

Neal, Brooke N. M.A. "Overcoming the Sinful States: Anne Finch's "Psalm the 137<sup>th</sup>: Paraphrased to the 7<sup>th</sup> Verse" as a Poem of Spiritual Transition. (2024)  
Directed by Dr. Jennifer Keith and Dr. Christopher Hodgkins. 35 pp.

Since the poetry of Anne Finch places equal emphasis on religion and the political atmosphere of early seventeenth-century Britain, it is surprising that her religious lyrics have received little attention from twenty and twenty-first century scholars. This essay argues that Anne Finch's devotional poem "Psalm the 137<sup>th</sup>: Paraphrased to the 7<sup>th</sup> Verse" demonstrates the importance of religion in Finch's oeuvre. Due to the significance of the original Psalm 137 in the political and literary spheres of seventeenth-century England, I argue that Finch's paraphrase of this psalm perhaps best demonstrates how her religious poetry illustrates her ability to repurpose the conventions of seventeenth-century religious verses to convey the themes of loss, grief, and spiritual transformation, which figure among other themes that undergird the entirety of her corpus. Because this psalm paraphrase, and other verses like it, are so closely bound to these foundational themes of Finch's oeuvre, they offer us a crucial guide to Finch's poetic strategies and their connection to her core values, demonstrating that it is her religious, rather than her secular, poetry that give us the clearest idea of the values that influence her work as a poet.

Neal, Brooke N. M.A. "Vessels of Desire in Jane Austen's *Persuasion*"(2024)  
Directed by Dr. Jennifer Keith and Dr. Christopher Hodgkins. 28 pp.

With the possible exception of Austen's preceding novel *Mansfield Park*, naval ships feature more prominently in *Persuasion* than any other of Austen's works, and they often appear in relation to the desires of the characters. While literal ships certainly feature in the novel, the characters themselves often embody the functions of naval vessels by acting as containers and transporters. I argue that these vessels, both literal and metaphorical, perform a dual function: first, they fluctuate between active and passive roles regardless of their gender and, second, offer a contrast to the existing circumstances in the narrative. The characters in the novel, such as Anne who is treated as an inert container for her family's desires, share this passive role but then demonstrates an ability to independently spring into action by taking initiative at the Cobb. Admiral Croft and Captain Harville also perform an active role by containing a regard for human connection over material assets, pushing against the current of the acquisitiveness of Anne's family. Ships, both metaphorical and literal, function in the same manner as the vessels of the British Royal Navy during the early nineteenth century: just as naval ships were instrumental in the British victory over French tyranny, so too do the vessels in *Persuasion* help Anne and Wentworth vanquish the characters' prevailing attitude of avarice, therefore transporting the couple to their joyful reconciliation.

OVERCOMING THE SINFUL STATES: ANNE FINCH'S "PSALM THE 137<sup>TH</sup>

PARAPHRASED TO THE 7<sup>TH</sup> VERSE"

AS A POEM OF SPIRITUAL

TRANSFORMATION

AND

VESSELS OF DESIRE IN

JANE AUSTEN'S

*PERSUASION*

by

Brooke M. Neal

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Approved by

---

Dr. Jennifer Keith  
Committee Chair

APPROVAL PAGE

This thesis written by Brooke M. Neal has been approved by the following committee of the Faculty of The Graduate School at The University of North Carolina at Greensboro.

Committee Co-Chair

\_\_\_\_\_  
Dr. Jennifer Keith

Committee Co-Chair

\_\_\_\_\_  
Dr. Christopher Hodkins

Committee Members

\_\_\_\_\_  
Dr. Jennifer Feather

April 10, 2024

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date of Acceptance by Committee

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## CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

This thesis consists of two smaller theses: “Overcoming the Sinful States: Anne Finch’s “Psalm the 137<sup>th</sup>: Paraphrased to the 7<sup>th</sup> Verse” as a Poem of Spiritual Transition” and “Vessels of Desire in Jane Austen’s *Persuasion*.” The first thesis highlights the overarching neglect of the religious aspect of Finch’s poetry, seeking to fill this deficit by a close reading of “Psalm the 137<sup>th</sup>: Paraphrased to the 7<sup>th</sup> Verse. This thesis points out that, while Finch’s religious poetry indeed engages with contemporary politics, it can also be read as a personal exhortation that is aimed at cultivating the speaker’s personal relationship with God rather than centering exclusively upon the sins of her enemies. The second thesis also seeks to build upon preexisting scholarship on how Austen’s knowledge of ships and the British Royal navy influenced her work as a writer. This thesis asserts that, while there are certainly distinct parallels between Austen’s work and the role of the navy in contemporary political events, the actions of the characters within *Persuasion* imply that they embody the roles that vessels played in the British victories over France during the Napoleonic Wars. This thesis ends by propounding that this maritime trope undergirds the theme of valuing familial connections over material assets that Austen develops throughout the entire body of her work.

CHAPTER II: OVERCOMING THE SINFUL STATES: ANNE FINCH'S "PSALM THE  
137TH: PARAPHRASED TO THE 7TH VERSE" AS A POEM OF SPIRITUAL TRANSITION

For a poet whose centers on religion just as much as the political atmosphere of early seventeenth-century Britain, it is surprising that Anne Finch's religious lyrics have received little attention from twenty and twenty-first century scholars. In 2011, Deborah Kennedy rightly observed that the increased emphasis on early modern devotional literature in the twenty-first century has done little to raise Anne Finch's religious works out of obscurity ("The Radiant Throne: Religion and the Poetry of Anne Finch, Countess of Winchelsea"423). Kennedy's remark still rings true over a decade later, as most of Finch's religious poetry, such as "Psalm the 137th: Paraphras'd to the 7th Verse," has received only passing acknowledgments from scholars who widely assert that Finch's religious verses are, at best, conventional, a critical attitude that has engendered an overarching neglect of her religious poetry in recent scholarship.<sup>1</sup> If Charles Hinnant and Barbara McGovern are correct in stating that Finch's works are predicated on "profoundly religious" presuppositions, then the disregard for her religious oeuvre has created a critical blind spot that has invariably led scholars to develop a disproportionate perception of her identity and work as a poet (*The Anne Finch Wellesley Manuscript Poems* xxx). Due to the significance of Psalm 137 in the political and literary spheres of seventeenth-century England, I argue that Finch's paraphrase of this psalm perhaps best demonstrates how her religious poetry

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<sup>1</sup> This paraphrase has received very little acknowledgment from critics who have written extensively on Finch's religious oeuvre. Charles Hinnant, for example, merely lumps it with several other of Finch's religious verses briefly to point out Finch's expressions of marginalization and exile. The remainder of Hinnant's chapter on Finch's religious poetry little comments upon (*The Poetry of Anne Finch* 227). In her *Critical Biography*, Barbara McGovern only mentions this piece as one of the six poems published in *Miscellania Sacra* during the Finches' residence at Eastwell (71).

illustrates her ability to repurpose the conventions of seventeenth-century religious verses to convey the themes of loss, grief, and spiritual transformation, which figure among other themes that undergird the entirety of her corpus. Because this psalm paraphrase, and other verses like it, are so closely bound to these foundational themes of Finch's oeuvre, they offer us a crucial guide to Finch's poetic strategies and their connection to her core values, demonstrating that it is her religious, rather than her secular, poetry that give us the clearest idea of the values that influence her work as a poet.

The preponderance of early criticism regarding Finch's poetry has perceived her religious verses as merely an accessory to, rather than a central element of, her work and identity as a poet. Although Myra Reynolds's seminal introductory essay to Finch's verses in 1903 presented a promising start to acknowledging the role of religion in Finch's corpus, successive criticism testifies to this aforementioned neglect of Finch's religious lyrics, as scholars have only sought to evaluate Finch's religious verses against decidedly non-religious poetic conventions.<sup>2</sup> Critics like Reuben Brower and John M. Murray, for example, have only found Finch's devotional lyrics noteworthy when compared to Romantic nature verses or the metaphysical poetry of Donne and Herbert.<sup>3</sup> Others, namely Edmund Dowden, were even less convinced of

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<sup>2</sup> Myra Reynolds' introduction to *The Poems of Anne Countess of Winchelsea: from the original edition of 1713 and from unpublished manuscripts* (1903) devotes an entire section to Finch's religious corpus exclusively. While this section is small in comparison those addressing Finch's work in other genres, Reynolds nevertheless stresses the importance of religion to Finch's oeuvre, stating that the devotional verse offers an insight into Finch's "philosophy of life" and what she refers to as her "stern morality" and "emphatic recognition of reason as man's supreme guide" (civ, xxii). Reynolds does analyze several poems against those of successors such as Cowper, but largely emphasizes the major themes underpinning the entirety of Finch's religious work: "shortness of life, failure of highest hopes, and prosperity of the wicked" (cv).

<sup>3</sup> Reuben Brower examines several of Finch's works containing religious themes, such as "The Spleen" and "On Affliction" in "Lady Winchelsea and the Poetic Tradition of the 17th century." Brower's analysis, however, centers upon Finch's uses of common seventeenth-century poetic convention as seen through the metaphysical elements of "The Spleen," and her uses of burgeoning eighteenth-century poetic



Finch's abilities as a devotional poet, describing those of her verses' concern with mutability and rejection of temporal matters as sententious clichés that "do not very well lend themselves to quotation" ("A Noble Authoress" 248). Dowden even goes further to lament that if Finch had been born later, she might have "been a writer of religious verse in which her real warmth of feeling might have found lyrical expression, delivered from that didactic and moralizing tendency which was characteristic of her time" (248-49). This statement, which Dowden supplies after a cursory glance at fragments of Finch's devotional verses, encapsulates the condescending treatment with which Finch's poetry was treated by scholarship in the early twentieth century.

Perhaps inspired by Virginia Woolf's appraisal of Finch as a writer whose mind was "harassed and distracted with hates and grievances" toward the "opposing faction" of men, later scholarship has continued to relegate the role of religion in her development as a poet, as well as most of her religious poems themselves, to the periphery ("A Room of One's Own" 49).<sup>4</sup> While Finch's religious corpus has not been ignored completely by contemporary criticism, much of it neglects a close examination of these lyrics in favor of highlighting Finch's political sensibilities or explicating her biographical circumstances. Carol Barash, for instance, amalgamates the

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sensibilities in "A Nocturnal Reverie," only briefly stating how this poem merges the seventeenth-century tradition of meditation with the reflections preponderating poetry of the following century (71). John Murray, while stating that Finch's "Orthodoxy" remained her primary support through adverse circumstances, does not address directly how Finch's Anglicanism informs her devotional verses ("Introduction: Poems by Anne: Countess of Winchelsea" 13). He instead employs "A Nocturnal Reverie" and "The Nightingale" to praise her "genius for the intangible" and does not discuss her rejection of the earthly as an attempt to become closer to God (16,15)

<sup>4</sup> For further reading on criticism that concerns Finch's political and feminist proclivities, see Wes Hamrick's article "Trees in Anne Finch's Jacobite Poems of Retreat" which identifies Jacobite language and imagery within Finch's "The Petition for an Absolute Retreat." Jean Mallinson's "Anne Finch: A Woman and the Tradition" also offers an excellent examination of how Finch's identity as a woman poet influenced her appropriations of poetic norms that before had been employed by male authors exclusively. Jennifer Keith later addresses Finch's feminism in relation to her contemporary Lady Mary Wortley Montagu in "The Lady Mary Wortley Montagu's Anne Finch." *CEAFI* comments on the disinclination of modern scholars to attend to Finch's religious work (lxxviii).

opinions of critics who center almost exclusively on Finch's political leanings and what they referred to as her proto-feminist tendencies, stating that her work is "more complex and more powerful for its ability to embed political sympathy to the ousted Stuarts in a heroically aggressive female poetic voice," therefore employing Finch's religious poetry to highlight her proto-feminist tendencies and Jacobite sensibilities rather than for its strongly religious undercurrents ("Anne Finch: Gender, Politics, and the Myths of the Private Self" 260). Critics in the latter part of the century, however, exhibited small glimmers of receptiveness to the centrality of Finch's Anglicanism to her work as a poet. Barabara McGovern's *Anne Finch and her Poetry: A Critical Biography* published in 1992, for instance, explains that Finch's emphasis on religion challenges William Wordsworth's famous proclamation of Finch as a proto-Romantic poet (85).<sup>5</sup> Kennedy takes this point a step further by devoting her entire essay to explaining how Finch's religious education and identity informs and shapes her work. Turning to "The Petition for An Absolute Retreat" and a "Nocturnal Reverie," Kennedy identifies a linkage between Finch's religion and the cultivation of her voice as a writer; she holds that religion, rather than being a mere aspect of Finch's identity, was the most integral to her artistic development. While certainly a groundbreaking acknowledgment, this assertion largely focuses on how an

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<sup>5</sup> McGovern does not address Finch's religious verse in a specific section of her *Critical Biography of Anne Finch (1992)* but integrates these religious themes sporadically throughout the chapters, most specifically in her section on "A Nocturnal Reverie" and "The Spleen." Like Murray, McGovern agrees that Finch's nature poetry exemplifies her religious, rather than pre-Romantic tendencies, stating that Finch emphasized human connections and a relationship with God as the contributing to the "continuity of life" and highlighting that Finch engages with these ideas and connections with Nature as the backdrop, and not the subject, of her musings (85). McGovern also identifies Finch's distinctive manner of balancing the religio-political ideas in the highly personal poem, "The Spleen," which contains both Jacobite and Anglican expressions (166). Although McGovern's points align with Hinnant's assertion that Finch's religiosity cannot be separated from her oeuvre in its entirety, she doesn't devote many words to Finch's overtly religious verses and instead focuses on how Finch conveys her religious sensibilities in her secular poems.

examination of Finch's religious background leads to a better understanding of her religious lyrics rather than allowing the lyrics themselves to testify to the centrality of religion to Finch's artistic persona. Although an examination of these biographical circumstances, as well as Finch's political leanings and advocacy for women's rights to poetry, are indeed vital elements to the full appreciation of the strong thread of religious themes running throughout her corpus, I would argue that her religious lyrics themselves, and especially Finch's psalm paraphrases, are equally capable of heightening our understanding of the character of and values within her religious poetry. These poems do not merely participate in the well-known conventions of seventeenth-century devotional lyrics; they also explicate the elements of mutability, loss, and grief that run throughout the entirety of her corpus, thus binding Finch's religion with the themes that so often occupied her poetic imagination.

These psalm paraphrases' deep roots in scripture are the key factor in their ability to create a pathway to Finch's artistic distinctiveness, as, by being so closely tied to the texts that she acknowledges to be the source of Truth, they clearly articulate how Finch reconciles earthly suffering with her faith. Her poem "Some Reflections on a Dialogue Between Teresa and Ardelia. On the 2d. And 3d. Verses of the 73rd Psalm " for example, exhibit the preoccupation with temporal afflictions found throughout her oeuvre. In this paraphrase, which features a conversation between Ardelia, Finch's literary persona, and Teresa, the sobriquet for her half-sister, Dorothy Ogle, Ardelia rails against the affluence of her enemies in comparison to her impoverished state; Teresa replies that such earthly comforts are not the true portion of Christians, as believers have already received the best gift of salvation through Christ's sacrifice. Even paraphrases that appear more conventional for their close adherence to the messages of the psalms from which they are derived, such as "The 10th; part of the 119th; Psalm paraphrased In

the manner of a Prayer from the 1st; to the 6th Verse” and “The 146th. Psalm Paraphras’d,” illustrate the same reckoning with earthly suffering as the speaker turns away from temporal hardships in favor of a focus on the divine.<sup>6</sup> However, “Psalm the 137th: Paraphrased to the 7th Verse,” rooted in a biblical passage of weighty political significance, illustrates Finch’s ability to integrate the personal concerns underpinning her corpus with her external circumstances.<sup>7</sup> Because this paraphrase is derived from a psalm charged with political and spiritual angst, it best illustrates how Finch merges the personal with the political: subtly emending the well-known conventions of seventeenth-century devotional poetry, she creates a religious poem with profound personal resonance and cutting political commentary.

In order to understand fully how “Psalm the 137th” allows a better insight into Finch’s poetic strategies, I propose a multi-angled approach that surpasses a mere examination of her biographical circumstances or political proclivities. First, I will offer a series of categories through which to understand how religious themes influence Finch’s entire oeuvre and how her psalm paraphrases can be distinguished from the remainder of her corpus. I will then explain how these paraphrases participate in the tradition of devotional poetry in the seventeenth century before turning to Finch’s paraphrase of Psalm 137, employing both a close reading of the poem while comparing it to both the original psalm and to preceding paraphrases. With this comparison I will explain how her poem coalesces with or departs from these other paraphrases in order to illustrate themes prevalent throughout her entire body of work. Finally, I evaluate

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<sup>6</sup> In the “The 10th; part of the 119th; Psalm paraphrased In the manner of a Prayer from the 1st; to the 6th Verse,” the speaker marvels at God’s creation of her own body and mind, imploring God to infuse her faculties with an understanding of the divine that will shield her from the petty distractions of the mundane. In “The 146th. Psalm Paraphras’d,” the speaker praises God for his steadfastness in comparison to weakness and changeability of earthly leaders.

<sup>7</sup> I will hereafter shorten this title to “Psalm the 137th.”

Finch's paraphrase against the three-fold process of poetic meditation proffered by Louis Martz in *The Poetry of Meditation*, arguing that the meditative quality of this paraphrase both distinguishes it from its contemporaries and demonstrates that, even within the confines of these conventions, Finch still crafts her own unique voice as a poet.

### **Religion in Finch's Poetry: Some Heuristic Categories**

Although many works in Finch's corpus employ biblical themes, they are not all primarily focused upon conveying a religious message. Some of her devotional poems are overtly religious by being rooted in specific biblical texts while others simply center upon religious themes and metaphors to bring about their meaning. Finch's religious poetry is easily divided into three distinctive categories: poems that simply include biblical images without promoting a particular moral or doctrine, poems that have a primarily religious focus, and, finally, poems that are rooted in specific biblical passages.

A prime example of this first categorization—verses that present biblical imagery without having a distinctly religious focus—is one of Finch's most well-known poems, "To Death." Although placed among the religious poetry in the Folger manuscript, in this work the speaker manages to integrate biblical language while skirting a blatantly Christian message. Often described as one of Finch's most disturbing verses, this poem begins with the speaker addressing personified death, describing his presence as an inevitability that even Jesus himself did not avoid or reject:

O King of terrors, whose unbounded sway  
All that have life must certainly obey;  
The King, the Priest, the Prophet, all are thine,  
Nor would ev'n God (in flesh) thy stroke decline.

My name is on thy roll, and sure I must  
Increase thy gloomy kingdom in the dust. (1-6)

While the speaker relies heavily upon Christian terminology, this poem does not develop into a message of the hope of heaven after death; instead, the speaker turns inward, relying on her own determination to meet death fearlessly. The second stanza follows the same vein:

My soul at this no apprehension feels,  
But trembles at thy swords, thy racks, thy wheels;  
Thy scorching fevers, which distract the sense,  
And snatch us raving, unprepared, from hence;  
At thy contagious darts, that wound the heads  
Of weeping friends, who wait at dying beds. (7-12)

Charged with disturbing images of torture, this bold resolution may have been prompted by the Finches' tenuous position of safety after their flight from court and retreat to Eastwell, during which time many of their fellow Loyalists were being arrested and racked for information about their compatriots.<sup>8</sup> With this distinctly terrestrial point of view, the speaker concludes with her direct address to death, omitting any reference to Christ's triumph over the grave. Instead, she admits to the inevitability of death's visit and, resigned, capitulates to its power:

Spare these, and let thy time be when it will;  
My bus'ness is to die, and thine to kill.  
Gently thy fatal scepter on me lay,  
And take to thy cold arms, insensibly, thy prey. (13-16)

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<sup>8</sup> The Finches did not retreat to Eastwell immediately after their flight from court in 1689; they first stayed with their good friends Lord Hatton and his wife Elizabeth before moving to Eastwell on invitation of Heneage's nephew, Charles (McGovern, *Critical Biography*, 57-61).

This grim surrender to death instead of hope in God in the face of mortality rightly designates this poem as belonging to the first category of Finch's verses, as in it, the speaker certainly employs Christian imagery but avoids transforming those images into an explicitly religious message of hope.

The second classification comprises verses that are primarily religious in focus but are not rooted in a specific Biblical passage, such as the short poem "On Affliction." Typical for a seventeenth-century religious lyric, this poem begins by welcoming earthly suffering as a means of sanctification:

Wellcome, what e're my tender flesh may say,  
Welcome affliction, to my reason, still,  
Though hard, and rugged on that rock I lay,  
A sure foundation, which if rais'd with skill,  
Shall compass Babel's aim and reach th'Almightys hill. (1-5)

Here, the speaker, disregarding the protestations of her weak flesh, bids earthly affliction to come to her. Drawing upon Old Testament imagery of sacrifice in Leviticus 17:11, she employs this image of laying herself upon a "rock" to indicate her willingness to expose her body to suffering for the purpose of spiritual refinement, which, as the final stanza shows, will ultimately bring her closer to the Almighty.<sup>9</sup> The speaker then reinforces this initial point that Affliction is a tool for refinement and further develops it in her concluding lines:<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> As the first volume of the *Critical Edition to the Works of Anne Finch (CEAFI)* notes, Finch also relates the speaker's "sure foundation" to that in Isaiah 28:16 and 2 Timothy 2:19, which designates God's law as a place of stability for Christians in the midst of an insecure and transient world (638).

<sup>10</sup> *CEAFI* also identifies Biblical references in the following stanza when the speaker mentions "The cup" and "The Crown and the full robe of light," identifying these images in Isaiah 51:22-23 and Revelation 7:14,17 respectively (638).

Affliction is the line, which every Saint  
Is measur'd by, his Stature taken right;  
So much itt shrinks, as they repine or faint,  
But if their faith, and Courage stand upright,  
By that is made the Crown, and the full robe of light. (11-15)

In these final words, the speaker proposes the ability to withstand adversity as a long-term benefit of suffering, one that, when obtained by faith, places the believer in God's favor. Her use of biblical terms and themes to buttress this central message distinguishes "On Affliction" as a poem characterizing the second category of Finch's verse whose poems are primarily religious in nature.

The third classification, which comprises a significantly smaller portion of Finch's poetry, is derived from specific Scriptural passages. Often identifying the original portions of scripture in the title of these poems, Finch employs these passages' main themes as her inspiration, extending their central ideas by either paraphrasing or developing them within the contexts of her personal and sociopolitical circumstances. The poem "Gold is try'd in the fire, and acceptable men, in the time of Adversity" perhaps best exemplifies how Finch takes a single passage from scripture and expands it into concepts germane to personal and religiopolitical struggles. The poem's title is nearly identical to Ecclesiasticus 2:5, a part of the Old Testament Apocrypha that was included in the original King James Bible in 1611. This verse exhorts readers to consider adverse circumstances as a means through which God perfects the faith of his followers, stating "[f]or gold is tried in the fire, and acceptable men in the furnace of adversity." In her poem, Finch expounds upon this original verse's concept of spiritual refinement through earthly suffering; she also draws upon the verses preceding and following Ecclesiasticus 2:5 that



instruct believers to expect hardship during their walks in faith and to cling to God during those times of trial, adding to these concepts her own observations of how God never intended for his children to live in ease:

Not so, th' Almighty wisdom has design'd,  
We shou'd in ease, and luxury remain,  
Untry'd by sorrow, or by pain.  
No, the searcher of the mind,  
Unshaken, vertue, there, must find,  
Tho' low, as to the dunghill brought,  
With him, whose sifted patience, taught,  
He serv'd for Duty, else for naught. (9-16)

This appropriation of Ecclesiasticus signifies two central elements of this third categorization of Finch's verse, first by its expansion of the ideas of the original passages and second by its significance in Finch's religiopolitical circumstances. Because of its subject matter, critics believe that Finch composed this piece in the aftermath of the Revolution of 1688, the time of her exile from court and the arrest of her husband, Heneage. This *terminus ad quo* suggests that Finch is writing in reaction to these circumstances, articulating her trust in God in this time of extreme duress.<sup>11</sup> The concluding lines of the final stanza support this claim:

Favors, alas! But fall in vain,  
And the good things, that are allow'd,  
Instead of happy, make us prou'd,

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<sup>11</sup> See *CEAFI* pp. 634-636 for information on the circumstances of this poem's publication.

Lett us not then, refuse this part,  
But wisely learn, the saving art,  
Our tears, to comforts to convert. (25-32)

Revisiting mutability, one of Finch's favorite themes, the speaker articulates the futility of seeking after earthly favor, stating that good esteem from others and worldly comforts lead to pridefulness. The speaker exhorts readers to find solace in suffering instead, as temporal affliction teaches one to be content with one's God-given lot. Such close adherence to the central idea of the original scripture places this poem in the third category of Finch's religious verse, wherein the poem's content and meaning are derived from a specific passage of the Bible.

Because the verses in the third category are rooted in specific biblical texts, one could expect them to be the least creative of Finch's entire oeuvre. Many modern critics have adopted this assumption, considering these works as artistically inferior to Finch's so-called secular verses and viewing them as rehearsing the well-worn cliches of seventeenth-century devotional poetry. However, careful readings of these verses show that they constitute some of Finch's most skilled work. As "Gold is Try'd in the Fire by men, in Times of Adversity" demonstrates, Finch is able to combine well-known scriptural passages with often overused conventions to create poetry with significant personal and political resonance. This overemphasis on Finch's Jacobite and feminist leanings has created a critical blind spot to the role of religion in Finch's poetry, which has led them to maintain a disproportionate perception of her identity and work as a poet. Finch's religious verse suggests that she did not use her Christianity to buttress her proto-feminist or Jacobite sensibilities; rather, her biblical references testify to the centrality of Christianity to her identity, influencing every facet of her poetic imagination.

### **The Sinful States: Finch's "Psalm the 137<sup>th</sup>" and the Psalm paraphrase Tradition**

Finch's psalm paraphrases comprise only eight of her entire oeuvre. While lacking in number, these poems nonetheless indicate Finch's sensitivity to the widespread practice of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century poets who would rewrite biblical psalms to meet their own religious, artistic, and political ends, using those psalms as inspiration for verses of personal devotion or as fuel for political commentary. This practice has its roots in the tradition of Jesuit and Franciscan monks who repurposed Biblical psalms to enrich their personal devotions, and it also came to dominate England's poetic sensibilities as poets turned to the comfort of the psalms in the midst of the extreme political upheaval of the Reformation and the subsequent political strife of the Restoration and Glorious Revolution. Barbara Lewalski presents this turn as a phenomenon wherein the old Catholic tradition and England's burgeoning Protestantism rapidly coalesced during this political upheaval, a time when English poets seized the opportunity to convey their inward spiritual strife through the biblical images and prototypes that Renaissance art and literature had already deeply embedded in England's literary imagination (*Protestant Poetics and the Seventeenth Century Religious Lyric* 4, 5). Lewalski contends that this phenomenon mirrors the crucifixion and resurrection by raising the religious lyric into a new life (5). This resurrection entailed a stress on *justificatio sola fide*, or salvation through an inward faith exclusively as opposed to a reliance on good works or a conformity to Church liturgy and traditions, an idea that requires believers to strengthen their saving faith by fostering a private relationship with God. The emphasis on a personal connection with the divine inspired devotional poets to infuse this previously Catholic psalm tradition with a protestant fervor as they drew inspiration from the psalm verses in their quests to draw nearer to God. They not only expressed this inward journey through their paraphrases, but they also reshaped the original

verses, employing their emotional dynamism that ranged from the ecstasies of praise to the pits of despair. By tapping into what Christopher Hodgkins explains as a powerful “psychological discovery” of the original psalms, poets transcended “settled statements of belief,” creating verses shot through with interior revelations that heightened their awareness of their own depravity (“Hebrew Poetry, How Deep Calls to Deep” 34-35). The English Reformation coupled with the civil unrest plaguing early Modern England was vital to the development of the religious lyric, allowing poets to escape the prescribed nature of Catholic worship in order to reach for a personal relationship with God.

While Hodgkins discusses the power of the psalms in a more general sense, Hannibal Hamlin examines Psalm 137 specifically and addresses its significance throughout the medieval era and the Renaissance. Hamlin states that this psalm’s description of the Babylonians’ destruction of Israel and capture of the Jews greatly appealed to both Protestants and Catholics who felt oppressed in the midst of the political turmoil of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries; able to connect personally with the plight of the displaced Jews, these artists often drew upon this psalm’s explicit references to exile and its exhortations to faithfulness, resulting in pieces that merged scathing political critiques and spiritual suffering in the midst of tyranny (“Psalm Culture in the English Renaissance” 225-26). Kairoff and Keith also address this common practice of paraphrasing biblical texts, asserting that artists largely turned to the psalms out of an awareness of their own transgressions, attempting to “overcome their sinful states” (lxxix). Many contemporaneous paraphrases of Psalm 137 do indeed seek to overcome sinful states, but they usually highlight the sins of tyrannical governments rather than subduing the sins of their own souls.

Given the Finches' desperate plight in the wake of the Revolution of 1688, it would not be a surprise if Finch adopted a similar accusatory tone in her paraphrase of Psalm 137. Before her marriage to Heneage Finch, Groom of the Bedchamber to the then Duke of York, James Stuart, Finch served as a Maid of Honor to Mary of Modena from 1682 to 84, spending her formative years in the “multicultural” and intellectually stimulating court of Charles II (McGovern 61-62). Finch resigned from her post after marrying but continued to reside at court when James’s ascended the throne in 1685 after Charles’s death. The Finches’ time in royal favor, however, ended abruptly when James fled England for France after being threatened by individuals in Parliament who, alarmed by the Catholic king’s increasing advancement of Catholic nonconformists, invited William of Orange to land on British shores with an army to save the country’s Anglican faith. This flight left those loyal to James, like the Finches, either to take the Oath of Allegiance to William or to face torture or exile. A stalwart supporter of the Stuart line, Heneage refused to take the Oath, leaving himself and Anne no other choice but to flee London for their lives and retreat to the countryside, eventually settling with their nephew Charles Finch on the Eastwell estate in 1690.

As McGovern observes, the abrupt termination of James’s rule had disastrous consequences for Finch, who, although moving to London with Heneage around 1710, never recovered the affluence or prestige of her former life (62). Soon after fleeing from court, Finch faced internal exile alone when Heneage, along with several unnamed noblemen, traveled to Hythe in 1690, ostensibly with the intention of sailing to France; he was promptly seized and held in London for eight months under suspicion of treason and was not released until November of that year. However, this forced retirement to the countryside had even more besetting consequences for Finch than these agonizing months of waiting for news of her husband’s fate;

torn from a colorful and dynamic life at court, she then was faced with a country existence at Eastwell, a life that, while more virtuous in Finch's eyes, still placed her in a state of isolation and loneliness.<sup>12</sup> Given these events, it is extraordinary that the verses Finch wrote during her time in exile lacked retaliatory sentiments. despite the vengeful tone of its predecessors, and indeed the original psalm itself, Finch's speaker in "Psalm the 137th" only alludes to the wrongs elicited by current political conflicts while concentrating on a distinctly different perspective than many contemporaneous paraphrases. Her speaker does not center upon the sins of her enemies; rather, she focuses primarily upon her own complete and utter submission to God and an adherence to her faith in times of adversity.

Not only is Finch's paraphrase notable in its contrast to the retributive tone of the original and other paraphrases, but its strategic locations in the first three of her four manuscripts also suggests that this poem is of particular importance to Finch's oeuvre. "Psalm the 137th" is positioned beside verses of weighty political or personal consequence in her earliest manuscript, "Poems on Several Subjects, written by Ardelia," commonly called the Northamptonshire, and *Miscellany Poems on Several Occasions*, or the 1713 manuscript.<sup>13</sup> The paraphrase features in the Northamptonshire manuscript directly after the poem expressing vigorous Jacobite sentiment titled "On the Lord Dundee." This work refers to the Battle of Killiecrankie, during which, in 1689, an army led by the English intercepted a troop of Jacobite rebels on Killiecrankie Pass,

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<sup>12</sup> Finch's high regard for a simple life in nature is evident in "The Petition for an Absolute Retreat" in which the speaker praises the "humble Joys" of a country existence (202-03).

<sup>13</sup> There are four known complete manuscripts of Finch's work. According to the first volume of *The Critical Edition of the Poetry of Anne Finch (CEAF1)*, the earliest surviving manuscript, dated approximately 1696, is the Northamptonshire manuscript, followed by the Folger, the largest surviving manuscript of Finch's poetry (cxxxix, cxxxii). The second edition (*CEAF2*) offers a description of the 1713 print volume, and the undated Wellesley manuscript, the last known manuscript (xcv).

resulting in a conflict that fatally wounded the Jacobite supporter Viscount Dundee.<sup>14</sup> “Psalm the 137th” appears in the 1713 print volume after “the Fragment,” a deeply personal poem that contrasts the allure of worldly ambition and amusements with the necessity of cultivating a reliance on God.<sup>15</sup> The position of “Psalm the 137th” beside verses of such external and internal profundity suggests that its placement is more of a rhetorical move than mere happenstance, for, in these manuscripts, Finch likely used this poem either to imply heavily her position on pressing political events or to communicate her manner of coping with spiritual turmoil.

The placement of “Psalm the 137th” in the Northamptonshire and the 1713 manuscripts perhaps alludes to the function of this paraphrase in Finch’s corpus, but the unclear organization of these manuscripts leaves us only to extrapolate this meaning from the poems bookending the paraphrase rather than this poem’s position within the whole manuscript. Its placement in the Folger, however, allows us to examine how it could function within an organized volume. Completed around 1701-02, between the dates of the Northamptonshire and 1713, this collection is carefully arranged, containing distinct section breaks that loosely categorize its fifty-one poems according to their respective genres.<sup>16</sup> The first and largest section is titled “Miscellany Poems with Two Plays by Ardelia,” which concludes with her two plays, *The Triumphs of Love and Innocence* and *Aristomenes or the Royal Shepherd*. The plays are immediately followed by a clear break to a new section titled “Additional Poems Chiefly on Subjects Devine and Moral.” “Psalm the 137th,” which is the first poem appearing after this section title, acts as the

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<sup>14</sup> See pages 402-03 and 480 of *CAEFI* for further information on the placement of this paraphrase in Northamptonshire as well as an explanation of Lord Dundee at Killiecrankie.

<sup>15</sup> “Some Occasional Reflections” appears on pages 384-85 of *CEAF1*. The editors believe this piece is a version of part of the poem “Some Occasional Reflections” that appears in the Folger manuscript.

<sup>16</sup> For more information on the organization and publication of these three manuscripts, see *CEAF1* pp. cxiii-cxviii and “Account of the Texts” pp. cxxvii-cxl.

introductory poem to this section that offers a distinct contrast to Finch's plays.<sup>17</sup> *The Triumphs of Love and the Royal Shepherd*, presumably written shortly after the Revolution, are centered upon the prevailing concerns of the Stuart court while the subsequent religious verses are overtly devotional in their scope and subject matter. According to the "General Introduction" of *CEAFI*, Finch maintained a significant influence over the arrangement of her poems in this manuscript particularly, meaning that she could have chosen to place any of her religious pieces in this pivotal position (Keith, Kairoff lii). Her decision, then, raises a pointed question that emphatically underscores the great need for scholars to move beyond the insular appraisals of this piece as merely an isolated specimen of standard devotional practice: what about this paraphrase compelled Finch to give it pride of place in this section of the Folger manuscript?

#### **Transition and Transformation: "Psalm the 137th" as a Religious Exhortation**

One of the most prominent themes underpinning the entirety of Finch's corpus is that of a personal or spiritual transformation. Whether secular or religious in nature, many of her poems illustrate how the speaker is transformed by shifting from a perspective that is trained solely upon earthly matters to one that transcends her temporal conditions, which, in Finch's religious poetry, asserts God's sovereignty over earthly circumstances. "Psalm the 137th" draws upon the original psalm's themes of exile, loss, and grief to illustrate the speaker's ability to transition from a worldly to a heavenly focus, transforming her from a dispossessed exile mourning among the throng of captives to an individual capable of maintaining an unshakeable faith in God's promises. Examining this paraphrase vis-à-vis contemporaneous renditions of the psalm reveals that her speaker's religious turn is unique to her paraphrase. Because of this originality, "Psalm

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<sup>17</sup> See also *CEAFI* pp. 580, 565-66.



the 137th” best illustrates Finch’s ability to reshape the conventions of devotional poetry for her own authorial ends, using them to convey the inward transformation that runs through her entire corpus.

The first stanza of the original Psalm 137 in the *King James Version* of the Bible begins with the group of Jewish captives mourning beside the Euphrates River. The psalmist identifies himself with the captives using the first-person plural pronoun “we,” therefore acknowledging his share in their grief: “By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down, yea, we wept, when we remembered Zion” (*KJV*, Psalm 137:1). So too do the clipped lines of iambic tetrameter in the first stanza of Finch’s paraphrase establish the same tone of loss and grief:<sup>18</sup>

Proud Babilon, thou saw’st us weep,  
Euphrates, as he past along  
Saw on his banks, the sacred throng  
A heavy, Solemn mourning keep,  
Sad Captives, to thy Sons, and thee,  
When nothing, but our tears were free. (1-6)

Finch compounds this mournful tenor with a transition from mutability to constancy, doing so by assigning the decisive—and overtly critical—modifier “Proud” to the city of Babylon at the very

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<sup>18</sup> Unlike contemporaneous lyrics, Finch often manipulates the narrative voice by digressing from the first-person singular, which blurs the lines between herself and her various speakers. Some of her pieces, such as “The Petition” and “The Introduction” are extremely personal poems that both include first person narration and are closely related to Finch’s biographical circumstances. In other works, however, Finch dabbles in alternate personae that are far removed from her experience, a prime example being “Unequal Fetters,” in which the speaker details a confinement within an unhappy marriage. Because of her diverse narrative personae which assume a largely female point of view, I will refer to the narrators of these poems as the “speaker” rather than as “Finch,” and use feminine pronouns in relation to the speaker.

beginning of the stanza.<sup>19</sup> This modifier sharply contrasts with the speaker's introduction of the Euphrates, to which she does not attach an adjective. The speaker's uses of the city and the river highlight this poem as one of spiritual transition, as the Jews' position by the Euphrates emphasizes their turn away from earthly joys and their looking with hope to God. The captives' position beside the river as opposed to within the walls of the city implies the mourners' dissociation from the mutable and the earthly and their adherence to the constancy of their faith, a mental stance that mirrors their physical position by the constantly flowing river. The "throng" beside the rushing water with the city looming in the background points to what Hinnant refers to as Finch's "ironic transformation" of "traditional symbols" (*Poetry of Anne Finch* 232). Instead of the river signifying changeability and the city permanence, the speaker's use of the city and the river inverts their conventional representations, juxtaposing the river—a symbol of constancy—against the walls of Babylon, imposing structures that, Hinnant asserts, Finch often employed in order to mock humanity's self-acclaimed invincibility (248). In this conversion exists a clear connection between Finch's verse and uses of the city and river that recur in various appropriations of this psalm. As Hamlin observes, the flowing Euphrates commonly features in the beginning stanzas of contemporary paraphrases and merges with the tears of the captives in a metonymic representation of their grief, a sorrow that emphasizes the constancy of the Jews' faith in their God (228). Finch's speaker, then, capitalizes on this water imagery, emphasizing the constancy of the captives' faith in the midst of adversity by placing them beside the steady river. The flowing tears of the captives, coupled with their position on the riverbank,

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<sup>19</sup> The use of "Proud" in reference to Babylon also appears in "Paraphrase upon the 137. Psalm" by John Oldham ("And thou, proud babylon" 87) and Francis Davison's "Psalm 137" ("And thou babel, / with the tyde of thy Pride" 49-50).

underscores their devotion to God, an attitude that starkly contrasts with the prideful immutability represented by the walls of Babylon (232).

The first stanza concludes by extending this water imagery with a poignant personification of tears. This continuation further emphasizes the constancy of the captives' faith and dramatically underscores the extent of their bondage: the captives' enslavement so constrained them from expressing grief over their lost faith that only their freely flowing tears could testify to their anguish. The speaker also couples this personification with a sort of ownership, using the possessive adjective "our." This word demonstrates that the speaker is identifying herself with the prisoners, not as a passive observer of their grief but as an active participant in it. This position among the group of captives illustrates the speaker's emphasis on the emotional suffering elicited by her bondage. By immersing herself within the throng, the speaker further demonstrates that this poem represents her transition from earthly to divine matters, as, through detaching from worldly concerns, she participates in the captives' grief over the loss of the freedom to express their faith, therefore centering upon the heavenly.

In the next two verses of the biblical Psalm 137, the speaker continues referring to himself and the mourners as a collective group sharing in the mockery inflicted upon them by their captors: "We hanged our harps upon the willows in the midst thereof. / For there they that carried us away captive required of us a song; and they that wasted us *required of us* mirth, *saying*, Sing us *one* of the songs of Zion" (KJV, Psalm 137:2-3). The second stanza of Finch's paraphrase conveys this same mockery, and, like many of its contemporaries, communicates the

grief over the captors' derision through the silent strings of the lyres, a Classical equivalent to the harps of the Jews:<sup>20</sup>

A Song of Sion, they require  
And from the neighb'ring trees, to take  
Each man, his dumb, neglected Lyre,  
And chearfull sounds on them awake;  
But chearfull sounds, the strings refuse,  
Nor will their Masters greifs abuse. (8-12)

Significantly though, Finch's speaker detaches herself from her place among the mourners in this stanza, a dissociation that again distinguishes this paraphrase as a poem of transition from a temporal to a heavenly focus. The speaker assumes a third person address in this stanza, positioning herself as an observer who is watching the captives endure the mockery of their captors. The separation of Finch's speaker from the captives during the height of their humiliation is a crucial narrative move that draws attention away from earthly suffering; by simply recounting the wrongs exacted on the captives without becoming personally involved in their affliction, the speaker does not identify herself as a victim or foster a desire for vengeance by ruminating upon the wrongs of her enemies. This attitude starkly contrasts with the exploitation of the captives' humiliation in the paraphrase of Thomas Carew. Carew's speaker, who identifies with the captives throughout the entire scene with the lyres, states that the captors ". . . (to scoffe *our* sorrowes) say / Sing vs some sweet hebrewe lay" (emphasis added; "Psalm

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<sup>20</sup> Hamlin explains that references to stringed instruments in sixteenth and seventeenth-century psalm paraphrases were often combinations of the biblical and classical ideas, as poets often amalgamated David and his harp with Orpheus's lyre (235). He also notes several occasions in which other instruments appear, such as the trumpet, lute, and coronet (236). Finch's use of the "Lyres" in her paraphrase stands apart from many of her contemporaries, who elect to use the harp in their works.

137” 14-15). Unlike Finch’s poem, this speaker focuses on the ridicule inflicted upon him by his enemies, effectively setting up his demand for earthly retribution at the conclusion of his paraphrase. Conversely, Finch’s speaker positions herself as an observer of the captives’ humiliation, placing her in the mindset that meditates on the heavenly. By stepping back and eschewing revenge, the speaker moves her focus from earthly to divine concerns, pointing her away from a militant call for retribution and toward the exhortation to remain true to her faith.

The third stanza of Finch’s paraphrase perhaps best testifies to her skill in extending the principal messages of the original psalm. Taking the verse from Psalm 137 that simply asks, “How shall we sing the LORD’S song in a strange land?” as well as the lengthy renditions of this paraphrase by her contemporaries, Finch crafts a succinct stanza that powerfully conveys the grief over the lost freedom to express her faith (*KJV*, Psalm 137:4). The beginning line marks this stanza as a turning point for the entire work, as the speaker exhibits another shift in which she departs from a general addressee in favor of a direct supplication to God:

How! Can we Lord, thy Praise proclaim  
Here, in a strange, unhallowed Land,  
Least we provoke them, to Blaspheme  
A name, they do not understand,  
And with rent garments, that deplore  
Above, what e’re we felt before. (13-18)

This appeal, in which the speaker asks God how she and the captives can still worship in the face of such vicious antipathy, exhibits a jarring shift from the beginning half of the paraphrase. In the first and second stanzas, Finch’s speaker maintains a largely sublunary point of view, concentrating primarily on tactile objects like the city and the river. The third stanza immediately

abandons this temporal focus with its beginning interjection “How!” in which the speaker moves from a horizontal to a vertical perspective. The single word “how” also indicates a certain forfeiture of agency for the speaker, as she turns away from the familiarity of the earthly to a subject that requires divine guidance to understand. These changes—a vertical focus and an appeal to God – solidifies this poem as a piece of transition from an earthly to heavenly focus; by turning to supplication in this time of duress, the speaker forfeits her own agency and demonstrates her complete reliance on divine direction.

The third stanza exhibits another shift when the speaker returns to identifying herself with the captives, using the personal pronoun “we” to denote that she, along with the other prisoners, are struggling to express their faith while in bondage. This fluctuation of joining, departing from, then rejoining the captives establishes a pattern in which the speaker separates from the suffering arising from personal humiliation and associates herself with the suffering occasioned by the Babylonians’ ridicule of God. Fearing blasphemy, the speaker is anxious that expressing her faith could cause the captors to desecrate God’s name. This concern exemplifies another turn toward the divine, as the speaker is not only concerned with remaining loyal to her faith, but also in sustaining its purity. By re-identifying herself with the captives in their concern for expressing their beliefs, she does not focus on the corporeal affliction that mockery brings, but only associates herself with the spiritual suffering occasioned by the captors’ scorn for her faith, indicating that the speaker is not dwelling on the wrongs exacted upon herself but is instead centered on the wrongs her captors inflict upon God.

Verses five and six of the original Psalm 137 further illustrate this desire to turn from the earthly in favor of a focus on the divine. Here, the psalmist exhorts himself to remain true to his faith in the midst of these adverse circumstances, subordinating all of these earthly abilities to his

hope in God in order to underscore just how vital is his relationship with God to his very existence:

If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget *her cunning*.”

If I do not remember thee, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth, if I prefer not Jerusalem above my chief joy. (*KJV*, Psalm 137.5-6)

So too does Finch’s speaker focus on the image of Jerusalem and exhort herself to maintain an unwavering faithfulness to God. While detaching from the captives earlier in the poem, she appears to break away completely from the temporal world in the fourth and final stanza:

But thou Jerusalem, so dear,  
If thy lov’d Image, e’re depart,  
Or I, Forgett thy suffr’rings here,  
Lett my right hand, forgett her Art,  
My tongue, her vocal gift resign,  
And Sacred verse, no more be mine. (19-24)

As in the previous stanza, the speaker again centers her attention on heaven by urging herself to not forget the “suffr’rings” of Jerusalem, which further demonstrates how she draws the attention to the mockery inflicted upon her God, and not to that exacted upon herself. This statement perhaps most poignantly illustrates the speaker’s rejection of the worldly; like the psalmist, she consigns all the abilities of her physical being as secondary to her faith, stating that forgetting the “lov’d Image” of Jerusalem should cause her to forfeit all of the capabilities of her earthly body.<sup>21</sup> She emphasizes this sentiment by using the words “dear” and “lov’d” when referring to

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<sup>21</sup> In the original Psalm 137 as well as in Finch’s paraphrase, the mention of Jerusalem connotes more than a physical city. In Jewish culture, Jerusalem represents the heavenly city on earth or the “foundation of God” (“Jerusalem” *Oxford Companion to the Bible*). By referencing Jerusalem instead of simply God

this city, indicating that, as in the original psalm, the speaker seeks to consider Jerusalem “above her greatest joy” and believes that holding fast to its image will give her a deeper gratification than any that she could glean from the abilities of her physical being (Psalm 137:6).

This examination of Finch’s paraphrase has thus far demonstrated its departure from those of her contemporaries who imitate the biblical Psalm 137 by calling upon God to exact a bloody revenge upon their earthly enemies. There is, however, one more extraordinary discontinuity between theirs and Finch’s work: her omission of the final prophecy. Finch’s last stanza completely excludes the concluding lines of the original psalm:

O daughter of Babylon, who art to be  
Destroyed; happy shall he be, that  
Rewardeth thee as thou hast served us.  
Happy shall he be, that taketh and dasheth thy little  
Ones against the stones. (*KJV*, Psalm 137.9)

These verses, as Hamlin explains, reveal the Jews’ appeal for God to remember his promise that He will exact revenge upon the Babylonians (251). Many of Finch’s near contemporaries, namely Carew and Oldham, retain this chilling reference to this promised wrath, using it as a sort of crescendo for their pieces as they turn from the lamentations of the dispossessed toward maniacal descriptions of a people ravaged in the wake of divine ire. Hamlin also observes that the final lines of Oldham’s paraphrase (“Who with their skulls and Bones shal pave thy Streets all o’re/ And fill thy glutton Channels with their scatter’d / Brains and Gore” [119-22]), are a

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in her paraphrase, Finch integrates both heavenly and earthly concepts of the church, which implies that she could also be referencing the Church of England, perhaps calling for a reinstatement of the true Anglican Church in the midst of the reforms brought about by William of Orange. See also note 9.



perfect example of how some poets would “wallow” in God’s promised vengeance on the Babylonians by describing their deaths in grisly detail (252). This description demonstrates how these paraphrases fixate upon the sins of their enemies and a thirst for vengeance rather than on an unwavering adherence to their faith. The conclusion of Finch’s paraphrase exhibits a distinctly different perspective. By omitting the prophecy and choosing to advertise that exclusion in the title of the piece, the speaker does not engage at all with this promise of retribution. Instead, she focuses solely on exhorting herself to consider the abilities of her earthly body as secondary to her faith, therefore illustrating a heavenly concentration not seen in many paraphrases. She does not dwell upon the loss of her dignity or of her homeland as the cause for anguish, but instead channels all of her concern into remaining true to the “belov’d image” of Jerusalem.

#### **“Oure teares were free”: Finch’s “Psalm the 137th” and Meditative Poetry**

The speaker’s unwillingness to dwell upon earthly suffering and her determination to hold fast to “Sacred Verse” appears to be the primary message of this piece when removed from its biographical and historical contexts. However, in order to understand fully the significance of this message against its contemporary paraphrases, re-examining “Psalm the 137th” in conjunction with her biographical circumstances and this paraphrases’ resonance with the poetry of meditation greatly enriches our understanding of her authorial choices while writing this piece and placing it in her manuscripts.<sup>22</sup> Given the Finches’ sudden loss of their position at court and Heneage’s arrest, the reason for Finch’s focus on the exhortation rather than on vengeance becomes clearer: she likely realized the transience of her earthly position as well as the necessity

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<sup>22</sup> Further information on the date, manner of publication, and biographical contexts for this verse can be found in its endnotes in *CAEFI* p. 580.

of clinging to her faith in Providence rather than relying on material possessions.<sup>23</sup> This close focus on faith rather than materiality indicates her use of another tradition deeply embedded within seventeenth-century England's poetic sensibilities: the poetry of meditation. While most paraphrases of Psalm 137 carry distinctly political overtones, the primary purpose of this psalm as a blueprint for personal devotion and edification, as Hamlin asserts, can by no means be overlooked (225). Protestant poets in the seventeenth century sought this edification through lyrics of meditation, a subgenre of poetry that focused upon and explicated a particular section of scripture. While some religious verses served as poetic exercises, meditative poetry merged the practice of the pen with a discipline of the mind, written with the particular goal of bringing the meditators closer to God by rooting out besetting sins and giving them a more intimate understanding of and appreciation for Christ's substitutionary atonement. Martz proposes that meditative poetry engages both the speaker and the reader in a three-fold process. The first stage of this process is the composition, a phase in which the speaker first lays out the scene upon which the meditation is predicated. The speakers then move to the second stage of analysis, or the examination of the composed scene, which, as Martz explains, produces the lines of poetry that involve the "analytical act of understanding" the images that the preceding composition had placed before them (40). In the final stage, the poets engage in a colloquy in which they draw significance from that analysis and apply it to themselves, often resulting in an intimate conversation with God. While a direct address to God is, Martz asserts, often thought to be traditional to Jesuit meditations, protestant poets in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries adapted these colloquies into self-directed exhortations to uproot sin and cleave to the Truth of

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<sup>23</sup> See *CAEFI* pp. lxxv-cxii for further biographical contexts of the Finches.

the gospel (41).<sup>24</sup> Martz asserts that such an adaption of this three-fold meditation resulted in verses that engaged both the mind and the soul, as they lead the reader through composition, creating images through memory, analysis, requiring one to make meaning from the composition, and colloquy, encouraging one to align one's will and affections with biblical or moral principles (42).

In their "Introduction" to their edition of Finch's Wellesley manuscript, McGovern and Hinnant address the role of meditation in Finch's religious verse, drawing a parallel between Martz's definition of meditative poetry and their own demarcations between what they define as Finch's meditative and contemplative verses. They assert that Finch's poetry is contemplative when the speaker discusses moral and religious certainties that she already knows to be true; by contrast, her meditations actively engage the will as the speaker reconciles herself to her God-given duties (*Wellesley Manuscript* xxvi-xxvii). Their point coincides with Lewalski's assertion that while meditative verse is intrinsically interior, it is by no means divorced from outward circumstances, as it often arises from the need to "make crucial decisions" in the face of the "pressing moral dilemmas" arising from Britain's increasingly volatile political atmosphere (xxvii). Finch's "Psalm the 137th" illustrates these characteristics: while the speaker attempts to remedy her dilemma of unfaithfulness, she concentrates upon the exterior scene of the Babylonian captivity – a metaphor for Finch's current circumstances—then moves through the analysis and colloquy in order to solidify her faith in the "Sacred Verse."

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<sup>24</sup> Although Martz rightly attributes these colloquies with Jesuit meditations, he understates the preponderance of colloquial endings in protestant meditations. The works in John Donne's *Devotions* and George Herbert's *The Temple*, for example, nearly all conclude with some form of direct address to God.

The first stanza of Finch's paraphrase in which the speaker establishes the scene of the Jews mourning beside the river illustrates the composition stage of this meditative process. The speaker accomplishes this concentration with her jarring subject-modifier relationship "Proud Babylon," which both communicates the image of Babylon looming in the background and identifies it as the culprit of her suffering. Interestingly, Finch's paraphrase stands out among the others by addressing Babylon at the paragraph's onset, as others mention the river and the captives before turning to address their foes. John Oldham for example, begins his paraphrase by first speaking about the river:

Far from our pleasant native *Palestine*,  
Where great *Euphrates* with a mighty current flows,  
And does in watry limits *Babylon* confine,  
Curss'd *Babylon!* the cause, and author of our woes... (1-4)

Thomas Carew writes in the same vein, addressing first the river then the city:

Sitting by the steames that Glide  
Downe by Babels Towering wall,  
With our tears wee field the tyde  
Whilst our Myndfull thoughts recall  
The Oh Sion, and thy fall. (1-5)

While these stanzas do effectively establish the scene, Finch's paraphrase immediately pinpoints the poem's locus. Her speaker's "Proud Babylon, thou saw'st us weep," prioritizes the city over the river, which immediately designates her adversary and establishes grief as the poem's predominant tone. This connection of Babylon with the speaker's grief rather than vengeance effectively sets her up for the personal exhortation to follow. It is the mourning, rather than a

thirst for retribution illustrated in the original psalm and in the other paraphrases, that brings her to the colloquy in which she reminds herself to remain true to her faith. The speaker's use of "Proud Babylon" with "weep," then, clearly identifies with the meditative process by both setting the scene upon which the speaker is fixating and the tone with which she will move through the following stanzas.

The analysis portion of Finch's paraphrase occurs in stanza two, wherein the speaker demonstrates her understanding of the struggle between the captives and their captors while also withdrawing from a retaliatory perspective. This description of the taunting captors designates this paraphrase as one of meditation, rather than retaliation. One could easily imagine Finch's speaker analyzing the mockery of the Jews in the first lines of stanza two— "A song of Sion they require"—as a statement charged with spite and hatred, yet the particular word choices in this short line would imply another tone altogether, as the speaker never identifies her enemies, but refers to them with the third-person pronoun "they" (7). This word choice starkly contrasts with Carew's references to the "spiteful foe" (11) and Oldham's even more blatant "cruell" and "Proud conquerors" (15, 28). The use of this pronoun de-emphasizes the enemies' tyranny and draws the speaker's attention toward her analysis of the captives' separation from their homeland and their faith. While the speaker does engage with the external scene by mentioning the sins of the captors in her analysis, she does not permit this event to drive her toward a call for retribution by identifying the captors; instead, she allows this picture of grief through separation to draw her attention inward as the poem reaches the colloquy.

While the colloquy, as Martz asserts, does often lead the speaker to turn to God in supplication out of a sharpened awareness of his or her sin, poets often wrote this final stage as an internal dialogue in which the speakers urged themselves to abandon their sinful ways (37).

Martiz illustrates the latter with the final lines of the nativity poem “New Prince, new pompe” by Robert Southwell:

With ioy approach ô Christian wight,  
Doe homage to thy King;  
And highly praise his humble pompe,  
Which he from heaven doth bring. (25-28)

In this profession of the “affections of the will,” the speaker determines to worship Christ and admire the beauty of His humility, a resolve that, Martiz delineates, is “not expressed in colloquy” between the speaker and God “but rather in an exhortation addressed simultaneously to the self and to the reader,” who are both embodied in the “Christian wight” (40). While the final two stanzas of Finch’s piece appear to be more introspective than Southwell’s poem, the way in which she builds toward her colloquy clearly mirrors this private entreaty. Finch’s speaker first cries out to God, asking him how she and the captives continue in their faith in the midst of persecution; she then immediately pivots inward to address herself, allowing the setting and her analysis of the scene to lead her toward a personal exhortation in which she confronts her sin of “forgetting” the sacred verse. The fact that “Psalm the 137<sup>th</sup>” so closely follows this structure of meditation testifies to its originality. In contemporary paraphrases, the speakers’ exhortations of faith are often communicated within eloquent colloquies, but their devotional tones are often tainted by the speakers’ immediate turns to vengeful imprecations. The end of George Wither’s paraphrase, whose gruesome conclusion garnered the attention of his contemporaries, certainly capitalizes on the original psalm’s ending. Turning from the colloquy in which the speaker states that “if the thought of thee [God] forgoe mee / Let hand & tongue, prove vsesles to me,” the speaker ends with a chilling imprecation (11-12):

Oh daughter of proud *Babilon*,  
Thou shalt, likewise, destroyed be;  
And, he will prove a blessed-one,  
Who shall avenge our Cause on thee:  
Ev'n hee, that payes thee our disgraces;  
And, braines thy babes, in stony-places. (19-24)

Oldham's verse follows in the same vein:

When I forget to think, to wish, to pray for you:  
For ever tied with Dumbness be my tongue,  
When it speaks ought that shall not to your Praise belong,  
If that be not the constant subject of my Muse, and Song.  
Remember, Heav'n, remember *Edom* on that day,  
And with like sufferings their spight repay,  
Who made our Miseries their cruel Mirth and Scorn,  
Who laugh'd to see our flaming City burn,  
And wish'd it might to Ashes turn:

Despite their touching colloquies, the vengeful tones in these paraphrases' conclusions prove their focuses are on addressing the sinful states of their enemies rather than their own souls.

Evaluating Finch's poem vis-à-vis these paraphrases highlights its distinctive meditative quality, as the speaker not only closely follows the three-fold process of meditative poetry but also identifies with its objective. Just as meditative verse brings the meditator closer to God, so too does Finch's speaker maintain her focus upon her complete submission to the image of Jerusalem in the face of tyranny by eschewing the retributive tone of her contemporaries.

While Finch's paraphrase follows the overall meditative structure in order to maintain its focus on exhortation, the speaker also integrates one of the most common tropes of seventeenth-century meditations: the literature of tears. According to Martz, this tradition, rooted in the works of St. Bonaventure and the Italian Jesuits, was likely brought to Britain in the late-sixteenth century by Southwell. Martz explains that this tradition focuses upon the image of Mary Magdalen's tears at Christ's crucifixion to signify a meditator's mourning over a separation from Christ. The literature of tears also employs this literal separation through death to symbolize a meditator's spiritual disunion from Christ through sin, a separation that can arise either from the personal sins of the meditator or from the sins of his enemies (200). Martz argues that, while this tradition draws from tears to represent physically the distress over this disunion, devotional portrayals of weeping are largely intended to engage the intellect rather than the affect, drawing the reader away from emotion and toward an introspective appraisal of how his own sins have elicited this separation.

Finch's paraphrase not only resonates with this tradition in the speaker's concentration on remaining true to her faith, but also in how the speaker employs tears to maintain to avoid becoming swept away in imprecation. In the end of the first stanza and the beginning of the second, the speaker connects the image of the captives' flowing tears with the grief represented by the silent strings of the lyres:

Sad Captives, to thy Sons, and thee,  
When nothing, but our tears were free.  
A Song of Sion, they require,  
And from the neighb'ring trees, to take  
Each man, his dumb, neglected Lyre,



And chearfull sounds on them awake;  
But chearfull sounds, the strings refuse,  
Nor will their Masters greifs abuse. (5-12)

She then allows her analysis of this grief to drive her toward the final colloquy, which, although charged with emotion, is a cognitive effort both to reconcile herself to the captives' plight and understand how she can stand firm in her faith in the face of such adversity. The tears of the captives and the emotional duress that they symbolize are the crucial elements to identifying this poem as one that centers the reader upon a separation from God as the primary cause for grief.

The use of this tradition, however, imparts more nuance to "Psalm the 137th" than simply to highlight grief as its locus, as it could also point us to the speaker's, and by extension Finch's, stance on retributive action. While the literature of tears centers upon how the sinful state of an individual separates him from God, the trope also includes a lament over the suffering that arises from the sinful states of one's foes. As Martz briefly mentions, this overtone developed from the imagery of Psalm 56, in which the psalmist David beseeches God to remember the sins that his enemies have enacted against him:

Every day they wrest my words: all their thoughts are against me for evil.  
They gather themselves together, they hide themselves, they mark my steps, when  
they wait for my soul.  
Shall they escape by iniquity? in thine anger cast down the people, O God.  
Thou tellest my wanderings: put thou my tears into thy bottle: are they not in thy book?  
(*KJV* Psalm 56:5-8)

Here the psalmist couples his lament over the danger in which his enemies have placed him with a plea to God to smite his enemies wrathfully. Yet remarkably, he does not insist upon

immediate retribution but sustains his hope by trusting that God will exact vengeance upon his adversaries in His own time. David offers the image of his tears in a bottle as a representation of God's remembrance of the wrongs inflicted upon his followers: as the tears accumulate in the bottle to the point of overflowing, so too will God count up the sins exacted against the Jews until his vengeance pours forth to exact destruction upon their enemies. This image captivated seventeenth-century poets who likened themselves to David in the midst of political upheaval, and Finch undoubtedly used this sense of the imagery to give her paraphrase a political nuance, for David's persecution clearly parallels that of the Finches and their fellow Jacobites at the hands of William of Orange and his followers ("General Introduction" lxxiv-lxxvi). Significantly though, this particular use of the literature of tears highlights that, however imminent God's wrath, the place and time of this vengeance is entirely his prerogative: David only beseeches God to remember the wrongs of his enemies but does not presume to lay before God the terms of that retribution. This emphasis on divine mediation rather than on revenge gives Finch's paraphrase a political significance beyond a mere foreshadowing of her enemies' demise: the speaker, by emphasizing tears, turns away from retribution and towards God's promise to redress the wrongs inflicted upon his children. After all, Finch was undoubtedly familiar with the promise that God made to the Jews in Deuteronomy 32:35, in which he states that "vengeance" and "recompense" are his alone.

The personal and political threads of "Psalm the 137th," however, are evident only with a close examination of the verse itself as well as an evaluation of it against contemporaneous paraphrases. Upon a cursory glance, this poem could easily be judged, as many critics have done, as a mere mimicry of the popular practice of employing "Psalm the 137" to convey spiritual angst. Yet, this close evaluation of this paraphrase has revealed its illustration of the

transformational shift pervading her entire oeuvre, also illustrating how the transitional space it holds in her second manuscript book reflects the speaker's changed perspective. The fact that this transition is so explicitly revealed in this paraphrase testifies to the pressing need for further scholarship on Finch's religious poetry. As "Psalm the 137th" demonstrates, it is Finch's religious verse that most clearly displays her emphasis on spiritual transformation, therefore indicating the centrality of religion to her artistic identity and poetic strategies. Significantly, Finch demonstrates this centrality in "Psalm the 137th" itself: despite her employment of poetic conventions and allusions to current political circumstances, this paraphrase still retains the central message of the original psalm: the determination to adhere to an unwavering faith in God's promises in the face of adversity.

### CHAPTER III: VESSELS OF DESIRE IN JANE AUSTEN'S *PERSUASION*

While dining at the Musgroves' home in the beginning of Jane Austen's 1817 novel *Persuasion*, the dashing navy captain, Frederick Wentworth, announces his desire to marry. With a "bright proud eye," he states that with "a few smiles, and a few compliments to the navy," any woman "between fifteen and thirty" could have him if she chooses (97). Wentworth's stipulation sets the precedent for how the navy is regarded throughout this narrative. Many of the characters within the novel are fascinated with anything pertaining to the navy, and, out of a "general ignorance of all naval matters," interrogate Wentworth "as to the manner of living on board" a ship while at sea (97). Ships in particular perform an important function in the plot, as the characters not only treat ships as objects of fascination, but also use them as a means to communicate their desires and to construct their ideal versions of their circumstances, often doing so by appealing to a ship's dependability in times of duress and its ability to function as a container and transporter.

Past decades have seen a broad range of critical opinions regarding the role of maritime tropes in *Persuasion* and the degree they were inspired by the experiences of Austen's brothers Francis and Charles, who, as Claire Tomalin explains, both made their careers as navy officers (*Jane Austen: A Life* 61-62, 81). The significant parallels between Britain's naval developments and Austen's novels have been largely ignored in earlier scholarship in favor of highlighting Austen's scant commentary on contemporary sociopolitical issues, yet an increased interest in Austen's military and naval knowledge has fostered a thriving body of scholarship centering on the connections between Austen's work, her family's military background, and Britain's

sociopolitical atmosphere during the Napoleonic era.<sup>25</sup> In his seminal work, Brian Southam draws upon James Edward Austen-Leigh, Jane's great-nephew and biographer, who asserts that the maritime experiences of Jane's brothers, Francis and Charles, heavily influenced the development and actions of her characters in her later novels (*A Memoir of Jane Austen* 18). Likewise, Southam associates Francis's and Charles's involvement in the navy as the primary source of Austen's obvious knowledge of pressing political events and their relation to the navy, constructing a broad basis on which subsequent scholars have formed their examinations of Austen's engagement with and knowledge of maritime activities (*Jane Austen and the Navy* 34). This attention to Austen's use of these sociopolitical circumstances certainly exonerates her from the opinions of early critics, such as Raymond Williams, who assume that she "chose to ignore the decisive historical events of her time," yet it primarily places these external contexts onto the novels and does not consider how the novel itself, and namely the actions and attitudes of the characters, embody the essential role that navy ships performed in Britain's rapid social reforms (*The Country and the City* 113). I argue that the heightened emphasis on the navy in *Persuasion* has more significance than a mere manifestation of Austen's maritime knowledge. Rather, the navy is embedded in the narrative through the words and actions of the characters themselves who not only use vessels to express their desires, but also assume the functions of ships. This embodiment demonstrates how the emphasis on vessels in *Persuasion* undergirds the

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<sup>25</sup> See "The Army, the Navy, and the Napoleonic Wars" by Gillian Russell; "A Class Act: *Persuasion* and the Lingering Death of the Aristocracy" by Paul A. Cantor; and Janine Barchas's "*Persuasion*'s Battle of the Books: Baronetage vs. the Navy List." These works address, along with other topics, the economic and social contrasts between the landed gentry and the newly-made naval officers during the Napoleonic Wars, and how Austen's work captures the clashes between old and new money in early nineteenth-century Britain.

novel's portrayal of love's triumph over self-fulfillment, a theme that runs throughout the entirety of Austen's work.

In contrast with her preceding works, most of which designate the army as a source of novelty and excitement, Austen's focus turns seaward in *Mansfield Park* (1814) and *Persuasion* (1817), in both of which the characters either turn to the navy for a lucrative career or for a source of exotic tales and intrigue. In *Mansfield Park*, for instance, Fanny's brother William, then a midshipman, gives "recitals" of his experiences in the "West Indies" and the "Mediterranean" to the Bertrams with such vividness that it captivates his "attentive" audience and causes the fussy Mrs. Norris to "fidget" about the room (236). However, Captain Wentworth's account to the Crofts and the Musgroves in *Persuasion* offers an even more detailed account of his experiences, describing a four day long "gale" that cropped up during his assignment in which he almost drowned (99). Wentworth's narrative reveals the distinctive role that ships play in this novel particularly; after describing his horrific experiences, Wentworth praises both the *Asp* and the *Laconia* for "being the making" of him and communicates what appears to be his nostalgic desire for those "pleasant days" he experienced while captaining these vessels. While the navy certainly plays a dominant role in *Mansfield Park*, it is in *Persuasion* that ships become the center of the characters' attention and the means through which they express their desires.

Desire, whether or not expressed through ships, is a prevalent theme throughout this novel and usually appears when the characters express a need for consequence or material assets. Perhaps as a manifestation of Austen's growing interest in nineteenth-century political philosophy, several characters in *Persuasion* exhibit the concept of desire as it was understood

during her time,<sup>26</sup> encompassing a broader range of topics than sexual drive exclusively and communicating desire as a feeling directed toward an object or circumstance that is expected to bring about satisfaction.<sup>27</sup> Sir Walter and Elizabeth, for example, desire the recognition and wealth befitting their title despite their financial crisis that leaves them with no choice but to “retrench” and lease Kellynch, and Mrs. Russell desires that Anne marry a man befitting her status, later leading Anne to sever her relationship with Wentworth (53). However, desire is not exclusive to these characters, as Captain Wentworth and Mrs. Croft also express wishes of their own, which they communicate through their conversations concerning ships.

Two distinctive patterns arise when tracing the functions of vessels, and by extension the characters, throughout *Persuasion*. First, the way in which the characters speak about ships indicate that vessels assume both active and passive roles. Whether present in the novel as containers, transporters, or objects of reliability, the ships in the narrative often function as inert objects that receive and contain the desires of the characters who bring them to life through their conversations. However, the same vessels also perform active roles by transporting the characters and reliably providing for their needs in some of the most crucial points of their lives, creating a complex balance between active and passive functions. Second, the presence of

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<sup>26</sup> Janet Todd details Austen’s increased interest in current events during the time she was writing *Persuasion*, which offers a probable explanation for the fact that this final novel contains more contemporary references than any of its predecessors. In a letter to her editor John Murray, Austen requests several works concerning the Revolution and unrest in France, such as *A Narrative of Events that Have Lately Taken Place* by Helena Maria Williams and Sir Walter Scott’s *Paul’s Letters to his Kinsfolk*. These writings offer interesting depictions of idealistic desires in the authors’ opposing opinions of the conflict in France; Williams disparages the monarchy and advocates the reforms of the Revolution while Scott communicates a desire for the traditions of the past while commenting upon the instability of the New Regime (“Introduction” xxiv xxviii).

<sup>27</sup> See the *Oxford English Dictionary*: desire n. sense 1a and 4, both of which date close to the publication of *Persuasion*.

vessels often offer some sort of contrast to existing circumstances presented in the narrative, a contrast likely inspired by the rapid changes within the British Navy. Southam explains these changes by pointing out that, in response to its numerous defeats during the first Napoleonic War, the British Royal Navy began to increase its manpower by allowing men from lower social strata to advance into higher ranks upon a successful completion of rigorous examinations (“Professions” 366). These changes, he asserts, had significant social implications, as they allowed men from the lower classes to advance through their merit and not their social standing (367).<sup>28</sup> This burgeoning meritocracy not only upset the highly stratified order of British society, it also, as Austen subtly highlights, greatly perturbed those like the Elliots who saw the privilege of their social status slowly erode in the face of individuals of “obscure birth” who, according to Sir Walter, bring themselves into “undue distinction” (59). By offering common men advancement instead of referring to those of higher social status, the Royal Navy began to operate in opposition to Britain's existing social conditions, a function thematized by Captain Harville, Admiral Croft, and Anne, all of whom push against the current of the class-based avarice and self-gratification exhibited by other characters in this novel.

The dinner party at the Musgroves’ home is the first scene that illustrates the integral role of ships in *Persuasion*, as it is during this gathering that both Wentworth and his sister, Mrs. Croft, express their desires while debating about the sort of people and circumstances ships

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<sup>28</sup> Advancing through the ranks of the British Royal Navy in the early nineteenth century was a complicated process. Syrett notes that the shift from promotions based on class to promotions based on merit was not a distinct one, as most aspiring officers during the reign of George III still had to attain interest in order to advance in rank, meaning that they had to have access to someone holding the ear of the “high and mighty” who would be able to use their influence to advance their careers (72). Although the navy were making strides in advancing men according to ability, remnants of this older method of attaining promotions was still prevalent during Austen’s time.



should contain. A successful navy captain, Wentworth clearly values efficiency while on his assignments and firmly believes that allowing ladies on his ship would interfere with his duties. He demonstrates this conviction when responding to Admiral Croft's disapproval of his not wanting to "give passage to Lady Mary Grierson and her daughters," asserting that his disinclination is for "no want of gallantry" as much as for "feeling how impossible it is . . . to make the accommodation on board, such as women ought to have" (102) Yet, in a stroke of generosity, Wentworth does concede that he will allow ladies on board for parties that only a "few hours might comprehend" (101).<sup>29</sup> Through this conversation about ships, Wentworth details his most ideal version of his circumstances while at sea, a situation in which he would be free to attend to his duties without also having to concern himself with the comfort of "a family of ladies" (102).

Mrs. Croft too uses circumstances within ships to express her desires and, perhaps more pointedly, to challenge her brother's preferences. Shocked at Wentworth's statement that "no woman has a right to feel comfortable on a ship," she boldly informs her listener, Mrs. Musgrove, that she had crossed "the Atlantic four times" (103). Mrs. Croft goes even further,

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<sup>29</sup> In her "Introduction," Linda Bree condemns Wentworth's objection to allowing women on board as a testament to his "tendency to misogyny," which clearly illustrates her failure to consider the contexts surrounding Wentworth's disinclination (31). Thomas Malcolmson offers various records detailing how women's presences on naval ships propagated disorder and hindered the efficiency of the sailors. Many of these records testify that women on board naval ships were prey to rape and harassment, and the presence of women on ships was linked to an uptake of sexually transmitted diseases that put naval men out of action (*Order and Disorder in the British Navy, 1793-1815*, 152). Having been in the navy for eight years, Wentworth would certainly be aware of this circumstance, and, being a gentleman, he tactfully refrains from asserting this point at the Musgroves' dinner party. This context reveals the myopia of Bree's statement; far from an expression of misogyny, Wentworth's refusal to not let women on ships may actually arise from the desire both to protect them from these unsavory situations and to preserve his men's ability to accomplish efficiently their assignment at sea by limiting their likelihood of falling ill. Wentworth's aversion to women on ships testifies to his patriotism and sense of duty, as, according to Syrett, "improving the health of the seaman proved to be integral in the improvement of the British navy" (73).

asserting that she had never had “a comfort or an indulgence” that she did not enjoy while accompanying her husband on his assignments and that she believes “nothing can exceed the accommodations of a man of war” (102, 103). While using the ship’s containing abilities to outline her desire to travel on vessels, Mrs. Croft proves that contrary to her brother’s belief, women do have the capability to thrive at sea. During the dinner party, the two siblings refer to the circumstances and people that ships could contain in order to create their ideal version of their circumstances and, by doing so, demonstrate that they have very different ideas of what the inside of a ship should contain.

Through this conversation about ships, Mrs. Croft uses a ship to communicate her past desire of remaining beside her husband during the dangerous events of the first Napoleonic War. Her good-humored rebuttal to her brother’s blatant disregard for her experience during the war reveals more than nostalgia for her seafaring days: the response serves the dual purpose of acknowledging a difficult time when she lived in constant fear for her husband’s safety while also offering a poignant reminder that the wives and families of officers also suffered during the years of conflict. As Sheila Johnson Kindred points out, Mrs. Croft’s short description of her naval experiences has a clear biographical basis in Jane’s sister-in-law Fanny, who accompanied her husband, and Austen’s brother, George on many of his assignments and whose letters recounted to Austen the trials of a navy wife’s life at sea (*Jane Austen's Transatlantic Sister: The Life and Letters of Fanny Palmer Austen* 58). These letters demonstrate a distinct parallel between Austen’s family and the characters within *Persuasion*. When France turned its attention to Portugal in 1810, George was commissioned to join a squadron of five vessels assigned to bring additional troops to Portugal’s aid, a commission that would take him directly through “enemy waters” (Kindred 196). Likewise, Admiral Croft, a man of the “Trafalgar action,”

participated in the most decisive, and deadly, battles between France and Britain, which is likely at the forefront of Mrs. Croft's mind as she relates her experiences to her listeners (60). Alluding to the time that was overshadowed by a fear for her husband's life, Mrs. Croft, like Fanny, offers a rare glimpse into the experiences of navy wives who were often compelled to watch their husbands go off to war, having little idea if they would ever see them again. Mrs. Croft certainly suffered from this anxiety, but clothes this fear for her husband's life in a description of her health, claiming that she had "always been blessed with excellent health" when she was in close proximity to the Admiral because there was "nothing to be feared" (104). She also contends that she only fell ill when he left her to go to the "North seas," during which she "lived in perpetual fright" and suffered "all manner of imaginary ailments" (104). Indeed, Mrs. Croft demonstrates that she would rather remain beside her husband and face potential hardships at sea than be in safety and be separated from him, stating that, as long as she and her husband could be together, she was "never met with the smallest inconvenience" and now thinks of the time on board her husband's vessels as "happiest part" of her life (104). Rather than a simple claim that women have a right to be on ships, Mrs. Croft's counter to her brother's statements both alludes to a time in her life that was overshadowed by a paralyzing anxiety and also offers the party an alternate experience to that of Wentworth's efficiently women-free voyages. By communicating her desire to join her husband at sea, Mrs. Croft gives her listeners a glimpse into the daily fear the wives of naval officers faced as they watched their husbands disappear to battle, knowing that it was probable that they would never return.

What Kindred doesn't highlight, however, is that navy wives were by no means the only sufferers of separation. Captain Wentworth demonstrates a similar pain when appealing to a ship's transporting abilities to communicate his desire of "eight years and a half ago" when Anne

brought an abrupt and painful end to their close relationship (245). Because of this heartbreak, Wentworth was desperate to leave the country, a desire that he communicated by appealing to a ship's ability to transport. Rejoining Admiral Croft's assertion that there never was a better sloop" than the *Asp* "in her day," Wentworth states that he "was well satisfied" with his "appointment" on the small vessel, as being at sea was a "very great object" for him during this time when he "wanted to be doing something" (98). Wentworth does refer to a literal ship during this implicit reference to his heartbreak, yet he uses the ship's action of ferrying him away on his assignment as a metaphor for his desire to escape from Anne during "that year of misery" (252).

As would be expected of a captain who made his career during some of the most formative years for the British Royal Navy, Wentworth also considers the ship's dependability as capable of bringing about his desires, especially when his ships proved themselves reliable in both the pleasant and pivotal moments in his career.<sup>30</sup> While recounting his experiences to the fascinated listeners, he refers to his assignments on the *Asp* and the *Laconia* as some of the most favorable times of his life, which leads him to use those ideal past experiences as a sort of metaphor for what he would consider to be his ideal circumstances in the present. Wentworth refers to his commission on the *Asp*, the first ship he "commanded," with fondness, saying that she "did all" he "wanted," and that he "never had two days of foul weather all the time he was at sea" with her (99). He also relives his "pleasant days" on the *Laconia*, recounting the "lovely

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<sup>30</sup> Syrratt also discusses Britain's heavy reliance on ships to defeat France during the Napoleonic Wars. Since the wide variety of vessels in the navy performed some of the most pivotal combative functions during the conflict, such as blocking trade routes and ferrying diplomats between main ports, the British depended almost entirely on ships to engage in a conflict that they could not fight on land due to Napoleon's continental control (72). In short, the British nation, and the entire British Empire, relied on the navy's ships to save the commonwealth from Napoleon's tyranny (75). This situation mirrors that of Wentworth's: just as the British nation relied so heavily on the ships of the British Royal navy to bring about victory over tyranny, so did Wentworth rely on ships to provide for his needs in some of the most critical times in his career.

cruise” he had to the “Western Islands” (99). Present during the most ideal moments of Wentworth’s time at sea, these vessels also proved reliable in the most pivotal instances of his career, especially when he recounts how quickly he “made money” on the *Laconia* and when he recalls a brutal storm where he knew that he and the *Asp* would either “either go to the bottom together” or that “she would be the making” of him (99). Through their dependability, these ships supply Wentworth with some of his fondest memories and provided for his needs in the formative stages of his career, making them a reliable means for him to convey an idealized version of a circumstance in which he has a home with a wife, and a ship without female interlopers.

The particular language that both Mrs. Croft and Wentworth use to refer to these ships also underscores the specific roles these vessels fulfill for the siblings when they use them to detail their desires. Throughout the dinner party, Wentworth repeatedly uses the feminine pronoun “she” when describing both the *Asp* and *Laconia*, and largely describes the vessels as the receivers of his actions, often referring to what he accomplished on or with these ships. When the Musgrove girls refer to the “navy-list” to locate the *Asp*, Wentworth recounts his exploits on this vessel by demonstrating his own action, stating that he was the last man “who commanded her” (97, 98). He also credits himself with the action while speaking about the *Laconia*, stating that she “had been one of the best friends a man ever had,” therefore subordinating the ship by ascribing the ownership of her to himself (100). In the few instances that Wentworth attributes action to his ships, such as how the *Asp* “did” all he “wanted,” he details the functions that they have fulfilled for himself, which is a stark contrast with the manner in which his sister refers to ships (99). Aside from her potentially indecorous reference to feeling at home in a “man of war,” Mrs. Croft’s comments regarding ships are surprisingly non-gendered (103). Throughout her

entire discourse, she refers to vessels only according to their particular types and refrains from assigning male or female pronouns to the ships. This lack of gender, however, does not afford the ships any agency, as Mrs. Croft uses ships to describe her own actions while never explicitly describing the actions of the ships themselves.

The fact that Mrs. Croft consigns ships to passive roles may appear simply to perpetuate Wentworth's use of ships to describe his ideal circumstances. However, I argue that the marked absence of gender from Mrs. Croft's discussion of ships actually severs the tie between these active and passive roles and between male and female identities, giving ships the ability to oscillate between active and passive functions regardless of their gender. John Sitter verges on this concept of fluidity in his article "Personification," wherein he asserts that "literature during this time was less fixed on the gender of personifications," meaning that the same object could be referred to as either masculine or feminine depending on whether or not the "roles that they play are active or passive" (164).<sup>31</sup> While Sitter does acknowledge an oscillation between action and passivity, he still describes these roles as contingent upon gender, which Mrs. Croft's discourse effectively eliminates. While the vessels featured in her conversation are distinctly passive, they are not female. By removing the gender identification from passivity, Mrs. Croft sets the precedent for how vessels operate in the narrative, fluctuating between action and passivity regardless of their gender.

The conversation at the dinner party demonstrates both how the characters communicate their desires through their conversations about ships and that these vessels are capable of

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<sup>31</sup> Sitter's article addresses specifically eighteenth-century literature, yet since there is less than a century between the publications of the work he addresses and *Persuasion*, I have found his argument germane to my discussion.

performing both active and passive functions by either receiving and containing the desires of the characters or actively fulfilling the character's needs by transporting or performing reliably. Yet the role of vessels transcends that of merely the subject of the characters' conversations, for the characters themselves also assume the essential roles that ships played, not only in "making" captains like Wentworth, but also in shaping a nation that favors an individual's merit over a deference to rank (99). Anne particularly embodies the role of a vessel first by functioning as a container for her family's ideals and desires and then by actively demonstrating her dependability in times of duress, illustrating her function as a container of desire early in the novel when she, yet again, receives a summons to attend to her sister Mary who is suffering another bout of her nervous ailment. During her visit, Anne finds herself entangled in a web of the Musgroves' disputes where nearly every member of the family deposits their "secret complaints" on her sympathetic, but often unwilling, ear (75). She is subjected first to Mary's moaning that her husband, Charles, would not care if he were to "see" her "dying," and then to Charles's entreaties for her to "persuade Mary not to be always fancying herself ill" (81). Charles's mother, Mrs. Musgrove, also finds Anne a suitable confidante for her concerns about her daughter-in-law's lack of control over her children and tells Anne it is a "pity" she "cannot put" her Mary "in the way of managing them" (81). In the beginning of the novel then, Anne functions much like the vessels featured at the Musgrove dinner party, also receiving and containing the idealizations and desires of her bickering family members.

While fulfilling the role of a container for the Musgrove family, Anne fluctuates between active and passive roles. The Musgroves not only view Anne as a suitable container for their wishes, but also as a person who is capable of bringing those desires to fruition. When Charles speaks to Anne, for example, he does not simply communicate a desire for his wife to stop

pretending to be an invalid, but he asks Anne to intervene and appeal to his wife on his behalf (81). Mrs. Musgrove also attempts to deploy Anne's mediating capabilities when she slyly observes that it is a "pity" Anne "cannot put" Mary "in the way of managing" the children (81). While undeniably using Anne as a container for their desires, the Musgroves also believe that Anne is capable of taking action to bring about the desired outcomes of their circumstances, which, like the ships in Wentworth and Mrs. Croft's discussion, places Anne's role as a vessel in fluctuation between active and passive roles.

Indeed, to a certain degree, Anne's role as a container matches that of the vessels described by Wentworth and Mrs. Croft, who only assign agency to vessels when they are performing a service for them. However, it is important to note that Anne does not take the role of an active container independently; she is given this active role at the will of the Musgroves who only bestow it upon her when it suits their purposes. When the Musgroves do not perceive any personal benefit arising from Anne's action, she, in their minds, retains an inert role in the family. Mary demonstrates this perception upon Anne's arrival at Uppercross by berating her sister for not coming to visit as soon as she had sent for her, asking Anne what she could "possibly have to do" at home that would prevent her from rushing to keep vigil at her sickbed (76). Mary never considers that Anne could have any role but to tend to her own needs and calls Anne into action only when enlisting her to "persuade" Charles that her illness is a "great deal worse than [she] would ever own" (81). Her attitude matches that of her husband and mother-in-law who also asks Anne to assume an active role only when they believe that her actions would directly bring about their ideal version of their circumstances (81). In the Musgroves' minds, Anne functions as an inert container of her family's desires and is only prompted into action when they believe that her intervention will bring about their desires.



Although numerous critics have commented on Anne's distinct passivity among Austen's heroines, they often fail to acknowledge that this inertness only exists in the consciousness of her family.<sup>32</sup> As the accident in Lyme Regis perfectly demonstrates, Anne is capable of springing into action independently. When Louisa hits the "pavement on the lower Cobb," Anne is the first of the stunned party to react when Wentworth, in a tone of despair, asks them if there "is no one to help" him (139). Although his entreaty calls upon the party collectively without designating Anne as the addressee, she is still the first to respond. She immediately commands Captain Benwick to go help Wentworth support Louisa's "poor, corpse-like figure" while, without being prompted, simultaneously attending to Henrietta and Mary (138). Anne's sudden transition into this active role, then, demonstrates that, unlike the vessels that feature in the conversation at the dinner party, she has the capacity to switch to an active role of her independent will.

Anne not only functions as a vessel in Lyme Regis through her independent action, but also through her dependability. Being the only individual in the party to retain her faculties during the chaos following Louisa's concussion, she elicits the praise of the entire party to recognize her "strength and zeal" amid the panic and also prompts Wentworth's assertion that there is no one "so capable as Anne" (139, 141). Her dependability deeply resonates with

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<sup>32</sup> Building on the work of earlier scholars, such as C. S. Lewis who propounds that Anne stands "almost outside from the world which the action of the novel depicts," many critics have used Anne's distinct lack of action and even apathy as entry points into their criticism ("A Note on Jane Austen" 365). Valerie Shaw states that Anne is often a mere observer of the events in the narrative ("Jane Austen's Subdued Heroines" 284), an idea that Bree carries into her commentary when discussing how Anne's discourse demonstrates a distinct detachment from the action within her family (22-23). Christien Garcia argues that Austen uses Anne's passive silence to distinguish the romance of her protagonist from that of her secondary characters ("Left Hanging: Suspension and Desire in Jane Austen's *Persuasion*" 88-89). Anne's lack of action also features in Michael Kramp's *Jane Austen and Masculinity* when Kramp discusses how Anne's suppression of her suffering during her separation from Wentworth highlights the novel's general disapproval of displays of feminine grief (29). These opinions, however, rely on the fact that Anne is consigned to these passive roles by the outward influences of her friends and family; they do not point out that she often oscillates between active and passive roles of her own volition.

Wentworth and heightens his esteem for her, which she later learns through Mrs. Croft's description of Wentworth's hope that Anne is not the "worse for her exertions" during Louisa's accident which he considers "great" (150). Wentworth's amplified respect for dependability in the face of adversity is understandable given his position in the navy. As Malcomson stresses, high stakes were attached to a naval man's ability to demonstrate reliability while engaging in a fight for the jeopardized freedom of the entire British Empire; dependability was a critical feature of a naval officer, meaning that crimes such as desertion and theft often resulted in corporal punishment, immediate dismissal, or even execution (147-50).<sup>33</sup> Wentworth's conversation at the dinner party clearly demonstrates that his eight years at sea instilled in him this high regard for dependability, as he only refers to the "dear old" *Asp* and *Laconia* with terms of affection when he recounts how they provided for his needs in the highly crucial moments of his life (99). This response to his ship's reliability in these critical times parallels his reaction to Anne's response to his plea for help; he attaches high praise to Anne's intervention at the Cobb, not referring to her actions as merely wonderful or admirable, but as "great" (150). By launching into action of her own volition, Anne precipitates her reconciliation with Wentworth, whose esteem for her greatly improves when she demonstrates her reliability in adverse circumstances.

Anne's action at the Cobb also demonstrates how vessels are instrumental in emphasizing the value of human connection over acquisition of titles and reputation. Louisa's accident is just as formative to Wentworth as are his experiences on the *Asp* and the *Laconia*: in

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<sup>33</sup> Malcomson does note several exceptions to these court rulings. He offers a record of a boatswain named John Sachell who, although convicted for theft, was allowed to retain his position in order to provide for his large family (147).

Bath, he later confesses that his reliance on Anne during this time of extreme duress caused a determinative moment within himself. In the beginning of the novel, Wentworth communicates a desire to marry, but appears to want marriage simply for marriage's sake without taking personal attachment into account, which effectively explains why he throws himself at the Musgrove sisters with no seeming consideration of their youth and simplicity. Later in Bath, Wentworth articulates how Anne's dependability convinced him of her "superiority" over Louisa, stating that it was "not til that day" of the accident and until "the leisure of reflection which followed it," that he had not understood the "perfect excellence of the mind which Louisa's could so ill bear a comparison" (249). Anne's trustworthiness makes Wentworth recognize his "angry pride" in "imagining himself indifferent" to her, which helps him understand that he had "not cared, nor could have cared" for Louisa (249). The fact that Anne's dependability proves to be instrumental in shaping Wentworth's perception of his folly illustrates how the function of vessels augments this novel's emphasis on the wisdom of prizing connections with people rather than on the acquisition of personal assets.

When considering Anne's active role as a vessel, whether given to her by her family or executed independently, it is well worth noting that her actions also demonstrate her role as a vessel by acting in opposition to her surrounding circumstances.<sup>34</sup> She exhibits this contrast throughout the narrative, first with her sensible replies to Mary's petty wants and then by leaping into action at the Cobb when the remainder of the party remains frozen and stunned. In this sense, Admiral Croft and Captain Harville also fulfill the roles of vessels in the narrative, as,

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<sup>34</sup> Bree also discusses how Anne's actions often appear counter to the prevailing attitudes of the other characters. She observes that Anne's feelings toward Wentworth display a constancy and loyalty that "that stands against the prevailing sense of slippage of time and opinions," therefore highlighting Anne's steadfastness in the face of those who objected to her union with Wentworth (25).

like Anne, they perform both active and passive functions while also fulfilling the roles of containers and vessels of dependability. Nearly always on the periphery of the action within the novel, these men's active roles are entirely counter to what Shaw refers to as the "rampant selfishness" of the societies in which they circulate (291). Unlike the other characters, these men demonstrate that they contain a wisdom not had by many other of the characters in the novel: the wisdom of valuing connections with people above material assets. They demonstrate this attitude through their perception of ships and the navy; unlike Wentworth or Mrs. Croft, they do not allow themselves to be swayed by nostalgia for their seafaring days nor do they use their times at sea to convey their desires. Instead of dwelling on what the past has offered them, they anchor themselves in what they have in the present, which is love and familial connection. This wisdom, often disregarded by the other characters, performs a special function for Anne. In these men, she finds the respect for love and connection opposite to the attitudes of those in her intimate social circle.

Captain Harville and the Admiral do not have to teach Anne this sort of respect for connection over assets. Her attitudes toward the acquisitiveness of her family suggests that she already is well aware that there is a deeper meaning to existence than the social fixity and vanity of her friends and family, and she recognizes this deeper meaning in both the Admiral and Captain Harville. Anne rarely challenges her family's attitudes overtly, but several narrative details communicate her poor opinion of their superficiality. When Anne supplies the Musgroves with music after dinner, for example, she is aware that her playing is giving "pleasure only to herself" and that she "had never since the loss of her dear mother, known the happiness of being listened to, or encouraged by any just appreciation or real taste" (83). Anne's uses of the words "just" and "real" in contrast to the attitudes of her family demonstrate that she is quite cognizant

of their frivolousness, which often manifests in their attention to transient assets and reputation. Unlike the other characters, Anne immediately recognizes the difference of attitudes between her family and that of the Admiral Croft and Captain Harville, and she finds herself taken by their “goodness of heart,” “simplicity of character,” and “unaffected, easy kindness,” making their function as vessels of wisdom instrumental to Anne’s reunion with Wentworth (150, 241).

When the Crofts take up Kellynch Hall with “all naval alertness,” the Admiral quickly demonstrates his clear contrast with the Elliots in his high regard for familial connection that is unattached to material acquisition (84). Admiral’s Croft’s position as the “rear admiral of the white,” indicates that he has achieved one of the highest naval ranks possible for an individual born in a lower social status, which, as Linda Bree states, immediately highlights the disparity between Admiral Croft’s position and Sir Walter’s opinion that “status is indissolubly connected with birth” (16-17).<sup>35</sup> Indeed, Admiral Croft does not earn his landlord’s respect by his accomplishments in the “Trafalgar action,” but through his assertion that he finds Sir Walter to be a “model of good breeding” (60, 61).<sup>36</sup> The Admiral appears intermittently throughout the narrative and holds a peripheral position within the plot, but his words and actions during his irregular appearances demonstrate the value of familial closeness so often dismissed by the

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<sup>35</sup> The position as a rear Admiral of the white denotes the Admiral’s position in the lowest rank of the admiralty (admiral, vice-admiral, and rear-admiral) in the white squadron, one of the three squadrons comprising the navy (Bree 61 n2).

<sup>36</sup> Austen’s reference to Admiral Croft’s involvement in the Battle of Trafalgar also demonstrates Sir Walter’s ignorance of current events and national concerns. Won by the British in 1805, a decade before this novel appeared in print, this battle proved to be one of the most decisive victories of the second Napoleonic War. According to Southam, officers involved in this battle were generously compensated for their efforts, receiving the “material rewards. . .of annuities and cash payments for those involved” that guaranteed the wealth of the officers involved in victory (376). If Sir Walter was aware of this circumstance, he certainly would have known of the Admiral’s remuneration and perhaps would have been more willing to lease Kellynch to an affluent naval officer. However, he proves that he is completely ignorant of these current events by stating a displeasure of his tenant being “as orange as the cuffs and capes” of his “livery” (62).

Elliots, demonstrating that Admiral Croft functions as a vessel by containing a wisdom that is not exhibited by the other characters.

Admiral Croft primarily demonstrates that he contains this wisdom by offering an alternative to Wentworth's utilitarian perspective on ships. At the Musgroves' dinner party, the Admiral exhibits a completely different attitude toward the *Asp* than Wentworth; he responds to the captain's comments that the *Asp* is now "quite worn and broken up" and not "fit to be employed" by strongly asserting that, although old, "there was never a better sloop than the *Asp* in her day" (98). Like Wentworth, the Admiral assigns the feminine pronoun to the *Asp*, but he does not adopt the captain's manner of consigning the ship's active role to fulfilling his needs. His praise of the *Asp* is not focused on anything that she has done for him, as he simply states that "any man would be lucky to have her" (98). The Admiral's admiration for the *Asp* coupled with his use of the female pronoun certainly parallels his high opinion of women, and, unlike Wentworth, he does not consider them a hindrance but as something that a man would be fortunate to have. He also conveys this attitude with his good-natured comments, stating that when Wentworth marries, he will "sing a different tune" by changing his conviction of not having women on board to being "very thankful to anybody that will bring him his wife" (103). The Admiral's use of the female pronoun for ships and his attitude toward the presence of women on ships show that he functions as a vessel by containing a high regard for love and connection, as he values his relationship with his wife over the convenience of maintaining a women-free policy on his ships.

The Admiral's function as a vessel through the containment of this wisdom further demonstrates how the role of vessels proves instrumental in highlighting the danger of dwelling upon desires. In Bath, he unwittingly communicates this wisdom to Anne during his "earnest

contemplation” of a print of a ship that is displayed in a printshop window. Gazing at this depiction of a ship with rocky mountains in the background, the Admiral observes “what queer fellows your fine painters must be, to think that anybody would venture their lives in such a shapeless old cockleshell” as that boat (187). He also describes the direction of the ship, which is sailing toward inevitable destruction, noting the “two gentlemen stuck up” in the mast “mightily at their ease, and looking about them at the rocks and the mountains as if they were not to be upset the next moment, which they certainly must be” (187). The Admiral’s primary critique of the men in the mast is their disconnection with their position in the surrounding landscape: they are seemingly distracted by distant mountains, apparently unaware of the danger of sailing toward a rocky shoreline while being trapped on a vessel in which the Admiral “would not venture over a horsepond” (87). Both this image, and the Admiral’s reaction to it, could serve as a metaphor for the disparity between his pragmatic perspective and the desires of the characters in the novel. Like the men on the mast, the characters are often disconnected with their present circumstances by allowing themselves to become distracted by their desires – whether it be Wentworth’s desperate search for a wife or Sir Walter’s thirst for prestige. These desires divert the characters from what they possess in reality, placing them in danger of facing discontentment and disappointment. The Admiral’s ability immediately to identify the danger in this image clearly illustrates his role as a vessel, as it demonstrates that, through the wisdom he contains, he is capable of identifying the danger of not anchoring oneself in the reality of what one does have and allowing desire to convey one toward inevitable disappointment. Admiral Croft’s following conversation with Anne reveals that he, conversely, is content with what he has in the present, stating that Bath suits him and Sophy “very well,” and that they found their lodgings in the city just as comfortable as those in Kellynch (188).

The Admiral demonstrates this wisdom of valuing connections with people by placing himself completely at Anne's disposal when, as the two prepare to leave the shop window, he asks Anne if he can "go anywhere" for her or "be of any use" (187). When Anne replies that she would be obliged if he would accompany her home, the Admiral responds with delight, stating that he would "go there" with her and "farther too," revealing that he has "something to tell" her (187). This wholehearted offer runs completely counter to the self-centeredness of the Elliots who only display their gentility when they would derive personal benefit from doing so. The Admiral has nothing to gain by offering his services or information to Anne, but his regard for fostering connections with people still prompts him to place himself at Anne's disposal. This act, then, further solidifies the Admiral's role as a vessel. Through his wisdom of valuing relationships over personal gain, he functions completely counter to the selfishness characterizing Anne's family, an act that, in the end, supplies the information that will lead Anne to a full reconciliation with Wentworth.

The Admiral's following conversation with Anne further demonstrates his role as a vessel by illustrating his function as a transporter, as the information he reveals helps Anne leave behind her original perception of her relationship with Wentworth and conveys her to the next phase of her life. Throughout the narrative, Anne has expended much of her energy fighting her feelings for Wentworth, simultaneously agonizing over what he was thinking about her and attempting to convince herself of the absurdity of "resuming the agitation which such an interval [of their eight years of separation] had banished into distance and indistinctness" (94). The recent news of Louisa's marriage to Benwick only exacerbates Anne's agitation, throwing her into a state of "senseless joy" as she attempts to discover the captain's attitude toward the upcoming marriage (186). The Admiral, however, unwittingly, relieves Anne's emotional duress. Prompted



by her inquiries, he reveals that Wentworth's letters do not seem to indicate that he has even "considered Louisa for himself" (190). This information effectively propels Anne into a new phase of her life in which she, more convinced of Wentworth's feelings, no longer has to exist in a state of agonizing indeterminacy. The narrative itself highlights the Admiral's role in this transition. As the two turn away from the print shop and step onto the street, the Admiral tells Anne to take his arm, and the narrator states that they "began to be in motion" (187). This emphasis on forward momentum with the Admiral leading Anne indicates that he is guiding her away from the stagnant state elicited by her previous perception of her relationship with Wentworth into her new mindset.

If Admiral Croft fulfills his role as a vessel through his regard for familial connection, so too does Captain Harville function as a vessel by demonstrating that he considers familial relationships to be one of life's preeminent comforts. Recalled from sea because of a wound and grieving the loss of his sister, Fanny, Harville's "unaffected, warm, and obliging" presence in the narrative offers another contrast to the Elliots and Musgroves who taint their familial connections with self-interest (127). Toward the conclusion of the novel, it is Harville's wisdom in respecting familial connection above all other things that continues to push Anne and Wentworth closer together, therefore demonstrating that, through his wisdom of valuing love over material possessions, both Anne and Wentworth finally experience a full reconciliation.

The scene in the Musgroves' temporary lodgings in Bath best displays how Harville's wisdom in valuing familial relationships and communicating his yearning for familial connection engenders Anne's reunion with Captain Wentworth. While at the Musgrove home waiting for Wentworth to complete a letter to a German artist whom Benwick commissioned to paint his portrait, Harville informs Anne of his grief over Benwick's engagement, thinking that he has

forgotten too quickly about Harville's sister Fanny, who was Benwick's fiancée before her untimely death. With emotion, Harville states that, if Fanny were in Benwick's position, she would have remained true and not have forgotten her familial connections so quickly. Anne agrees, asserting that it is not "in the nature of any woman who had truly loved to forget" her relationships and states that the "more robust" men are more liable to neglect close attachments than women who have "more tender" feelings (239). Roused by Anne's generalization of men's sentiments, Harville passionately maintains that since men's bodies are stronger, their "feelings are capable of bearing most rough usage," meaning that men are able to remain true to the women they love in even the most adverse circumstances (242). Through this vehement defense of his gender, Captain Harville demonstrates that he values and respects the bonds forged by love above all other things. He solidifies this sentiment when reassuring Wentworth that he is not in a hurry, stating that, while speaking to Anne of his staunch belief in the unwavering devotion of his gender, he finds himself "in very good anchorage" and "well supplied and in want of nothing" (242-23). These statements underscore—and in strikingly nautical terms—the preeminent importance of love and familial connection to Harville: he feels that he is grounded and secure through the simple act of informing Anne about his experience with love. Harville's assertion that this conversation leaves him "in want of nothing" also demonstrates his role as a vessel, as this statement stresses his belief that only connections based upon genuine love and devotion will bring about complete satisfaction and fulfillment (242).

This interchange between Anne and Harville also demonstrates that he functions as a transporter because his communication of the wisdom he contains, as Shaw asserts, affords Anne the opportunity to "demonstrate her constancy" that precipitates her final reconciliation with Wentworth (301). In response to Harville's emotional depiction of the anguish of naval men who

are separated from their families, Anne concedes that men are constant in their “married lives”; she states that all she can claim is that women are the ones who love “the longest, when existence or when hope is gone” (244). Harville’s assertion then, finally prompts Anne indirectly to disclose her eight years’ of suffering upon Wentworth’s eavesdropping ear, which in the same moment causes his written confession in which he states that he has never been “inconstant” to Anne and begs her not to tell him that he is “too late” in declaring his feelings (245). Harville’s declaration of his constancy then prompts both Anne and Wentworth to proclaim their devotion that had lain in silence during the eight years of their separation, therefore transporting the estranged couple toward their final, and joyful, reconciliation.

Despite this happy conclusion, some critics have highlighted how the perplexing and indeterminate ending of *Persuasion* casts a portentous shadow on Anne and Wentworth’s future.<sup>37</sup> Indeed, the narrator does not end with Anne’s “tenderness” and Wentworth’s “affection” in their newly married life, but instead ominously foreshadows the fear and danger that will dog their marital bliss, prefiguring “the dread of future war” in which Anne “must pay the tax of quick alarm” due to Wentworth’s “profession” (258). Interpreting this ending as a sure sign of the couple’s future struggles, however, would be to ignore that characters who embody the functions of vessels had hitherto been capable of traversing indeterminate circumstances successfully. Indeed, the characters have been shaped by uncertainty, for *Persuasion* is particularly distinctive from Austen’s preceding novels in that its most pivotal moments do not

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<sup>37</sup> This ending has led critics to label this novel as one of Austen’s most realistic depictions of life during war, a description that, as Nina Auerbach asserts, is shot through with a “fear” that “strikes through the emotional heart of the book” (“O Brave New World” 126). Bree goes further to identify indeterminate states of the characters at the novel’s conclusion, observing that, while the narrator briefly discusses the fate of the characters in the conclusion, the narrative still leaves many loose ends untied (35).

occur within the security of a landed estate, but within temporary environments and in the midst of indeterminate situations. Anne's first encounter with Wentworth in eight years, for instance, occurs while her family retrenches and leaves their home; Mrs. Croft finds her happiness in the cramped confines of a ship; and Anne and Wentworth finally declare themselves in the Musgrove's temporary lodgings in Bath. However, the narrative suggests that only the characters who express a regard for human connections over material assets are able to function in these moments of indeterminacy, as their action starkly contrasts with the reactions of the characters who place their value in materiality and therefore have no idea how to function in adverse circumstances. Sir Elliot and Elizabeth, for example, feel "ill-used" and "unfortunate" at the necessity of retrenchment and the uncertainty of their future but still find it impossible to "compromise their dignity" by giving up their "comforts" (52). By pushing against this inertia, the characters who personify vessels offer a hopeful tenor to the narrative's foreboding conclusion: their actions during these moments of indeterminacy illustrate that they do not perceive instability as something to be feared; rather, they demonstrate their ability to weather, and even to navigate successfully, the storms of uncertainty.

This heightened emphasis on indeterminacy also highlights the novel's stress on forward motion, as these uncertain circumstances the characters face often involve movement or travel, a motion that slowly culminates into pivotal changes within the characters themselves. Uncertainty, motion, and reform, then, form the final illustration of how the characters embody the function of British naval vessels during the Napoleonic Wars. As Southam explains, the significant reforms of the navy, wherein common men could advance through their own merit, were not actualized on land, but within the vessels themselves as they traversed the seas (*Jane Austen and the Navy* 109-114). The characters likewise experience inward changes as they move

from one place to another, a transformation that Wentworth demonstrates when he, at the end of the novel, lists the series of events that transformed his opinion of Anne and convinced him of her “superiority”: the “passing admiration of Mr. Elliot,” the “scenes” that occurred while walking on the “Cobb,” and Anne’s “action” at the site of the accident are all charged with forward motion and a sense of change (249).

Yet, Anne’s inward change perhaps most poignantly illustrates this transformation, as it is within these scenes of forward movement that she not only gains insight into her own feelings toward Wentworth but is finally able to articulate her perspective of Mrs. Russell’s hand in their separation. Her exchange with Admiral Croft while walking the streets of Bath is not the only scene of motion that offers Anne this critical insight, as there are other instances in which Anne comes to realize Wentworth’s feelings toward her. Earlier in the novel, when Wentworth prevails in convincing Anne to ride in Admiral and Mrs. Croft’s gig instead of continuing with the walking party, the narrator notes Anne’s increased insight into Wentworth’s disposition toward her, stating that, as she rode away, Anne then “understood” how Wentworth’s attitude suggested that he “could not forgive her,” but also “could not be unfeeling” toward her, a prospect she “could not contemplate without emotions so compounded with pleasure and pain” (120). Anne also acquires a better sense of how Wentworth’s feelings influence her own during the carriage ride following Louisa’s fall when Wentworth asks her advice about how “to break” the news of the accident to Mrs. Musgrove (144). This appeal heightens Anne’s awareness of her tenderness for Wentworth, for she takes “great pleasure” in this entreaty and considers it “proof of their friendship” (144). These scenes of motion culminate in Anne’s ability to articulate her thoughts regarding Mrs. Russell’s intervention that had hitherto remained unvoiced. Significantly, this verbalization occurs as they are strolling down a “gravel walk” (248). While responding to

Wentworth's agony in thinking that Mrs. Russell had convinced Anne to become engaged to Mr. Elliot, Anne demonstrates an ability to weigh external expectations with her conscience by asserting her belief that feeling, not pragmatic considerations of rank and wealth, should be the ultimate measure of marital attachments. She replies that, eight years before, she had considered it a duty to obey Mrs. Russell, but now realizes that "all risks would have been incurred and all duty violated" if she married Mr. Elliot to whom she feels "indifferent" (251). It is within these scenes of forward movement, then, that Anne gains an awareness of both Wentworth's feelings and her own, an insight that transforms her into an individual who is capable of both asserting and articulating her own principles regarding marriage free from external influences.

These scenes of forward motion not only enable Anne to express her desires, but also to oppose her family's self-indulgent and selfish attitudes, an altruism she demonstrates when countering Wentworth's disdain of Mrs. Russell's "indelible" influence (250). Anne does not treat Mrs. Russell's interference with scorn but instead graciously acknowledges her friend's care for her well-being, stating that Mrs. Russell "was like a parent to her," and that she was "perfectly right" in following her advice" (253). Anne's resolve gainsays her family's need for self-gratification, as she refuses to harbor resentment toward Mrs. Russell whose advice has given her eight years of pain. These moments of forward motion then highlight another manner in which the characters assume the functions of naval vessels. Just as the expeditions of naval ships slowly led to Britain's social reforms, so too do the characters' forward motions culminate into Anne's realization of the change within herself that pushes against her family's avaricious attitudes.

With its rejection of status in favor of love, the conclusion of *Persuasion* does indeed, as Nina Auerbach states, give "a home to the values that had to struggle on the land," a

phenomenon that clearly emerges when viewing this ending in light of Austen's preceding characters who have also fought to assert their desires, often doing so against the confines of Britain's social strata ("O Brave New World: Evolution and Revolution in *Persuasion*" 199). In Anne and Wentworth's reunion, we can find a reiteration of Lizzy Bennet's vehement assertion that "Mr. Darcy really was really the object of her choice" (*Pride and Prejudice* 697) as well as Mr. Knightley's ardent "hope" that he had secured Emma's "affection" (*Emma*, 270), and the conclusion offers a final illustration of how valuing love and connection over assets brings about a true and lasting fulfillment. As Monica Cohen observes, marrying a navy captain means that, unlike the other heroines of Austen's novels, Anne has "no literal home awaiting her post-nuptial arrival" and is destined for a life at sea ("Persuading the Navy Home" 348). This instability, however, does not concern Anne; despite the pain of her past and the potential fear within her future she still "glorie[s] in being a sailor's wife," an attitude that presents a rare parallel between current events and Austen's fiction (258).<sup>38</sup> Anne, Admiral Croft, and Captain Harville, appear to function in the same manner as the vessels of the British Royal Navy during the early nineteenth century; as naval ships were instrumental in the British victory over French tyranny, so do the vessels in *Persuasion* help Anne and Wentworth vanquish either the avarice or the shortsightedness of most of the characters. Their contentment in the face of potential danger and

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<sup>38</sup> Austen's depiction of Anne's and Wentworth's marriage is uncommonly close by Regency standards. Lawrence Stone explains the increasing distance between spouses in the middle and upper-classes in the early nineteenth century as a manifestation of society's response to the surge in individualistic thought in the 1790s; the following decades saw an increased sensitivity to sexual restraint and patriarchal authority, a cultural disposition that encouraged women to exhibit deference to their husbands (*The Family, Sex and Marriage in England, 1500-1800*, 666-667). Rather than being subservient to Wentworth, Anne intends to be his helpmate by sailing with him and assisting him in his vocation, meaning their marriage would be premised upon a partnership and an equal companionship that would be quite unusual in Regency society.

fear not only anchors the novel's message but illustrates the values that Austen had been championing throughout her writing career. By rooting the revolutionary function of vessels within the actions of the characters themselves, Austen does more than create a world that resembles contemporary concerns; rather, this embodiment of ships brings to life, with striking vividness, a world in which a value for love and human connection, not greed and self-gratification, brings about a true and lasting fulfillment.



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## APPENDIX A: THE ORIGINAL PSALM 137 KING JAMES VERSION

### Psalm 137 *KJV*

**1** By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down, yea, we wept, when we remembered Zion.

**2** We hanged our harps upon the willows in the midst thereof.

**3** For there they that carried us away captive required of us a song; and they that wasted us required of us mirth, saying, Sing us one of the songs of Zion.

**4** How shall we sing the Lord's song in a strange land?

**5** If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning.

**6** If I do not remember thee, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth; if I prefer not Jerusalem above my chief joy.

**7** Remember, O Lord, the children of Edom in the day of Jerusalem; who said, Rase it, rase it, even to the foundation thereof.

**8** O daughter of Babylon, who art to be destroyed; happy shall he be, that rewardeth thee as thou hast served us.

**9** Happy shall he be, that taketh and dasheth thy little ones against the stones

APPENDIX B: PARAPHRASES OF PSALM 137

“Psalm 137” Thomas Carew 1655

Sitting by the streames that Glide  
Downe by Babells Towering wall,  
With our tears wee field the tyde  
Whilst our Myndfull thoughts recall  
The Oh Sion, and thy fall.

Our neglected harps vnstrunge,  
Not acquainted with the hand  
Of the skillful Tuner, hunge  
On the willow trees that stand  
Planted in the Neighbour land.

Yett the spiteful foe Commands  
Songes of Mirthe, and bids vs lay  
To dumbe harps, oure Captiue hands,  
And, (to scoffe our sorrowes) say  
Sing vs som sweet hebrewe lay.

But say wee, our holye strayn  
Is too pure for heathen land,  
Nor may wee godes Himnes prophane,  
Or moue eyther voyce or hand  
To delight a sausage band.

Holye Spyrit yf thy loue  
Fall from my forgetful harte,  
May the skill by which I moue  
Stringes of Musicke tund with art,  
From my withered hand departe!

May my speechless tongue giue sound  
To noe accents, but remayne  
To my prisen Roofe fast bound,  
Iff my sad soule Entertayne  
Mirth, till thou reioyce agayne!



In that day remember, Lord  
Edoms brood, that in our groaned  
They Triumph; with fier and sword  
Burn their Cittie, hew their bones  
And make all One heape of stones.

Cruell Babell, thou shalt feele  
The Reuenger of our groaned,  
When the happie Victor steele  
As thine, ours, shall hew thy bones,  
And make thee one heape of stones.

Men shall bless the hand that teares  
From the Mothers softe embraces  
Sucking Infants, and besmeares  
With their braynes, the Rugged faces  
Of the Rockes and stony places.

“Paraphrase upon the 137. Psalm.” John Oldham 1676

Far from our pleasant native *Palestine*,  
Where great *Euphrates* with a mighty current flows,  
And does in watry limits *Babylon* confine,  
Curss'd *Babylon!* the cause, and author of our woes;  
There on the Rivers side  
Sate wretched, Captive we.  
And in sad Tears bewail'd our misery.  
Tears, whose vast store increas'd the neighb'ring Tide:  
We wept, and strait our grief before us brought  
A thousand distant Objects to our thought.  
As oft as we survey'd the gliding Stream,  
Lov'd *Jordan* did our sad remembrance claim:  
As oft as we th' adjoyning City view'd,  
Dear *Sions* razed Walls our Grief renew'd:  
We thought on all the Pleasures of our happy Land,  
Late ravish'd by a cruel Conqu'rour's hand:  
We thought on every piteous, every mournful thing,  
That might access to our enlarged sorrows bring;

Deep silence told the greatness of our Grief,  
Of grief too great by Vent to find relief:  
Our Harps as mute and dumb, as we,  
Hung useless, and neglected by,  
And now and then a broken String would lend a sigh,  
As if with us they selt a sympathy,  
And mourn'd their own, and our Captivity:  
The gentle River too, as if compassionate grown,  
As 'twould its Natives cruelty attone,  
As it pass'd by, in murmurs gave a pitying Groan.

There the proud Conquerors, who gave us Chains,  
Who all our suff'rings and misfortunes gave,  
Did with rude Insolence our Sorrows brave,  
And with insulting Raillery thus mock'd our Pains:  
Play us (said they) some brisk, and airy strain,  
Such as your Ancestors were wont to hear  
On Shilo's pleasant Plain,  
Where all the Virgins met in Dances once a year:  
Or one of those,  
Which your illustrious David did compose,  
While he fill'd Israel's happy Throne,  
Great Soldier, Poet, and Musician all in one:  
Oft (have we heard) he went with Harp in hand,  
Captain of all harmonious Band,  
And vanquish'd all the Quire with's single skill alone:

Forbid it Heav'n! sorbid thou great thrice-hallow'd Name,  
We should thy Sacred Hymns defame,  
Or them with impious ears profane.  
No, no, inhumane slaves, is this a time  
(Oh cruel, and preposterous demand!)  
When every Joy, and every Smile's a crime.  
A Treason to our poor unhappy native Land?  
Is this a time for sprightly Airs,  
When every look the Badg of sorrow wears,  
And Livery of our Miseries,  
Sad miseries that call for all our Breath in sighs,  
And all the Tribute of our eyes,  
And moisture of our Veins our very bloud in tears?  
When nought can claim our Thoughts, *Jerusalem*, but thou,  
Nought, but thy sad Destruction, Fall, and Overthrow?

Oh dearest City! late our Nations justest Pride!

Envy of all the wond'ring world beside!

Oh sacred Temple, once th' Almighty's bless'd abode,  
Now quite forsaken by our angry God!  
Shall ever distant time, or Place  
Your firm Ideas from my Soul deface?  
Shall they not still take up my Breast  
As long as that, and Life, and I shall last?  
Grant Heav'n (nor shall my Pray'rs the Curse withstand)  
That this my learned, skilful hand  
(Which now o're all the tuneful strings can boast command,  
Which does as quick, as ready, and unerring prove,  
As nature, when it would its joynts or fingers move)  
Grant it forget its Art and feeling too,  
When I forget to think, to wish, to pray for you:  
For ever tied with Dumbness be my tongue,  
When it speaks ought that shall not to your Praise belong,  
If that be not the constant subject of my Muse, and Song.

Remember, Heav'n, remember *Edom* on that day,

And with like sufferings their spight repay,

Who made our Miseries their cruel Mirth and Scorn,  
Who laugh'd to see our flaming City burn,  
And wish'd it might to Ashes turn:  
Raze, raze it (was their cursed cry)  
Raze all its stately Structures down,  
And lay its Palaces, and Temple level with the ground,  
Till Sion buried in his dismal Ruines lie,  
Forgot alike its Place, its Name, and Memory.  
And thou proud Babylon! just Object of our Hate,  
Thou too shalt feel the sad reverse of Fate,  
Tho thou art now exalted high,  
And with thy lofty head o'retop'st the Sky,  
As if thou would'st the Pow'rs above defie;  
Thou (if those Pow'rs (and sure they will) prove just,  
If my Prophetick Grief can ought foresee)  
Ere long shalt lay that lofty head in dust,  
And blush in Bloud for all thy present Cruelty:  
How, loudly then shall we retort these bitter Taunts!  
How gladly to the Musick of thy Fetters dance!  
A day will come (oh might I see't!) e're long  
That shall revenge our mighty wrong:  
Then bless'd, for ever bless'd be he

Whoever shall return't on thee,  
And grave it deep, and pay't with bloody Usury:  
May neither aged Groans, nor Infant Cries,  
Nor pitious Mothers Tears, nor ravish'd Virgins Sighs,  
Soften thy unrelenting Enemies,  
Let them as thou to us inexorable prove,  
Nor Age nor Sex their deaf Compassion move;  
Rapes, Murders, Slaughters, Funerals,  
And all thou durst attempt within our *Sions* Wall,  
May'st thou endure, and more, till joyful we  
Confess thy self out-done in artful cruelty.  
Bless'd, yea, thrice blessed be that barbarous Hand  
(Oh grief, that I such dire Revenge commend!)  
Who tears out Infants from their Mothers Womb,  
And hurls them yet unborn unto their Tomb:

Bless'd he who plucks them from their Parents Arms,  
That Sanctuary from all common harms,  
Who with their Skulls, and Bones shall pave thy Streets all o're,  
And fill thy glutted Channels with their scatter'd Brains and Gore.

“Psalm 137” *Skipwith Manuscript*, Frances Davison 1620-30

By Euphrates flowry side  
we did bide  
From dear Iuda far absented  
Tearinge y ayre w our cryes  
& our eyes  
w y streames his stream augmented.

when poor syons dolefull state  
desolate  
sacked, burned, & enthrald  
And the Temple spoyld w wee  
near should see  
To our myrthless minds we cal'd.

Our mute Harpes, vntun'd, vnstrunge  
vp wear hunge  
on green willowes neer beside vs,  
when we sittinge all forlorne

thus in scorne  
Our proud spoylers gan deride us.

Come sad Captiues leaue y mones  
and y grones  
vnder sions ruins burye:  
Tune y harpes, & singe us lays  
in the prayse  
of y God & lets be merry.

Can? ah can we leaue our mones?  
& our grones  
vnder Syons ruines bury?  
can we in this Land singe lays,  
in y praise  
of our God, & heer be merry?  
No dear syon if I yet  
doe forget  
Thine aliction miserable  
Let my nimble ioynts become  
sti & num,  
To touch warblinge harpe vnable.

Let my tongue loose singinge skill  
Let it still  
To my parched rooffe be glewed,  
If in either harpe or voyce  
I rey reioice  
Till thy ioyes shall be renued.

Lord curse Edoms traterous kinde  
bear in minde  
In our ruines how they reuil'd,  
sack, kill, burne they cryed out still  
sack, burne, kill,  
Downe w all let all be leuel'd.

And thou Babell, when the tyde  
of thy Pride,  
Now a flowinge growes to turninge

victor now, shalt then be thrall  
& shalt fall  
To as low an ebb of morninge.

Happy he who shall thee wast  
as thou hast  
vs w out all mercy wasted:  
And shall make thee tast, & see,  
what poor we  
By thy meanes haue seen, & tasted.

Happy who thy tender Barnes  
from y armes  
of their waylinge mothers tearinge,  
Gainst the walls dashe y bones,  
ruthless stones w their braynes, & blood besmearinge.

George Wither

*This Elegiacal Hymne, mistically expresseth the Zeal, & love of the Faithfull, to the Citty of God: And Prophecies, the fall of the spirituall Babilon. Wee may sing it to comfort vs during the continuance of our Naturall bondage, & the tirranies of Antichrist.*

AS wee nigh *Babel* River sate,  
Wee, overcharg'd with weepings were,  
To thinck on *Syon's* pore estate;  
And hung our harpes, on willowes there:  
For, they to whome wee were inthralld,  
On vs, for songs of *Syon*, called.

Come sing, they sayd, a *Syon-hymne*.  
Lord! cann wee sing thy songs in thrall?  
Vnles (Oh dear *Ierusalem*)  
Thee, in my mirth, preferr I shall;  
Or, if the thought of thee forgoe mee,  
Let hand & tongue, prove vseles to me.

Oh Lord, remember *Edom's* brood,  
And, how, whilst they *Ierusalem*,  
Vnsackt, & vndefaced stood,

Her spoile was hast'ned on, by them.

For, loud thy cryed, race it, race it;  
And, to the groundwork, downe deface it.

Oh daughter of proud *Babilon*,  
Thou shalt, likewise, destroyed be;  
And, he will prove a blessed-one,  
Who shall avenge our Cause on thee:  
Ev'n hee, that payes thee our disgraces;  
And, braines thy babes, in stony-places.