accidentally or not. In this scene, Smith dramatizes her process of creating the necessity of the auditor while emphasizing the auditor's role in the poetic utterance overall.

The audience in this scene makes such an important figure that they appear even before the performance of the lyric utterance. Though the text remains in third person, readers experience the stunning nighttime scene which frames the poem because Mrs. Stafford and Emmeline have chosen to spend the evening on the deck of the ship: "There was a solemnity in the scene at once melancholy and pleasing. Mrs. Stafford and Emmeline both felt it. They were silent; and each lost in her own reflections" (385). Each experiences their own emotions – the narrator remains silent on this point – as they contemplate the scene. Smith sets an audience who functionally appears in a necessary role in opposition to the poet. She also provides a sympathetic audience, a thinking, feeling selection of listeners, who are already predisposed to understand Godolphin's feelings even if they do not yet know to whom they are addressed. As such, the audience in this poem is both aligned with Godolphin as the speaker and opposed to him, as the silent listener. It is not surprising, then, that Smith has chosen for his audience the two most mature and likeable characters from the text to overhear Godolphin's poem: indeed,

Mrs. Stafford and Emmeline are the two characters, other than his sister Lady Adelina, most likely to appreciate it.

Smith describes their exact appreciation of the poem directly after Godolphin finishes his recitation. Both women immediately discuss the identity of the speaker, an act that Smith prefigures in the sonnet itself and in the narrative, which frames the poem's presence in the novel. Mrs. Stafford, perhaps teasing Emmeline into admitting her true feelings, comments on the voice of the speaker and when Emmeline refuses to respond, repeats her question. Here, despite the poem's work to undercut a stable identity of the speaker, in the novel itself, the speaker's identity is quite clear to Godolphin's audience. Smith demonstrates a canny awareness of her own audience outside of the novel; she understands that many of her readers initially attempt to uncover the speaker's identity in the sonnets. Smith dramatizes this process in *Emmeline* in the moments after Godolphin completes his recitation. Indeed, Smith foregrounds the listener's desires by not only placing them in the scene before the sonnet utterance but also by selecting the two characters who desire most to know the speaker's identity.

The novel's context for this poem also helps answer one of the poem's most interesting questions: whether, when in the second quatrain the speaker appears to answer an unheard response coming from the outside asking why someone might address nature when they feel pain:

> In deep depression sunk, the enfeebled mind
>
> Will to the deaf cold elements complain,
>
> And tell the embosom'd grief, however vain,
>
> To sullen surges and the viewless wind. (5-8)

This second quatrain seems to answer an unheard, unrecorded prompt to explain why the speaker turns to nature to reveal sorrows. The speaker answers that "deep depression" (4) prompts the turn towards "the deaf cold elements" (6). This unacknowledged question for which the speaker provides an answer highlights the presence of another auditor in the sonnet. In its original context, the audience appears before the lyric utterance, and makes it possible for readers to hear. The presence of Mrs. Stafford and Emmeline affects the scene despite Godolphin's own assumption of privacy. In the novel, Mrs. Stafford and Emmeline provide the human presence suggested in the poem, giving a body to the voice which, though unheard, prompts the poem to continue. They perform the function of, to use William Waters's nonaddressed listener: not "the *you* of the classical poem [who] is one person, [but] the reader or listener [who] is another" (19). Godolphin provides an anticipatory figure for Mill's solitary poet: Mrs. Stafford and Emmeline, the overhearing audience, the nonaddressed. However, of course, Emmeline is what Waters calls the "wild spot in poetics" (157): Godolphin's desired audience. When Godolphin constructs his triangulated address to night, he does so because he cannot address his real object, Emmeline. By placing Emmeline, silent and listening, in the boat out of view, Smith rewards Godolphin not only with a beautiful sonnet but also with the ability to address his actual beloved. Despite the fact that this poem is never again mentioned by either Godolphin or his audience in the text itself, it still remains an important material presence in the poem, giving the necessary human counterpoint to Godolphin's apostrophe to night. The audience's presence in the poem itself, knitted into the very fabric of the text, allows Smith to explore a scene which describes both a poet unaware of his audience and an audience which forms both an unintended and intended figure.

Placing "To night" inside of its original context allows for an interpretation of one of Smith's variations on the sentimental sonnet: her play with the identity of the speaker. Outside of the novel, prompted by other *Elegiac Sonnets* or the collection's engraved images, we might assume that the speaker of this poem is Charlotte Smith herself, or one of her many stricken female characters. The novel reveals that the speaker of this poem is none other than the masculine hero of the book and Emmeline's future husband. This added context, too, highlights the sonnet's final turn towards its presumed audience, "the ear of Heaven!" (14) and suggests that Mrs. Stafford and Emmeline are human equivalents of a divine listener. By the close of this poem, Smith participates in the same strain of Romanticism that occupies her inheritors like Wordsworth, Coleridge, and P.B. Shelley: she imagines the divine embodied in her listener. Thus, this sonnet demonstrates not only Smith's interest in an unstable speaker, but, too, figures the audience, both human and nonhuman, as a viable and important part of the lyric moment. Godolphin's private utterance, though undercut by the already-present audience in the novel, thus allows Smith to explore the ways in which the audience's presence creates a tension between the private and the public that is integral to the sonnet and to the novel itself.

2. Celestina Composing; Thorold Listening

In *Emmeline*, Smith emphasizes the importance of the poem's audience by humanizing the sonnet's figures and by providing the speaker with his ideal audience in the figure of his beloved who overhears his utterance. The triangulated address in "To night" and detailed more precisely in the novel helps to authorize Emmeline and Godolphin's relationship and his sonnet, though unintentionally addressed to his beloved, proves his worthiness to be with her. The sonnet provides the lyric promise of an emotional confession and rewards Godolphin for his utterance

with the eventual hand of his beloved. Smith returns to this triangulated structure of address, and the confessional promise of the lyric, four years later in her novel *Celestina*. In this novel, however, rather than using the triangulated structure to reward the speaker for his utterance, Smith refigures the components. She replaces Godolphin with Celestina, a burgeoning female poet, Emmeline with Montague Thorold, an unwanted suitor, and the speaker's ideal audience (Emmeline) with a changing set of auditors, sometimes Celestina's beloved and sometimes other women. In so doing, Smith changes the power dynamic between the speaker and the auditor, placing the constrained and abandoned heroine Celestina as the speaker, and the masculine presence attempting to marry her into the auditor. Smith, too, reconfigures the desire lines in this triangulation; rather than granting a Godolphin/lyric speaker his desired auditor, and a listening Emmeline/audience the knowledge of her beloved's true feelings, Smith depicts Celestina being hounded by an unwanted audience who desires to control her poetry through ownership. Smith takes Emmeline's' desire to hear more poetry and places it in the hands of Montague Thorold, who refuses to leave Celestina alone and thus grant her the lyric illusion of privacy.

One of the ways in which Charlotte Smith provides an important corrective to questions about the role of the audience, or Smith's listeners, is that she writes audiences into her lyric moments rather than leaving their motivations up for debate. Based on the multiple, and highly varied responses to her own work which Smith was privy to in her own time, she was all the more aware of the various winds which blow public and private opinion into potentially unchartered spaces.[48] As William Waters explains, the attempt to understand each reader's response to a poem is "futile" (163), and indeed impossible. Rather than attempting to enumerate

[48] Smith's first foray into publishing produced a scandalous translation of *Manon Lescaut*. The critical reception of that translation perhaps, according to Fletcher, soured Smith on the publishing of novels. In any case, Smith's experience with this translation was only her first in what would become a lifetime with the highs of critical and popular success and the lows of failed novels and critical derision.

all of the various responses an audience could have, Smith imagines in her 1791 novel *Celestina*, the same situation of the "secret addressee" (Waters 163). This event occurs when a reader comes upon a poem and becomes convinced that they are the addressee to whom the poem is written. The lyric intimacy and the complications which stem from it forms an important aspect in Celestina's growth as a poet; for Smith, the simultaneous emergence of Celestina's poetic ability and Thorold's listening presence characterizes a necessary and yet troubling relationship between the reader and the poet. Smith complicates the presumed authority of the poet speaking to the silent audience through her depiction of Thorold. As Celestina's unwanted suitor, Thorold appears everywhere she does not want him to be; however, in terms of Celestina's lyric audience, Thorold appears to be the only character who can accurately read and engage with her poetry. Smith shifts the focus away from a singular vision of poetic development to observe instead the dual development of both poet and audience. As Celestina continues to write poetry, Thorold continues to appear nearby, which establishes the necessity of his presence, however annoying, to Celestina's poetic moments. Thus, Smith argues, the reader and the poet exist in an important relationship which is crystallized at the occasion of the poem. *Celestina*'s main courtship plot, as Loraine Fletcher notes in her introduction to the Broadview edition of the text, maps onto the main character's development as a poet: "the heroine's wide reading and talent as a poet associate her closely with the author" (10). While Fletcher resists reading *Celestina* as a direct narrative of Smith's own development, many readers of *Celestina* imagine the text as a kind of *kunstlerroman* under which the courtship plot of the eighteenth-century novel is overlaid.[49] Celestina begins to read and write poetry with her beloved Willoughby but does not truly develop as an independent poet until after he abandons her.

[49] Loraine Fletcher's edition of *Celestina* for Broadview transcribes contemporary reviews of Smith's novel, including one written by Mary Wollstonecraft for the *Analytical Review*. In it, Wollstonecraft

Before Thorold comes upon Celestina as she composes a poem, Smith first sets him up as the ideal reader of her poetry based on his fluency with sentimental literature and his discerning eye. Young Thorold, fresh from a romantic entanglement with a woman who remains ignorant of his person, meets Celestina in the early days of her abandonment. Their first meeting renders him stunned by Celestina's outward appearance, which as the narrator explains, has changed since her ill-fated matrimonial attempt: "she was pale and languid; her eyes had all their softness, but the lustre was diminished … Montague almost instantly forgot the nymph for whom he had been dying in song… and saw in the interesting languor of Celestina – in her faded cheek and downcast eyes, a sentimental effect" (180). Thorold's perspective influences the narrator's description here almost immediately and the narrator begins to write Celestina as if she were a heroine in a sentimental novel. Thorold's influence here means that the narrator describes Celestina's loss of bloom positively, as Thorold himself would read them: as "interesting" and "sentimental" (180), rather than negatively, as the narrator does in previous scenes. Thorold's considerable fluency with sentimental novels and romantic plots colors this description of Celestina. Although the narrator emphasizes that Thorold's regard for Celestina comes not from her actual person but from the ease with which he can characterize her like the earlier "nymph for whom he had been dying in song" (180), Thorold's description of Celestina's physical appearance as indicative of sentimental portraiture remains accurate to her overall characterization at this moment in the novel. Indeed, in this scene, Celestina is described much like an engraving that might accompany a sentimental, even elegiac, edition of poetry.[50]

explicitly marks Smith's autobiographical characterization of Mr. and Mrs. Elphinstone: "it is true, she has given us portraits forcibly sketched from nature; we shall only particularize Mr. and Mrs. Elphinstone" (544), implying, as Fletcher notes, that "the couple are representative of Smith and her husband" (pg. 544, n. 1).

[50] Both Jacqueline Labbe and Sarah Zimmerman provide nuanced readings of Smith's self-portraiture and emblematic figures in the engraved images.

Celestina's romantic troubles, which factor strongly in her later poetic development, not only changes her outward appearance but also her material circumstances. The singular emotional upheaval of Willoughby's abandonment authorizes both her changed looks and the sadness which pervades her poetry. Later, Thorold encourages Celestina to read aloud one of his favorite Italian poems and he "recollected -- with reluctance recollected, that these seducing tones were drawn forth by the reality of those sufferings the poet described" (181-82). Thorold, after hearing her read this poem aloud, recognizes the authenticity of emotion which foregrounds sentimental poetry and, in this case, his reading of Celestina as a sentimental heroine. This moment represents Thorold's realization that Celestina's ability to imbue poetry with emotion comes not from a skillful but false performance but from the genuine experience of the emotion to which the poem alludes. Thorold here also recognizes that his earlier reading of Celestina as a sentimental heroine is actually true to her life experience. Unlike Thorold himself, who writes in the sentimental genre as a performance of emotion, Celestina feels deeply the emotions of the poem. This scene, then, also serves as a pointed response to critics who read Smith's own effusions as a disingenuous performance. [51] Reading Celestina as a cipher for Smith, here Smith would seem to defend her own genuine performance of emotion. Either way, this scene simultaneously confirms Celestina's later genuine sentimental effusions and authorizes Thorold's correct, although perhaps overblown, reading of her character.

[51] This moment provides an interesting echo to Smith's Preface to the second volume of *Elegiac Sonnets* (1797) when she defends her poetry by describing, albeit briefly, her situation of real woe. Her comments in the preface, perhaps like this scene with Thorold, seem in direct conversation with critical reviews of her poems: "But I am unhappily exempt from the suspicion of *feigning* sorrow for an opportunity of showing the pathos with which it can be described – a suspicion that has given rise to much ridicule, and many invidious remarks, among certain critics, and others, who carry into their closets the same aversion to any thing tragic, as influences, at the present period, their theatrical taste" (12)

Thorold, now proven as a good reader of the important connection between Celestina's outward appearance and her inward emotional strife, continues to develop their romantic relationship through their shared language of poetry. Engaging her at every chance into conversations about poetry, "he found that her mind corresponded with the elegance of her form; that she was very well read, had a taste for poetry, and understood Italian, of which he was enthusiastically fond" (180). Undoubtedly, Celestina functions as the master to Thorold's apprentice; her fluency in Italian and poetic education surpass his, but Thorold engages with Celestina on her terms, quoting the Italian poets that she reads too. However, Thorold lacks the ease with language that melds quotation and original thought which Celestina enjoys. She critiques his way of speaking for its lack of genuine subjectivity: "'that is exactly what I complain of; there is no rational conversation with you, capable as you are of adorning it; but, as Arabella very truly says, you do nothing but make speeches out of Otway or Shakespeare" (228). Smith draws an important distinction here between Thorold's extensive quotation and Celestina's educated viewpoint which involves an integration of quotation with her own subjective verse. Smith deliberately highlights Thorold's myopic visionary qualities in order to firmly place him in the role of the reader, rather than the poet. Thorold may accurately read Celestina, but he cannot create evocative verse and neither does he possess the awareness of his surroundings which Celestina finds so influential on her own poetry. Thus, though Thorold shares important qualities with Celestina, his function remains as her ideal audience.

However, the novel suggests that Celestina must escape Thorold in order to begin her career as a Romantic poet. Celestina manages to elude Thorold's notice and take a solitary walk towards a churchyard: "a turn out of the road brought her to the style of a church yard. She leant pensively over it, and read the rustic inscriptions on the tomb stone" (190). The sight of a

gravestone arrests Celestina: “One was that of a young woman of nineteen; it was her age, and Celestina felt an emotion of envy towards the village girl, whose early death the rural poet lamented in the inscription … Insensibly this idea [that she would be happier now to die than to live] took possession of her fancy and with her pencil she wrote the following lines in her pocket book, not without some recollection of Edwards’ thirty seventh and forty fourth sonnet” (190). Here, Smith’s narrator guides the interpretation of Celestina’s initial impulse by placing the poem which follows in the tradition of the pre-Romantic Graveyard Poets. Celestina’s full poem follows in the text and is re-titled in the fifth and sixth editions of *Elegiac Sonnets* as Sonnet XLIX “Supposed to have been written in a church-yard, over the grave of a young woman of nineteen:”

O thou! who sleep’st where hazle-bands entwine
The vernal grass, with paler violets drest;
I would, sweet maid! thy humble bed were mine,
And mine thy calm and enviable rest.
For never more by human ills opprest
Shall thy soft spirit fruitlessly repine:
Thou canst not now thy fondest hopes resign
Even in the hour that should have made thee blest.
Light lies the turf upon thy virgin breast;
And lingering here, to Love and Sorrow true,
The youth who once thy simple heart possest
Shall mingle tears with April’s early dew;
While still for him shall faithful Memory save

Thy form and virtues from the silent grave.[52]

Not unlike the Graveyard Poets from whom Celestina, and thus Smith, take the inspiration for this sonnet, Celestina finds fertile ground for poetic inspiration as she stands atop the grave of a young woman. This sonnet, an apostrophe to both the dead girl and the physical gravestone which represents her, serves both as a break in the prose of the text but also as a pause in Celestina's ever-forward motion as she travels from house to house throughout the narrative. This poem also functions as the first-ever in-text inclusion of one of Celestina's poems. The narrator explains that, though Celestina has a "natural turn" for poetry,[53] this instance marks the first time she has composed her own without the direct influence of Willoughby:

> Celestina, who had a natural turn to poetry, had very rarely indulged it; but since she had passed so many hours with Willoughby, his passionate fondness for it, and his desire that she should not neglect the talent she had received from nature, had turned her thoughts to its cultivation; and now almost the first use she made of it was to lament that she lived, (190)

The text establishes an important complication in Celestina's poetic development: she has often considered cultivating her natural talents but "had very rarely indulged it" (190), implying a delicious deviation from Celestina's normal habits. Because this poem appears in the text where

[52] Smith writes another poem on this same topic in the voice of Werther in *Elegiac Sonnets*. Taking her cue from Werther's final letter, which contains instructions for his gravesite, Smith imagines Werther's Charlotte visiting his grave. The poem becomes Sonnet XXIV in *Elegiac Sonnets*.

[53] Celestina's "natural turn to poetry" echoes specifically later in the novel when Smith describes the family resemblance between Celestina and her cousin Anzoletta, saying that Anzoletta's features are rougher than Celestina's, less "turned" to use the sculptural term for the smoothing of the features. This shared diction establishes a link between Celestina's "turn" of face and "turn" of poetry, linking Celestina's body with her ability to be a poet. John Stuart Mill will later make this same connection between Percy Bysshe Shelley's fevered enthusiasm and his feverish constitution.

Celestina's other previous compositions do not, this moment marks a moment where Celestina begins to embrace her "natural turn to poetry" (190).

This graveyard scene does seem to encapsulate John Stuart Mill's later description of the lyric moment out of which poetry emerges. A solitary Celestina does confess her feelings to themselves. Smith's use of "indulge" (190) paired with the poem's fantasy of observing Willoughby's return to Celestina's own early grave, captures a vibrantly melancholic moment occasioned by Celestina's reading of the village girl's gravestone. Mill later goes on to describe the poetic situation which occasions this type of emotional outburst: "… what we have said or done in solitude we may voluntarily reproduce when we know that other eyes are upon us … Poetry, accordingly, is the natural fruit of solitude and meditation" (97-98). The situation thus described by Smith in *Celestina* embodies Mill's view of a true lyric poet who is completely removed from her social situation. However, Smith immediately inserts her own complication at this moment. In much the same way as she prefigures Godolphin's audience in *Emmeline,* she reveals Celestina has had an invisible listener all along:

> She had finished her sonnet, and read it over aloud; she changed a word or two, again read it, and was putting it into her pocket book when she was startled by the sight of Montague Thorold, who appeared behind her, though she had not heard him approach. "Do not," he cried, "be offended, dearest Miss de Mornay, if I thus break in upon your solitude; and do not," continued he, taking her hand in which she still held the pocket book – "do not punish me by putting away what I have so earnest a desire to hear."
>
> Celestina, half angry replied -- 'I have nothing, sir, worth your hearing."
>
> …….

> "'May I ask, as the most inestimable favour, to hear once more the lines you were reciting?'
>
> 'Once more!' repeated Celestina, 'Have you heard them once already then?'" (190-191)

This moment captures the simultaneous emergence of Celestina as a poet and revelation of Thorold as her poem's audience. Like Celestina, the novel's reader has been unaware of Thorold's presence. Readers learn of Thorold's continual but hidden presence when she does. He reveals that he has been around long enough to hear Celestina recite the poem before making her final edits and putting her pocket book away. Readers, along with Celestina, have fallen into the very situation of the lyric poet who, ignorant of an audience, turns around to find one present all along. Thus, despite the delayed revelation of knowledge of the scene, Celestina's first moment as a poet coincides with Thorold's first moment as her listener.

Thorold's surprise presence in the scene again shifts attention towards him, highlighting his importance as a necessary irritant. In some ways, the previous mention of Celestina's poems become a model for the novel; indeed, without Thorold's presence to force Celestina to repeat her poems, readers, too, might never hear them again. When Celestina, solitary and emotional, composes a poem on the gravestone of a young woman, she enacts the same type of narrative which foregrounds many of Charlotte Smith's sonneteer influences, like Thomas Gray. However, unlike the graveyard poets, Smith does not allow Celestina's poem to operate as if it were a solitary, spontaneous utterance. Instead, Celestina turns around to find Thorold and must reckon with his demands as a listener to her sonnet. As in earlier scenes of conversation between Celestina and Thorold, when Thorold's reading of Celestina's features influenced their description as sentimental, Thorold's presence at this moment shifts the focus of the scene away

from Celestina's poem and towards Thorold's relationship with it. The scene begins with Thorold's desperation to hear again Celestina's poem,"what I have so earnest a desire to hear" (190), which both establishes Thorold's desire to hear and also refocuses the scene around his desires. In reaction to Celestina's poem, Thorold's first impulse makes him reach out to possess it for himself:

> "Once more!' repeated Celestina. 'have you heard them once already then?"
>
> "I will say I have not, if by acknowledging that I have will displease you."
>
> "I do not think,' said Celestina carelessly, 'that will mend your case much: but however the lines were not worth your hearing and …"
>
> "Every thing you even repeat from another,' cried he, eagerly interrupting her, 'is worth hearing; how much more worth hearing, when that fascinating elegant voice is employed in expressing the sentiments of that elegant and lovely mind."

……..…..…….

> She gave him the paper, therefore, saying coldly – 'You are anxious for a very trifling matter; and as you have already heard the lines, it is hardly worth the time you must give, hastily written as they are, and with interlineations and erasures, to make them out."[54]
>
> "Give me then time to do it,' cried he, as he kissed the paper and put it in his bosom. Celestina, more disconcerted by his manner than before, said yet more gravely, 'I beg I may have them again immediately."
>
> "You shall indeed,' replied Thorold, 'but I must first read them."

[54] Bishop Hunt notes that Wordsworth's personal copy of Smith's poems contains a few alterations from their published form, indicating that Smith herself revised her poems. This scene from *Celestina* could perhaps mimic her own process.

> "Read them then now," replied she.
>
> "It is impossible," cried he, "for here is Arabella and my brother coming to meet us; and it is the first time that being with you, I have felt their interruption as a favour." (191)

Though Thorold begins this scene demanding to hear Celestina read her poem aloud again, he quickly moves into demanding she give him the manuscript copy of it. He insists "'I beg I may have them again immediately'" (191) which puns on "have" (191) both indicating his request to gain possession of the poem materially and to again hear the poem recited aloud. He misunderstands Celestina's objections "'it is hardly worth the time you must give, hastily written as they are, and with interlineations and erasures, to make them out'" (191) as a request for his intervention in the text, requesting that she "'Give me then time to do it,'" (191) as if she asked him to make a fair copy for her. Celestina insists again that he already has had possession of the text in terms of his aural sense; Thorold overcomes her objections and maintains material control of the poem by placing it in his bosom. The arrival of their friends soon after silences any of Celestina's further objections.

Once Thorold gains possession of the material object, the poem and all reference to this moment disappear from the text. It is as if once Thorold touches the poem, both in terms of his ear and of his hand, the poem ceases to exist as a solitary object which Celestina can again regain control of. In *Emmeline*, Godolphin's sonnet exists only as an indication of his private emotion, and here Celestina's poem prompts no analysis on the part of the narrator. This lack of analysis in terms of the poem acts to highlight the poem as a textual and narrative event; like any other important plot point, the poem functions as spot of time in Celestina's personal and poetic life. Because this poem exists as a singular moment, never again referenced by any character, its

moment of narration deserves particular focus for the ways in which it describes the situation around and including the poem. As I've mentioned before, the poem exists in the text because Thorold listens to it. This scene, then, focuses not only on Celestina's first poetic composition but also on how Thorold's presence as audience and listener of that poem changes the poetic event. Thorold influences the entire scene so that, by the end, Celestina's poem no longer belongs to her as either an aural or material object. Despite her awareness of her own audience, Smith could not predict what her readers would do with her poems. And neither can she control their actions after reading her works. Here, Smith characterizes an audience figure in her novel in order to work through her ideas about them. This moment of overheard composition, followed by an interruption demanding control of the sonnet, establishes Smith's ideas about the potential dynamics of her audience figures.

Smith characterizes Thorold as her audience more generally, and this figuration allows for the emergence of a key aspect: the audience immediately feels that the poem, although not addressed to them, belongs in some way to them regardless. Thorold feels comfortable enough to approach Celestina after she recites her poem; he assumes that she wants him to be involved in the poetic event. One of Smith's inspirations for Thorold's characterization is undoubtedly her own audience; Sarah Zimmerman has established that not only did Smith's readers feel personally attached to her poems, they also felt close enough to the poetess to respond to her sonnets in kind. Zimmerman begins her chapter on Smith with a survey of contemporary responses to Smith's sonnets, which often included sonnets in Smith's style. These sonnets respond to the genuine emotion shared by both Smith and her reader: "The poem by a "constant Reader," a sonnet, begins by admitting that propriety recommends against the intensely biographical quality of Smith's lyrical poems … Yet it is the suspect quality that arouses a

response … Despite the reader's qualms, it is Smith's 'REAL WOE' that is engaging" (39). This "constant Reader" (Zimmerman 39) claims a type of ownership over Smith's sonnets because they, too, experienced the same type of emotion themselves.

These responses represent Smith's audience appeal. Not only did her readers respond with poems in Smith's style, they also demonstrated their feelings of personal involvement with her poetic scenes. Zimmerman cites these responses to track how Smith maintained intimacy with her audience by turning away from them. I argue that they serve as evidence for the ways in which Smith characterizes her audience as akin to Thorold in *Celestina*. Thorold, like Smith's own readers, feels involved in Celestina's poetic utterance, despite her ignorance of his presence, because of the particular way in which Smith's lyrics invoke a kind of possessive instinct. When Celestina denies Thorold his request to "have them again immediately" (191) by hearing her again recite the poem, he takes the poem from her, having it in another way. Like Smith's own readers, who take a kind of quasi-ownership of Smith's style and diction through their own responses, Thorold takes physical possession of Celestina's poem. The readers of this scene know that initially the poem has nothing to do with Thorold but, once he enters the scene, the entire poetic occasion becomes about him and is forever changed by his presence.

In *Celestina,* Smith easily disposes of troublesome characters, sometimes without an explanation, so that Thorold's continuous reappearance demonstrates his status as indispensable, even necessary. He functions not only as an irritant to the novel's romance plot involving the fated lovers Celestina and Willoughby, but also as a necessary presence during Celestina's moments of poetic inspiration. However, as the novel progresses, Thorold's obsession with Celestina takes a dangerous turn. During a trip to Scotland, the heroine leaves the house after

dark for a walk along the cliffs; a storm brews over the sea and the Aurora Borealis flashes in the night sky:

> Celestina, left alone, went out as was her custom, even although the evening was already closed in; and standing on the edge of the rocks, near the house, remarked the singular appearance of the moon, which was now rising. It was large, and of a dull red, surrounded by clouds of a deep purple, whose skirts seemed touched with flame … From the North, arose distinctly the pointed rays of the Aurora Borealis; fiery and portentous, they seemed to flash like faint lightning a little while, till the moon, becoming clearer, rendered them less visible, (300)

Celestina, enraptured by the scene before her, continues to walk to gain a better viewpoint. Finding one, she:

> went along a narrow pass, where there was a cairn or heap of stones loosely piled together, the work of the first wild natives of the country … she leaned pensively against it, and watched with some surprise the fluctuations of the clouds that were wildly driven by the wind across the disk of the moon, and listened with a kind of chill awe, to the loud yet hollow echo of the wind among the hills; which sometimes sobbed with stormy violence for a moment, and then suddenly sinking, was succeeded by a pause more terrible. (301)

Smith captures this scene in all of its tremendous detail; Celestina marks the diverse colors of the sky, the changeable motion of the clouds over the moon, the breathtaking colors of the Aurora Borealis above her. She pauses against a stone cairn, which gives a particular place to her meditations and provides a particular type of rocky backdrop, which readers of *Elegiac Sonnets*, already associate with Smith's emblematic speakers. Though Celestina does not compose a poem

during this scene, one can easily imagine that she might once she returns back to the safety of her own home. Indeed, this scene easily maps on to Smith's sonnet LIX from *Elegiac Sonnets* "Written September 1791, during a remarkable thunderstorm, in which the moon was perfectly clear, while the tempest gathered in various directions near the earth":

> What awful pageants crowd the evening sky!
> The low horizon gathering vapours shroud;
> Sudden, from many a deep-embattled cloud
> Terrific thunders burst, and lightnings fly –
> While in serenest azure, beaming high,
> Night's regent, of her calm pavilion proud,
> Gilds the dark shadows that beneath her lie,
> Unvex'd by all their conflicts fierce and loud. (1-8)

The image of Celestina leaning against a rocky cliffside combined with the shared image of the moon hovering above the thunderstorm establishes a strong connection between the scene from *Celestina*, published 1791, and this poem dated as having been written in 1791. Thus, even though Celestina herself does not compose a poem in this scene, evidence from *Elegiac Sonnets* argues that Smith herself did. Loraine Fletcher notes the same continuity: "As Celestina sits beside the sea … she enacts the pictured emblem of the author's sensibility created by Thomas Stothard, which had appeared as an illustration in the fifth subscription edition of Smith's *Elegiac Sonnets*, published while Smith was planning *Celestina*" (21). Fletcher describes the same image included below; she even highlights this image as the frontispiece to her edition of Smith's *Celestina.* Smith removes sonnets found in her novels and reframes them in later

editions; indeed, Smith's poems often live in multiple places. In much the same way as Sarah Zimmerman argues that Smith encouraged readers to identify her emblematic figures across both her poetic collections and novels, her poems, too, should be read across both mediums of publication. Though Celestina never composes a poem in this scene, that poem still exists in *Elegiac Sonnets* and, I argue, Smith intends readers to read between the lines here and to imagine that Celestina could have composed a poem like "During a remarkable thunderstorm" from this inspirational moment. This scene, too, shares the presence of an unheard observer.

When Celestina turns to walk home, she experiences a ghastly shock, which the text eventually reveals to be the living character of Montague Thorold who has followed her all the way to Scotland:

> It was in one of these moments of alarming silence, that Celestina thought she saw the shadow of a human form for a moment on the ground, as if the person was behind her who occasioned it … Something immediately glided away; and convinced that the first impression had not been the work of fancy, she hastened with quick steps from the place, and hardly at the distance of above a hundred yards, ventured to look behind her. She fancied that she saw a man standing in the place she had left … she became extremely

> terrified, and hurried on which such unguarded speed, that a little before she reached the house she trod on a loose stone, that turned under her foot, and she fell with some violence and with considerable pain; which, together with the fear she had before felt, produced a momentary stupor, from which she was awakened by finding herself eagerly raised from the ground by some person, who wildly expressed his fears for her safety, and in whose voice she recognized, with astonishment that deprived her of utterance, Montague Thorold. (300-301)

Later, as Thorold carries her home, he admits that he has been following her since the very beginning of her trip, revealing that he:

> '… had for some weeks been the distant and unseen companion of all her walks. 'I was the highlander,' said he, 'who supplied the vacancy I had before taken care to make when you went on your excursion on the water. I am the person of whom you had sometimes caught a glimpse at a distance, and who would never have approached you nearer, had not my fears for you the evening of the storm thrown me off my guard, and induced me to conceal myself within a few yards of you, behind those piled up stones against which you leaned' (306)

Here, Thorold emphasizes his continued presence on Celestina's walks: "I am the person of whom you had sometimes caught a glimpse at a distance" (306), which helps Smith again revise the previously told narrative. Aligned with Celestina, readers now understand that their interpretation of these scenes as solitary has been a misreading. Thorold has always "been the distant and unseen companion of all her walks" (306). Just as in the graveyard scene, readers along with Celestina do not become aware of Thorold's presence until after the occasion of the poem, or of the almost-poem, occurs. In the first scene, Celestina felt surprise but, in this scene,

she feels the much more intense emotion of fear. Thorold's unexpected presence literally haunts Celestina; for a moment she mistakes him as a spirit, a fantasy which is aided by Thorold's costume of Highland dress, a practice which was outlawed by the English after the massacre that was the Battle of Culloden in 1746. While in the first scene of his eavesdropping, Thorold announced his presence to Celestina, in this moment he simply retraces her steps before noticing that she is running away from him in fear. This decidedly Gothic scene, responsibly solved by the rational explanation of Thorold's continued misplaced devotion, nonetheless causes Celestina considerable emotional and physical pain. His explanation further identifies him, as Loraine Fletcher notes in her introduction to the novel, as a modern-day reader's stalker, as he describes how he has been "the distant and unseen companion of all her [Celestina's] walks" (306). The term "stalker," which Smith does not use but invokes, comes from hunting practice, and is particularly associated with Highlanders. The *Oxford English Dictionary*'s third definition of "stalker" describes "One who stalks game. In early use only *Scottish,* one who stalks game illegally, a poacher." Thorold's Scottish dress, and his behavior, transgress the boundaries of polite society; he goes so far to endanger Celestina's life. The term's connection with poaching, too, highlights the fact that Thorold hunts where he has no claim. Smith implies here the diverse levels of Celestina's position: she is unclaimed, unprotected, and left vulnerable to advances of men.

This moment also represents a key aspect in Smith's arguments about the lyric's dynamics between privacy and visibility, between haunting and help. In this scene, Thorold prompts Celestina's faint but also intervenes and saves her from future danger. His presence has, of course, caused her to feel the fright in the first place but, as Smith describes, his actions operate independently of Celestina's own wishes. She cannot control Thorold's actions any more

than she can control his influence on her poetry. Because of the ways in which Smith sets up these scenes, with their later revelations of Thorold's presence, readers, like Celestina, believe that her poetic inspiration comes in part from her solitude. I have shown throughout the novel the copious ways in which Celestina can never be truly alone, and these few snatched moments of assumed privacy feel all the more important because of Celestina's otherwise occupied time. Because Smith delays the revelation of Thorold's presence until after the moment occurs, she allows for the ideal situation of the lyric poet, later outlined by Mill, and for the constant presence of the audience. Unlike the writer of eloquence who, knowing his audience, speaks to them, Celestina, unaware of Thorold's presence, speaks only to herself, and, of course, to her readers. By maintaining this simultaneous fiction of privacy and awareness of visibility, the moments of poetic inspiration imagine a situation in which the poet benefits both from the idea of solitariness and experiences the interaction of the audience.

Thorold's presence in this particular scene literally drives Celestina away. She runs from him and then, terrified, falls into a faint before he can reveal himself rationally by simply telling her who he is. Celestina's reaction to Thorold mimics how readers may feel when they find out that he has been around the entire time. There is a certain aspect of violation that Smith extends to her readers because readers assume that the lyric moment is private, and overheard, happening only between the speaker and themselves. I argue that this feeling of violation, shared by both reader and Celestina forms one of the primary functions of Thorold's continued presence in the text. Thorold, however, performs only the actions that lyric readers perform regarding Celestina. Indeed, what draws readers into Celestina's poems is that feeling of eavesdropping or being a member of a private conversation; the same is true for Thorold. He reveals that listening to Celestina sigh the name of her lost beloved, Willoughby, is what always draws him nearer from

his distance away: "'Ah! I heard you sigh – I heard the name of Willoughby repeated with tenderness!'" (306). Though Thorold insists that "'nothing but your fall, your apparent danger, could have compelled me … to intrude upon you'" (306), thus maintaining his earlier promise to stay away from her, he still stands close enough to hear her sighs and to create the shadow which draws her attention to his figure in the first place. Thorold comes closer even though the name Celestina whispers is not his. Celestina does not sigh or write poems about Thorold; nonetheless, he feels drawn in by her presence, and leans closer to hear her words. Thorold does not need to be the subject of the poem, neither does he need to feel welcomed into the poem in order to participate in this poetic exchange.

Though Thorold knows that he is not the object of Celestina's affection, during her utterance he can imagine that he is Willoughby. Thorold's sense of himself as the "secret addressee" of Celestina's poems maps onto one of the ways in which readers respond to poetry. In *The Idea of Lyric: Lyric Modes in Ancient and Modern Poetry*, W. R. Johnson argues that, in ancient lyric, the lyric situation of listening mimics "the conditions and purposes of song" because "the person addressed (whether actual or fictional) is a metaphor for readers of the poem and becomes a symbolic mediator, a conductor between the poet and each of his readers and listeners" (4). Johnson goes on to place a finer point on the audience's role, and establishes that readers, or listeners, of ancient lyrics interpreted their position as "meant" (4) which indicates an ancient awareness, on the side of the audience, that the lyric necessitates their presence regardless of the speaker's turn away from them. Montague Thorold seems to embody this position in Smith's novel when he assumes ownership over the poem as an aural experience "'I beg I may have them again immediately'" (191) and as an audience member, leaning in closer to hear an address specifically not towards him: "'I heard the name of Willoughby repeated with

tenderness'" (306). Thorold responds to the intimacy of Celestina's sighs for another man in much the same way one might imagine Willoughby would respond to them. Thorold adopts the rather contradictory position of a listener who, despite explicitly not fulfilling the place of the addressed, nonetheless responds similarly to how the addressed might. William Waters, after reading William Carlos Williams's "This Is Just To Say," argues that "the lyric's inability to 'belong' fully to its personal addressee is universal" (*Lyric's Touch* 25).

Though Waters' argument focuses on addresses which turn toward another human entity, his point about lyric's aspect of intimacy remains relevant in my discussion of Smith's characterization of her audience as always something like Montague Thorold. As Waters argues, lyric intimacy occurs because of the lyric's internal structure which draws readers into the poem's occasion even if, and possibly because, they are not the intended addressee of the poem itself. Smith explores this curious aspect of the lyric in these scenes between Thorold and Celestina because, as I have shown, Thorold continues to lean closer, even to take Celestina's physical place, though he hears her sighing the name of his romantic rival. Thus, the novel seems to argue, that it is not simply because Celestina is a beautiful woman that Thorold feels he has a right to her company, but it is also because of her creation of these lyric moments. As I have already established, the text characterizes Thorold as Celestina's ideal reader through his ability to correctly read Celestina and their shared vocabulary of sensibility. Here, the novel makes a clear statement on the boundaries of that relationship and upon what grounds it functions: though Thorold may stalk Celestina in order to listen, he must not intervene until after she has already established a solitary lyric moment. Thorold is Celestina's lyric audience; his presence in the text necessitated by the poetic moment, whether observed in the text or not, proves that Celestina's poems can be legible only because he is there.

Smith argues the audience of a lyric is a necessary presence for the product of poetic inspiration, the poem itself, to exist in a legible state. Celestina's poems written with Willoughby as her guide never appear in the text; only those poems which Celestina writes in the presence of Thorold make it into the novel overall. Thorold's characterization as the audience member, then, brings to bear some key pressures on the modern lyric. As Mill will later assert, Celestina has no previous knowledge of Thorold's presence behind or near her and as such, she can unburden her heart and create the moment of lyric intimacy which her lyric readers crave. However, Smith always indicates that readers share Celestina's ignorance; despite a lack of awareness of his presence, Thorold hovers always behind, listening to the poem or experiencing the moment which may inspire a poem. This narrative moment means that Smith imagines both situations as equally important to the poetic moment. Celestina must believe herself alone, but her audience must always be present, leaning ever closer to listen.

CHAPTER FOUR

ECHOES

> I was much struck by an expression in your letter to Hayley where you say that 'you will endeavor to take an interest in green leaves again.' This seems the sound of my own voice reflected to me from a distance, I have so often had the same thought and desire.
> - William Cowper to Charlotte Smith, September 1792

In the original Preface to the first edition of *Elegiac Sonnets And Other Essays* (1784), Charlotte Smith makes reference to the ways in which readers will re-encounter already familiar lines of verse from other poets: "The readers of poetry will meet with some lines borrowed from the most popular authors, which I have used only as quotations. Where such acknowledgement is omitted, I am unconscious of the theft" (3-4). In these concluding lines, Smith dramatizes the experience her readers will have upon reading her sonnets as an encounter between subjects; one does not, after all, meet a tree or a mountain. Smith prefigures and frames her reader's eventual encounter with quotations from "the most popular authors" as a meeting of like minds, or at least a meeting between two subjects. Her description of their meeting, then, assumes the subjectivity of the reader and the quotation by defining their encounter as a meeting, rather than simply placing the burden of recognition on the reader alone. It is as though, when a reader comes upon the fourteenth line of the introductory sonnet "The Partial Muse" and its quotation from Pope's "Eloisa to Abelard," that the reader meets a particular embodiment of the work itself, or perhaps even Pope. In the Preface, Smith again creates a subjectivity in an unfamiliar place; in her sonnets, subjectivity can be found in the speaker, the auditor, and, here, the quotation.

In the Preface to the second edition of *Elegiac Sonnets*, Smith elides these final two sentences and thus removes her staging of the encounter between the reader and quotations from other authors. In all other editions of *Elegiac Sonnets*, Smith reprints the previous Prefaces, so that readers of the final, extended edition would also encounter all of the earlier prefatory material. And though she later includes more detailed notes, as well as a comment directed towards those critics who accused her of plagiarism, it seems that between the first and second edition, Smith rejected an explanation of her use of embedded quotations. However, despite her removal of the described anticipated meeting between the subjectivity of the reader and a kind of pseudo-embodied subjectivity of the quotation, Smith often plays out this meeting in her sonnets themselves. In the brief example above, from the introductory sonnet "The Partial Muse," Smith embeds Pope's line as her own closing line, without any contextual acknowledgment in the poem itself that the line exists elsewhere. Though Smith cites Pope's original line, and italicizes the line in order to mark it visually as different from the previous thirteen lines, she also composes her sonnet around it, so that it appears to exist naturally as part of Smith's sonnet, as much as it also exists in Pope's original poem. Smith first describes this act as "borrowing" but later defines unacknowledged use as "theft," indicating that, in the temporary space of the sonnet, she has taken possession of these quotations for her own use. Smith takes possession of these quotations as objects, stages them as an equivalent figure in their meeting with readers in her sonnets, and then sends them back to their owners in her notes. Her use of these quotations, and the reader's encounter with them, is necessarily brief, as indicated both in her use of *borrowed* and in the form of her sonnets themselves, which comprise only fourteen lines.

Smith plays out the brevity of this imagined encounter which implies an equivalent presence between two figures, in her poem "To Melancholy. Written on the Banks of the Arun,

October 1785" when the speaker in this sonnet meets Otway's ghost: "Here, by his native stream, at such an hour, / Pity's own Otway I methinks could meet, / And hear his deep sighs swell the sadden'd wind!" (9-11). This imagined meeting, in which the speaker hears Otway's spectral sighs in the "half-leafless woods" (4) of Melancholy's vale, figures a kind of disembodied presence in the figure of the dead playwright and author. Otway himself never materializes, but Smith nonetheless embodies him in this poem through his "deep sighs" (11) which the speaker imagines hearing. Otway appears in this poem through his encounter, albeit imagined, with the speaker; she creates his presence as equivalent to hers because she will be able to hear and interpret his sighs in the wind. However, as "To Melancholy" makes clear, the speaker's encounter with Otway is temporary and ephemeral, much like the ghostly figures in Melancholy's vale and like the sonnet form of the encounter itself. Indeed, by the close of the poem, both the speaker and Otway disappear entirely and become one of the many "night-wanderers" who "bewail" (8) the sorrows in Melancholy's vale. Having borrowed Otway from Melancholy's inspirational vale, and perhaps even from her earlier sonnet "To the River Arun", which occupies itself particularly with Otway, Smith returns him and her speaker to the realm of poetry.

This brief reading of Smith's prefatory comments, as well as two of her many sonnets which include quotations or allusions to other authors, demonstrates Smith's shifting, and sometimes contradictory, relationship with the multiple voices in her sonnets.[55] She imagines in her Preface a kind of meeting between two figures who are made equal at that moment; in her use of embedded quotations from Pope, for example, the reader encounters Pope's quotation in its borrowed state: as the final line of Smith's own sonnet. For Smith, the ephemeral space of the

[55] See Stuart Curran's essay "Charlotte Smith: Intertextualities" for a comprehensive reading of Smith's various other intertextual practices.

sonnet allows for her to create encounters between her speaker and other figures, whether they appear as quotations or as spectral presences. In so doing, Smith's sonnets negotiate their relationship with other voices, and other presences. These quotations, and allusions to Otway and other authors, are always disembodied: Otway appears as an implied, spectral presence, and Smith only alludes to Pope's body of work in her notes. As I will pursue in this chapter, these other presences, other voices, are often, too, ephemeral and in danger of fading.[56] They also only appear within the dedicated, brief space of the sonnet. For Smith, the voices of others represent ephemerality, replication, and the ability to cross time and space. For these reasons, I argue that Smith interprets these voices as echoes, which repeat a voice at a distance and exist for a short while before vanishing.

As replications of distant, and sometimes impossible voices, as in when Smith quotes authors long dead, her echoes thus achieve what is, for some modern lyric theorists, the key aspect of the lyric: its relationship with the human voice. In its classical history, the lyric's relationship with the human voice is clear, as lyrics were originally songs sung by a singular figure or chorus. As the classical definition changed over time, however, lyrics maintain their relationship with the human voice; the critical step of identifying a poem's *speaker* or *persona* or, sometimes even, *voice* makes reference to this lost status of the lyric. J.S. Mill's definition of poetry as "overheard" implies a solitary voice; T.S. Eliot, following Mill, defines modes of poetry by their "voices" where each depends upon different postures of the poet as he speaks to himself and to others. Counter to Mill and Eliot's definitions, which link the speaker of the poem

[56]Jonathan Culler and Sharon Cameron both cite the lyric's status as ephemeral, and tied to a short period of time, as an integral aspect. For Culler, "the lyric can displace a time of narrative, of past events reported, and place us in the continuing present of apostrophic address, the 'now' in which, for readers, a poetic event can repeatedly occur. Fiction is about what happened next; lyric is about what happens now" (226). Cameron reads the lyric as a suspension of time: "Thus the lyric is a departure not only from temporality but also from the finite constrictions of identity" (208).

with the poet himself, Herbert Tucker argues for the textual status of the speaker: "while texts do not absolutely lack speakers, they do not simply have them either; they invent them instead as they go. Texts do not come from speakers, speakers come from texts" (153). Tucker's discussion of the textual speaker closes his essay on the dramatic monologue, a genre which depends, again, upon the echo of a former human voice: the actor upon the stage who performs a monologue during a drama. In their seminal poetry textbook, Cleanth Brooks and Robert Penn Warren define all of poetry as "a form of speech … written or spoken" (117) which is possible in all everyday discourses. Lyrics, as these critics argue, echo the human voice either in a performance or in a solitary emotional moment.

Modern lyric theorists must grapple with lyric's drive towards mimesis of a human voice and lyric's vision of the potential for action embedded in words. Many lyrics, like those surveyed by Jonathan Culler, describe and perform desire; these lyrics demand a change in the state of affairs and imagine the results of this desire. For Northrup Fyre, lyric's optative mode becomes legible through his discussion of "babble," which obviously has antecedents in human vocalizations. This hidden rhythm of lyrics, Frye argues is "an oracular, meditative, irregular, unpredictable, and essentially discontinuous rhythm emerging from the coincidences of the sound pattern … this oracular rhythm seems to be the predominating initiative of lyric" (270). For his example of this patterning, Frye selects a portion from *Much Ado About Nothing,* which would have been performed aloud by an actor on stage. This "oracular" rhythm, for Jonathan Culler becomes "germane to a theory of the Western lyric … [that] the poem's allusions to a context of ritual foreground the question of the poem's own ritualistic character as spell or chant" (16). Culler's definition of lyric involves the repetitive, chanting language of a spell "whereby voice calls in order to be calling, and seeks to manifest its calling, to establish its

identity as poetical voice" (216). This particular voice, Culler argues, is not performed outside of the lyric but embodied inside of it: "that they create effects of voicing, of aurality" (35). For Culler, the voice which emerges from the lyric does not exist outside of it and cannot be replicated in any normal speech act. The lyric's aurality occurs only in the mind of the poet and repeated in the mind of the reader; in terms of reading aloud, Culler describes this act as "ventriloquizing" (187) rather than overhearing. In these accounts, the lyric invests itself in a replication of the human voice in the written form, with the poem thus attaining the status of a spell or chant. For Helen Vendler, the lyric "is intended to be voiceable by anyone reading it" (6-7) and that "the act of the lyric is to offer a script to say" (18). Vendler argues that the success of a lyric comes down to its ability contain an authentic, identifiable voice: "that the voice offered for our use be 'believeable' to us, resembling a 'real voice' coming from a 'real mind' like our own" (18). Vendler thus links together two important aspects of the lyric: that it contains the mimesis of a voice and looks forward to future voicings by readers.

In the current poetic moment, lyric's relationship to voice appears quite different than it would have appeared to Romantic readers of lyric because, unlike eighteenth- and nineteenth-century readers, modern readers of poetry rarely engage in a practice of reading aloud. This practice means that lyrics are hardly ever voiced now; in the Romantic period, however, lyrics were consistently voiced, and often written to be read aloud in small or large groups. Citing examples including Anna Seward and Sarah Siddons, Paula Backscheider argues for the necessity of remembering the actual aurality of poetry in the period: "Reading aloud was a major social and domestic activity. Because books were both scarce and expensive, all classes invited friends to their homes to hear a new book" (12). Backscheider, too, cites a contemporary of Smith's, Frances Burney, whose novel *The Wanderer* uses reading aloud to prove a character's

"understanding and her feeling" (11).[57] One of the key effects of this practice was to prove an individual's taste and to create bonds of similar identification between individuals. Look no further than Marianne Dashwood's impassioned recitation of William Cowper's *The Castaway* (1799) in Jane Austen's *Sense and Sensibility* (1811). This practice, of shared identification through reading, and in this case, listening, becomes important in the culture of sensibility which imagines the healing possibilities of poetry. J.S. Mill describes a web of sympathetic identification created between the poet and the reader, overhearing, who has also felt the same emotions: "poetry … is interesting only to those to whom it recalls what they have felt" (356). The lyric poet, in the Romantic period as well as in accounts which remember that period, thus erects bonds of sympathetic identification through a process of describing similar feelings by speaking those feelings aloud. In Charlotte Smith's contemporary moment, then, the lyric not only provides a mimesis of the human voice, it demanded it in practice.

Charlotte Smith was always aware of her audience, and of the practices of improvement and taste that were particular to women; in her poems and novels, she writes lyrics which embed and demand the presence of other voices. Smith's sonnets were not, as Jonathan Culler argues, "from the outset … written only" (69); she anticipated and expected her poems to be read aloud by her audience. Aware of this historical reality, Smith plays into this practice in her poetry and novels with her negotiation of other voices and their echoing possibilities. As I have discussed, the idea of the poetic speaker depends on the fiction of a voice; Smith's poems and novels help to bring this fiction to the forefront because she often explores disembodied voices and echoes which emerge from other sources. Though Smith may sound like herself at various points throughout these poems and novels, both the sound of her voice and the identity imagined behind

[57] See, too, Amanda Vickery's account of the domestic and public practice of recitation in *The Gentleman's Daughter: Women's Lives in Georgian England*.

it are fictions. For Adela Pinch, Smith's poems function "like echo chambers, in which reverberate direct quotations, ideas, and tropes from English poetry" (60) Whereas Pinch locates the "fundamental unit around which Smith's sonnet seem to be built" as "not so much the image, or even the individual word or line, but rather the artful, pathetic phrase" (60), I argue that Smith explores these echoes in three diverse spaces. Smith's extension allows her to negotiate a complex vision of solipsism, which embraces identity's ability to multiply outward while avoiding unproductive navel-gazing. Like Culler's apostrophes which "can … be read as an act of radical interiorization and solipsism, which either parcels out of the self to fill the world, or internalizes what might have been thought external" (225), Smith extends these echoes of her constructed selves into the bodies of others in order to establish important lines of sympathetic connection. This chapter explores three of Smith's echoing spaces: the literary space, the bodily space, and the political space.

1. "Sonnet XXII: To solitude": The poetic power of the echo

In the second chapter, I explored Smith's deliberate play with her speaker's identity in three apostrophes, which, as I argued, are constructed out of speakers who occupy a liminal space between a female poet, a sentimental female speaker, and Charlotte Smith as a public-facing author. The focus of this section shifts towards another apostrophe, one of Smith's most complex, and yet unstudied poems, Sonnet XXII "By the same. To solitude." Introduced in the first edition, this cycle of five sonnets proport to come from the hero and narrator of Goethe's famous 1774 novel, *The Sorrows of Young Werther*. Smith's poem, which becomes Sonnet XXII in Stuart Curran's edition of *The Poems of Charlotte Smith*, exists in its own miniature Werther cycle which functions both inside and outside of Smith's larger *Elegiac Sonnets*. Though Curran,

in his edition of *The Poems of Charlotte Smith*, refers to this sonnet and the series to which it belongs, most critics pass over the sonnets in Smith's Werther series, characterizing them as simple ventriloquisms of Goethe's hero.[58] However, a closer examination of these poems, and especially "To solitude," reveals a far more complicated negotiation between allusion, character, and speaker. Though Smith cites the moments from the novel which form the inspiration for her poems, the actions and emotions described in the poems quickly diverge from Goethe's original text. For example, "To solitude" includes a reference to Werther's eventual suicide, an idea that Werther has not yet placed into writing at the time of the chapter from which this poem allegedly emerges. A more detailed reading of this poem will show that these poems as such are not intended to be only read as though Smith simply ventriloquizes Werther; nor are they meant to be read as solely emerging out of Smith's authorial voice or Werther's narrative voice. Instead, especially in "To solitude," a poem whose primary occupation is with the poetic efficacy of the echoing, disembodied voice, Smith deliberately creates a poetic echo chamber out of Goethe's original Werther and her own, preexisting authorial persona in this poem, blurring the lines between speakers and narrative, and allusion and quotation. The fundamental intertextuality of the Werther sonnet cycle interrogates the ways in which the idea of a voice becomes tied to a specific subject. In this poem, subjective voice can be disengaged with the subject, split, and disembodied. Thus, the poem captures deliberate subjective disembodiment which questions the canonized Romantic singular speaking subject as the controlling voice in the poems. Smith

[58] A notable exception is Elizabeth Dolan's *Seeing Suffering in Women's Literature of the Romantic Era* (2016) where she argues that Smith takes on Werther's dress so that she "asks readers to 'see' the suffering body – in some cases her own, but more often the bodies of characters suffering from melancholia – in order to bring attention to the materiality of suffering and to portray sufferers also as seers … By re-envisioning the relationship between melancholic thought and feeling and by emphasizing the melancholic's seen and seeing body, in the *Elegiac Sonnets*, Smith challenges late-eighteenth century norms for emotional expression, particularly those establishes by the cult of sensibility."

places us in a position where the voice which echoes throughout this poem, belongs to both Smith and Werther, and neither at the same time. To engage with this poem on the level of intertextuality and allusion reveals Smith working through a new theory of allusion, which depends upon the echo as a poetic construction.

"To solitude" makes a deliberate argument about the poetic power of the echoing voice which has been partially removed from a singular identity, including both that of a character and of the poet themselves. In this poem, Smith deploys two separate yet related poetic voices in order to blend the boundaries between them, allowing both Werther and Smith's own authorial voice to echo throughout this poem. Smith uses internal rhyme and alliteration in this poem to create an echo chamber of sound; these internal reverberations extend outward to vibrate in the sonnet form itself and provide an internal echo of the double-subjective voice. In harmony with the disembodied voice of the speaker, an everchanging blend of Smith-as-speaker and Werther, Smith adds the song of the nightingale, adding another layer of poetic complexity to this repeating voice. Smith's sonnet thus participates in Sharon Cameron's concept of the choral voice of lyric, which is "more accurately the voice of its collective moments, bound together as if one, is not equal to the human voice" (208). For Cameron, the contradiction of a speaker who says "I" and this choral voice means that "lyric speech is not a remembrance of the diverted or altered presence, but a distinct contradiction of the reality from which it diverges" (207) so that not only does the singular voice speak collectively, it does so at a remove from empirical reality. Smith's poem, with its variety of echoing voices, fulfils this concept. This unstable poetic ground, built atop echoes, allows us to read both types of speaker, and the emanations which issue from it, as simultaneously possible in the poem. This speaking voice, in the poem, becomes all the more powerful because of the speaker's use of sentimental language, which defines the

echoes and grants them their power. The sentimental echo is the originary sound in this poem – the life of it – rather than the singular subjective speaker. Echoes are the force which constructs and animates this poem, not only appearing aurally or through metaphor but as a deliberately poetic and allusive construction which replaces the now decentralized subjective voice.

By the same. To solitude

O Solitude! to thy sequester'd vale
I come to hide my sorrow and my tears,
And to thy echoes tell the mournful tale
Which scarce I trust to pitying Friendship's ears!
Amidst thy wild-woods, and untrodden glades,
No sounds but those of melancholy move;
And the low winds that die among thy shades,
Seem like soft Pity's sighs for hopeless love!
And sure some story of despair and pain,
In yon deep copse thy murm'ring doves relate;
And, hark, methinks in that long plaintive strain,
Thine own sweet songstress weeps my wayward fate!
Ah, Nymph! that fate assist me to endure,
And bear awhile – what Death alone can cure! (27)

Though Smith initiates this series of five sonnets as "Supposed to be written by Werter" and maintains this association by titling each subsequent sonnet either partially or in full as "By the same," she makes obscure the exact links between her poems and the original source text. For example, though Smith direct readers to *The Sorrows of Young Werther* by volume number, she

never cites the source material by letter or even by page number. This obscurity allows Smith a certain level of license when it comes to the ways in which her poems rehearse the events of the narrative. The particularities of the plot which "To solitude" refers barely appear in the context of Smith's poem. Though Werther describes "I climb steep rocks, I break my way through copses, among thorns and briars which tear me to pieces, and I feel a little relief," (153-4),[59] this scene of self-flagellation against the branches hardly aligns with the whispers and echoes which the speaker in Smith's poem describes.

Werther's subjectivity, and indeed Goethe's text, thus occupy a curious presence in the poem itself, simultaneously appearing and disappearing. In other moments, the speaker who emerges also echoes Smith's usual emblematic speaker. In lines such as "I come to hide my sorrows and my tears" (2) and "And, hark, methinks in that long plaintive strain, / Thine own sweet songstress weeps my wayward fate!" (11-12), Smith echoes the same speaker who elucidates her sorrows in "To Melancholy" and "Written on the Sea Shore." The speaker's final turn towards Death as the eventual cure of sorrow, "Ah, Nymph! that fate assist me to endure, / And bear awhile – what Death alone can cure!" (13-14) echoes Smith's speaker in "To hope:" "Come then, 'pale Misery's love!; be thou my cure, / And I will bless thee, who, tho' slow, art sure" (13-14). It also echoes and foreshadows Werther's eventual suicide. As Adela Pinch notes, Smith uses this liminal position to play with the rather convenient naming of Werther's beloved. In Sonnet XXIV "By the same" Smith's Werther imagines "Yes – CHARLOTTE o'er the mournful spot shall weep, / Where her poor WERTER – and his sorrows sleep!" (13-14) cleverly

[59] Citations for Goethe's text from Dodsley's 1780 *The Sorrows of Werter: A German Story*. Smith might have read the story in the French translation or in this edition. I have chosen to cite this edition because it is the only contemporaneous one which spells Werter in the same way Smith herself spells it in her own citations.

playing on the double name so that the Charlotte who weeps and remembers "her poor WERTER" (13) is both Charlotte from the novel and Charlotte Smith:

> The fact that Smith is also a Charlotte has the effect of making her appear to be both the transmitter and the receiver of Werther's sentiment. Imagining Charlotte weeping, the sonnet transforms the Petrarchan beloved into the woman of feeling. Moreover, it seems to allow Werther to nominate Smith as the woman who weeps over the sorrows of young Werther, as well as others' sorrows. (Pinch 61-62)

Pinch suggests here that Smith's posturing as both the woman who weeps and the woman who creates the sonnets which allow others to weep uncovers an important identity for the poet, placing her in a network in relation to "others' literary feelings" (62). These others, as Pinch implies, are not just readers of Smith's sonnets, but also Petrarch and Goethe, and Laura, Werther, and Charlotte.

As Pinch explains, Smith's self-positioning here also creates Charlotte Smith, the character, who appears as the inheritor of Werther's sentiments and adopts some of his subjectivity in the poem. At different moments in this poem, the speaker who emerges also echoes Smith's usual emblematic speaker. In lines such as "I come to hide my sorrows and my tears" (2) and "And, hark, methinks in that long plaintive strain, / Thine own sweet songstress weeps my wayward fate!" (11-12), the same speaker who elucidates her sorrows in "To Melancholy" and "Written on the Sea Shore" echoes here. The speaker's final turn towards Death as the eventual cure of sorrow, "Ah, Nymph! that fate assist me to endure, / And bear awhile – what Death alone can cure!" (13-14) echoes Smith's speaker in "To hope:" "Come then, 'pale Misery's love!; be thou my cure, / And I will bless thee, who, tho' slow, art sure" (13-14). Though this final moment also, of course, echoes Werther's eventual suicide, many of Smith's

other speakers in her sonnets imagine the final embrace of Death as the only release from their sorrows. In terms of allusion, then, Smith echoes the texts of others, more of which will be made later, as well her own poems which occur both before and after the Werther sonnet series in *Elegiac Sonnets*. Though in the second edition of the volume, Smith closes the book with three of the Werther poems, subsequent editions saw this series expanded and placed in the middle, at the perfect reference point which allows previous poems to resound inside the series and for the voices of Werther, and Smith-as-Charlotte, to repeat throughout the rest. Thus, the voice that Smith adopts in the Werther series is not just Goethe's Werther as re-envisioned and repeated within Smith's poetry, but also a repetition of the emblematic figure she uses throughout *Elegiac Sonnets*.

The repetition of these different voices in this particular literary space creates an echo chamber out of this sonnet. For Smith, this echoing space can be entered each time her sonnets are read; she describes this metaphorical entrance in the sonnet itself, when the speaker describes entering Solitude's "sequester'd vale." (1) Here, the speaker explains, she joins her own "mournful tale" (3) to the already-echoing "wild-woods, and untrodden glades" (5) which resound with "low winds" which "melancholy move[s]" (7,6). Smith's speaker participates in the construction of Solitude's vale as she interprets the echoes as a listening ear but the speaker also enters an already-constructed vale: "to thy sequester'd vale / I come to hide my sorrow and my tears" (1-2); Solitude's vale may echo with the speaker's own sighs, but she enters a space that already exists without her. Solitude's vale, which overflows with echoing sounds but no other subjects who make them, grants the speaker both the audience she craves for her "mournful tale" but also the privacy of telling these tales to an entrusted figure. Because, of course, this vale belongs to Solitude, the speaker tells her tales only to herself; Smith complicates this idea,

however, because she describes the speaker entering into this space, and joining her echoes with those which already move through the vale.

Smith allegorizes Solitude, along with Friendship and Pity, in this poem to transport human emotions, experienced privately, into a social environment which readers enter with the speaker at the start of the poem. By allegorizing these figures Smith allows her reader and speaker to "meet with" them, expanding the boundaries of their encounter to indicate a complex type of personhood. Though the allegorized figures may become agents in their meeting with the speaker, they too imply the speaker's equivalent status as an abstraction. This desire for the identification of a preconstructed quasi-social space, can be mapped onto Smith's choice of form in this poem because the constructed space, entered by the speaker and the reader at the same moment, is the form of the sonnet. This poem differs from others in *Elegiac Sonnets* because it initially appears to lack the formal hybridization in other sonnets, like "Sonnet IV: To the Moon." "To solitude" follows the English sonnet pattern closely until the rhyming pair in line six and eight. At the moment in which the speaker turns to address a new figure, the nightingale, Smith marks this shift with a momentary break in the English sonnet form through her use of a sight rhyme. In lines six and eight, the speaker rhymes "move" (6) with "love" (8). Smith's turn towards the nightingale brings up, as Stuart Curran notes in his gloss on the poem's title, a Petrarchan echo: "The idea from the 43rd Sonnet of Petrarch. *Secondo parte*. "Quel rosigniuol, che si soave piagne." [With so highly traditional a subject, the specific influence of Petrarch's verse is at most slight]" (n 14). As Curran explains, the reference is "slight" indeed, but provides, like the eye rhyme of "move / love" (6, 8) a momentary pause. The presence of a nightingale in "To solitude" does not indicate a direct citation from Petrarch, but, as I have been arguing, what matters in this poem are echoes. The slight break from the rhyming pattern at the eighth line and

the nightingale who appears soon after indicates echoes of Petrarch in this English sonnet and thus, provide an echo which exists formally as well as in the content of the poem.

If, as Smith describes, the speaker enters a constructed space, built of echoes, then her construction of this sonnet with its traditional English structure, and echoes of Petrarch provides another formal layer to this poem in which the reader enters the echo chamber of the constructed sonnet and experiences those "Sounds but those of melancholy move" as allusions to other types of sonnet forms. The actions of the speaker in "To solitude" then become a metaphorical example of the process of the reader encountering Smith's sonnet. For the speaker in this poem, Solitude's vale echoes both mimetically through the "low winds" through the trees and the "long plaintive strain" of the distant nightingale. The eye rhyme which brackets the middle point of this poem breaks through this poem's spell, revealing that this moment is not simply a spontaneous relation of an emotional moment but also that it is also a highly constructed poetic event that exists in the ear and on the page. To consider the poem as both a mimetic and metaphoric space, as Smith invites in this poem, is to realize that the echoes which the speaker experiences mimetically carry heavy metaphorical weight. Just as the speaker identifies the echoes which construct Solitude's vale, so too Smith constructs the poem out of these echoes. Though an empirical echo may be a softer sound, a weakened repetition of the original, once Smith creates a poem out of them, they become an influential poetic sound, constructing the sonnet as much as its English form.

With these metaphorical stakes, then, Smith doubly rehearses the process of the echoing encounter inside the form of the poem, as she constructs her own echo chamber not only of allusions to other forms, but with the poem's repeating internal rhymes. Smith uses a combination of full end rhyme and internal half rhyme in this poem to construct a space of

echoes and repetitions, which occur not only at the close of the lines, but also at the beginning. With the exception of the first line, every odd numbered line in this poem begins with either the same sound, represented by the repeated "And" which begins five out of fourteen lines in this poem, or the letter a, which begins seven lines of this poem. These repetitions emerge on both the visual and the aural level so that Smith constructs the poem visually from these echoing letters and aurally from the echoes of their vowel sounds. Lines seven and eight contain a series of half rhymes, "die among thy shades … soft Pity's sighs" (7-8), a pattern repeated again in lines eleven and twelve: "long plaintive strain … wayward fate" (11-12). This final half-rhymed line also includes the repeated sibilance of "sweet songstress weeps" a phrasing which softly sighs into another closing alliteration in "weeps my wayward fate" (12). Like the vale into which the speaker enters, this sonnet reverberates upon itself and "No sounds but those of melancholy move" the air inside the poem. Having thus created her echo chamber, both in terms of the repeating half-rhymes and in the structure of allusion to other sonnet forms which Smith combines in the entire poem, Smith then proceeds to explore the implications of this echoing sonnet for the speaking subject. Inside the reverberating vale of Solitude, which metaphorically matches the structure of the sonnet in both form and content, Smith destabilizes the identity of the speaking subject through the poem's involvement with Goethe's original text, *The Sorrows of Young Werther*, which Smith adapts for her sonnet series.

Smith provides one additional echo in the poem, the nightingale, which the speaker experiences as both an individual figure and as an echo of her own voice. The nightingale's presence allows the speaker to imagine a future endurance for her pain, which extends the stakes of her emotions away from the presence of the poem. Thus, the speaker imagines that nightingale's song will replicate and echo into the future. This poem continuously explores the

potentialities of a speaker who responds to echoes and adopts their voices in this constructed poetic space. The speaker constructs another echoing version of herself after the mid-point of the poem when she redirects her apostrophe to an absent, yet nevertheless extremely important, literary figure. The speaker pauses to listen and interpret the particular song of a nightingale:

> And, hark, methinks in that long plaintive strain,
>
> Thine own sweet songstress weeps my wayward fate.
>
> Ah, Nymph! that fate assist me to endure,
>
> And bear awhile – what Death alone can cure!

The "sweet songstress" of these lines refers to the nightingale because of Smith's earlier description of the bird in "To a nightingale" as a "songstress sad" (13) and because of the speaker's interpretation of the bird as a "Nymph!" in line thirteen of this poem. Up until this point, the speaker has only identified "thy murm'ring doves" (10); here, she describes the singular nightingale, marking this moment out from the rest of the poem with "hark" (11) which she brackets off inside two commas. Smith composes "To solitude" in the present tense and so this moment, with its instantaneous "hark" does not disrupt the verb structure as much as it establishes a situation of immediacy and a change from the previous lines of the poem. The final quatrain of the poem captures an important auditory as well as conceptual shift as the speaker turns her apostrophe towards the nightingale, and away from the figure of Solitude. Smith often aligns her speakers with this literary bird; "To solitude" makes this same connection as the speaker imagines the consoling power of the nightingale's song "that fate assist me to endure / And bear awhile" (13-14). The speaker imagines both the nightingale, and thus Solitude, as figures and spaces which exist outside of herself; as such, she is in a position to both comment on the consoling power both of relief of secrets, "Which scarce I trust to pitying Friendship's

ears" (4) and to interpret beautiful sounds "Seem like soft Pity's sighs for hopeless love!" (8). All of these actions fall under the purview of the speaker, who creates her own poetic space inside the imagined vale of Solitude. When Smith's speaker imagines the nightingale's song as a response to her own sorrows, "that long plaintive strain, / … weeps my wayward fate!" (11-12), she imagines the nightingale producing a soothing song inside her own soothing song of this sonnet. This meta-textual moment of alignment encourages a reading of the speaker as a poet herself.

By combining the speaker's creation of her own, momentary space in the poem with the above reading of the two speaking voices, a new reading of this poem emerges which emphasizes not Smith's ventriloquism of Goethe or Werther but instead her awareness of the poem as a constructed space. When Smith constructs this poem to contain these echoing voices, she not only emphasizes the echo as an important poetic sound but also underlines the echo's very multiplicity as the source of its poetic power. Echoes of all sorts appear in this poem; there are those which the speaker creates, those that the speaker hears, those that emanate from the speaker's voice, and those which promise a future release from pain. The poem's formal aspects, its conceptual and contextual nods towards the Petrarchan tradition, argue for the poetic power of the echo to both create and undercut singular figures and restricted spaces. Echoes not only help to constitute Solitude's vale, to which the speaker turns in order to process her pain, but also allow the speaker to imagine a future balm for those pains. In terms of the form of the poem, echoes from Petrarch reverberate through the poem's construction, emphasizing the poem as an auditory and physical object, a space which is created by the echoing speaker. In "To solitude" the number and form of each echo compounds on each other, creating a dense poetic space which resists singular definition in terms of both its form and its figures. Thus, for Smith, these

echoes provide important poetic power to construct poems and to create diverse versions of speaking voices.

The deliberate merging and melding of voices, and additionally the ways in which Smith alludes to other literary works and writers through allusion and, sometimes, unidentified passages, maps itself not only onto the structure of the sonnet, to resound there as well, but also works to remove the voices from their original identity associated with Smith or with Werther. Like empirical echoes which repeat away from their point of origin and fade into obscurity, the echoes in this poem radiate away from their original voice. This distancing allows Smith to emphasize the disembodied voice as the encounter around which the poem, in both form and content, is structured. Rather than relying on the subjective viewpoint of Werther, the allusion to another text which authorizes the poet, or even the beloved voice her established sonnet speaker, Smith's echoing sonnets incorporate all three aspects which diverge and merge in various ways throughout the sonnet itself. The echo, as the medium of transmission, neither fully rejects nor embraces the origin point of the speaker, and as such, rejects a limited view of the poetic voice which is only associated with the author herself. The echo, too, fills whichever space it encounters, and reverberates off of the edges, continuing to multiply. In this case, Smith adapts an epistolary novel into a sonnet cycle, which allow these echoing voices to fill new literary spaces.

2. Troubling the Embodiment of Echoes in *Celestina*

Smith continues her exploration of echoes in her third novel *Celestina* (1791); in the space of the novel, and with the affordances of this form to expand beyond the bounds of the sonnet in terms of plot, description, and characterization, Smith explores a new echo chamber in the bodies of

her characters. In *Celestina*, a novel which echoes not only Smith's emblematic figure in the poetess heroine but also, too, familiar scenes from Smith's novels, Smith imagines the ways in which the echo can be replicated but shared across bodily boundaries. The fourth volume of the novel begins with the hero's journey into revolutionary France, where individual characters repeat narratives of tyranny under the *ancien régime*. Their echoing voices, first imagined by Smith as a national echo, become further embodied in the individual people the hero meets. Finally, Smith explores a curious instance of a replicated voice between two people: Celestina and her recently discovered cousin Anzoletta. Choosing to maintain the ambiguity of this shared voice rather than rationalize it, Smith instead uses this replicated voice in order to authorize the eventual marriage of Anzoletta and Celestina's annoying suitor, Montague Thorold. In this novel, echoes embodied in both the characters and the body of text persist in their replication and potential instability as they are shared across boundaries. Smith rejects a rational resolution for these echoes, and rather insists upon their pervasive power to unsettle.

At the beginning of the fourth volume, the narrator describes the ways in which the echoes of the revolution spread over France. Willoughby, the novel's hero, escapes the entanglements of his family's machinations in England and travels to France to recover from a recent illness and to uncover the identity of his beloved, Celestina. As he travels from the north towards southern France, Willoughby everywhere encounters this echo: "and hearing, and *but* hearing, at a distance, the tumults, with which a noble struggle for freedom at this time (the summer of 1789) agitated the capital, and many of the great towns of France, till, among the wild and stupendous scenes which he at last length reached, even this faint murmur died away" (473). Smith's narrator not only describes the "noble struggle for freedom" (473) which Willoughby hears, but specifically locates it in a point of recent time, "(the summer of 1789)" (473) so that

the specificity of this "noble struggle" is clear. However, as Willoughby leaves the towns and cities, this echo recedes into first a "faint murmur" (473) before disappearing entirely. As the present struggles in Paris and France's country towns fade, Willoughby then enters a vivid sublime dreamscape, culminating with an episode where Willoughby, having lost his companions on his travels, becomes disoriented and confused. In the midst of a storm and with night rapidly approaching, Willoughby walks aimlessly until he hears a voice: "when amidst the silence of the night, the sound of a human voice, in slow cadence, accompanied by some musical instrument, was borne on the faint breeze that arose from the low lands" (478). Like the speaker in "To solitude" who wanders among the vale, or the speaker in "To Melancholy" whose vision becomes obscured by increasing mists, Willoughby, too, abandons his visual sense in order to be guided by a disembodied voice.

This song, emerging out of the valley deep in the mountains, leads Willoughby out of his vision-obscured wanderings and into the home of a man who, rather serendipitously, serves the Count de Bellegarde, a former nobleman who happens to be, as Willoughby discovers later, Celestina's maternal uncle. Willoughby's wanderings represent an important sublime moment in the text; as the mists from the torrent obscure his vision, Willoughby releases his vision, his guiding sense, and travels further away from his companions. His blindness is rewarded when he rests under the rising moon and hears the fantastic voice of Le Laurier, the servant of Count de Bellegarde, as she sings into the night. This epiphany in the text, prompted by Willoughby's loss of vision and culminating in the voice which emerges out of the valley, represents Willoughby's travels deep into a Gothic fantasy. For the moment, at least, Willoughby seems to have left behind him the political landscape of the French Revolution and, instead, enters the world of the romance, where a beautiful voice lures him out of his vision and, eventually, into knowledge.

Willoughby maintains this fantasy after he meets the Count, and entering the Count's decaying castle, ascends through the various halls to make his introductions to the Count's daughter: "Willoughby, as he marched gravely along, through the long galleries, and across the gloomy hall, fancied himself a knight of romance; and, that some of the stories of enchanted castles, and wandering adventurers, of which he had been so fond, in his early youth, were here realized" (489-491). Willoughby's fancy, that he has become a "knight of romance" (491), becomes a clear fantasy as the narrator describes the "enchanted castles, and wandering adventurers [which] were here realized" (491). The text weaves two important, and intrinsically connected, threads together here: the first, Willoughby's association between the fantasy of romance and the second, the decaying Gothic castle, which contains within it the sinister secrets of this once-great family. The scene into which Willoughby enters as he travels deep into the French countryside combines the Gothic ruin, the mysterious voice, and the obscure connections to the past with a romantic, sublime fantasy of discovering exactly what was desired. The reference to "stories … of which he had been so fond, in his early youth" (491) establish the terms upon which Willoughby, and thus the reader, comprehends this fantastic space.

However, Smith makes an important revision to this fantasy of romance because she undercuts Willoughby's imaginings with the tales of oppression and tyranny told of Celestina's mother and her uncle. Though Willoughby might imagine that the echoes of the political upheaval in France have faded along with the mists which surrounded him before he hears Le Laurier's song, the political emerges immediately when the Count begins to tell Willoughby his own personal history and the history of Celestina's mother, Jacquelina. The Count's narrative impulse picks up on a pattern throughout *Celestina,* in which individual characters relate, in detail, their own personal stories which have created the present moment. In all cases but this

one, the eager listener is Celestina. In this case, the Count unburdens himself to Willoughby, who, standing atop the castle and gazing out at the landscape below, listens intently. In the context of this narrative, the Count's tale of romantic and political persecution, enforced military service, and illegal imprisonment functions as Celestina's legacy. It also serves as a political allegory for the tyranny of the *ancien régime*. The count describes his father as "…proud, vindictive, and violent; with such a portion of national pride, as made him hold every other nation but his own in the utmost contempt; and, whenever they seemed likely to dispute the superiority of France, he was tempted to wish, like Caligula, that the people so presumptuous, had but one neck, that he might destroy them at a blow" (492-3). The embedded reference to the guillotine which closes this description hints at the eventual downfall of many real men in France who also thought the same as the Count's father. Upon learning of his son's unwise passion for a servant girl, and his secret marriage to her, the Count imprisons his daughter-in-law in a convent and procures a *lettre du cachet* for his son, imprisoning him in the fortress of Mont St. Michel for five years.[60] Thus, the echoes of the general battles for freedom which Willoughby hears distantly as he travels through France become, in the Count's narrative of his own suffering and that of his sister, personalized and allegorized through his telling. In the repetition of the Gothic oppression under their tyrannical father, the narratives of the Count and his sister distill the depersonalized echo of the town into a highly wrought personal tale of suffering. Readers versed in sentimental and Gothic tales, listeners like Willoughby and the readers of *Celestina*, emotionally attach themselves to these characters, and are thus able to see, through Smith's trope of echoes, the ways in which the personal and the general join together in protesting the unjust control of a tyrant.

[60] See Loraine Fletcher's note on this concept from her edition of *Celestina* for Broadview Press.

Unlike his unlucky sister and brother-in-law, Celestina's parents, the Count manages to escape from his prison, but only due to the wide-spread legal reform brought about by the French Revolution: "Between four and five years had I been captive in that gloomy prison, when the glorious flame of liberty, of which I only saw the first feeble rays, burst forth. I regained my personal freedom, when my country became free" (517). That the Count becomes free from unlawful imprisonment at the same moment that "my country became free" (517) firmly places the Count's tale in the realm of the allegory, but because the Count suffered under the *lettres du cachet*, a very real tool of the corrupt monarch, Smith maintains the foundation in truth that keeps the Count's allegory from extending too far into fantasy. The Count, as he emerges from his imprisonment into the light of freedom, here represents France shaking off the rule of a cruel tyrant. However, the Count's future, as Smith describes it, does not look indeed all that bright:

> He was greatly above the common height, thin, and a little bent, as if from depression of spirit, but his face, pale, sallow, and emaciated, as it was, was marked with such peculiar expression, that all the adventures of his life seemed to have been written there … the strong muscular lines of his whole face, seemed to bear the harsh impressions of the hand of adversity rather than of time; for though his hair was grey, and he looked much older than he was (490)

The Count, upon first description, resembles the castle in which he lives. Bent, scarred, and aged beyond his years, the Count lacks the personal strength to make any sufficient improvements to the castle and thus it remains the crumbling reminder of his father's power, which Willoughby recognizes when he imagines himself as a knight of romance as he walks the halls. The Count's final goal, as of yet unrealized in the text, is to free his wife from her convent-prison and to reunite with her. His family, as the Count describes to Willoughby, is dead aside from his wife

and daughter. To read the Count as a metaphor for France, then, is to imagine a vision where, broken and beaten, France cannot rise beyond its first push for liberty. The Count's beaten body can contain the echoes of tyrannical tales, but it cannot perform the actions necessary to change the situation.

However, Smith cannily inserts another doubled pair here, in the figures of Celestina and Anzoletta, who each figure not only as doubles for their parents, but as doubles of each other. I have been arguing that, in the fourth volume of *Celestina*, Smith deploys echo in order to grant diverse voices narrative power as they are replicated across individual bodies. Smith echoes the generalized voice of the people oppressed by the *ancien régime* in the Count's personal narrative, in order to place the political in the realm of the romance, and thus in the realm of literature. By adapting the trope of doubling not only in the stories of the dead, but in their representative daughters, Smith allows Celestina and Anzoletta to represent a new generation of possible Anglo-French relations. However, for Smith, this possible relationship can never be straightforward and so she grants these cousins a particular exemplarity: a shared voice. Indulging in the fantasy of himself as a knight-errant Willoughby follows the Count upstairs to meet the Count's recently discovered daughter. Willoughby:

> entered a gallery, and at the end of it was his daughter's apartment, the door of which was open, and Willoughby was immediately introduced to a young person, who sat before a frame, working on a piece of embroidery … when she spoke, in answer to the compliment he made her, this pleasure converted into amazement. He fancied he heard the voice of Celestina! (489)

Upon hearing this voice, a voice he himself has not heard since his travels in France began, Willoughby's shocked reaction and his ensuring silence, captured by the exclamation point,

establish a moment of unreality. At this key moment, in order to delay the revealation that the speaker is not Celestina but her cousin, the narrator intrudes and gives an explanation for Willoughby's sudden loss of his senses: "So strikingly did its tones resemble those to which his heart had always been tremblingly responsive, that had he not seen who spoke, he should not have doubted of its being Celestina" (489). This intrusion deserves further examination.

Aside from his pilgrimage to the place of Celestina's birth which makes him the unlikely focus of the entirety of the novel's fourth volume, the text focuses most narrowly on Celestina and her actions. Willoughby's innermost feelings, up until this fourth volume, have been excluded from the reader; indeed, his travels to France could have been more an effort to exonerate his mother from charges of an affair than to uncover the parentage of his beloved Celestina. Here, the text diverges from this previous pattern to closely describe Willoughby's inward confusion and state of mind when confronted with this uncanny voice. The otherwise unfailingly polite Willoughby pauses long enough to commit a social faux-pas: "He started and felt the blood rush to his cheeks, nor could he immediately recollect himself enough to reply to what Anzoletta said" (489). Willoughby's strong emotions here overcome his sense of reason and his social manners; the feminized language of his "tremblingly responsive" (489) emotions and the description of his blushing face place Willoughby in the inverse position for the hero of a book. If indeed this scene depicts Willoughby reuniting with Celestina, his violent emotional and physical response mark him with the language typically used to describe eighteenth-century heroines.

The narrative intrusion functions in another way in the text: to prolong this moment of confusion and mishearing. By sustaining this moment in the text through this narrative intrusion, Smith makes Willoughby's confusion persist far longer than it would in the normal course of a

conversation. Considering the suspended moment of this conversation, and Willoughby's experience of intense emotion upon hearing a certain sound, this moment presents in miniature the same experience that Smith rehearses in her sonnets. Willoughby hears an evocative noise, in this case the mysterious voice of his beloved, witnesses an event slightly out of the ordinary, which launches him, however temporarily, out of the normal bounds of time. To add to this momentary launch out of the social scene, the narrator intrudes to compound the delay with a short diversion. The text then enters Willoughby's consciousness to reveal his desire to again hear Anzoletta speak:

> and again call forth those sounds, to which, the second time she spoke, he listened with increased astonishment and more painful delight; for, not only the similarity of her voice, to that of Celestina, was more evident, but he saw a resemblance to her in the air and manner of Anzoletta, that assisted the delusion. (489)

Smith echoes herself in "again call forth those sounds" (489) as she seems to repeat lines from "The return of the nightingale:" "'Tis the soft voice of young and timid Love / That calls these melting sounds of sweetness forth" (7-8). And Willoughby's desire is the same as the speaker's in that sonnet: he wishes to hear an impossible sound, the voice of his beloved coming out of this other woman's throat. The text indicates that as he listens the resemblance between the two grows stronger. Further acquaintance should show the differences between the two women's voices, not increase those connections. In this scene, then, Smith repeats a similar pattern evoked by her sonnets in which intense emotion prompts us to momentarily exit linear time.

When Willoughby meets Anzoletta and hears her voice, the same voice of his beloved, he momentarily exits the realm of empirical reality. The text's description of Anzoletta's features as "more regular, and were not turned like Celestina, so that the resemblance consisted in that sort

of air of family, which we sometimes observe among relations – a kind of flying likeness, which we now detect, and now lose" (489) mimics Willoughby's momentary experience of disorientation. Unlike Willoughby, who eventually recovers himself to behave politely, Smith rejects a logical end by refusing to account for the effect of hearing Celestina's voice through Anzoletta's mouth. The text works to establish the differences of the cousins in their features but never bothers to explain away the reasons why they have the same voice. Unlike Anzoletta's features, which are "not turned like Celestina" (489), their voices remain exact replicas. Readers familiar with Gothic texts, a genre Smith already explored in *Emmeline*, feel the familiarity of doubling of characters, which the text establishes based not only on their similar features but on their shared voice. The text establishes that physically, Anzoletta is the unfinished version of Celestina, but does not dispute the similarities between their voices. In fact, their voices are so similar that Willoughby who was raised with Celestina, finds no difference between the voice of his beloved and the voice of her cousin.

It is only when Willoughby reunites with the other owner of the shared voice, Celestina, that the text provides a potential explanation for this fantastic family trait. When Willoughby visits Celestina at the close of the novel, he again encounters his rival for Celestina's affections, the high-strung listener Montague Thorold. As I have already established, Celestina's feelings for Thorold are complex and now, at the close of the book, his potential as a real romantic rival for her affections becomes a problem that must be solved. However, as the text indicates, Thorold has attached himself so irrevocably to Celestina that he has rejected every other romantic opportunity and has followed Celestina on all of her travels since the day of their meeting. Once Willoughby reunites with Celestina, he maintains his insistence on a close relationship with her, and listens at the door to her reunion with Willoughby:

> A silent and heavy despondence took possession of him. He neither complained of, nor reproached any one, but persisted in saying, that he would see Celestina, take a last leave of her, and then try to reconcile himself to his fate … 'The sound of her voice is to me so soothing, that if she does not refuse it, I must hear it once more speak to me in accents of kindness.' (537)

Thorold's devotion to Celestina traps him in an untenable situation; Celestina has told him that she loves only Willoughby, in Scotland he himself heard her lovesick sighs naming Willoughby as her beloved, and now Willoughby has returned. Thorold's last request highlights the aspect of Celestina he values the most: "The sound of her voice is to me so soothing, that if she does not refuse it, I must hear it once more" (537). With an uncanny knowledge of the true sense of his rival's affections, Willoughby provides the solution:

> 'Would to Heaven,' said he, as he spoke of him to Celestina, 'would to Heaven that he could see Anzoletta, and transfer to her that affection, which, while it is fixed on you, can serve only to render him miserable.' Celestina joined most cordially in this wish. 'He deserves to be happy, I believe,' said she; 'and the desire you express to see him so, is worthy of the heart of my Willoughby' (537).

The issue of Thorold is solved quickly from that point forward. A meeting is arranged between the two and, "Montague Thorold, struck with the resemblance between them, and particularly with the voice of Anzoletta, was soon as passionately attached to her, as a man could be, who had once loved Celestina herself" (541). While this feat of vocal serendipity could be laid at the feet of Smith's ingenuity based on the pressure of a publication deadline, I have been arguing that the doubling of Celestina's voice in the throat of her cousin does in fact function as part of a larger pattern of echoing throughout the text. The similarity between their voices does indeed

solve the romantic troubles of Montague Thorold quite neatly but it also cements the doubling of Anzoletta and Celestina as ciphers for their mothers. Anzoletta marries Thorold, an Englishman of solid standing, thus solving the problem of who would consent to marry her given her precarious social position as the daughter of a servant and a Count. Celestina marries Willoughby, echoing her mother's own actions when she married her own Englishman. These relationships, however, have been removed from the Gothic realm of France under the *ancien régime*, and present a new hope for Anglo-French relations after the French Revolution.

Aside from the political advantages for the marriages in *Celestina*, Smith extends the echoing of voice to resolve one of the novel's most pressing narrative issues: Montague Thorold and his troublesome listening. Thus, echoes become not only a viable empathetic tool, in terms of helping people to see their connections to each other, but also a narrative tool which can help to resolve some of the loose threads of this novel. As delineated in my chapter on listeners, Thorold's presence as a necessary yet unwanted listener presents a deliberately productive tangle for not only Celestina, but for the text of *Celestina* as well. Thorold doubles as a cipher for the audience of *Celestina*, and for Smith's other works, and Smith uses his character to investigate the ways in which her audience can be implicated and included in the narrative as another listener to the text. Smith establishes a network of figures which includes the listener, the speaker, and the audience; the echo becomes, for Smith, the object of movement inside this network. When Thorold has attached himself to Celestina, he becomes an irritant not only in the romantic plot of the novel but also in the novel's description of Celestina as a burgeoning poetess. Thorold believes he has unrestricted access to Celestina's body and, therefore, to her poetry. He listens at the door, interrupts her private moments, and demands her poems to hold for himself. When Willoughby suggests that Thorold meet Anzoletta, Willoughby implicitly

acknowledges not only to the power of Celestina's voice but the uncanny strangeness of the echo between herself and her cousin; he wishes that Thorold "could see Anzoletta, and transfer to her those affections" (537). Where Willoughby makes this association implicitly, the narrator makes it explicitly with the description of the meeting between Anzoletta and Thorold:

> Montague Thorold, struck with the resemblance between them, and particularly with the voice of Anzoletta, was soon as passionately attached to her, as a man could be, who had once loved Celestina herself (541).

The text highlights "the resemblance between them, and particularly with the voice of Anzoletta" (541) to again remind the audience of their strange doubled voice. This shared quality forms the basis of Thorold's attraction, and, as Willoughby hopes will happen, Thorold transfers his affections from Celestina to Anzoletta seamlessly.

By removing Thorold as a troublesome audience member who feels a sense of possession over Celestina's physical and poetic body, the narrative resolves Thorold as an irritant to the marriage plot. However, the sense of irony in "as a man could be, who had once loved Celestina herself" (541) indicates, this solution comes only because of their replicated voice. Perhaps the narrator means to reveal that Thorold's affections for Celestina, and thus Anzoletta, are based more in a fantasy of women or, perhaps, the narrator's sense of the absurd in this marriage only highlights this echoing voice as a problematic further. In this reading, the sense of irony with which the narrator describes the transfer of affections draws attention to the fact that the rather fantastic circumstance of this shared voice is never explained at all. That the text maintains this Gothic double even out of the realm of the romance in southern France indicates that the shared voice remains a mystery for which the text denies resolution.

So, as other plots in *Celestina* are neatly resolved, identities revealed, and properties placed back in the hands of their rightful owners, the mystery of the shared voice persists without explanation. The control over their spouses which Celestina and Anzoletta both enjoy, through their voice which stuns Willoughby into a subordinate position and soothes Thorold's vacillating emotions, continues even after the text closes. Perhaps throughout their marriages, the power of their shared voice will endure and provide peace for these two women. This control over their marriages mimics the same kind of narrative control that the echo holds over this section of *Celestina*. When the text shifts into Willoughby's Gothic travel narrative, the focus of the plot moves away from a courtship narrative into a kind of Gothic allegory for the despotism of the *ancien régime*. The section begins, as I have established, with Willoughby hearing echoes of the struggles for freedom in Paris, as well as smaller towns in France. These echoes reverberate throughout this section of the novel, emerging in both the Count's personal narrative, and in the doubling of the voices of Anzoletta and Celestina. Here, Smith expands upon the potentialities of the national echo from the cities of France by disconnecting a character's voice from their physical body. Celestina and Anzoletta share a singular voice; thus, each of their acts of speech either together or apart function as an echo and replication of the other. To maintain the power of these reverberations, Smith rejects a logical resolution of their mystery, and closes the novel without any further explanation. In this section of the novel, Smith marshals the echo not only to inject the close of *Celestina* with decided political stakes, but also to establish a form of narrative which allows echoes to persist into the future, both inside and outside of the novel. Echoes, for Smith, are the energy which moves in between her narrative and poetic networks, which create a space for these reverberations to endure inside the network and outside of it.

3. Echoing Witnesses: "Written on the sea shore" and *The Emigrants*

As the echoes which Willoughby hears during his travels in France and the echoing stories of the Count de Bellegarde, as well as a laundry list of other characters, replicate across bodies in *Celestina*, these echoes, too, have a clear political import. Smith's argument in *Celestina* is clear: the *ancien régime* has systematically broken the bodies of its people so that the only hope for the next generation comes in a sort of domestic unity with England. Smith, however, rejects an equalizing union by again insisting upon the strangeness of Celestina and Anzoletta's shared voice, and by reminding the reader again that Thorold loved Celestina first. The replicated voice, however powerful in the domestic sphere, cannot erase the facts of history. In this next section, I want to examine two of Smith's works which deliberately embed the echo with political agency. Smith's sonnet "Written on the sea shore. – October, 1784" and the second book of *The Emigrants* (1793) imagine the echo as a medium of recording, of a model of witnessing. Echoes become a poetic form which captures a power that has political and social effects. Smith's sonnet "Written on the sea shore. – October, 1784" uses aural language to reinforce the metaphors of the poem and embeds and records key images in memory. For Smith, these images must be visual as well as auditory and, in this poem, she leans heavily on the sounds which surround the speaker, which the speaker then inscribes into the visual language of the poem. In "Written on the sea shore" Smith establishes that echoes, and their fragments, become indicative of the poetic mien. Smith extends this construction outward to imagine what the echoing poem can do in terms of the historical record. These poetic echoes must be fully embraced and acknowledged for change to take place. In order to address this idea, I close this section with the second book of Smith's blank verse poem, *The Emigrants*, which, although composed nine years after "Written on the sea shore" participates in the same project. These poems invest themselves in a version of

historical witnessing which imagines echoes of all sorts (voice, image, allusion) as necessary in order to address the political snarls of the age. In this poem, Smith imagines a version of witnessing which authorizes the echoes, both aural and metaphorical, as historically and politically important. Smith underlines the necessity of embracing multiple echoing voices in order to move into a future space of peace.

As a standalone poem, "Written on the sea shore" contains many of Smith's emblematic images: the solitary figure contemplating the world around her, the crashing sea waves, the closing image of unstoppable death, and because of these, was chosen as an inspirational poem for one of the images in *Elegiac Sonnets*. The image, copied here, draws heavily on Smith's authorial self-fashioning, as well as key images from at least two of her novels, and as such, the poem has become almost a by-word for Smith's work overall. The image of the doomed mariner that occupies the final sestet of the poem has placed this poem in conversation with Samuel Taylor Coleridge's later *Rime of the Ancient Mariner* (1798), along with other works of the period which feature this type of shipwrecked imagery. Perhaps because of the ways in which this poem fits so exactly in Smith's self-fashioning, especially considering the image's proliferation throughout Smith criticism, readings of this poem risk glossing over what, I argue, becomes a kind of *ars poetica* for Smith when it comes to her evolving conceptions of the poetic echo.

Written on the sea shore. – October, 1784

On some rude fragment of the rocky shore,
Where on the fractured cliff the billows break,
Musing, my solitary seat I take,
And listen to the deep and solemn roar.

O’er the dark waves the winds tempestuous howl;
The screaming sea-bird quits the troubled sea:
But the wild gloomy scene has charms for me,
And suits the mournful temper of my soul.
Already shipwreck’d by the storms of Fate,
Like the poor mariner, methinks, I stand,
Cast on a rock; who sees the distant land
From when no succor comes – or comes too late.
Faint and more faint are heard his feeble cries,
‘Till in the rising tide the exhausted sufferer dies. (20)

This poem contains Smith’s typical hybridization of form, rhyming *abab cddc effe gg,* which she transposes in this case into the visual structure of the poem: what on sight appears as the poem’s sestet is actually a quatrain placed with the final heroic couplet. To extend the tension between the poem’s visual and structural components, I now consider the image which accompanies this poem in *Elegiac Sonnets*. The image for this poem ignores the sestet’s metaphorical emphasis on the mariner, in whom the speaker finds a mirror for her own feelings of abandonment and eventual decay and focuses on the speaker herself. The image, rather than capturing the scene described by the poem, limits our scope to the description of the speaker in the first quatrain of this poem. Rather than serving the purpose of illustrating the descriptions presented by the poem, as other illustrations from *Elegiac Sonnets* do, then, this image places emphasis on the visual arrangement of the speaker as an emblem for Smith.

This image serves as a visual echo which replicates the frontispiece image of Smith as well as her connections to the emblematic speaker in the sonnet collection overall. To consider the image as an emblem, then, is to acknowledge that the speaker's function in the poem moves beyond the role of describing the scene around her. This emblematic speaker stands in for an idea, for a concept that Smith wants to emphasize overall. The poem itself provides a key to understanding what concept Smith embodies in this depiction of her speaker. The third and fourth lines of the poem provide the exact description of the speaker: "Musing, my solitary seat I take, / And listen to the deep and solemn roar" (3-4). "Musing" here could refer to the speaker's state of mind as she contemplates the scene around her. However, I argue that this moment puns on the word "Musing." Not only does the speaker muse on the sea shore, she also acts as a Muse figure: providing the inspiration and vehicle through which, as readers look upon the image, they can interpret the poem. And, considering how many times this image can be substituted for a variety of Smith's other poems, characters in novels, and depictions of herself in her letters, it seems this image has proven protean for all types of interpretations across Smith's poetry and prose.

The image's emphasis on the speaker's placement among the rocks, too, highlights this poem's emphasis on poetry itself. The speaker's seat among the "rude fragment" and "fractured

cliff" upon which the sea breaks, captured in the image as the darkness which surrounds the glowing figure of the Muse, emphasizes the fractured sonnet forms which Smith has changed in order to hybridize her sonnet. Although this poem is complete, it contains broken, fragmented pieces of other forms which nonetheless structure this completed poem. In terms of the poem's content, the ideas presented here find no resolution, either metaphorical or descriptive. The sonnet imagines the mariner's death but as a kind of inevitable end which cannot be prevented by the "distant land" (11). The closing rhyme of "cries / dies" (13-14) resolves the sonnet form in a heroic couplet, knitting together the fragmented Italian and English forms. Sonnets presume a kind of completion because they are contained forms, with rules about their rhyme scheme and structure.[61] The close of this poem promises the inevitability of the mariner's death but does not address the metaphorical impact of that death. Thus, the poem offers no resolution to the ideas presented in it. The poem ends with the closing heroic couplet, but the ideas are by no means resolved.

In this reading, the "rude fragments" and "fractured cliffs" upon which the speaker spends the poem "Musing" (1, 2, 3), become the components of the poem itself. The speaker acts as an emblematic image not only of Smith's typical speakers but also of the Muse herself, and in so doing, reflects on the very nature of poetry and of her own role as an emblematic figure. If Smith intends for this image of the speaker to function as an emblem for the Muse, then this interpretation argues that the poem emphasizes the aural mode as a viable tool for recording memory. In this poem, echoes form the primary aural indicator and function on two levels: on the formal and the metaphorical. The "deep and solemn roar" (4) to which the speaker first listens as she "Musing, my solitary seat I take" (3) becomes echoed visually in the next line:

[61] See Barbara Herrnstein Smith's chapter on formal closure from *Poetic Closure* for a more detailed reading of English sonnet structure and the closing heroic couplet.

"O'er the dark waves" as the "winds tempestuous howl" (5) picks up and brings the "deep and solemn roar" of the waves to the speaker's ear. The speaker then describes the sounds of the sea-bird as "screaming" (6) which, together with the "roar" of the waves and the "howl" of the winds characterize this scene as fueled by Nature's powerful lungs. Perhaps unable to roar, scream, or howl herself, the speaker depicts this "wild gloomy scene" (7) as a noisy echo chamber where the sounds of the sea, the wind, and the bird all reverberate off of each other. This echo chamber mimics the poem's form after Smith moves into the hybridized Italian quatrain structure, where the second rhyming pair remain together, so that the initial rhyme of "sea" in line six becomes immediately echoed by "me" in line seven. Smith continues this pattern with lines ten and eleven, "stand / land," before closing with another echoing heroic couplet, "cries / dies" (13-14). Thus, despite the lack of listed sounds in the poem itself after the second quatrain, the poem continues to echo its own sounds through Smith's formal hybridization.

Smith's shift between the second and third quatrains, or between the second quatrain and the sestet depending on interpretation signals, too, the poem's entry into the realm of the metaphorical. Initiated by the speaker's use of pathetic fallacy in lines seven and eight, "But the wild gloomy scene has charms for me / And suits the mournful temper of my soul" (7-8), the poem continues to describe a metaphorical scene. In order to establish her own feelings of helplessness, the speaker imagines a similar character, "the poor mariner" (10) "who sees the distant land / From whence no succor comes --- or comes too late" (11). The mariner's inevitable death, as certain as the "billows break" "on the fractured cliff" (2), operates in the poem not simply as an end tragic unto itself but as a tragedy because of its implications for the speaker. However, the speaker's entry into the metaphorical space of the sestet means that she has distanced herself even further from the mariner she describes. The final couplet echoes the

sounds of the mariner's "feeble cries" but rather than reaching the distant ear of the speaker who "listen[s] to the dark and solemn roar" of the sea in the first quatrain, Smith describes that his cries "Faint and more faint are heard" (13). The use of "are heard" here rather than "I hear" distances the speaker further from the mariner but, too, implies the presence of another listening ear to which these echoes may reach: the reader.

While this point may seem impossible to prove on the basis of "Written on a sea shore," I argue that, by looking at Smith's later second book of *The Emigrants*, the political and social implications of an ear open to hearing those "feeble cries" (13) can be understood. Smith composed the second book of her blank verse poem *The Emigrants* during a year of war, 1793, and almost a decade after she composed "Written on a sea shore. – October 1784." The first book of *The Emigrants*, as Smith describes in her dedication to William Cowper, echoes with multiple allusions:

> yet, having read *The Task* almost incessantly from its first publication to the present time, I felt that kind of enchantment described by Milton, when he says,
>
> > The Angel ended, and in Adam's ear
> > So charming left his voice, that he awhile
> > Thought him still speaking. [*Paradise Lost*, VIII. 1-3]
>
> And from the force of this impression, I was gradually led to attempt, in Blank Verse, a delineation of those interesting objects which … even pressed upon a heart, that has learned, perhaps from its own sufferings, to feel with acute, though unavailing compassion, the calamity of others. (12-20, 21-23).

In this dedication, Smith describes the way in which Cowper's work impacted her by alluding to a moment from Milton's *Paradise Lost*. Not only, Smith argues here, does *The Task* echo

Milton's greatest work, it also echoes in the way Milton describes the voice of the Angel does for Adam: "that he awhile / Thought him still speaking" (VIII. 2-3). Smith's "almost reflexive allusiveness" in *The Emigrants*, argues Susan Wolfson, allows her to subtly critique the very masculine tradition she embeds in this poem: "she complicates the notion of gendered literary traditions not only by drawing men's texts into the figure of a woman reading but also by mobilizing her 'historical sense' (as T.S. Eliot would propose in the wake of another war) to alter the 'relations, proportions, values' of what she reads" (546).[62] Smith delineates both a literary genealogy here which begins with Milton, moves to Cowper, and then ends conveniently on herself, and a series of powerful echoes which she adds to with her own poem. Smith, however, does not limit her own contribution to this echoing field in terms of literature, rather she takes a decidedly political stance in this dedication, outlining that her intent comes from her own experience with the echoing voices of those who have experienced "calamity" (23). As Wolfson argues, "gives the genre a pan-national, nearly mythic appeal – and writes herself into it. *The Emigrants* does not open with its eponyms but with Smith herself as fellow-victim" (532). Smith describes her own ear here as Adam's ear in *Paradise Lost*; the Angel's voice that Smith hears "still speaking" (3) combines Milton and Cowper but also "the calamity of others" (23). *The Emigrants* responds to this echoing discourse which Smith outlines in her Dedication to Cowper.

Written in springtime, a mere four months after the first book of *The Emigrants*, the second book opens with a deliberate indication of the speaker's place and time:

Long wintry months are past; the Moon that now

[62] Wolfson delineates the complex intertextualities of *The Emigrants*; especially key here is Wolfson's interpretation of Smith's Miltonic allusions: "What is most impressive in this steadily intensifying rant is Smith's interpretation of Milton's simile for her own political ends, evoking both the Satanic moment and, more generally, Milton's English Protestant-republican antipathy to Continental Catholic-monarchal decadence" (530).

Lights her pale crescent even at noon, has made
Four times her revolution; since with step,
Mournful and slow, along the wave-worn cliff,
Pensive I took my solitary way,
Lost in despondence, while contemplating
Not my own wayward destiny alone,
(Hard as it is, and difficult to bear!)
But in beholding the unhappy lot
Of the lorn Exiles …….. (1-10).

The speaker places herself in seasonal time with her description of the Moon's "revolution" (3) but also in literary time. Readers of this blank verse poem cannot help but be reminded of the beginning of William Wordsworth's "Lines Written a Few Miles Above Tintern Abbey:" "Five years have passed, five summers the length of five long winters" (1) when they encounter Smith's "Long wintry months are past; the Moon that now / Lights her pale crescent even at noon, has made / Four times her revolution" (1-3). The speaker describes what changes have occurred since her original experience with the emigrants. In short, not much has changed in both her material experience and in the experience of the emigrants, though the political landscape has indeed shifted. For Wolfson, the unchanging persistence of history becomes Smith's preoccupation: "She summons these precedents not simply to repeat them with a purchase on their authority but also to trope history itself as horrific repetition" (512). The dating of the poem, April 1793, marks both the arrival of spring, ironically played against the war which recently was declared between England and France. Though Nature has changed, Smith's speaker argues in this second book, human nature has not. She neither anticipates nor expects a

rebirth of her own circumstances; rather, Smith's speaker imagines the potential for a new relationship between the readers of her poem and the emigrants who she describes.

As the poem progresses, the speaker again takes the part of the voiceless emigrants, using her own voice to elevate and, in some cases, structure their stories, which, as she describes, she has heard herself many times: "Oft have I heard the melancholy tale, / Which, all their native gaiety forgot, / These Exiles tell" (239-241). The speaker repeats these tales, told already to her, not by simple narration, but by reimagining these scenes for her own poetic audience. As the speaker describes the "pictures they have drawn" (216) she continues to emphasize the place of sound in these recollections, often peppering her own speech with indicators of immediacy. When she describes the noise of a trumpet of war, for example, the speaker says:

> …….. ……*There* the trumpet's voice
> Drowns the soft warbling of the woodland choir
> And violets, lurking in their turfy beds
> Beneath the flow'ring thorn, are stained with blood. (68-71)

In terms of repeating to us the tale of one of the exiles, the trumpet's sound clearly indicates a sound of war, but the speaker turns it poetic and metaphorical as well with her use of the indexical, "*There*," which indicates an immediacy which only works on a poetic level. At this moment, the reader functions as a listener standing beside the speaker as she tells her tale. The italicized *There* indicates that both the speaker and the reader hear the trumpet. Smith's speaker again adopts this type of sound-based immediacy during her description of the mother who escapes from a fight with her child. Chased by soldiers, the woman hides and believes that she has found safety when: "Hark! again / The driving tempest bears the sound of Death, / And with deep sullen thunder, the dread sound / Of cannon" (272-275). These moments, framed by the use

of an exclamation point, occur in the middle of the poetic line and indicate a break, an eruption of a sound which places the reader in the immediate time of the narrative. The speaker herself, however, reveals that she records the stories of the emigrants as she listens, making these sounds echoes both in the speaker's ear and repeated in the poem itself. The echoing trumpet and the sound of the cannon, thus, live again in the poem, reframed as an immediate noise available to all: in the memory of the emigrant, in the speaker's retelling, and in a reader's experience of the poem.

The framing of these eruptions of sound not only serves to engage the reader's ear in the immediate moment, but also emphasizes the speaker's role in this poem. As she has claimed, she records what she hears repeated to her, an event which binds both books of *The Emigrants* together as the speaker continues to relate these tales over a period of months. The speaker delineates her particular goal in the middle of the poem:

> Shuddering, I view the pictures they have drawn
>
> …….
>
> …… and the wind that howl'd
>
> Along its troubled surface, brought the groans
>
> Of plunder'd peasants, and the frantic shrieks
>
> Of mothers for the children ……
>
> ……
>
> Oft have I heard the melancholy tale,
>
> Which, all their native gaiety forgot,
>
> These Exiles tell – (216, 227-230, 239-241).

The speaker, in uniting the dual arts of poetry and painting, also unites the visual and the aural in her record of the tales of the emigrants. She echoes their tales of desolation in visual detail, like "The flames of burning villages" (226) which can be seen across the ocean, and also describes how the cries of the suffering are carried by "the wind, that howl'd … brought the groans" (227-228) across the ocean into England. The speaker compounds the natural power of the wind with the terrifying sounds of war; unlike Nature which turns to spring while war wages in France, this image describes nature and the emigrants joined in the same task: to carry their stories across the waters to listening ears.

United with the natural power of the wind is the speaker's own voice, and intent, in this poem. At the close of the poem, the speaker sends a prayer up to listening heaven, requesting:

> ……...Teach the hard hearts
> Of rulers, that the poorest hind, who dies
> For their unrighteous quarrels, in thy sight
> Is equal to the imperious Lord… (426-429)

Although the speaker turns this call towards heaven, the implications for her own listeners still appear clearly. Like she confesses in the Dedication to this poem, Smith "has learned, perhaps from its own sufferings, to feel with acute, though unavailing compassion, the calamity of others" (22-23); these effects, and their political import, focus the close of the Dedication as much as the end of the blank verse poem which follows. When Smith alludes to Charles James Fox's speech to Parliament which quotes *The Task*, she makes for her own poem a similar political claim: should her own audience accurately experience, through her work, the suffering of others, surely political action ending the war with France, will follow.

Thus, from the very beginning of *The Emigrants*, the political impact of the echo is at the forefront of this poem. The speaker, as she records the voices of the emigrants in her verse, contributes to this chain of echoes which unites both the political and the literary. Smith's choice of blank verse here reflects her professed desire in the Dedication: unlike a sonnet form which constricts and requires deliberate, potentially unnatural rhymes, blank verse more closely mimics the rhythms of natural conversation. Despite the speaker's ironic description of spring which provides the setting of this poem, the speaker and Nature become united in their shared task of sending the voices of the suffering across the water to England. When the speaker inserts interjections, which mimic an eruption of sound, she implies the immediacy of the suffering exiles and allows their echoes to be heard in future times when this poem is read. Readers perform this prescribed action each time they read this poem, and in so doing, serve as members of the echoes imagined by the poem. As Jonathan Culler argues of lyrics, "it seems important that the reader be not just a listener or an audience but also a performer of the lines – that he or she come to occupy, at least temporarily, the position of speaker and audibly or inaudibly voice the language of the poem" (37), Smith's speaker records not only the visual but the aural details in order to metaphorically mimic the sound of the wind as it brings the cries across water. Her speaker embraces the visual and the aural in order to record a vision of the present so that the future can be changed. Readers who are always implicated in Smith's verse hear again these echoes over the water as they read the poem, both aloud and silently to themselves. Audiences may change over time, but Smith's call here for justice to the oppressed, still echoes throughout this work.

I have argued for the presence of the echo as a viable literary and political presence in *The Emigrants*; this interpretation of echoes across the ocean in order to reach an audience can

shed new light on the final two lines of Smith's poem "Written on the sea shore." The speaker's metaphorical vision of the shipwrecked mariner occupies the sestet of the poem, reflecting on the speaker's feelings about her own future. However, as the sestet progresses, the speaker removes mentions of herself and, indeed, by the closing heroic couplet, the ear that hears the cries of the mariner is an impersonal ear: "Faint and more faint are heard his feeble cries, / 'Till in the rising tide the exhausted sufferer dies" (13-14). The speaker's task here, like the task of the speaker in *The Emigrants*, is to record the voices of those sufferings, to embed their echoes into the poetry itself so that they can be heard by other, unimagined by Smith, ears in the future. By embracing the echo as a poetic and political power, Smith seeks to revise conceptions of the sound as ever-weakening or impotent. Thus, even though the echoes may die off, like the mariner, the effects remain, as they construct the poem itself, and reverberate through future readings.

Smith extends the "echo chamber" of her sonnets in both literary space and effect; she expands the boundaries of replicated voices in terms of allusion and literary connection, to bodily boundaries in her novels, and towards sympathetic identification for political ends in her longer effusions. Although generic differences often mean differently in terms of the type of investigation of these echoing voices, Smith embraces the echo for its multiplicity and its ability to extend outside of the sonnet or poem and into a future moment. However, each of these echoes emerges from one clear source: Smith herself. In many ways, and across her novels and poems, Smith often seems to echo herself. Smith maintains the centrality of her emblematic authorial persona in each of the poems and novels I have surveyed; she can allude to other texts and writers because she has read them, Celestina is a burgeoning poetess who actively composes sonnets which Smith later duplicates in *Elegiac Sonnets*, and both speakers in "Written on a sea

shore" and *The Emigrants* can be read biographically as Smith, or are legible in terms of Smith's emblematic figure.

However, as tempting as it can be to read these echoes simply as duplicates for Charlotte Smith herself, this type of reading falls flat because Smith's own authorial identity is bound up, as I have argued, in many versions of identity. Thus, even the echo's original point is multiple, replicated over many editions of sonnets, and constantly in flux as Smith negotiates biographical interpretations with the many other ways her authorial persona can be read. Smith's knew the pitfalls and gradations of the self she presents to her readers; evidence from her private letters demonstrates a personality quite different than the "melancholic disposition" figured in *Elegiac Sonnets*. She, too, understood the dangers of solipsistic navel-gazing and often marks the inadequacy of her characters by their obsessions with themselves. Rather than creating simple replications of herself, or her authorial persona, Smith avoids this solipsistic worldview by demonstrating, rather, the similarities between a variety of figures, which, includes the reader of her works. Smith writes figures and characters who appear similar to herself, but upon closer examination, instead share basic human qualities like empathy or the desire to improve their present society. While these desires could be read as confessional, and Smith indeed encourages this type of reading, they are also legible inside a larger network of connection between figures across class, gender, and political boundaries. Like the singular voice which Celestina and Anzoletta share, the echoes which resonate between Smith's figures are available to all of her characters. Readers, too, are asked to identify with these aspects, and to see themselves in Smith's novels and verse. This complex vision of solipsism thus indeed allows Smith to extend outward into a variety of figures, but also asks readers and characters in novels to do the same. Smith thus blurs the boundaries between self and other, between lyric and novel, and between

past and present to explore the potentialities of literature to connect across political, generic, and temporal boundaries.

AFTERWORD

Charlotte Smith so often imagines in her writing the potentialities of new relationships in a future moment. I similarly wish to consider how I might someday encounter Smith once more, and what such an encounter might entail. As I have demonstrated, throughout her own conception of her literary and lyric project, Smith often encourages repeated encounters with herself, her emblematic figures, even her novels; this demand anticipates future readers who will come upon her texts and interpret them to their own ends. Smith demonstrates this act by literally repeating encounters on the page – encounters between characters – or by invoking her emblematic figure throughout her poetry collections. This repeated encounter expands the boundaries of her work and creates future ties which bind each of her readers together.

In Smith's apostrophe-sonnets, for example, the future encounter with the apostrophized object drives the poem's ability to be performed and repeated, and also promises that her network of subjectivities can again be experienced through that future repetition. Smith imagines that in these future moments the network of connection between figures can again be built, that the subjective voice can be extended towards each figure, and that each active agent can again participate in the poem. Smith also repeats these series of encounters in her novels as she divides characters only to reunite them in changed circumstances. Smith echoes the multiple voices embedded in each sonnet when she places these sonnets in her novels, and again gives them a new speaker. This relationship between the original speaker in the novel and the implied, emblematic speaker in the sonnets is perennially available to readers who read each of Smith's

works. Across her novels and sonnets, which also reject a resolution to the intense emotions captured within them, Smith embraces the potential for future encounters as she refuses to resolve or enclose her works with a neat ending point.

This dissertation is organized around a key conceptual question: what can be learned by the encounter between a study of Smith's work and the theories of the modern lyric first outlined in Chapter One? The answer lies in her fundamental understanding of the lyric as a flexible generic category, which in the Romantic period has not yet been solidified to the degree that it has a stable set of generic boundaries. Placing Smith as a foundational figure in the lyric in the period when lyric was on the way to becoming Mill's "feeling confessing itself to itself," allows for a more complex reading of the Romantic lyric as a boundary-breaker rather than a stable form that allows for future permeations and comparisons. The terms of Smith's lyric are these: the lyric deliberately incorporates traditional forms; it contains a multitude of voices; and it rejects resolution. None of these terms sound like familiar definitions of the lyric, which is often assumed to be original and voiced by a singular subject often associated with the author. Lyrics also almost always appear as a complete, bounded poetic objects. These standards of lyric are often read as emblematic of Romantic lyrics, but Smith's example shows that this was not the standard. If the modern lyric today seems overly complicated and without a singular definition, it was the same during Smith's time. Rather than assigning to the Romantic lyric a kind of stable set of boundaries, Smith's work demonstrates the flexibility of the Romantic lyric and its changeable nature. Out of this flexibility Smith indicates potential for future encounters between the lyric and its readers that will continue to craft its shape.

Smith's example changes the shape of the lyric as well. Her poems offer a unique emphasis on the types of formal concerns that often take a backseat in discussions of the modern

lyric. Perhaps because the lyric is changeable, malleable, and indistinct, modern lyric theorists often select a handful of lyrical aspects which appear across poems of different genres and unite them under lyric's umbrella. However, by prioritizing the definition and discovery of these aspects as lyrical, the different shades and gradations of those multiple forms are often sublimated to the lyric's elevation. As I have demonstrated in the present study, Smith's lyrics formally map onto a hybrid sonnet structure that incorporates elements from Petrarchan and Shakespearean traditions, as well as other forms like the apostrophe and the ode. Smith's example demonstrates the importance of each of these other forms as they are hybridized, before they become lyrical aspects. For example, Smith's choice to hybridize both Petrarchan and Shakespearean sonnets reflects the traditional sonnet cycle, used by both Petrarch and Shakespeare, in which each sonnet exists on its own and as part of a larger collection. The elevation of the lyric by critics like J.S. Mill and, to an extent the New Critical preoccupation with reading each poem as a contained microcosm, elides the connections between each sonnet in these cycles and prefers to remove them from this original context in order to interpret them as a singular poetic object. Smith's lyrics function simultaneously as individual poems, sonnets in particular cycles like the Arun river sonnets and her sonnets on Werther, and as part of the flexible, expansive sonnet collection of *Elegiac Sonnets*. These interconnected relationships place emphasis back on the lyric's integration with other generic structures, rather than its complete removal out of them.

Smith's influence brings further attention towards these formal concerns because she often highlights different forms either directly or obliquely in her sonnets. Smith's lyrics contain apostrophes, as I have shown, but also aspects of the ode, the elegy, the eighteenth-century heroic couplet form, as well as Shakespearean drama. These formal elements of Smith's lyrics,

which are often swallowed up into the larger category of Romantic lyric, often preoccupy the poetry itself and become the object of the sonnet as well as an aspect of it. Therefore, despite the fact that Smith herself never writes a theory of poetry in the same way that other Romantic writers did, Smith often makes poetry the object of her sonnets, and embeds each of her works with this intellectual investigation. Because Smith also includes sonnets in her novels, and repeats instances of characters reading, listening, composing, or reacting to poetry, she integrates her lyrics into the novel form in a way which provides further gradations to the history of the novel. Though modern reading and critical practices often involve either removing the sonnet from the novel entirely to interpret it or read over the sonnet only as further contextualization for a narrative moment, Smith consistently seeks to draw readerly attention to the ways in which sonnets interact with her novel form. For Smith, the lyric exists in continuous conversation with the novel. When Smith removes her sonnets from their original scenes in her novels and then includes them in *Elegiac Sonnets*, she deliberately changes their context. This conversation between the novels and the sonnet collection expands the parameters of the lyric utterance so that instead of having a single speaker, each sonnet potentially contains multiple speakers, and different voices, all depending on the context of the reader's encounter.

In both *Emmeline* and *Celestina*, Smith outlines situations of reading, composing, and listening to different voices, which reflects the ways in which she imagines her readers may encounter her sonnets in her novels and in her poetic collections. Smith's deliberate emphasis on these various scenes of reading demonstrates her argument about the connection between her lyrics and the novel: the lyrics can be removed, but in order to fully understand their context, they must be returned to again in each of their formats. A new reading always grants new information to enrich the experience; a new voice seems to be always added to Smith's echoing

forms. For Smith, then, another potentiality of the lyric's generic flexibility emerges out of an integrated experience in the novel form. Smith removes her sonnets from her novels to place them in her poetry collections, yet they exist simultaneously and cohesively in multiple iterations.

In terms of the Romantic novel, then, Smith's influence reorients conversations around the novel's own becoming as a form. Smith's position clarifies the ways in which Romantic novels, especially written by women, sought a further integration and conversation between genres. If Smith captures the lyric's Romantic potentiality for flexibility, change, and integration, then so too do her novels capture a similar force. For Smith, the lyric and the novel are never opposing forms. Instead, as I have argued, these forms can be deployed to meet similar ends. Smith's experimentation with forms, with non-linear narratives, and with a poetics of encounter in her sonnets maps rather interestingly onto her novels as well. A prolific writer of novels as well as poems, Smith's contributions demonstrate a hidden thread of Romantic writing which still must be explored.

Frankly, I believe that Smith's influence on and position at the center of conversations about Romantic lyric means that an entire new set of standards must be created. As with any integration of the writings of a once-forgotten author, our existing vocabulary and our standards for evaluation must be changed to accommodate this new perspective. Smith imagines encounters, exchanges, and conversations between her forms. Though she clearly differentiates between her novels and her poetry, many of her key ideas are shared between them. Smith not only asks readers to examine her sonnets in conversation with her novels; she encourages readers to value the instability of that conversation to create potential future encounters with different sets of circumstances. The particularities of those encounters warrant future exploration and

elucidation if we are to paint a more accurate picture of what Romantic writers understood to be true about their own lyrics and novels, and to better avoid the pitfalls of reading back into the past what we assume we will find.

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