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Hester Pulter's Psalmic Poems

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In poem 18 in Hester Pulter's mid-seventeenth-century manuscript poetry collection, she expresses her present anguish and turns to God in hope of relief:

> Dear God, vouchsafe from Thy high throne
> To see my tears, and hear my moan;
> For I, in heaven and earth, have none
> To pity me
> In my dejected sad estate,
> Wherein I'm thrown by adverse fate,
> And hope in none till my last date
> But only Thee.
> O then be pleased my dust to raise,
> To sing thy everlasting praise
> In those celestial unknown lays,
> With life and love.
> Then shall I leave these terrene toys,
> Obliviating past annoys,
> And be involved in endless joys
> With Thee above.
> (Pulter, 'The Desire')[1]

Fittingly titled 'The Desire', the poem is representative of a particular kind of devotional poem that Pulter writes – namely the psalmic lament. In this poem as well as poems 20, 24, 29, 48, 50, 55, and 63 in her manuscript, she follows the lone biblical psalmist by opening her poem with a cry to God and an extended description of her lament. Midway, she turns to God – putting her trust in him and then presenting her desire or petition: 'O then be pleased my dust to raise'. This plea in lines 9–12 in turn provides an imaginative window into what such redemption would look like, as she would praise God in 'unknown lays'. As the poem ends, it finishes on a more confident, yet provisional note – 'Then shall I' – again invoking the idealized future self that she wishes to

[1] All Pulter quotations from Leah Knight and Wendy Wall, eds., *The Pulter Project: Poet in the Making* (2018). Elemental Edition. <http://pulterproject.northwestern.edu> (accessed June 2022). I refer to untitled poems merely by their number in the collection.

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see. In following this structure, Pulter adheres to a pattern found in multiple biblical psalms, the sub-genre known amongst biblical literary scholars as 'the lament of the individual'.[2] While much has been written on women's engagement with the psalms in their poetry – either through translation, paraphrase, or psalm collage – this paper looks at how one poet uses the psalms as a formal model to write psalmic poems. I define a psalmic poem as a poem addressed to God, modelled on patterns, rhetorical devices and themes found in the psalms, but which is not strictly a psalm translation or a 'collage psalm' in and of itself.[3] Psalmic poems are thus original devotional works that follow a recognizable biblical model. Pulter's integration of her distinctive voice with a psalm form, I will argue, enables her to write idiosyncratic petitions to God in a form that could nonetheless be recognized and appropriated by other devotional readers.

The manuscript of Hester Pulter (ca. 1605–1678) includes a wide range of lyric poetry, a collection of emblems, and an unfinished prose romance, largely written during the English Civil War and Republic. Since the attribution of the manuscript in 1996, Pulter's literary works have increasingly drawn the attention of literary scholars for their striking imagery, skilled poetics and their frank references to the English Civil War. The first part of her manuscript, in which one finds her psalmic poems, contains miscellaneous poems on a wide variety of themes. Pulter's Royalist sympathies are made especially apparent in poems mourning the deaths of Charles I and other Royalist figures. She often filters her personal griefs through a political lens, as the regicide evokes the pain she feels at the deaths of her children and vice versa. In these poems, Kate Chedgzoy argues, Pulter often blurs the intimately personal with the political.[4] This aspect of her poetry makes her a vital resource for the study of mid-century poetics and for understanding the affective and creative responses of a woman writer to the political events of the mid-century. Furthermore, the poems themselves reference a wider community of potential readers from which she feels excluded, a sentiment most likely arising from her husband Arthur Pulter's choice to spend the majority of this tumultuous period in retirement at his home, Broadfield Hall, Hertfordshire.[5] Pulter's frustration

[2] Claus Westermann, *Praise and Lament in the Psalms*, trans. Keith R. Crim and Richard N. Soulen (Atlanta, GA: J. Knox Press, 1981), 170. See also Hermann Gunkel and Joachim Begrich, *Introduction to Psalms: The Genres of the Religious Lyric of Israel*, trans. James D. Nogalski (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1998), 121–98.

[3] For more on the genre of 'collage psalms', see Susan Felch's introduction in Elizabeth Tyrwhit, *Elizabeth Tyrwhit's Morning and Evening Prayers*, ed. Susan M. Felch (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008), 40–4.

[4] Kate Chedgzoy, *Women's Writing in the British Atlantic World: Memory, Place and History, 1550–1700* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 144.

[5] For biographic information on Pulter, see Mark Robson, 'Swansongs: Reading Voice in the Poetry of Lady Hester Pulter', in Peter Beal and Margaret J. M. Ezell (eds), *Writings by Early Modern Women*, English Manuscript Studies 1100–1700 9 (British Library, 2000), 238–56; Alice Eardley, 'Lady Hester Pulter's Date of Birth', *Notes and Queries*, 57 (2010), 498–501, https://doi.org/10.1093/notesj/gjq153; Hester Pulter, *Poems, Emblems, and The Unfortunate Florinda*, ed. Alice Eardley (Toronto: Iter Inc.: Centre for Reformation and Renaissance Studies, 2014), 13–21.

with this situation appears in both the political and the personal poetry found in her fair-copy manuscript, held in the Brotherton Collection at the University of Leeds.

Pulter's psalmic poems are peculiar within the manuscript for their generality and lack of political, scientific and mythological imagery. In comparison to her other poetry, these poems appear pared down, with only vague references to Pulter's biography or context. Perhaps as a result of this generality, these poems have received comparatively little attention, although their psalmic nature has been recognized by Sarah C.E. Ross and by editors of Pulter's poetry.[6] However, the extent to which Pulter employs psalm structures and participates in what Hannibal Hamlin terms 'early modern psalm culture' – and the implications of these choices – has yet to be fully elaborated.[7]

Elizabeth Scott-Baumann argues that form can be 'a site for experimentation and engagement', demonstrating women writers' participation in 'their literary and intellectual culture'.[8] In the following, I explore Pulter's engagement with psalm forms. I first look at the various ways in which the psalms are used in early modern English literature; my aim is to highlight what writing in a psalm framework could achieve, especially for women writers. I then explore Pulter's adaptation of psalm structure and her use of rhythms and rhymes associated with sung hymns. And, finally, I look at how such formal engagements allow Pulter to accommodate and, in so doing, construct a potential audience for her poetry. My contention is that Pulter uses the psalm form to gesture towards a community from which she is temporarily separated; form thus becomes community, as she writes in a framework that invokes collective worship.

EARLY MODERN WOMEN WRITERS AND THE PSALMS

Scholarship on early modern England shows that the use of the psalms in literature has four interconnected dimensions: the affective, the performative, the communal and the political. These functions are by no means mutually exclusive and are often at play simultaneously, but identifying them makes clear how each function positions the speaker of the psalm differently to God and to the audience. Tracking each of these functions in early modern protestant psalm applications lays the foundation for understanding how Pulter uses psalm forms to engage with potential readers.

[6] Sarah C. E. Ross, 'Hester Pulter's Devotional Complaints: "Then Will I Hallelujahs Ever Sing"', *Journal for Early Modern Cultural Studies*, 20 no. 2 (2020): 99–119, https://doi.org/10.1353/jem.2020.0011; Knight and Wall, *The Pulter Project*.

[7] Hannibal Hamlin, *Psalm Culture and Early Modern English Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

[8] Elizabeth Scott-Baumann, *Forms of Engagement: Women, Poetry and Culture 1640–1680* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 3.

Barbara K. Lewalski has highlighted the importance of the psalms in acting as an affective outlet for the believer's individual feelings and experiences.[9] She notes the ubiquity of St. Athanasius's treatise on the psalms in which he provides a reading guide based on one's emotional state and personal situation, highlighting that in the psalms every man can find 'the motion and state of his owne soule'.[10] John Calvin's oft cited description of the psalms as the 'Anatomy of all the partes of the Soule' further testifies to their personal, affective importance within early protestant discourse.[11] Suzanne Trill argues that this importance hinges not only on how the psalms reflect human emotions but also on how they help produce a protestant subjectivity and provide a rubric to '*articulate* [believers'] experience'.[12] For female devotional writers in particular, the biblical psalms – metrical and otherwise – offered not only an easily recognizable biblical precedent, but a means, according to Helen Wilcox, of 'lyricizing and generalizing their experience […] in the masculine Davidic voice.'[13] Michele Osherow has added nuance to the gendered connotations of this argument by emphasizing the fact that David himself is often feminized and depicted as 'weak and obedient' – associations that resonated with seventeenth-century women.[14]

Importantly, the subjectivity enabled by articulating oneself through the psalms – whether metrical psalm translation, paraphrase, collage psalms, or psalmic poetry – often had a performative aspect. In the last few decades, scholars have challenged the notion that devotional writing in manuscript was a purely personal, affective matter, as evidence shows the prevalence of manuscript publication culture and circulation.[15] Danielle Clarke writes that women's devotional writings in manuscript were often a 'public display of piety and devotion' through which 'the individual negotiated her relationship not only to the text in front of her and the faith that it represented, but also to the wider world'.[16] To a degree, the protestant idea that the best devotional writing emerged from a private space of devotion – a space women were encouraged to inhabit – empowered women to set their own example down in the hope of edifying others, even occasionally in

[9] Barbara Kiefer Lewalski, *Protestant Poetics and the Seventeenth-Century Religious Lyric* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1979), 232, 234.

[10] Thomas Sternhold, *The Whole Booke of Psalms* (1565), EEBO, A2r.

[11] Jean Calvin, *The Psalmes of Dauid and Others* (1571), EEBO, *6v.

[12] Suzanne Trill, '"Speaking to God in His Phrase and Word": Women's Use of the Psalms in Early Modern England', in Stanley E. Porter (ed.), *The Nature of Religious Language* (Sheffield: Academic Press Sheffield, 1996), 272.

[13] Helen Wilcox, '"My Hart Is Full, My Soul Dos Ouer Flow": Women's Devotional Poetry in Seventeenth-Century England', *Huntington Library Quarterly*, 63 (2000), 455, https://doi.org/10.2307/3817612.

[14] Michele Osherow, *Biblical Women's Voices in Early Modern England* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009), 111–12. See also Michele Osherow, 'Mary Sidney's Embroidered Psalms', *Renaissance Studies*, 29 (2015), 650–70, https://doi.org/10.1111/rest.12166.

[15] See Harold Love, *Scribal Publication in Seventeenth-Century England* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993).

[16] Danielle Clarke, *The Politics of Early Modern Women's Writing* (Edinburgh: Pearson Longman, 2001), 126.

print, as in the case of Katherine Parr.[17] For seventeenth century women's writing especially, the modern assumption that 'private' or 'closet' manuscript texts were written exclusively for the writer herself, has become untenable.[18] On the contrary, it appears that writers often had a specific audience and specific aims. They may have been motivated by a desire to self-fashion or defend themselves, as in the cases of Anne Clifford's and Alice Thornton's autobiographical writings.[19] Alternatively, the aims may have been more broadly political: Elizabeth Clarke argues that during the English Civil War, the special emphasis placed on the authority and authenticity of writing from a 'private' space, created an opportunity for women writers in which, 'sequestration bec[ame] in the spiritual economy a qualification to speak'.[20] Engagement with the psalms enabled women to perform a particularly protestant brand of devotional subjectivity that in turn invested them with a public authority *because* rather than *despite* of their position as women.

Within the context of religious observance, the affective and performative aspects discussed so far blur into communal ritual. In the early protestant English church, the psalms were key to melding the voices of individuals into a worshiping community. Roland Greene notes how the psalms

> allow, or better, require the reading voice to assume the identity of their represented speaker; in a certain sense a psalm scarcely represents a speaker at all, but is the script for sacred ritual cast in lyric discourse, the medium for bringing a congregation together under the convenient unity of an 'I' that may also be thought to coincide with the historical David, Christ and the Church. […] the act of reading devotional lyrics is not an interpretive activity, but the entry into a collective identification.[21]

This moment of 'collective identification' is an event that flows out of the performance of the psalms within a communal context, but it is also enabled by the forms of the biblical psalms and singers' familiarity with those forms.

[17] See Micheline White, 'Katherine Parr and Royal Religious Complaint: Complaining For and About Henry VIII', in Sarah C. E. Ross and Rosalind Smith (eds), *Early Modern Women's Complaint* (Cham: Palgrave, 2020), 60, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-42946-1_3.

[18] Evidence for the political and social engagements of such writings has been discussed at length across generic boundaries, see Katherine R. Larson, 'From Inward Conversation to Public Praise: Mary Sidney Herbert's Psalmes', *Sidney Journal*, 24 (2006), 21–44; Julie Sanders, '"The Closet Opened": A Reconstruction of "Private" Space in the Writings of Margaret Cavendish', in Stephen Clucas (ed.), *A Princely Brave Woman* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003), 127–40.

[19] Trill, '"Speaking to God"', 277–83; Raymond A. Anselment, 'Feminine Self-Reflection and the Seventeenth-Century Occasional Meditation', *The Seventeenth Century*, 26 (2011), 69–93, https://doi.org/10.1080/0268117x.2011.10555659.

[20] Elizabeth Clarke, 'The Garrisoned Muse: Women's Use of the Religious Lyric in the Civil War Period', in Claude J. Summers and Ted-Larry Pebworth (eds), *The English Civil Wars in the Literary Imagination* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1999), 133.

[21] Roland Greene, 'Sir Philip Sidney's Psalms, the Sixteenth-Century Psalter, and the Nature of Lyric', *Studies in English Literature, 1500–1900*, 30 (1990), 23, https://doi.org/10.2307/450682.

Although the tradition of viewing the book of Psalms as embodying the voice of the collective church goes back to Augustine, it became especially important to the reformed English church in the sixteenth century.[22] The psalms played an important role in the 'common' liturgy that Ramie Targoff argues afforded not just outward performance and conformity but inward transformation.[23] One aspect of this protestant community building, as Micheline White has shown, was its radical inclusion of women and other marginalized voices in collective psalm singing; she notes especially Mary Sidney's representation of 'communal worship as a liberating and pleasurable space for female voices'.[24]

Such conceptions of the psalms as amenable to both an 'I' and a capacious 'we' correspond with Jonathan Culler's concept of 'triangulated address' in lyric, the idea that the poet speaks 'to listeners through an apostrophic address to an absent power'.[25] In the case of psalms, however, more helpful is to think of the psalmist inviting the audience to take on that active role of speaker. In this sense, there is a kinship between speaker and audience, as there is in Culler's model, for both come to have the same addressee: the absent deity.[26] The question of psalm translation and psalmic poetry complicates the entangled nature of psalm speaker(s) and gender even further. In her discussion of John Donne's poem, 'Vpon the translation of the Psalmes by Sir Philip Sydney, and the Countesse of Pembroke his Sister', Trill argues that Donne privileges the collaboration between Philip and Mary Sidney, as well as the book of Psalms' 'first Author', David.[27] In instances of psalmic poetry, the relationship between the speaker and the larger community is equally complex, as the poet creates new poetry that is nonetheless obviously modelled on this communal and ubiquitous form. For women writers, this blurring of the poet's voice with David's and, in turn, the blurring of David's voice with the nation's, provides a valuable opportunity to write not just *to* but *for* a broader audience.

The affective and performative aspects of writing in a psalm form engage the speaker in acts directed either inwardly or outwardly, retaining a clear sense of 'I' and 'you'. But the communal dimensions, both how psalms were sung together as a congregation and the thematic importance of community to so many of the biblical psalms, demonstrate that writing in a psalm register provides a mode that can be used as a script for the collective 'we'. As Trill

[22] Lewalski, *Protestant Poetics*, 232.

[23] Ramie Targoff, *Common Prayer: The Language of Public Devotion in Early Modern England* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001), 13.

[24] Micheline White, 'Protestant Women's Writing and Congregational Psalm Singing: From the Song of the Exiled "Handmaid" (1555) to the Countess of Pembroke's Psalmes (1599)', *Sidney Journal* 23, no. 1–2 (2005): 65–6, 78.

[25] Jonathan D. Culler, *Theory of the Lyric* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2015), 15.

[26] Culler, 187.

[27] Suzanne Trill, '"We Thy Sydnean Psalmes Shall Celebrate": Collaborative Authorship, Sidney's Sister and the English Devotional Lyric', in Susan Wiseman, Patricia Pender, and Rosalind Smith (eds), *Early Modern Women and the Poem* (Manchester: University of Manchester, 2013), 100.

notes, the female speaker uses a 'pre-existent Symbolic order' that enables her to 'create a new and coherent request to God'.[28] But Trill's point can be taken further, as it also enables the speaker to create a 'coherent request' recognizable to a reader as a psalm form, a poem that is general enough to be appropriated and embraced by other voices. I would go so far as to argue that this is an imaginative possibility even when the degree of circulation for a manuscript is unclear – as it is with Pulter.[29] For any writer, blending their own voice with the psalmist's allows for the possibility of blending their voice with the broader collective. Because of the ubiquity of the form, the form implies community even when used in isolation.

The idea that the psalms provided women with a form that could be followed in order to create devotional poetry in turn accessible to anyone – male and female alike – has political connotations. These are heightened by the fact that the psalms were already politicized. Just as they had provided a flashpoint for distinctions in worship between Catholics and Protestants in the early years of the Reformation, so also they served as a point of contest between Royalists and Parliamentarians in the mid-seventeenth-century.[30] At the most basic thematic level, the interspersed moments of narrative in the psalms were easily appropriated through a typological worldview. As Victoria Brownlee has shown for Elizabethan and Jacobean literature, biblical typology provided a neat framework through which to understand but also write about 'national, local, domestic, and personal circumstances'.[31] The conflicts of the mid-century merely strengthened these impulses. Christopher Hill's comment that 'all parties' involved in the Civil War 'appealed to the Bible for support', is now largely commonplace but no less important.[32] More specifically, Hannibal Hamlin and Paula Loscocco have both demonstrated the discursive role that the psalms played in mid-seventeenth-century political discourse.[33] Psalm discourse could thus be deployed for radically different political ends, as Ruth Ahnert writes, speaking, 'as well for the man oppressed by the king as for the king himself'.[34]

Arguably it is this very flexibility, these affective, performative, communal, and political dimensions that attracted women writers to this particular biblical form.

[28] Trill, '"Speaking to God"', 272.

[29] On the readership of Pulter's manuscript, see Pulter, *Poems, Emblems*, 4; Karen Britland, 'Conspiring with "Friends": Hester Pulter's Poetry and the Stanley Family at Cumberlow Green', *The Review of English Studies*, 69 (2018): 832–54, https://doi.org/10.1093/res/hgy058.

[30] White, 'Protestant Women's Writing', 63–8.

[31] Victoria Brownlee, *Biblical Readings and Literary Writings in Early Modern England, 1558–1625* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 8.

[32] Christopher Hill, *The English Bible and the Seventeenth-Century Revolution* (London: Allen Lane, 1993), 6.

[33] See Hamlin's discussion of Ps. 137 in Hamlin, *Psalm Culture*, 219, 251. See also Paula Loscocco, 'Royalist Reclamation of Psalmic Song in 1650s England', *Renaissance Quarterly*, 64 (2011), 500–543, https://doi.org/10.1086/661798.

[34] Ruth Ahnert, 'The Psalms and the English Reformation', *Renaissance Studies*, 29 (2015), 506, https://doi.org/10.1111/rest.12158.

While Mary Sidney and Anne Lock are perhaps the most famous female writers to engage with the psalms, scholarship has shown the wide range of ways that women used the psalms. Elizabeth Tyrwhit engaged in what Susan Felch terms 'collage Psalms', 'in which a variety of scripture texts are sewn together to create a continuous narrative'.[35] A similar mixing of biblical quotation and diction can be observed in seventeenth-century prose writings, such as those by Alice Thornton and Anne Clifford, among others.[36] Other female writers – like Pulter – use the psalms or particular psalms as looser models for poetic expression.

Frances Cooke provides one little-discussed popular example of psalmic poetry. Cooke titles her published poem, 'A Psalm gathered out of the Psalms of *David* at my landing after the great storm at Sea in January 5, 1649'.[37] Cooke thus highlights her poetic creation as 'a gathering together of biblical tradition and personal testimony', Wilcox writes.[38] Cooke's poem easily fits into what biblical literary studies terms the 'psalm of praise' genre, as she expresses a 'simple and joyous response to a definite act of God which has just been experienced'.[39] While such generic orderings of the psalms are modern classifications, Cooke's borrowings from the psalms demonstrate her acute awareness of this biblical poetry, as she utilizes turns of phrase and ideas directly from many of the very psalms Claus Westermann identifies with this genre: 'He did revive when help did lack,/and kept me from the grave' (ll. 15–16; Cf. Ps. 30: 3); 'Who with the Lord is equal then,/in these his works of wonder?' (37–38; Ps. 113: 5); 'And it is marvellous to behold/with eyes that noble act' (55–56; Cf. Ps. 118: 23); among others.[40] While the psalm is voiced by an individual, Cooke explicitly frames her psalm within the context of a community of worship:

> Come forth and harken dearest friends,
> all such as love the Lord,
> What he for my poor life hath done,
> to you I will record. (ll. 1–4)

Like many biblical psalms, Cooke praises the Lord in the presence of a godly community, but she does so occasionally, using her personal experience to highlight God's goodness. Cooke's poem is thus a testimony, and her accompanying prose preface to the poem establishes her desire to inspire others.[41] Formally, she connects her poem to public worship through her use of 'Sternhold's metre': this was an oft-used denotation for common metre in the

[35] Tyrwhit, *Elizabeth Tyrwhit's Morning and Evening Prayers*, 41.
[36] See Trill, '"Speaking to God"'; Anselment, 'Feminine Self-Reflection'.
[37] Frances Cooke, *Mris. Cooke's Meditations*, (1650). EEBO.
[38] Wilcox, '"My Hart Is Full"', 453.
[39] Westermann, *Praise and Lament*, 88.
[40] See Westermann, 102–6. All biblical references and quotations taken from the King James authorized version of 1611 unless otherwise noted.
[41] Wilcox, '"My Hart Is Full"', 452.

period due to its association with *The Whole Book of Psalms* (*WBP*), by far the most popular and most often printed metrical psalter used in early modern England.[42] Her choice of metre undergirds her claim to have written a 'psalm' and situates her poem within a form heavily associated with communal worship. Cooke's psalmic poem thus comes to serve affective (praise), performative (demonstrating God's favour on her) and communal functions simultaneously.[43]

Cooke's poem helps cast Pulter's poetry into relief. As much as Cooke's choice of form has clear precedents within the Bible, such psalms of praise are in the minority within the book of Psalms, overall.[44] Many biblical psalms, in contrast, testify to the exclusion of the individual from collective worship. In Pulter's poetry as well, the individual's lament is articulated in isolation, but, just as in the biblical psalms, her laments gesture to and invoke the community, even when it is distant.

THE STRUCTURE OF PULTER'S PSALMIC POEMS

Pulter's devotional poems fall largely into two categories, direct devotional or psalmic complaints to God (poems 18, 20, 24, 29, 48, 50, 55, 63) and poems in which she addresses her soul (or 'heart') (poems 28, 40, 47, 49).[45] I will be focusing on the former, although the latter also demonstrate an intertextual use of biblical psalms. In the former, more explicitly psalmic poems Pulter does not paraphrase the psalms but rather – like Cooke – writes original poetry modelled on the psalms.

Sarah C. E. Ross is one of the few scholars that has investigated Pulter's devotional poetry. She offers a comparison between these poems and those of George Herbert, both of whom enact a movement within their poems from initial complaint to final praise. Ross considers the lack of autobiographical and occasional references in these poems as characterizing what she calls 'the devotional complaint', a genre in which the poet 'steps into the psalmic frame'.[46] In fact, these poems deploy structures that closely follow some of the biblical psalms, namely what Westermann calls 'lament[s] of the individual'.[47] Pulter not only models these poems on the biblical psalms but adapts that model to a specific form of early modern complaint poetry, what Felch terms the 'petitionary complaint'.[48] Pulter's use of these two forms is important

[42] On the popularity of the *WBP*, see Beth Quitslund, 'The Psalm Book', in Andy Kesson and Emma Smith (eds), *The Elizabethan Top Ten: Defining Print Popularity in Early Modern England* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2013), 203–11.

[43] While Cooke's politics can only be speculated on, her embracing of publication as well as her explicit references to a godly community and her use of words like 'Gospel' point to nonconformist, Parliamentarian sympathies. Due to old-style dating, Cooke's book was most likely published in 1650, not 1649, therefore after the execution of Charles I.

[44] See Westermann, *Praise and Lament*, 81–2.

[45] While much of Pulter's poetry takes a devotional turn at some point, I have singled these poems out because of their exclusively devotional focus.

[46] Ross, 'Hester Pulter's Devotional Complaints', 105.

[47] Westermann, *Praise and Lament*, 170.

[48] Susan M. Felch, 'Anne Lock and the Instructive Complaint', in Ross and Smith, *Early Modern Women's Complaint*, 30, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-42946-1_2.

because they highlight the absence of penitence in her poems.[49] Just as in the biblical psalms, these poems are often complaints, not just *to* God, but *about* God, as she writes during a time of both personal and national hardship.

Poem 24 provides a good model for how Pulter utilizes the form of the lament of the individual psalm:

> How long shall my dejected soul
> (Dear God) in dust and darkness roll,
> Without one ray
>
> Of thy eternal love and light
> To conquer these sad shades of night?
> That endless day
>
> In my forsaken soul may shine,
> The hallelujah shall be Thine.
> O then, look down
>
> Upon a ruined heap of dust,
> Slave to those tyrants, Death and Lust;
> My hopes, O crown.
>
> My God, vouchsafe t'enfranchise me;
> Let me no more a vassal be
> To sin and pain.
>
> These vanities I fain would leave;
> O then, my weary soul receive,
> With Thee to reign
>
> In those celestial joys above,
> Involved with glory, life and love,
> And then Thy praise
>
> (My everlasting God and King)
> To all eternity I'll sing,
> In unknown lays. (Poem 24)

According to Westermann, the lament of the individual begins with the 'address (and introductory petition)', which is followed by the 'lament', the 'turning toward God (confession of trust)', then the 'petition', and the psalm ends with a 'vow of praise'.[50] Pulter's adherence to a similar pattern is notable here as well as in poems 18, 29, 50, 55, 63 and, to a lesser degree, poems 20 and 48. While Pulter's question in lines 1–5 of poem 24 echoes Ps. 13: 1, 'How long wilt thou forget mee

[49] See Ross, 'Hester Pulter's Devotional Complaints', 113.
[50] Westermann, *Praise and Lament*, 170.

(O Lord) for euer? how long wilt thou hide they face from me?' she softens the direct nature of the psalmist's question by voicing the state of her soul, rather than attributing any kind of forgetfulness to God. At the same time, her retention of the parenthesis around the address to God, a stylistic choice also found in the psalms printed with *The Book of Common Prayer* and Philip Sidney's Ps. 13, strengthens her allusion to the psalm and reinforces the sense that Pulter is positing a felt chasm between herself and (God)[51]: while the psalmist in these various translations leaves off the use of parenthesis in the rest of the psalm, Pulter redeploys them in line 22. The parenthetical indirectness of Pulter's address embodies visually her separation from God spiritually. Pulter takes inspiration from the psalms and transforms these elements for her own devotional and aesthetic purposes. In other psalmic poems, the address to God is more veiled but continues to follow the address/introductory petition structure, such as in poem 29, 'My Souls Sole Desire':

> Thou that didst on the chaos move,
> Illustrious Spirit of life and love:
> O, pity me,
>
> And on my dark soul deign to shine; (ll. 1–4)

Poem 48 employs such imagery as well, veiling the address to God through descriptive imagery: 'Immense Fount of truth, life, love, joy, glory:/Irradiate my soul in her dark story' (ll. 1–2).

As these examples show, it is often difficult to distinguish between the introductory petitions and the laments in Pulter's poems, a trait that further underscores Pulter's use of the lament of the individual framework. Westermann notes that in these psalms, laments or accusations against God are often written as a 'negative petition' which 'contains within it, concealed or paraphrased, a complaint against God'.[52] In her analysis of Anne Lock's penitential psalm sequence, Felch extends Westermann's classifications of the psalms, arguing that reformed devotional writers employ three types of complaint: the prophetic, the penitential, and the petitionary. While the prophetic is directed at the people of God and the penitential involves complaining about 'her own, or her community's, wickedness', Felch defines petitionary complaint as 'the complaint of the righteous to or against God in the face of persecution, overwhelming suffering, or the prosperity of the wicked'.[53] In fact, the degree to which Pulter's psalmic poems model themselves on the biblical psalms makes their overall scarcity of penitential content highly conspicuous. While Pulter never directly accuses God of neglect in these poems, she consistently emphasizes her own lack. This lack, however, is largely defined in

[51] See Ps. 13 in *The Booke of Common Prayer, with the Psalter or Psalmes of Dauid* (1604), EEBO; Philip Sidney and Mary Sidney Herbert Pembroke, *The Sidney Psalter: The Psalms of Sir Philip and Mary Sidney*, ed. Hannibal Hamlin (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 28.

[52] Westermann, *Praise and Lament*, 185.

[53] Felch, 'Anne Lock and the Instructive Complaint', 30.

passive terms. Pulter presents herself as one who has little control over the darkness that engulfs her, a position reiterated throughout the psalmic poems: 'In my dejected sad estate,/Wherein I'm thrown by adverse fate,' (Poem 18, ll. 5–6); 'Though I no off'ring fit can bring,' (Poem 20, l. 9); 'Slave to those tyrants, Death and Lust;' (Poem 24, l. 11); 'And on my dark soul deign to shine;/Sin, Death, and Hell, will all resign/Their place to Thee.' (Poem 29, ll. 4–6).

Significantly, the language Westermann identifies as being employed in these negative petitions – 'to hide, drive out, cast off, forsake, be silent, be far off, etc.' – is frequently found in Pulter's poems along with references to light and darkness. Helen Smith notes the association in Renaissance painting between the light of God, revelation, and truth and the frequency of these motifs in Pulter's work, as in poem 20[54]:

> Dear God, turn not away Thy face,
> Desert me not, in such a case
> As I am in, without thy grace,
> Involved with death and night. (ll. 1–4)

This poem echoes not only Ps. 13 but also, as Scott-Baumann has pointed out, Ps. 27: 9, 'Hide not thy face farre frō me'.[55] A similar emphasis on light is found in the middle of poem 50: 'But send (O, send) Thy spirit from above/T'irradiate my soul e'en with one ray./It will create in me eternal day,' (ll. 9–11). Pulter is not alone in her incessant combining of the day/light/God metaphor: Herbert also utilizes this metaphor in his poem from *The Temple*, 'The Glance', in which God's alighting his eyes upon the youthful speaker leads to a conversion (ll. 1–8), sustains him through trial (ll. 9–16), and encourages him to look forward to an eternity in which the gaze of God will be more sustained: 'When thou shalt look us out of pain' (l. 21).[56] Like Herbert and the psalmist, Pulter equates God's face with light and light with individual revelation. While in poem 20, the address to God is more direct than in poem 24, both connect God to light – a motif that recurs in the psalms. In these poems, the speaker's recognition of a soul stuck in darkness is an indirect lament that she has been denied the light of God by God. Although grace is never mentioned specifically, the poem operates on the assumption that Pulter is destitute without this light.

The analysis so far demonstrates Pulter's engagement with the affective aspect of psalmic poetry, the manner in which the psalms provide a model for expressing one's frustrations and griefs. But formally, these poems also attest to the performative and communal dimensions of psalm discourse. Alice Eardley has noted that Pulter's devotional poems differ significantly in their metrical forms

[54] Helen Smith, 'The Light of God' (Curation, Poem 50), in Knight and Wall, *The Pulter Project*.

[55] See Elizabeth Scott-Baumann, ed., '[Untitled]', by Hester Pulter (Poem 20, Amplified Edition), in Knight and Wall, *The Pulter Project*.

[56] George Herbert, *The English Poems of George Herbert*, ed. Helen Wilcox (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 589–90.

from others in her collection, favouring hymn-like rhythms and rhymes.[57] Poems 18, 20, 24, and 29 are linked through having similar stanzaic forms: each has either a rhyming couplet or tercet followed by a final, often shorter, tail-line that rhymes with the final line of the next stanza, *aab ccb* or *aaab cccb*.[58] This stanza finds its roots in fifteenth-century carols and mediaeval hymns and is used in the devotional poetry of Ben Jonson (e.g. 'The Sinner's Sacrifice To the Holy Trinity') and occasionally Herbert as well (e.g. 'The Sepulchre').[59] Paul M. Cubeta argues that in the hands of Jonson, a pragmatically simple carol stanza is made deliberately elocutionarily difficult, 'to create the effect of the broken, almost gasping speech of a man in spiritual torment'.[60] Knight and Wall have similarly noted that the enjambment in Pulter's poem 24 creates the feeling of a 'breathless rush and a proliferation of clauses that refuses expected separations and terminations'.[61] Both poets take a form meant for communal singing and adapt it to an individual's cry to God – casting the individual into relief through the utter and complete lack of community support. Here, the void created by the lack of community becomes integrated into the lament, but the psalm form of the poem simultaneously leaves open the possibility of recognition and appropriation by a reader. The community may be absent but is not unthinkable.

Following the address and lament, Pulter's psalmic poems move on to the 'turning toward God' or 'confession of trust'. However, while a turn towards God is generally recognizable in these poems, Pulter's confessions of trust are generally much less assured than those found in the biblical psalms. In poem 24, lines 6–12, a sense of lament remains, as Pulter expresses her confession of trust in counterfactual imagery that both imagines a future state of joy and fulfilment while at the same time identifying what she believes is lacking. While giving the reader a preview of her conclusion, as she imagines the 'hallelujahs' that 'shall be thine', her reiteration of 'forsaken' marks this statement as not yet fulfilled. In 'The Desire' (poem 18), the turn towards God is little more than four syllables and requires the previous line just to make it intelligible: 'And hope in none till my last date/But only Thee.' (7–8). In poem 50, the turn takes the form – rare in these poems – of confession and repentance:

> Leave not (O, leave not) my dejected soul,
> Though I have wickedly deserted Thee,
> Though I (ay me!) the most ungrateful be;
> Yet let not (let not) me in sorrow roll.
> (ll. 5–8)

[57] Pulter, *Poems, Emblems*, 25.

[58] *Ibid.*

[59] E. K. Chambers, *English Literature at the Close of the Middle Ages* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1964), 81, 88, 100–1; Paul M. Cubeta, 'Ben Jonson's Religious Lyrics', *The Journal of English and Germanic Philology*, 62 (1963), 96–7; Cf. Ross, 'Hester Pulter's Devotional Complaints', 110.

[60] Cubeta, 'Ben Jonson's Religious Lyrics', 97.

[61] Knight and Wall eds., 'How Long Shall My Dejected Soul', by Hester Pulter (Poem 24, Elemental Edition), in Knight and Wall, *The Pulter Project*.

The use of parenthesis in poem 24 marks God as distant, and here again they function in several ways. On the one hand, in echoing the semantic content of the verse, they underline the urgency of the pleas while also working as a phatic attempt to prolong or extend the communicative situation with the divine – again indicating the distance of the addressee.[62] On the other, the parenthesis function as an echo, suggesting the call and response or the singing of parts in the worship service. Such a reading hints at the third member of the triangulated address of the poem, a potential audience that would recognize its psalmic qualities and appropriate its words.[63]

While in poems 24 and 50, the distance of the divine obfuscates the statement of trust, other poems put forward a much more emphatic and clear statement of trust. Poem 63 presents a much more hopeful tone:

> Dear God, from Thy high throne look down,
> And let my suff'rings have their crown:
> I Thee implore.
>
> Though grief calcine my flesh to dust
> Yet in Thy mercy still I trust
> And Thee adore.
>
> Should I to tears dissolvéd be
> Yet will I still depend on Thee
> Forevermore. (ll. 1–9)

The stanza structure of this poem (*aab ccb ddb*) has a conceptual similarity to those already discussed, with the nine stanzas of the poem separated into three groups based on the rhyming of their final lines: implore/adore/forevermore; trust/dust/just; be/see/thee. The importance of trust in the poem is demonstrated through the repetition of the word both in the main rhymes of the second stanza and in the tail lines of the middle trio. Furthermore, the final rhymes of the first trio gesture towards the manner in which these poems invoke lament and praise as interdependent upon one another. The process of moving from lament to praise relies on inversion: the psalmist must be in dire straits to petition, and the subsequent praise is contingent on a deliverance that would be impossible without the previous predicament of the speaker. Ross recognizes this as a marriage of opposites in Pulter's poetry, what she calls the 'proximate, even constitutive, relationship between lamentation and joy' which in turn suggests the 'contiguity of earthly and heavenly song'.[64] But as Cooke's poem, ex-

[62] Roman Jakobson, 'Linguistics and Poetics', in Thomas A. Sebeok (ed.), *Style in Language* (New York: MIT Press, 1960), 355–6.

[63] Culler, *Theory of the Lyric*, 15.

[64] Ross, 'Hester Pulter's Devotional Complaints', 115.

plored in the previous section, highlights, this lament to praise process also has a communal aspect in the psalms, as the speaker's own journey from adversity to triumph functions as a witness to the larger devotional community.

After the confession of trust, these poems usually move to the formal petition. In poem 24, the petition takes up roughly the second half of the poem, lines 13–20. Here the speaker's plea that God 'look down/Upon a ruined heap of dust,' has a parallel in poem 18: 'O then be pleased my dust to raise,/To sing thy everlasting praise' (ll. 9–10). Poem 48 is notable amongst Pulter's psalmic poems for taking the form of a sonnet; this choice not only has a precedent within psalmic and religious poetry, but, in the case of *The Sidney Psalter*, has especially collaborative connotations, as Trill has shown.[65] In keeping with the tradition for sonnets to focus on a singular theme, poem 48 focuses largely on the petitionary aspect, as she asks God to 'Irradiate my soul in her dark story' (l. 2). The grounds of Pulter's distress in poem 24 are clearly stated although they remain spiritually general and abstain from giving biographical specifics: she is 'Slave to those tyrants, Death and Lust;'. William Bellinger notes that in some psalms of lament 'the crisis' is understood 'to be self-inflicted' while in others 'there is an expectation that YHWH can and should change things'.[66] Most of the time, in Pulter's case, the poems express both of these feelings simultaneously, as in poem 48, 'Let not th'erroneous shades of death and night/Obscure Thy love and glory from my sight.' (ll. 3–4). In poem 20, her opening use of the 'negative petition' indirectly accuses God of having abandoned her and the poem is rife with words that suggest Pulter's challenge to God as she asks him to 'deign' to move on her soul (l. 7). Her later repetition of the plea to God to turn not his face away, further highlights a sense that God is both present and absent:

> O, then turn not Thy face away;
> Let love and light bear all the sway.
> They'll soon create eternal day,
> O do it but explore. (Poem 20, ll. 17–20)

The fourth line of the stanza undergirds the sense of challenge that this poem offers to God, 'the mixture of humility and assertion' in the poem.[67]

In the final lines of these poems, Pulter plays with the closing frame, the vow of praise. In poem 24, lament is latent within her own vow of praise, as she continues to address God at a distance in parenthesis and highlights that these psalms of praise are yet 'unknown' – a sentiment that recurs in her

[65] Cf. the editorial notes on the poem by Knight, Wall, and Scott-Baumann in *The Pulter Project*. Suzanne Trill has discussed the collaborative motivation of Mary Sidney's choice to translate Psalm 150 as a '"Sydnean" sonnet'. Trill, '"We thy Sydnean Psalmes"', 112.

[66] William H. Bellinger, 'Psalms and the Question of Genre', in William P. Brown (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of the Psalms* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 320.

[67] Scott-Baumann, '[Untitled]' (Poem 20, Amplified Edition).

devotional complaint poems.[68] In short: how can the poet know how to praise when she has yet to experience the relief for which she petitions? Ps. 13 again offers an excellent source of comparison for what Pulter is doing. In the final lines of the psalm, the speaker's faith in future praise is predicated on past experience: 'But I haue trusted in thy mercy, my heart shall reioyce in thy saluation. I will sing vnto the LORD, because hee hath dealt bountifully with mee' (Ps. 13: 5–6). In contrast, Pulter's rejection of such certainty is an honest admittance of her position in the midst of her trial as well as a challenge to God. Not only are the songs that she will sing 'unknown' but they are definitively distinct from the laments that she already 'sings'. As Ross notes, 'these songs of praise are not exactly her poems themselves', rather the latter are a prequel, an 'exercise in preparation'.[69] A similar, though less muted, sense of praise being only possible in futurity appears in poems 18, 48, 55, and 63. Westermann highlights that many of the psalms of lament transform into psalms of praise, that is to say, there are two temporalities at play within many lament psalms.[70] Pulter, in contrast, is still in the midst of her despair and her poems index but offer no guarantee of the praise that she hopes she will one day sing.

PULTER'S INVOCATION OF A COMMUNITY OF PSALM SINGERS

Felch emphasizes the performative and communal dimensions of devotional complaint when she writes that it is 'primarily a liturgical genre, intended to be rehearsed regularly in the company of others'.[71] In addition to her deployment of such a 'liturgical' form, Pulter engages with early modern reception and interpretations of the book of psalms, and she does so in her most community-oriented psalmic poem, poem 55. The poem has been interpreted as an expression of despair at feeling excluded from communal worship, presumably because of the Presbyterian views of her local minister, who was given patronage by Pulter's own husband.[72] Kenneth Graham explores the various possible backgrounds invoked by the poem, arguing that it may point to Pulter's exclusion from communion or reference more generally her personal protest at the changes to the church service in that parish.[73]

[68] Ross, 'Hester Pulter's Devotional Complaints', 113.

[69] Ross, 113.

[70] Westermann, *Praise and Lament*, 81, n. 11.

[71] Felch, 'Anne Lock and the Instructive Complaint', 42.

[72] Pulter, *Poems, Emblems*, 15; Britland, 'Conspiring with "friends"', 834, n. 13; Elizabeth Clarke, 'Women in Church and in Devotional Spaces', in Laura Lunger Knoppers (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Early Modern Women's Writing* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 115; Sarah C. E. Ross, *Women, Poetry, and Politics in Seventeenth-Century Britain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 137.

[73] Kenneth Graham, ed. 'Must I Thus Ever Interdicted Be', by Hester Pulter (Poem 55, Amplified Edition), in Knight and Wall, *The Pulter Project*.

Must I thus ever interdicted be,
My gracious God? To Thee and only Thee
I will complain: pardon and pity me.

Have I Thy sacred pledges took in vain,
Or heard Thy blessed word applause to gain,
That Thou dost thus Thine ordinances restrain?

If it be so, Thy mercy I implore,
To lay my sins upon my Savior's score
And me unto Thy church again restore.

The wanton sparrow and the chaster dove
Within Thy sacred temple freely move;
But I (ay me!) am kept from what I love.

O, let Thy Spirit my sad soul sustain
Until those comforts I do reattain;
Then let me never part with them again

Until my captivated soul takes wing;
Then will I hallelujahs ever sing
To Thee, my gracious God and glorious king. (Poem 55)

The poem follows the structure of the lament of the individual, as the first three stanzas correspond to the address/petition, the lament, and the turn to God, while stanzas four and five correspond to the petition, and the poem finishes with the vow of praise. Several scholars have seen a connection between Pulter's references to 'The wanton sparrow and the chaster dove' and Ps. 84: 3,[74] but the whole of Ps. 84 merits comparison, as it highlights how Pulter appropriates and innovates on specific language and structures from the psalms and early modern psalm interpretation.

Few direct statements are made in Ps. 84 that suggest that the psalmist has been excluded from worship, and Westermann even classifies the psalm as a 'Psalm of community'.[75] Nonetheless, there is a long history of the psalm being interpreted as a personal cry of David and his longing for the sanctuary. This interpretation is found in the glosses of the Geneva Bible (1599): '[1]David driuen foorth of his countrey, [2]Desireth most ardently to come againe to the Tabernacle of the Lord and the assembly of the Saints to praise God'. Although this connection to David is effaced in the later Authorized Bible, it is likely that the psalm retained the association with David, as the book of Psalms was popularly conceived to be written by him,

[74] Clarke, 'Women in Church', 114. Graham, 'Must I Thus Ever Interdicted Be'.
[75] Westermann, *Praise and Lament*, 254–5.

despite notations that indicated otherwise.[76] Without this context, the psalm can be read in very general terms as a dilation on the pleasures of communal worship; the proverb-like parallelism of verses 4 and 5 especially highlight this generality: 'Blessed are they that dwell in thy house: they wilbe still praysing thee. Selah. Blessed is the man whose strength is in thee: in whose heart are the wayes of them:' (Ps. 84: 4–5). However, when the associations with David and these glosses are included within an interpretive framework, the psalm is easily appropriated as a cry of *personal* exclusion. One can see the influence of this interpretation in Mary Sidney's version of the psalm, which plays up the sense that the individual is pining after the house of God:

> Alas! The sparrow knowth
> The house where free and fearless she resideth:
> Directly to the nest the swallow goeth,
> Where with her sons she safe abideth.
> Oh, alters thine, most mighty
> In war, yeah, most almighty:
> Thy alters, Lord: Ah! Why should I
> From alters thine excluded lie?
> (Sidney and Pembroke, Psalm 84, ll. 9–16)[77]

While up through line 14 Sidney's poem follows the text and organization of Ps. 84, lines 15–16 have essentially been inserted, finding no comparative sentiment within the psalm itself. While the psalm acknowledges that the birds find a home at the altar of God, the comparison with the individual is only implied; Sidney instead makes this comparison explicit, as does Pulter, when she notes 'But I (ay me!) am kept from what I love' (Poem 55, l. 12). Again, as in poems 24 and 50, her use of parenthesis underlines this sense of distance, but rather than distance from God, Pulter is arguably speaking about a more concrete sense of distance – distance from communal worship.[78] While in the psalm, no reason is directly given for the psalmist's statement of longing after the 'courtes of the Lord', in Sidney and Pulter, some unnamed person (or God himself) is actively excluding the speaker from this community. Yet Ps. 84 further provides a hint as to why a psalmist *may* feel excluded: 'For a day in thy courts, is better then a thousand: I had rather be a doore keeper in the house of my God, then to dwell in the tents of wickednesse' (Ps. 84:10). As a woman with Royalist sympathies writing poetry during the Civil War and Republic, Pulter expresses her feelings of exclusion through reference to the biblical psalms.

[76] Ahnert, 'The Psalms and the English Reformation', 506.
[77] Sidney and Pembroke, *The Sidney Psalter*, 163.
[78] For an alternative reading of the poem, see Ross, 'Hester Pulter's Devotional Complaints', 107.

While she does not come out and state her confessional differences explicitly, her reference to Ps. 84 does it for her.

Pulter's choice to use a set form for these poems further distances her from the Republican establishment. Ben Burton writes that 'Formalist' was a 'term of abuse' used by nonconformists for those who preferred the rituals of the established English church.[79] Pulter's use of form in these poems is significant both in how she follows the structure set out in the biblical psalms as well as in her preference for older, pre-Reformation forms of metre. In both instances, she uses structural and formal elements to subtly mark her current political exclusion, but these forms also allow her to align her poetry with a resilient and especially recognizable tradition.

Multiple scholars have commented on Pulter's construction of an ideal audience within her poetry. Lara Dodds and Michelle Dowd argue that she 'wills a "state of affairs"' and testifies to her understanding 'that her verse will be read in another world'.[80] Eardley has similarly argued that the care taken in composing Pulter's manuscript suggests 'she envisioned a future readership for her work'.[81] Ross notes that her use of complaint in non-devotional poems allows for the creation of a 'a sympathetic, intra- and extra-poetic female community'.[82] Pulter's engagement with a psalm framework within the poems explored here supports but also slightly alters these analyses by showing how Pulter wrote poems that could be appropriated and voiced by other believers. While it remains unclear who exactly read or had access to Pulter's poetry, her use of the psalm form inscribes her into a community of psalm singers. The psalm form, in this sense, creates the community that Pulter lacks. Despite the absence of explicit political content, these poems are nonetheless political: Pulter writes original psalmic poems that affectively relay her own experiences as a sequestered Royalist woman, but she does so in a manner that enables any early modern English reader – no matter their political and religious convictions – to recognize and relate to them because of their psalm-like qualities.

Pulter's potential audience in these poems – other Christian worshipers – suggests a much more immediate ideal audience than has so far been imagined, one that may not be at Pulter's fingertips, but one that nonetheless exists, even if she is separated from it. That she imagines this audience as Royalist is likely, but not necessarily relevant, since the generalized tone of these poems

[79] Ben Burton, 'Forms of Worship: Shakespeare's Sonnets, Ritual and the Genealogy of Formalism', in Elizabeth Scott-Baumann et al. (eds), *The Work of Form: Poetics and Materiality in Early Modern Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 56.

[80] Lara Dodds and Michelle Dowd, 'Happy Accidents: Critical Belatedness, Feminist Formalism, and Early Modern Women's Writing', *Criticism*, 62 (2020), 186, 188.

[81] Alice Eardley, '"Shut Up in a Countrey Grange": The Provenance of Lady Hester Pulter's Poetry and Prose and Women's Literary History', *Huntington Library Quarterly* 80 (2017), 355.

[82] Sarah C. E. Ross, 'Complaint's Echoes', in Ross and Smith, *Early Modern Women's Complaint*, 198, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-42946-1_9.

allows for appropriation by anyone familiar with the biblical psalms. The hymn stanza in which she writes and the psalm structure that she uses have a historical as well as future-oriented element about them. Pulter's form thus promises a relief from her present suffering even as she finds it difficult to imagine what her poetry would look like if such relief came. Although her preferred Royalist community is, for the time being, conspicuously absent, the flexibility, resilience, and cultural significance of the psalm form enables Pulter's lonely speaker to invite her audience to address God along with her and, in that sense, she is no longer alone.

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