

CONTENTS

List of Illustrations vii

Acknowledgements xi

1	Introduction	1
2	Classical Antiquity	30
3	Late Sixteenth Century to the Exaltation of Newton	106
4	Milton	161
5	After Milton	193
6	Visions of Apotheosis and Glory on Painted Ceilings	257
	Epilogue	320

Bibliography 325

Index of Passages Discussed 347

General Index 355

1

Introduction

UNTIL THE INVENTION of the hot-air balloon, human beings were physically restricted in space almost entirely to the ground on which they stood. They could ascend in the direction of the heavens only by climbing mountains or other tall objects (as they could in more limited ways descend beneath the earth in chasms and caves or artificially excavated holes). But these earthly limitations could be transcended in religious belief or poetic fancy, and dreams, sleeping or waking, of flight, whether in the body or out of it, are no doubt as old as humanity, and to be found in every part of the world and in every century.

This book is focused on classical antiquity and the period in Britain reaching from the late sixteenth to the earlier part of the nineteenth century. It is a study in classical reception, centred mostly on literary history, accompanied by a substantial consideration of related phenomena in the history of art. My starting point is the observation that between the later part of the sixteenth century and the beginning of the nineteenth century the British imagination—poetical, political, intellectual, spiritual and religious—displays a pronounced fascination with images of ascent and flight to the heavens. The roots of this, and its manifestations, are various. The subject is given unity, in the first instance, by the fact that, on any reckoning, the roots of the post-classical materials lie substantially in the texts of Greek and Roman antiquity. Under this heading I include late antique Christian texts, which process specifically biblical and Christian narratives of ascent and aspiration largely through the vocabulary and imagery of non-Christian texts. My own perspective, that of a classicist with long-standing interests in early modern reception, looking forwards from antiquity, is guided, in the first instance, by the concern to trace the paths of the ancient representations of celestial aspirations through a wide body of British texts, primarily in verse, and painting, above all paintings on

ceilings, the surfaces most appropriate for images of the heavens and of ascent to the heavens.

Looking back to the classical material from the perspective of the later period, the book aims to lend cohesion to its subject by attending to the ways in which antiquity is received and transformed through the history, ideologies and aesthetics of the post-classical world. The following pages outline some of the main contexts, themes and motivations under which to consider the shaping of the particular trajectories taken by narratives and images of celestial aspiration in British history from the late sixteenth to the first part of the nineteenth century.

Science

From the time that the pre-Socratic philosopher Parmenides set out in his allegorical flying chariot, the ‘flight of the mind’ to the heavens and through the universe has been a recurrent figure for the quest for philosophical or scientific truth. The most famous, and the most influential, ancient example is Lucretius’s praise of his revolutionary philosophical hero Epicurus, who burst through the ‘flaming walls of the world’ in order to traverse the boundless void, and to bring back to benighted mankind the truths about the nature of things (*On the Nature of Things* 1.62–79: see ch. 2: 36–39). Frequently imitated in later antiquity and in the Renaissance (after the rediscovery of Lucretius in 1417), this passage took on a new lease of life with the revolutionary discoveries of the new science of the seventeenth century. The new astronomy of Copernicus, Kepler and Galileo, through its reconfiguration of the heavens and through the observational revelations of the newly invented telescope, expanded still further mankind’s freedom to wander through the skies, in intellect and in spirit. In Britain, the Lucretian flight of the mind is the single most important intertext for a subgenre of poems in praise of Newton’s achievements in physics and astronomy, in which Newton is described as soaring through the heavens that he has mastered intellectually (see ch. 3: 149–60). On his tomb in Westminster Abbey (sculpted by Michael Rysbrack to designs by William Kent), Newton reclines under a celestial globe on which is traced the path of the comet of 1680; seated on the globe is Urania, the Muse of astronomy, and of Du Bartas and Milton, and above Urania is a star. The pyramid which forms the backdrop to the sculptural group is a symbol both of Newton’s everlasting fame, and of heavenly aspiration.

Religion

Ascent to the heavens is before anything else a religious theme. Most, perhaps all, religions locate, if monotheistic their god, or if polytheistic their supreme god or most powerful gods, in the sky. The journey from the earth to the heavens is undertaken by mortal humans who undergo apotheosis; by the souls of the virtuous dead; and, in spirit while still in this life, through mystical rapture or contemplation. The question of whether these ascents are to be understood literally or figuratively is one that I shall, for the most part, leave to the side. In some cases the vertical ascent must be understood literally: for example, when the posthumous journey of the soul is to the stars, or in the taking up, before witnesses, of Christ into the heavens at the Ascension. Classical antiquity had a wide range of beliefs about the gods and about the destiny of the soul after death (including its non-survival). In antiquity, systematic theology was not a separate discipline from philosophy, and it is philosophical accounts and representations of divinity and of the soul, particularly Platonic and Stoic, that are most easily assimilated within Christian theology; which indeed, in its late antique elaboration, owes not a little to Neoplatonism. For example, Augustine's climactic account of the mystical experience shared with his mother Monnica at Ostia, at *Confessions* 9.10.23–24, a narrative of spiritual ascent and transcendence to make contact with the life that is the Wisdom which has created all things, is punctuated by biblical allusion; but this is also a Christian version of the Neoplatonic transcendence of the mind towards supra-sensible being in Plotinus, for whom too 'life is wisdom' (*Enneads* 5.8.4.36).¹ Chapter 2 below includes a survey of a number of ancient philosophico-theological texts on the ascent of the soul, in this life or the next, that were very well known in early modern Britain. Syncretism between the Christian and the non-Christian is also found, again and again, in religious imagery. Thus, in late antique art Elijah is borne up to the sky in a chariot barely distinguishable from that of the pagan *triumphator* (Fig. 1.1), which was also the vehicle for the celestial apotheosis (*consecratio*) of the Roman emperor (Fig. 1.2).

The period of British history central to this book was one of religious upheaval and controversy, and many of the authors under consideration were deeply religious poets (to look no further than Du Bartas, Milton, Traherne

1. For commentary, see White 2019. For some discussion, see Lane-Fox 2015: ch. 26. On ascent in Augustine, see Madec 1988: cols 465–67.



FIGURE 1.1. Ascension of Elijah, 'Sarcophage de la Remise de la Loi' (late fourth century, from St Peter's, Rome). Photo © Musée du Louvre, Dist. RMN-Grand Palais/ Anne Chauvet.

or Young). Even after the 'Glorious Revolution' of 1688, and the definitive victory of Protestantism over Roman Catholicism with the exile of James II, religion and religious controversy continued to be central concerns for poets.² My point of entry in the late sixteenth century is with poets whose investment in taking flight for the heavens is an expression of a militant Protestantism: Guillaume de Salluste Du Bartas and Edmund Spenser. Du Bartas's call to elevate poetry from earthly to heavenly matters, following the inspiration of Urania, the 'heavenly' Muse, will be heard later in the seventeenth century both by the republican and heterodox John Milton and by the royalist and

2. Connell 2016 presents a detailed and subtle case against a view of a progressive, Enlightenment, distancing of literary culture from religious controversy, from Milton to Pope.



FIGURE 1.2. Apotheosis of a member of the imperial family, Belvedere Altar. Vatican City, Musei Vaticani, Museo Gregoriano Profano, inv. No. 1115. © DAI Rome, neg. 75.1286.

Anglican Abraham Cowley. Cowley's most vigorously soaring poem, 'The exstasie', is an adaptation of a Latin ode by the Polish Jesuit poet Casimire Sarbiewski, who enjoyed great popularity in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century England. In his Horatianizing odes, Sarbiewski undertakes repeated flights of the mind, including one in a poem in praise of his patron Pope Urban VIII. It might be misguided to look too hard for distinctive confessional variations in

the representation, in religious contexts, of flights of the mind or soul. The desire to be received in heaven above is common to all brands of Christianity. Religious lyric in the seventeenth century was fed both by meditative techniques deriving from medieval meditational treatises that also informed the Jesuit practice of Saint Ignatius's *Spiritual Exercises*, and by Protestant assumptions about the poetry of the Bible and the nature of the spiritual life.³ These are some of the streams that flow into the sublimity of Milton's celestial aspirations, whose Protestantism is hardly compromised by the affinity of his poetry with the literature and the art of the continental baroque.⁴

Being full of the god, having the god within oneself, in Greek ἐν-θεός, whence 'enthus-iasm', leads to raptures that snatch the soul upwards in religious ecstasy. The language of religious inspiration is embedded in Greek and Roman ideas of poetic inspiration. Horace, in *Odes* 3.25, is 'full of Bacchus', and is carried away to figurative mountain-tops, as he entertains thoughts of elevating, in his poetry, the emperor Augustus to the company of Jupiter, among the stars (see ch. 2: 50). This ode inspired many later poetic raptures. In seventeenth-century England enthusiasm of the religious variety became suspect because of its association with radical religious sects during the Civil War and later. After 1688, a rehabilitation of enthusiasm took place within a Whig literary culture that also enlisted for its purposes the Miltonic sublime. A central figure here is the critic and poet John Dennis, for whom the 'enthusiastical passions' were the chief motors of poetic excellence. Dennis also sought to reform poetry by putting it to the service of religious ideas. Dennis's critical works were an important impetus for the investment in religious poetry and in the Miltonic sublime on the part of Whig poets such as Richard Blackmore, Isaac Watts, Aaron Hill, Elizabeth Singer Rowe, James Thomson and Edward Young.⁵ In the 1726 Preface to 'Winter', the first of *The Seasons* to be published, Thomson pleads, '[L]et poetry, once more, be restored to her ancient truth and purity; let her be inspired from heaven, and, in return, her incense ascend thither.' Like Dennis, these poets are much given to rapturous heavenwards

3. Martz 1954 is a classic study of medieval and Counter-Reformation influences on English poetry of meditation, revised but not invalidated by Barbara Lewalski's study of a more distinctively Protestant poetics (Lewalski 1979).

4. On Milton and the baroque, see Roston 1980, and here ch. 4: 169.

5. On Whig poetics and religion, see Connell 2016: ch. 4. On Whig literary culture in general, Williams 2005 is central. On enthusiasm in eighteenth-century poetics, see Irlam 1999. On Christian poetry and the religious sublime in the eighteenth century, see Morris 1972.

flights of the mind or soul, none more so than Edward Young in the nine books of *Night Thoughts*, whose insistent religious message of the transcendence of the soul and of God's providence is driven by Young's desire to find consolation for the loss of his step-daughter, wife, and son-in-law, and by his opposition to Enlightenment criticism of Christianity. Young's enthusiastic Christianity struck a chord with John Wesley, who twice edited versions of *Night Thoughts*.⁶

Science and Religion

Science and religion come together in poems in praise of Newton. In this respect, they differ strikingly from Lucretius's praise of Epicurus, where science and religion part company when Epicurus's revelations dethrone the traditional gods from their tyranny over mankind. His flight of the mind empties the world of religion, understood as superstition. At the same time, Epicurus's reason (*ratio*) reveals the true nature of the gods, who dwell in the spaces between the plurality of worlds in a state of total serenity that is also one of total unconcern for mankind. That serenity is described with a translation of Homer's description of the windless and cloudless seat of his very interventionist gods on mount Olympus (Lucr. 3.18–22; cf. *Odyssey* 6.42–46). But in the Epicurean world the gods do not lord it over mankind from a high mountain. And, unlike Plato's divine demiurge, the Epicurean gods do not create the universe, but are themselves composed, like everything else, out of atoms, the universe's eternal material substrate.

Newton's science, by contrast, is enlisted as proof of a world created and guided by God, according to rational and universal principles. In 1692, Newton's friend Richard Bentley, the classical scholar and master of Newton's Cambridge college, Trinity, gave the first of the Boyle Lectures, endowed by the natural philosopher Robert Boyle to consider the relationship between Christianity and the new science. Bentley's title was 'A confutation of atheism'. Whatever the exact nature of Newton's own, probably heretical, religious beliefs,⁷ Newtonian astronomy was one of the underpinnings of early modern British works of 'physico-theology', the use of natural science in the service of a theology that uses the argument from design. The term was coined by the natural philosopher and clergyman William Derham (1657–1735) in the

6. See James May's ODNB article on Edward Young.

7. See Iliffe 2017.

publication of his own Boyle Lectures as *Physico-theology: or, A Demonstration of the Being and Attributes of God from His Works of Creation* (London 1713).⁸ The great outpouring of physico-theological poetry in the first half of the eighteenth century is particularly associated with Whig politics and Whig literary culture, in which an analogy is developed between the rational order of the Newtonian universe and the providential legitimacy of the constitutional monarchy established by the 1688 settlement.⁹ In this poetry, the mind or soul is constantly taking flight and soaring through the spaces of the newly revealed Newtonian universe, but in the tracks of the Lucretian Epicurus, and of other classical precedents. These classical models are now combined with, and viewed through, Miltonic elevations and soarings.

The Baroque

In considering the receptivity of religious poetry to extravagant imagery of heavenwards motion, there is a further point about what might be labelled a baroque sensibility, which arguably informs all of the early modern British poetic texts on display in this book. This is a sensibility marked by an openness to, and striving for, the sublime; by a desire to reach for the unbounded and limitless; and by an emotional, and at times theatrical, exaltation and exultation. If celestial aspiration is a typical feature of the baroque, it need occasion no surprise that its expression is not regulated by narrowly confessional self-definitions: Peter Davidson has argued that ‘Baroque is a cultural system which is supra-national, supra-confessional’.¹⁰

The importance of the category of the baroque for a wide range of arts (not just architecture) in late Stuart Britain (1660–1714) has recently been put on

8. Derham was also the author of *Astro-theology* (1714) and *Christo-theology* (1730), all three books being teleological arguments for the existence and attributes of God. On physico-theological poetry, the fullest account is Jones 1966, esp. ch. 4, ‘The Triumph of Physico-Theological in Poetry’; see also Connell 2016: ch. 4. For a survey of the rise and fall of Newtonian natural theology over two centuries, see Gascoigne 1988. On physico-theology, or ‘natural religion’, in general in the Enlightenment, see Robertson 2020: 147–57.

9. On the religious politics of physico-theology see Connell 2016: ch. 5.

10. Davidson 2007: 13. Chapter 2, ‘British Baroque’, makes a strong case for recognizing that much English (and Scottish and Irish) culture of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries should rightly be labelled ‘baroque’, as part of an international European (and New World) baroque, of which Latin literature of the period, with its international readership, is a central part. In the case of English literature, in both English and Latin, Davidson draws in particular on the scholarship of Mario Praz, who brought a continental eye to his subject.

display in an exhibition on ‘British Baroque’ at Tate Britain, which set British visual arts in the context of a European court culture.¹¹ In the visual arts, the story of the baroque in Britain goes back some decades earlier, with a major milestone, in the 1630s, in Rubens’s ceiling for the Banqueting House in Whitehall (see ch. 6: 268–80). In Britain, the period within which baroque ceiling paintings were produced, c. 1620–c. 1720, coincides roughly with a standard periodization of the heyday of the continental baroque, from the early seventeenth century to about the 1740s. Elements of what would become the full-blown baroque are already visible in the late sixteenth century, and a major impulse to the emergence of the baroque was the Counter-Reformation, set in motion by the Council of Trent (1545–63). In poetry, I would suggest that many of the texts examined in this book show the presence of a baroque sensibility in Britain from the late sixteenth century to well into the eighteenth. In this respect, it may be argued that there is an asymmetry between the chronologies of the diffusion of baroque elements in British literature, and in British art and architecture.¹²

The Sublime

To track the celestial aspirations of poets from the late sixteenth to the nineteenth century is to follow an important strand in the history of the sublime in English poetry. The vertical axis is built into the vocabulary of the sublime: Latin *sublimis* means literally ‘high, lofty, borne aloft’, and the Greek title of Longinus’s *On the Sublime* is *Περὶ ὑψους*, where *ὑψος* literally means ‘height’.

Religious ideas have always played an important part in the experience of the sublime.¹³ It is notorious that almost the only quotation of the Bible in a pagan, and (probably) non-Jewish, Greco-Roman author is Longinus’s use of Genesis 1:3–9 as an example of a sublime expression of divine grandeur, immediately after quotations of the manifestations of the gods in Homer (*Sublime* 9.9): ‘And God said, Let there be light: and there was light . . . And God said . . . let the dry land appear: and it was so.’ This almost unique juxtaposition in pagan antiquity of the classical and biblical will become routine from Christian late antiquity onwards. In the eighteenth century, the ‘ninth chapter’ was the most famous part of *On the Sublime*;¹⁴ Alexander Pope will have been well

11. See the catalogue, Barber 2020.

12. An asymmetry discussed in Praz 1964.

13. In general, see Chignell and Haltzman 2012.

14. Russell 1964: xlv.

aware of this when he composed his epitaph on Newton: ‘Nature and Nature’s laws lay hid in night: God said, Let Newton be! and all was light’—an epigrammatic contribution to the Newtonian sublime.

One of the most irrepressible of soaring poets, John Dennis was also an important early eighteenth-century theorist of the sublime, a good few decades before Edmund Burke. As I have already noted, Dennis is a foundational figure in the history of the eighteenth-century religious sublime. Well before Milton, the religious sublime finds major expression in Edmund Spenser and in Josuah Sylvester’s translation of the French biblical poet Du Bartas. My readings of the celestial aspirations in poets of the late sixteenth and earlier seventeenth centuries are offered as further corroboration of Patrick Cheney’s argument for the importance of a pre-Miltonic ‘early modern sublime.’¹⁵ Abraham Cowley, a younger contemporary of Milton, also made a plea for the rededication of poetry to the service of religion, and his poetic and spiritual flights, following both classical and biblical models, play an important part in the history of the seventeenth-century sublime.¹⁶

As well as religion, science (or natural philosophy) has been a powerful generator of the sublime, from the beginnings of Greek philosophy. For Lucretius, a part of Epicurus’s heroism is his daring to pass through the whole of the boundless void of the Epicurean universe. The boundless void is an important source and subject of the Lucretian sublime, increasingly recognized as a decisive episode in the larger history of the sublime in Western culture.¹⁷ Other ancient models of the universe operated with a closed system of celestial spheres, that was not definitively broken until the vast expansion of astronomical space with the coming of the new astronomy: what Marjorie Nicolson called ‘the breaking of the circle.’¹⁸ Sublime flights become more sublime still when they head upwards and outwards into the vast spaces of post-Galilean astronomy.

How central the idea of upwards flight is to the early modern notion of the sublime may be seen from William Marshall’s title page for the first edition (in parallel Greek and Latin) of Longinus, published in England by Gerard Langbaine in 1636 (Fig. 1.3).¹⁹ The upper half of the page consists almost entirely of

15. Cheney 2018.

16. For an attempt at a sympathetic reading of Cowley’s sublime ambitions, see Hardie 2019.

17. Porter 2016: 445–54.

18. Nicolson 1950.

19. Discussed by Hamlett 2012: 204–6; Cheney 2018: 27–28.

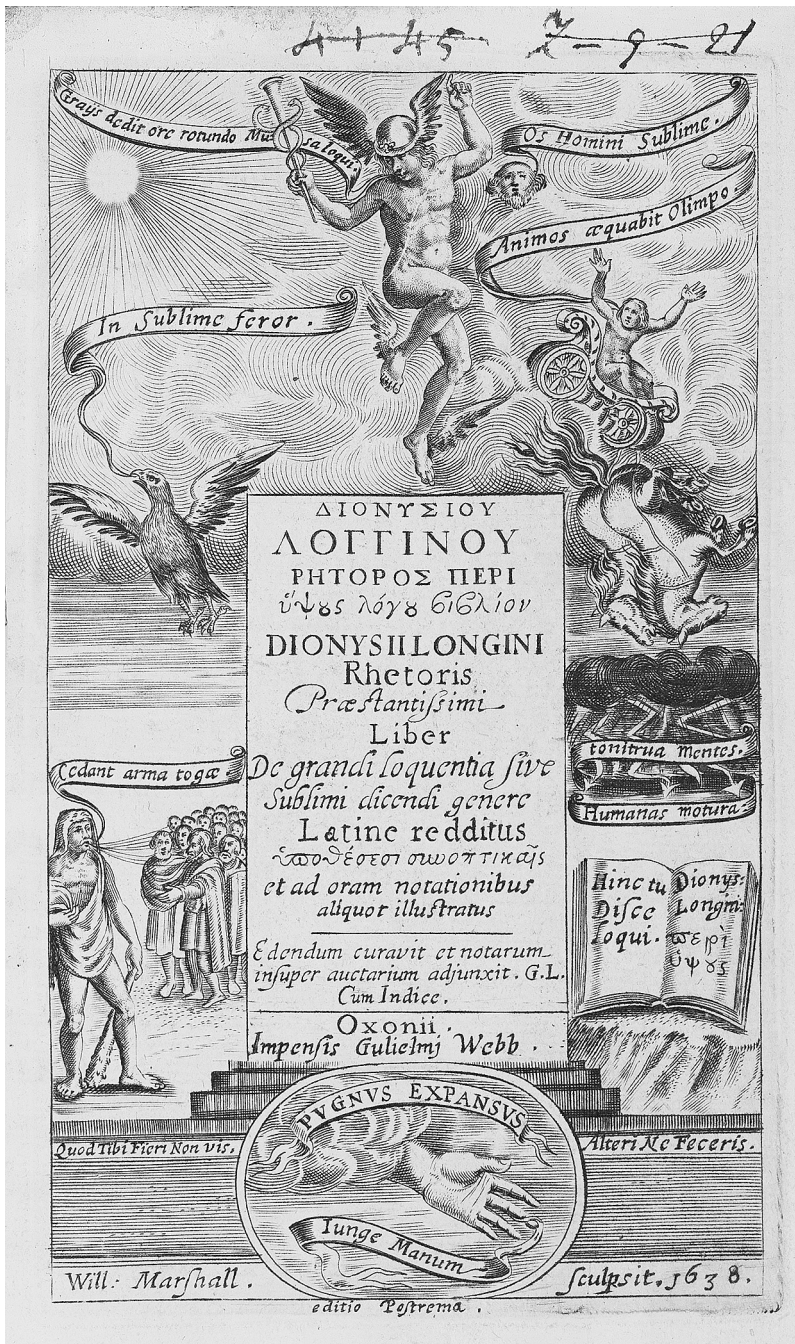


FIGURE 1.3. William Marshall, title page to Gerard Langbaine (ed.), *Dionysiou Longinou rhetoros Peri hypsous logou biblion* (Oxford, 1638). By permission of the Master and Fellows, Trinity College, Cambridge.

images of flight: at top centre, Mercury with winged helmet and sandals descends, with a scroll reading ‘Graius dedit ore rotundo Musa loqui’ (The Muse granted the Greeks the power of speaking with well-rounded utterance) (Horace, *Ars poetica* 323–24); to the left an eagle flies up to the sun, with the scroll ‘In sublime feror’ (I am carried up on high);²⁰ to the right is the open-mouthed head of a man in the clouds, with the scroll ‘Os homini sublime’ ([Prometheus gave] man a face raised up high) (Ovid, *Met.* 1.85, from the description of the creation of ‘homo erectus’: see ch. 2: 46n39). Below, Phaethon and chariot and horses plunge down to earth, with the scroll ‘Animos aequabit Olympo’ (He will raise his spirit to the level of the heavens) (Virgil, *Aen.* 6.782), but ending in noble failure, blasted by the lightning bolts that appear in dark clouds beneath his precipitated horses, with the scroll ‘Humanas motura tonitrua mentes’ (Thunderclaps to shake men’s minds) (Ovid, *Met.* 1.55). At the bottom of the page the open hand of God emerges from clouds, with the scrolls ‘Pugnus expansus’ (Open fist), and ‘Iunge manum’ (Join hands), an invitation to the viewer and reader to reach up to the hand of God through the vehicle of the sublime.

In sum, to trace a history of celestial aspirations in early modern Britain is to trace an important component in the history of the early modern sublime—Spenserian,²¹ Marlovian, Miltonic, and on into the ‘Whig sublime’ of the early eighteenth century,²² the proto-romantic poetry of Thomas Gray and Edward Young, and on to the full romanticism of Wordsworth and early Tennyson.

Power and Panegyric

In praising his hero of the spirit, Epicurus, Lucretius draws on the topics used in the praise of rulers and warriors, both in the account of Epicurus’s triumphal flight of the mind in book 1 of *On the Nature of Things*, and in the proem to book 5, where Lucretius pronounces that Epicurus deserves to be called a god for his benefactions to mankind, which far exceed in utility those of the monster-slaying Hercules. In antiquity and after, Hercules, the son of the supreme god, Jupiter, and a mortal woman, Alcmena, is the archetype of the hero who, after his labours on earth, was rewarded on his death with apotheosis. In comparing

20. Cf. Seneca, *Hercules furens* 958 (Hercules predicts his own apotheosis): ‘in alta mundi spatia sublimis ferar’ (I shall be carried on high into the lofty spaces of the universe).

21. On the Spenserian sublime, see Cheney 2018: chs 2, 3.

22. On the ‘Whig sublime’, see Williams 2005: ch. 5

his hero, Epicurus, with Hercules, Lucretius engages polemically with the panegyric elevation of a great man to the status of a god in the late Roman Republic, a topos that fed into the cultic deification (*consecratio*) of the Roman emperor, beginning with the deification of Julius Caesar after his assassination in 44 BC. Apotheosis, or figurative identification with a god from the classical pantheon, became a standard part of the vocabulary of Renaissance panegyric, a metaphor for sublime and (hopefully) enduringly remembered achievement, which, understood as a metaphorical fiction, cohabited easily enough with Christian beliefs about God and the nature of the human soul. Those who so aspired might also run the risk of setting themselves up for a fall. Marlowe's pagan hero Tamburlaine hubristically imagines himself in the role of Jupiter driving his chariot through the sky. One of the many models for the bright-shining 'throne of royal state' on which Satan is seated at the beginning of book 2 of *Paradise Lost* is the Palace of the Sun at the beginning of book 2 of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. Satan is a parodic version of a sun king, an equation of an earthly monarch with the sun-god, or with Apollo as god of the sun; an equation that early modern Christian monarchs took over from antiquity (Louis XIV stands in a long tradition).²³

It is above all (in more than one sense of the phrase) on ceiling paintings that images of apotheosis are displayed. Chapter 6 discusses a range of ceiling paintings, in classical mode, of the apotheosis or glorification of kings and great men. The heyday of these ceiling paintings reaches from the earlier part of the seventeenth century to the first decades of the eighteenth. For reasons that have to do partly with architectural and artistic fashion, this is a narrower time-frame than that of the narratives and images of celestial aspiration in poetry, which continue unchecked through the eighteenth century and into romanticism. The ceiling paintings that I shall discuss in this book use the classicizing forms of the continental and English baroque. For the most part, the imagery specific to scenes of ascent to the heavens cannot be traced directly to ancient models, for the simple reason that, with the exception of some ceilings and domes in early Christian churches, very few, if any, ancient ceiling paintings or mosaics with images of ascent survived into the Renaissance. The visual iconography of ascent is perforce indebted largely to those same texts on which early modern poetry draws. This is also an area where Christian and classical imagery interact, since the continental, predominantly Italian,

23. On the continuity of sun-kingship from antiquity to Louis XIV, see Kantorowicz 1963.

imagery of royal and princely apotheosis draws largely on religious imagery, to which the Roman Catholic Counter-Reformation gave a major impetus.

States of Mind

The sensation of flying is one of liberation from constraints, physical or mental, that hem in, suppress—ground—a human consciousness. The image of flight or ascent is also frequently applied to a number of mental or spiritual conditions and emotions that escape from, or transcend, quotidian states of mind, escape from the subject's attachment to the perceptions and sensations of the world around us: desire, ecstasy, contemplation, fancy, imagination.

Erotic desire

One of the most powerful engines of heavenwards flight is erotic desire, usually of a purified and sublimated kind, and often contrasted with a kind of unpurified desire that consigns its subject to an earthbound existence, or, worse, condemns him or her to a lower inferno of lust, like Adam and Eve after the Fall in *Paradise Lost*, or like the sinner of Greek mythology Tityos, whose punishment of having his liver perpetually devoured by vultures in the underworld is allegorized by Lucretius as a figure for the unending torments of 'empty desire' in this life (Lucr. 3.984–94). In Plato's *Phaedrus*, erotic 'madness' gives the soul wings to fly upwards, enabling the flying chariot of the soul to resume its revolutions in the region above the heavens. This is a sublime image for the ascent of love that Plato elsewhere characterizes in terms that fall short of flight: the 'steps' (ἐπ' ἀναβασμοί) of the ladder of love in the speech of Diotima in the *Symposium* (211c2). The Platonic texts are the starting point for a long and rich tradition of the ascent of love in Neoplatonism and in Platonizing Christian mysticism. For example, the twelfth-century Richard of St Victor, in his contemplative work *Benjamin major*, describes the soul's amazement at the supreme beauty, producing a self-abasement from which it rebounds to rise all the higher and more swiftly through its desire for the supreme things, ravished above itself and elevated to sublime things ('tanto sublimius, tanto celerius per summorum desiderium reuerberata, et super semetipsam raptā, in sublimia eleuatur') (5.5, *Patrol. Lat.* 196:174B).²⁴ Platonic love and its celestial

24. Cited in Porter 2016: 22. The language used by Richard of his spiritual ravishment coincides with Virgil's narrative of the physical snatching up of Ganymede by Jupiter's eagle at *Aen.* 5.254–55: 'praepes ab Ida / sublimem pedibus rapuit Iouis armiger uncis' (see ch. 2: 72).

yearnings were put at the centre of Renaissance culture by the Florentine school of Platonism headed by Marsilio Ficino.

Modern psychology is less optimistic about the possibility of detaching the psyche from our animal instincts. Freud interpreted sexual excitement as the content of dreams of flying.²⁵ Involuntary ascent in flight is the result of a narrative of physical rape in the myth of the Trojan prince Ganymede's abduction to Olympus by Zeus, or the eagle of Zeus, to be the catamite (from the Etruscan form *catmite* of the Greek name *Ganumedes*) and cupbearer of the supreme god. The story of Zeus's erotic infatuation lent itself to spiritualizing allegoresis: in the *Phaedrus*, Plato transforms the traditional story of Ganymede into an account of divine love that leads to the regrowth of the wings of the soul (*Phaedr.* 255b–c). Plato stands at the start of a spiritualizing tradition that continues into the Middle Ages and Renaissance, for example in Dante's dream of being rapt by an eagle, like Ganymede, in *Purgatorio* 9, masking his actual assumption by Saint Lucy to the gate of Purgatory; and in Michelangelo's much-copied drawing of the rape of Ganymede, made for his beloved Tommaso Cavalieri.²⁶

In the *Phaedrus*, sublimated sexual desire motivates the return of the lover's soul to the heights of true knowledge, to the 'Plain of Truth' (*Phaedr.* 248b6). It is a combination of love and intellectual enlightenment that enables the ascent of Dante, in the *Commedia*, from Inferno to the summit of the mountain of the Earthly Paradise in *Purgatorio*, and then soaring upwards through the heavens to the Empyrean. The soul of the woman Beatrice, once the object of Dante's earthly love, accompanies him on this ascent towards the final revelation. The two masculine saints who, in the fourth heaven of the sun, represent, respectively, Christ as Love and Christ as Wisdom, are Saints Francis and Dominic (*Paradiso* 11 and 12).²⁷ These are, as it were, the two wings that bear Dante upwards.

Petrarch's relationship with Laura in the *Rime sparse* (or *Rerum uulgarium fragmenta* [RVF]) is shadowed by the poet's awareness that he cannot replicate Dante's steady ascent towards God in the company of Beatrice. Petrarch frequently talks of raising himself from the ground, sometimes with reference to

25. Freud 1920, 2.10: 'Symbolism in the Dream.'

26. See Barkan 1991: 59–66 (on Dante's dream); 74–98 (on Michelangelo's drawing). Barkan questions the received opinion that Michelangelo's Ganymede is the expression of a purely Platonic love. On the ascent in Dante's *Commedia* within the tradition of Platonizing Christian mysticism, see Patten 2012.

27. Foster 1985.

Virgil's ambition at the beginning of *Georgic* 3 to find a path on which he too can raise himself from the earth (8–9: 'me . . . tollere humo'; see ch. 2: 68).²⁸ Love for Laura is both an incentive to take flight, and an obstacle thereto. The poet tries to reassure himself with the thought that it was love that enabled the flights of Saint Paul and Dante, at *RVF* 177.3–4: 'Love, who gives wings to the feet and hearts of his followers to make them fly up in this life to the third heaven' (Amor, ch'asuoi le piante e i cori impenna²⁹ / per fargli al terzo ciel volando ir vivi)—Dante's third heaven of the planet Venus, and also the third heaven to which Paul was rapt. In the debate between the poet and Love before the tribunal of Reason in *RVF* 360, Love defends himself against the charges of the sufferings that he has brought on the poet (136–39): 'Again, and this is all that remains, I gave him wings to fly above the heavens through mortal things, which are a ladder to the Creator, if one judges them rightly' (Ancor, et questo è quel che tutto avanza, / da volar sopra 'l ciel li avea dat' ali / per le cose mortali, / che son scala al Fattor, chi ben l'estima). After her death, Laura has been raised to heaven, where the poet can, in this life, only follow her in a flight of the mind: 'I fly with the wings of thought to Heaven so often that it seems to me I am almost one of those who there possess their treasure, leaving on earth their rent veils.' (Volo con l'ali de' pensieri al cielo / sì spesse volte che quasi un di loro / esser mi par ch'àn ivi il suo thesoro, / lasciando in terra lo squarciato velo.) (*RVF* 362.1–4). In imagination he addresses Laura and asks to be brought into the presence of the Lord. But in the penultimate poem, before the concluding hymn to the Virgin Mary, who finally replaces Laura as the supreme object of love, Petrarch still regrets times past in which he was earthbound through love of something mortal: 'I go weeping for my past time, which I spent in loving a mortal thing without lifting myself in flight, though I had wings to make of myself perhaps not a base example.' (I' vo piangendo i miei passati tempi / i quai posi in amar cosa mortale, / senza levarmi a volo, abbiend'io l'ale, / per dar forse di me non bassi esempi.) (*RVF* 365.1–4).

Petrarch's *Rime* provided impetus for countless celestially aspiring imitators in the Europe-wide Petrarchism of the following centuries. For example, in France, 'the celestial flight on the wings of love for a woman was to persist well into the seventeenth century as one of the most shopworn pieces in the poet's baggage'.³⁰ The journey to the skies is smoother in the sixteenth-century fashion

28. See Santagata 2004 on *RVF* 360.28–29.

29. Cf. Dante, *Paradiso* 10.74: 'chi non s'impenna sì che là su voli'.

30. Ridgely 1963: 161.

for a ‘spiritual Petrarchism’, whose starting-point is Girolamo Malipiero’s *Il Petrarca spirituale* (Venice 1536), a Christian rewriting of the *Rime sparse* in which the success of flight to the heavens is assured by the image of Christ spreading his wings on the cross (‘Sonetto 335’, 7–8).³¹

Ecstasy

‘Ecstasy’ (ἔκστασις) literally means ‘a standing outside, or apart’, a state of being ‘beside oneself’. The displacement to an outside may be the result of violent emotion, terror, astonishment, anger, madness; it is also the effect of sublime writings on an audience (Longinus, *Sublime* 1.4). The displacements of ecstasy need not be on the vertical axis. But certain kinds of ‘ecstatic’ emotion propel the soul upwards. Hermias, the late antique commentator on Plato, uses the phrase ἔκστασις καὶ μανία (ecstasy and madness) of the erotic madness in the *Phaedrus*, through which the soul ascends to the place of the gods.³² The Neoplatonist Plotinus uses ἔκστασις of the mystical ascent of the soul to the supra-rational One: ‘But that other, perhaps, was not a contemplation but another kind of seeing, a being out of oneself [‘ἔκστασις’, although the reading is not certain] and simplifying and giving oneself over and pressing towards contact and rest and a sustained thought leading to adaptation, if one is going to contemplate what is in the sanctuary’ (*Enneads* 6.9.11). In the Acts of the Apostles, Peter experiences an ecstasy in which he does not himself ascend, but is connected to what lies above through a vision of the heavens opening and a vessel descending (Acts 10:10: ‘ἔκστασις’; ‘mentis excessus’ in the Vulgate). In the seventeenth century, Abraham Cowley’s Pindaric ode ‘The Exstasie’ set a fashion for later seventeenth- and eighteenth-century verse ecstasies in which the soul soars to God (see ch. 3: 139–43, 147–49).

Meditation and contemplation

Spiritual or mental ascent may also be achieved through more measured alterations of consciousness, meditation and contemplation.³³ In the Middle Ages, Jacob’s Ladder was standardly allegorized in terms of the ascent of the

31. Hart 1988: 153–57.

32. Lucasini and Moreschini 2012: 88.10–13.

33. On contemplative ascent, see Wallerstein 1961: ch. 8; Hawkins 1984; Madec 1988.

contemplative life,³⁴ an allegory of which Dante makes magnificent use in cantos 21–22 of *Paradiso*, and to which Milton alludes in *Paradise Lost* (see ch. 4: 186). The Christian ladder of contemplation has precedent in the ‘steps’ of the ladder of love in the speech of Diotima in Plato’s *Symposium*, and in the ladder woven on the dress of the personification of Philosophy who appears to Boethius at the beginning of the *Consolation of Philosophy*; the steps of the ladder link the letter p (practical philosophy) to the letter theta (theoretical philosophy).

The late medieval tradition of the ‘scale of meditation’ flows into both Jesuit and Protestant channels. The *scala meditatoria* laid out in Joannes Mauburnus’s *Rosetum* (Zwolle 1494) exerted a strong influence on both Saint Ignatius’s *Spiritual Exercises*, and on *The Arte of Divine Meditation* (London 1606) by Joseph Hall, later bishop of Exeter and Norwich, and, through Hall, on the Puritan Richard Baxter’s *The Saints Everlasting Rest* (London 1650).³⁵ Both Hall and Baxter also acknowledge the authority of *On the Mountain of Contemplation*, an influential meditative treatise by Jean Gerson (1363–1429), chancellor of the University of Paris.³⁶ The image of sacred steps is also applied to devotions based on the fifteen ‘Psalms of Degrees’, or ‘Gradual Psalms’: for example, the royalist nobleman Henry Hare, first Baron Coleraine’s, *La scala santa: or, A Scale of Devotions Musical and Gradual being Descants on the Fifteen Psalms of Degrees* (1681), whose frontispiece shows the steps to the Temple and Jacob’s Ladder.³⁷

In the eighteenth century, the dissenting Isaac Watts enjoins on his soul a calibrated ascent through contemplation, elevation on steps rather than on wings, and imposes a closure that is content to stop short of the infinite, in Hymn 58 (‘The Scale of Blessedness’): ‘Ascend, my soul, by just degrees, / Let contemplation rove / O’er all the rising ranks of bliss, / Here, and in worlds above’ (1–4). The hymn climbs up the steps of creation, to reach Jesus, to come to a stop in the

34. On Jacob’s Ladder and contemplative ascent, see Patrides 1962; Schaar 1977; and Hawkins 1984: 258 n. 8 on the image of Jacob’s Ladder in the sphere of Saturn in Dante, *Paradiso* 21–22, in the context of Dante’s meeting with Saint Benedict. For other examples of the image of the ladder of spiritual ascent in the Middle Ages, see Cahn 1989; Martin 1954. On the image of the ladder to heaven in non-Jewish ancient contexts, with particular reference to Manilius, *Astron.* 4.119–21, see Volk 2004 (with further bibliography); on the ladder to heaven in late antique Christian texts, see Graf 2004: 29–32.

35. Information from Martz 1954: 62–63, 331–52.

36. Martz 1954: 113.

37. See Stewart 1970: 99–100.

last stanza: ‘But O what words or thoughts can trace / The blessed Three in One! / Here rest, my spirit, and confess / The Infinite unknown.’³⁸

Contemplation’s ascent can also be envisaged as flight, or as a ride in a flying chariot (Milton; Traherne; Young: see ch. 3: 135, ch. 4: 177 and ch. 5: 244). In the eighteenth century, lofty thoughts of a secularized Contemplation also aim high in non-religious poetry (see ch. 5: 212, 226).

Flights of fancy and imagination

In British poetry in the centuries under consideration in this book, ‘flights of fancy’ are more than a faded metaphor for unrealistic or fantastic ideas. Stephen Cornford, in his edition of Edward Young’s *Night Thoughts*, observes that “flight”, “winging”, “mounting”, and “soaring” became in the middle of the eighteenth century the ideal metaphors to describe imaginative and religious aspirations.’³⁹ Fancy sweeps up poet and reader in vivid imaginings of flight, for example in Joseph Warton’s ‘Ode to Fancy’ (1746), where the poet experiences a rapture comparable to that of Horace, swept away in *Odes* 3.25 by the god of ecstatic inspiration, Bacchus (‘Quo me, Bacche, rapis tui / plenum?’). Warton is transported not by Bacchus, but by the personification of Fancy: ‘Whence is this rage?—what spirit, say, / To battles hurries me away? / ’Tis Fancy, in her fiery car, / Transports me to the thickest war’ (85–88). Here the means of transport is a flying chariot. Earlier in the poem, Fancy herself is winged: ‘Whose rapid wings thy flight convey / Thro’ air, and over earth and sea, / While the vast, various landscape lies / Conspicuous to thy piercing eyes’ (17–20).

The view from above is enabled through Fancy’s ‘piercing eyes’, eyes of the mind, *oculi mentis* (see ch. 2: 44), which call attention to her nature as the faculty of forming mental images of things not immediately present to the senses. ‘Fancy’ is a contraction of ‘fantasy’ (or ‘phantasy’), Greek *φαντασία*, literally ‘appearance’, for which, in faculty psychology, the Latin equivalent is *imaginatio*, ‘the production of images’. ‘Fancy’ and ‘imagination’ are often used interchangeably before the Romantic period.⁴⁰

38. In Watts 1721.

39. Cornford 1989: 10.

40. For an overview of the complex history of the relationship, increasingly divergent, between the terms ‘fancy’ and ‘imagination’, see the entries by James Engell s.vv. in *The New Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics* (Princeton, 1993).

The non-dependence of this faculty on what is immediately present to the senses liberates the mind in untrammelled flight, very often flight in a vertical direction. David Hume thinks of imagination as something that gives the subject the illusion (only) of the unlimited ability to travel not only in space, but also in time: ‘Let us chase our imagination to the heavens, or to the utmost limits of the universe; we never really advance a step beyond ourselves’ (*Treatise of Human Nature* 1.2.6);⁴¹ ‘The imagination of man is naturally sublime, delighted with whatever is remote and extraordinary, and running, without control, into the most distant parts of space and time in order to avoid the objects, which custom has rendered too familiar to it.’ (*Enquiry concerning Human Understanding* 12.25)⁴²

Hume here makes the frequent association between imagination (or fancy) and the sublime.⁴³ Equally common is the association of fancy and imagination with originality, as in Henry Pemberton’s account of Milton: ‘Milton had a subject, which permitted his fancy to expatiate beyond the bounds of the world,⁴⁴ where the strength of his invention has formed greater and more astonishing images than any former poet, or than can be allowed to any succeeding one, whose subject confines him within the limits of human actions and powers.’⁴⁵ The language is close to Samuel Boyse’s praise of Pindar’s imagination, in ‘Ode, on the Military Procession of the Royal Company of Archers, at Edinburgh, July 8 1734’: ‘Favoured by thee [Apollo], could matchless Pindar rise, / To vast imagination loose the reins! / Could, free, expatiate thro’ the boundless skies, / And eternize the great Olympic scenes’ (31–34).

The flights of fancy and imagination are not always valued positively, and their upwards impetus sometimes fails, or falls short of more powerful sky-reachers. For Milton, there are right and wrong ways for fancy and imagination to take flight (for detailed discussion, see ch. 4: 186–87, 189–92). For David Hume,

41. Norton and Norton 2007: 49.

42. Beauchamp 2000: 120.

43. On the importance of *phantasia* for the sublime, and in particular for the Marlovian sublime, see Cheney 2018: 131–32; at 132, ‘*Phantasia*, we might say, is the ultimate form of freedom, and Marlowe knew it.’

44. ‘Beyond the bounds of the world’ resonates with Lucretius’s description of Epicurus’s mental flight ‘beyond the walls of the world’ (see ch. 2: 36–39), a passage frequently adapted in praise of the power of Newton’s mind (see ch. 3: 149–60). Henry Pemberton was best known as a physician and mathematician, a collaborator of Newton in his old age; I suspect here an association of the innovations of Milton and Newton.

45. Pemberton 1738: 155.

man's imagination, while sublime in its space- and time-travelling, also 'run[s] without control', and is opposed to 'a correct judgement'. The flying chariot of Abraham Cowley's 'The Muse' (see ch. 3: 143–45) is drawn by a numerous team, but the first two trace-horses are the opposed pair of Fancy and Judgement: 'Go, the rich chariot instantly prepare; / The Queen, my Muse, will take the air; / Unruly Fancy with strong Judgement trace'. Cowley perhaps has in mind the good and bad, obedient and disobedient, horses of the Platonic chariot of the soul (see ch. 2: 33). The strength of judgement, it is hoped, will keep in check the unruliness of fancy.

The first book of Mark Akenside's *The Pleasures of Imagination* ends with an address to the 'Genius of Ancient Greece' (566–604), and the wish to transplant Attic cultural goods to British soil (like Virgil bringing the Muses of Greece back to Italy at the beginning of the third *Georgic*, in preparation for his own lofty flight: see ch. 2: 68–69) (1.595–600⁴⁶):

From the blooming store
Of these auspicious fields, may I unblamed
Transplant some living blossoms to adorn
My native clime: while far above the flight
Of fancy's plume aspiring, I unlock
The springs of ancient wisdom!

Classical learning will enable a flight higher than that of fancy. This is a vertical expression of the opposition between classical learning and native fancy in Milton's 'L'Allegro' (132–34), between 'Jonson's learned sock' and 'sweetest Shakespeare, fancy's child, / Warbl[ing] his native wood-notes wild'.

In James Thomson's 'Autumn', the poet experiences contrasting motions through the powers of Imagination and Truth, horizontal in the case of the former, vertical ('elates') in the case of the latter: 'With swift wing, / O'er land and sea Imagination roams: / Or Truth divinely breaking on his mind, / Elates his being and unfolds his powers' (1334–47).

Fancy continues to take flight even in a period when 'imagination' has become the favoured term: for example, in Leigh Hunt's (1784–1859) 'Fancy's Party. A Fragment', which takes for its epigraph the Augustan astronomical

46. The last line (604) is, 'And tune to Attic themes the British lyre', alluding to Horace's boast at *Odes* 3.30.13–14 to 'princeps Aeolium carmen ad Italos / deduxisse modos', and perhaps also to Virgil's statement at *Geo.* 2.176: 'Ascraeumque cano Romana per oppida carmen'.

didactic poet Manilius's exultant claim to wander through the sky (*Astron.* 1.13–14: see ch. 2: 45–46):

Juvat ire per ipsum
Aera, et immenso spatiantem vivere coelo.
Manilius.

We take our pleasure through the very air,
And breathing the great heav'n, expatiate there.⁴⁷

The free expatiation of Leigh Hunt's *Fancy* includes soaring movement up to the heavens and over mountain-tops (36–49):

Now we loosen—now—take care;
What a spring from earth was there!
Like an angel mounting fierce,
We have shot the night with a pierce;
And the moon, with slant-up beam,
Makes our starting faces gleam.
Lovers below will stare at the sight,
And talk of the double moon last night.

What a lovely motion now,
Smoothing on like lady's brow!
Over land and sea we go,
Over tops of mountains,
Through the blue and the golden glow,
And the rain's white fountains

The images of release from confinement and skywards soaring are also found in Leigh Hunt's friend John Keats's poem 'Fancy' (1–8):

Ever let the Fancy roam,
Pleasure never is at home:
At a touch sweet Pleasure melteth,
Like to bubbles when rain pelteth;
Then let winged Fancy wander

47. Leigh Hunt was the author of *Imagination and Fancy, or, Selections from the English Poets, Illustrative of Those First Requisites of Their Art* (1844). On Leigh Hunt and the poetry of fancy, see Edgecombe 1994.

Through the thought still spread beyond her:
Open wide the mind's cage-door,
She'll dart forth, and cloudward soar.

Originality

Fancy and imagination take writer and reader into remote and novel regions, and both are strongly associated with originality. The same is true of flights of the mind, considered as a theme in itself. There is a light paradox in the fact that the present study of a tradition, the reception of classical themes and imagery of flight upwards and outwards, includes a tradition *of* originality, the repeated use of a stock of motifs to make a claim to be doing something new and unprecedented.

The connection between a flight into the boundless void and originality is already strong in Lucretius, who suggests an analogy between Epicurus's philosophical flight of the mind and the Callimachean untrodden paths of his own poetics. The verb *peragro* (travel over) is used both of Epicurus's trail-blazing solo journey outside the flaming walls of the world, traversing all the infinite void (1.74: 'omne immensum peragrauit'), and of the poet Lucretius's own claim to primacy in his philosophical didactic poem: 'I wander over the pathless places of the Muses, previously trodden by no foot' (auiā Pieridum peragro loca nullius ante / trita solo) (1.925–30), drinking from 'untouched springs', and gathering 'new flowers . . . with which the Muses garlanded no-one's head before mine'.

Horace allusively takes Epicurus's leap into the void, when he imitates Lucretian language in his invective against the servile herd of imitators at *Epistles* 1.19.21: 'I first planted my footsteps freely in the void' (libera per uacuum posui uestigia princeps). The later Augustan poet Manilius, in turn, adapts both the Lucretian flight of Epicurus's mind, and Horace's prior imitation of that flight, to assert his own claim to poetic primacy in his astronomical didactic poem the *Astronomica*. At the beginning of the poem Manilius describes his own wanderings through the boundless heavens, in strongly Lucretian language (1.13–15: see ch. 2: 45–46). The metaphorical field for Manilius's first-time poetic endeavour is not Lucretius's trackless uplands of the Muses (Lucr. 1.926), but the heavens that are his subject-matter: 'my poetic undertaking I will owe to none of the bards, it will be nothing stolen [furtum], but my own work: in a lone chariot I soar to the heavens, in a ship of my own I sweep the sea [soloque volamus / in caelum curru, propria rate pellimus undas]' (*Astron.* 2.57–59),

combining the image of riding a chariot in the sky with the image of seafaring. Some lines later, Manilius asserts, 'Not in the crowd nor for the crowd shall I compose my song, but alone, as though borne round an empty circuit I were freely driving my chariot [uacuo ueluti uectatus in orbe liber agam currus]',⁴⁸ with none to cross my path or steer a course beside me over a common route' (2.137–40).

Milton combines flight upwards with the claim to originality at the start of *Paradise Lost*, invoking the aid of the heavenly Muse 'to my advent'rous song, / That with no middle flight intends to soar / Above the Aonian mount, while it pursues / Things unattempted yet in prose or rhyme' (1.13–16)—a claim to primacy which, famously, treads allusively in the footsteps of Ariosto: 'Cosa non detta in prosa mai, né in rima' (*Orlando furioso* 1.1.2).

In the eighteenth century, flights of originality are a repeated theme of Isaac Watts (1674–1748). For Watts, a leading dissenter, whose father had been imprisoned for non-conformity, the freedom often associated with flights into the boundless void had a particular meaning, a freedom of thought that is also a political and religious freedom, and which goes together with a freedom and originality of poetic expression, a highly Miltonic combination. In 'Free Philosophy', Watts praises his teacher, Thomas Rowe, who ran a well-known dissenting academy, for leading Watts away from 'Custom, that tyranness of fools' and from the 'shackles of the mind' (20–22, 25–29):

Thoughts should be free as fire and wind;
The pinions of a single mind
Will through all nature fly:
...
A genius which no chain controls
Roves with delight, or deep, or high:
Swift I survey the globe around,
Dive to the centre through the solid ground,
Or travel o'er the sky.

In 'The Adventurous Muse', Watts invokes the Christian Muse Urania, who 'takes her morning flight / With an inimitable wing', owing nothing to the 'rules' of the French critic René Rapin. Using classical images for poetic journeying, Watts contrasts 'little skiffs' which 'along the mortal shores / With humble toil in order creep . . . Nor venture thro' the boundless deep' with 'the

48. Alluding to Horace, *Ep.* 1.19.21: 'libera per uacuum posui uestigia'.

chariot whose diviner wheels . . . unconfined / Bound over the everlasting hills / And lose the clouds below, and leave the stars behind,' pursu[ing] an unattempted course, / Break[ing] all the critics' iron chains, / And bear[ing] to paradise the raptur'd mind.' 'Unattempted' is the first overt signal that this is in fact a poetic flight to the now immortal Milton, the subject of praise in the last thirty lines of the poem, and the object of imitation for Watts (see also ch. 5: 193–94). In the pre-Romantic era, as in classical antiquity, originality and imitation are not polar opposites

One of the founding documents for the Romantic cult of originality is Edward Young's *Conjectures on Original Composition* (1759). In his own poetry, Young is the most persistent of all cosmic voyagers (see ch. 5: 230–46). Unsurprisingly, *Conjectures* also uses the image of the flight of the mind. Young appeals to Francis Bacon in his advocacy of 'Originals':⁴⁹ 'Nor have I Bacon's opinion only, but his assistance too, on my side. His mighty mind travelled round the intellectual world; and, with a more than eagle's eye, saw, and has pointed out, blank spaces, or dark spots in it, on which the human mind never shone. . . . Moreover, so boundless are the bold excursions of the human mind, that in the vast void beyond real existence, it can call forth shadowy beings, and unknown worlds, as numerous, as bright, and, perhaps, as lasting, as the stars.' The astronomical comes into sharper focus a few sentences later: 'Originals shine, like comets; have no peer in their path; are rivalled by none, and the gaze of all.' Young perhaps has in mind in particular the original genius of Newton, famous, among other things, for his contributions to cometary science.

Celestial Aspirations and Larger Structures

The central motif of this book is a simple one: ascent from earth to the heavens. But ascent along the vertical axis frequently enters into larger patterns and systems, both in antiquity and after. A common contrast is that between a legitimate and successful ascent, and an illegitimate and unsuccessful attempt that ends disastrously in travel in the opposite direction. Major classical examples of the latter, all the subject of frequent allusion in post-classical literature and art, are the myths of the tragic failure to sustain flight of two headstrong young men—Phaethon in the chariot of his father the Sun, and Icarus on the wings crafted for him by his father Daedalus—and the myths of the

49. Bacon is contrasted here with Pope, criticized for being an imitator.

monstrously impious Titans and Giants who attempt to climb up to heaven to overthrow the Olympian gods. The latter are blasted down by Zeus's thunderbolts to a place lower than the surface of the earth, to underground prisons. Ascent and descent are deployed along the full vertical axis that reaches from the skies to the underworld, from heaven to hell. Descent, however, is not always negatively evaluated. The quest for knowledge or enlightenment may plumb the depths as well as search the heavens. Profundity, as well as altitude, is something to strive for. Sinking is the passive failure to soar, but diving is the active correlative to soaring.

The charting of the extremes of success and failure, of virtue and vice, of theological good and evil along the vertical axis often forms part of a larger moral, theological or political construction of the universe, in which order struggles against disorder. The scene is thus set for encyclopaedic texts or iconographies with ideological or theological plots. In antiquity, the classic example is Virgil's *Aeneid*, which charts the history of Rome and Roman ancestors against a cosmic backdrop, and in which the success and rewards of Roman empire are figured in terms of both horizontal and vertical expansion. The vertical thrust of the *Aeneid* is something new in Greco-Roman epic, and is determinative for much of the later tradition. Ovid responds to it, in his own idiosyncratic way, in the *Metamorphoses*, as does Dante in the *Commedia*, the great medieval 'epic' of descent and ascent, although the upwards passage through the successive spheres of the heavens in *Paradiso* often occludes the motions of flight. Soaring and sinking are, however, vividly experienced in Milton's *Paradise Lost*, an encyclopaedic epic in which moral fall and recovery from fall are recurrently mirrored in episodes of physical descent and ascent.

Periodizations and Intertextualities

These structural patterns, as well as the headings surveyed previously, could all be traced through longer histories stretching back into the Middle Ages and forward into modernity. The decision to focus on two discrete periods—classical antiquity (roughly up to the early fifth century AD, but coming as far forward as the early sixth century in the case of Boethius), and Britain roughly from the late sixteenth to the eighteenth century, but looking forward to the romanticism of the nineteenth century—inevitably has something of the arbitrary about it, and I occasionally stray into the long stretch of time that lies between. Nevertheless, my British texts and images respond for the most part to the classical models, and only intermittently to those models, both

non-Christian and Christian, as mediated through medieval texts. Milton draws on Dante, as well as the rest of the epic tradition from Homer down to the seventeenth century, but the *Commedia* is not an important influence on most of the authors discussed in this book. Of earlier English authors, Chaucer certainly is an important presence in my period, and his parodic version of a celestial ascent in *The House of Fame* is discussed briefly at ch. 2: 102.

This is also a period in English literary history given unity through its intensive and creative engagement with classical texts, of a kind that at its earlier limit was informed and concentrated by the humanism of the Renaissance, but at its latter end underwent relaxation and marginalization. While this book looks to wider frameworks of reception, it is, in the first place, a study in allusion and intertextuality. I proceed on the assumption that many of the early modern poets engage in conscious and intentional allusion to the ancient texts, as well as to earlier British (and in some cases non-British) poets, in a manner quite comparable to the proliferating chains, or ‘imitative series’, of intertextuality that link the ancient authors.⁵⁰ This is beyond question when it comes to classically learned, and in some cases self-annotating, authors like Milton, Cowley, Pope, Thomson, Gray and Young (university poets all, apart from Pope, who was debarred by religion). In other cases, we have to do with what had become a shared vocabulary and imagery of celestial aspiration and its associated emotions—a *koine* of rapture, ravishment and transport.

The unity of this book also depends on the claim that there *is* something cohesively British to the package of texts and images discussed. There are clear lines of intertextuality within both the textual and the visual productions of the period. Texts and images both participate in specifically British histories—literary, artistic, political, ideological. At the same time, it is important to recognize that this period in Britain, and in particular the first part of that period, was as open to continental influence as this country has ever been. This is very clearly the case with the ceiling paintings, which largely derive from, and are in dialogue with, Italian and French models, setting up tensions between continental Catholicism and British Protestantism, and activating rivalries firstly

50. Historically, allusion and intertextuality have been more central to the concerns of students of classical, especially Latin, literature (like myself) than to those of early modernists. Signs of an increasing dialogue between classicists and early modernists are the major book on imitation by Colin Burrow (Burrow 2019), and the collection edited by Burrow et al. (2021). Earlier, Ricks 2002 is a dazzling demonstration of the importance of allusion for readers of English poetry.

between British and French versions of absolutist monarchy, and subsequently between French absolutism and British constitutional monarchy. Many of the artists who painted on walls and ceilings were themselves of Italian or French origin, and brought their continental training with them to Britain. British poets were also impelled in a skywards direction by European models: for example, Spenser's Neoplatonizing ascents, James VI of Scotland's and Josuah Sylvester's translations of Guillaume de Salluste Du Bartas's sacred poems, and not least Milton, deeply read in a wide range of early modern continental authors both in the vernaculars and in Latin. Neo-Latin poetry, written for a readership not restricted by national boundaries, plays a significant part in this book: for example, the poetry of the Polish poet Casimire Sarbiewski, popular in seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century Britain. Some of the most extravagant expressions of Milton's celestial aspirations are in his own early output of Latin poetry.

Overview

Chapter 2 offers an extensive, but selective, survey, with commentary, of Greek and Latin texts, in both prose and verse, on the subject of celestial aspiration. Most of these texts were well known in the elite classical culture of Britain in the period under review. Readers who want to skip to the post-classical material may start with chapter 3, and refer back to the discussion in chapter 2 of particular ancient authors and texts, as required. The three chapters (3–5) on British poetry are organized, in general, chronologically. Chapter 3, however, takes the story to a point some decades after the death of John Milton, before chapter 4 returns to a synoptic account of celestial aspirations across the whole of Milton's poetic output. Chapter 5 then proceeds further into the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Throughout the book, I touch occasionally on the visual arts; chapter 6 is a sustained account of the iconography and contexts of visions of ascent to (and, in some cases, descent from) the heavens on painted ceilings.

Milton has a central role, both for his response to the earlier traditions of celestial aspiration—Christian and non-Christian; classical, medieval, early modern; British and non-British—and for his inescapable presence in the post-Miltonic material. A large number of other poets still central to the canon of English literature put in appearances, but so do a number of other poets famous in their time, but now very little read outside specialist circles. Josuah Sylvester's translation of Du Bartas's *Divine Weeks and Works* was one of the

most popular poetic works in the seventeenth century, but then plummeted into near-oblivion. Abraham Cowley, James Thomson and Edward Young all flew high in fame in their lifetimes and after, but how many read them now? A similar fate has befallen the mural and ceiling paintings of seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century palaces and stately homes, in their time the height of fashion, but now usually relegated to the sidelines in histories of British art.⁵¹ This book has no ambition to bring about a revolution in taste, but a more modest aim is to suggest that these faded celebrities deserve continuing attention for both their literary-historical and their art-historical interest, and indeed for their aesthetic appeal. Partly for that reason, I have been generous with the quotation of texts. As a consequence, the book offers something of an anthology of passages from authors many of whom may be unfamiliar to many readers.

51. The British Murals Network is a group of art historians dedicated to the study of mural painting in Britain in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, and to the fostering of a wider interest in the subject: <https://www.britishmurals.org/about-us> (accessed 29 July 2021). Hamlett 2020 surveys the painting of murals in Britain from 1630 to 1730, and reconstructs contemporary ways of viewing them.

GENERAL INDEX

- Abrams, M. H., 321
 Achilles, 70
 Actium, battle of, 304
 Addison, Joseph, 195, 221, 222
 Aeneas, apotheosis of, 78
 Aeolus, 215, 308
aerobatein 'walk in the air', 99
 Akenside, Mark, 43; and Lucretius, 222–25
 The Pleasures of Imagination, 221–25, 253
 Alan of Lille, *Anticlaudianus*, 322
 Alexander of Ephesus, 54
 Alexander the Great, 43, 297–98
 Ambrose, St., *On the Death of Theodosius I*, 97
 Anne, Queen, 308, 311
 Antonine altar of Ephesus, 85
 Antoninus Pius, column of, 86
 apotheosis, 12–14, 241, 275–76, 291–93; of
 Roman emperor, 3, 13, 49, 61–63, 83–90
Apotheosis of George III, 321
 Apuleius, *Cupid and Psyche*, 34–35,
 315–16
 Arator, *De actibus apostolorum*, 93–94
 Ariadne, 62, 282–83
 Ariosto, 24, 102–5, 185, 202
 Aristaeus, 90
 Aristophanes, 99, 101
 Arnold, Matthew, 132
 ascension of Christ, 3, 92, 93, 267
 ascent: of the soul, 31; by steps, 14, 18, 34,
 108, 244
 assumption of the Virgin, 92
 Astraea, 266–67, 288
 Augustine, St., 3, 56
 Augustus: apotheosis of, 79; celestial
 aspirations of, 50–51, 66–67
 Babel, tower of, 91
 Bachelard, Gaston, 40
 ballooning, 54n58, 75n
 Banqueting House, Whitehall, 268–80,
 301
 Barbauld, Anna Letitia, 'A Summer
 Evening's Meditation', 247–49
 Bate, Jonathan, 122
bathos, 'bathos', 33n9, 52, 211
 Beaumont, Joseph, *Psyche, or, Loves
 Mysterie*, 35, 91, 134
 Bellerophon, 99, 181n53, 182
 Belvedere Altar, 85, *Fig. 1.2*
 Benlowes, Edward, *Theophila*, 133–34
 Bentley, Richard, 7, 154n119
 bird of paradise, 167, 216
 Blackmore, Sir Richard, 195
 The Creation, 199–200
 Blenheim Palace, 197, 199–200
 Boethius, *The Consolation of Philosophy*,
 18, 56–58
 Bolsover Castle, Heaven Room and
 Elysium Closet, 267–68, *Figs 6.7–8*
 (*Plates 4, 5*)
 Bonincontri, Lorenzo, *De rebus coelestibus*,
 125n51
 boundlessness, 37, 112, 225; in Edward
 Young, 235–38, 251; in Thomas Traherne,
 133–37, 237; in William Wordsworth,
 252–56

- Boyse, Samuel, 'Ode on the Military Procession of the Royal Company of Archers', 20
- Brahe, Tycho, 306
'Hortatory Ode', 152n114
- Brereton, Jane, 'On the Bustoes in the Royal Hermitage', 225
- British Murals Network, 29n
- Brunidi, Constantino, *Apotheosis of George Washington*, 320
- Bruno Giordano, 126–27
De gli eroici furori, 126
Lo spaccio de la bestia trionfante, 279
- Buchanan, George, *De sphaera*, 124–25, 202–3
- Buckingham, Duke of, 283–86
- Burke, Edmund, 42, 195
- Burton, Robert, *Anatomy of Melancholy*, 128
- butterfly, 233
- Byron, Lord, 321, 322
- Carew, Thomas, *Coelum Britannicum*, 279, 283–84, 291
- cartography, 54, 125
- catasterism, 62, 116, 142n, 207–8, 279, 282, 296
- Catherine of Braganza, 295
- Catullus (Callimachus), 'The Lock of Berenice', 62, 75, 77, 207–8
- Cavendish, William, 267
- celestial aspirations: and the baroque, 8–9, 169; and erotic desire, 14–17, 43, 111–12, 135, 176, 258; and fancy and imagination, 19–23; and liberation, 14, 40–42, 59–60, 99, 132, 136, 147, 223, 233–35; and meditation and contemplation, 17–19; and originality, 23–25; and power and panegyric, 12–14; and religion, 3–7; and science, 2, 123–37; and science and religion, 7–8; and the sublime, 9–12, 36, 42–44
- chariot, flying, 2, 19, 21, 31–32, 67, 68, 85, 90–91, 144, 244, 293
- Charles I, King, 107, 283–84
- Charles II, King, 288–97; apotheosis of, 297n
- Chaucer, *House of Fame*, 102, 202
- Cheney, Patrick, 10
- Chéron, Louis, 313
- Chudleigh, Lady Mary, imitations of Casimire, 147–48
- Cicero, *Dream of Scipio*, 53–55, 62–63, 139, 188, 258
- civil war, 272
- Claudian, 85, 97–98, 280–81
- clouds, 92
- Clymer, Lorna, 225
- Cole, Spencer, 63
- Coleridge, Samuel Taylor, 217
- Columbus, 140–41, 149, 251n
- Columella, 211
- consecratio*. See apotheosis, of Roman emperor
- Consecratio Diptych, 86, Fig. 2.1
- Constantine the Great, 86
- contemplation, ascent through, 17–19, 111–12, 113, 177, 226, 247–48
- contemptus mundi*, 55
- Copernicus, 128
- Cornford, Stephen, 231
- Corpus Hermeticum*, 138, 173
- Correggio, Antonio da, *Assumption of the Virgin*, 260, 267, 272, Fig. 6.3
- Cortona, Pietro da, 169, 301; 'Planetary Rooms', 258–65, Figs 6.1–2, 6.4, 6.6 (Plates 2, 3)
- cosmic kingship, 299
- cosmic whiggism, 307n80
- Cowley, Abraham, 5, 10, 17, 225; praise of, 145n101
Davideis, 141
'The Exstasie', 139–43, 239; imitations of, 147–49
'The Muse', 143–45
Pindarique Odes, 137–45
- Creech, Thomas, 47
- Creutius Cordus, 60
- Cupid and Psyche on ceiling paintings, 315–16
- Daedalus, 50
- Dante, 15, 27, 102, 103, 181, 258, 322
- Davenant, William, 133–34
- de Coetlogon, Charles Edward, 244
- Demodocus, 228

- De mundo* (pseudo-Aristotle), 43–44
- Dennis, John, 6, 10, 195, 204, 215, 216; and
the enthusiastic passions, 197–99, 238
- Derham, William, 7–8
- Desaguliers, Jean-Théophile, 307
- descent from heaven, 73
- de Wet II, Jacob Jacobsz, *Apotheosis of
Hercules*, 311, Fig. 6.33 (Plate 20)
- Diana (Phoebe), 118–19, 266
- Dido and Aeneas, 73–75
- Donne, John:
The Anniversaries, 130–33
Ignatius, His Conclave, 128–29
- Downes, Kerry, 318
- Drayton, Michael, *Endimion and Phoebe*, 117–19
- Dryden, John, poetic flights of, 228n93
Albion and Albanus, 296–97
- Du Bartas, Guillaume de Salluste, 4, 10
Les Sepmaines, 107–10
'L'Uranie', 107–8
- eagles, 86, 89, 97, 102, 109, 203–4, 222, 272, 321
- ecstasy, 17
- Elijah, ascent of, 3, 90, 141, 171, 172, 182, 186,
244, Fig. 1.1
- Elizabeth I, panegyric of, 266–67, 288
- Empedocles, 52, 100, 171
- Enoch, 182, 185n67, 186
- enthusiasm, 6, 51, 197–99
- Eratosthenes, *Hermes*, 53–54
- Euphorion (in Goethe's *Faust*), 321–22
- Euripides, 40
- exaltation: of Christ, 91, 162; of Satan, 162
- 'expatiate', *exspatiari*, 41, 82, 203
- eyes of the mind (*oculi mentis*), 19, 44
- Ezekiel, 90, 97
- fama* ('fame', 'rumour'), 52–53, 73–75, 210
- fame, flight of, 48, 52–53, 65, 71, 80, 103–5.
See also Spenser, Edmund, flight of fame of
- Fawkes, Francis, 'An Eulogy of Sir Isaac
Newton', 153–54
- Felix, St., 94–95
- Ferri, Ciro, 261
- fire, upwards motion of, 178
- Flamsteed, John, 305
- Fletcher, Phineas, 109
- flight, failure of, 95, 245
- flights of fancy, 19–23, 102, 187, 216, 218–19, 248
- flights of the mind, 31–32, *passim*
- flying fish, 144n97, 216
- four continents, 308
- Freud, Sigmund, 15
- Furies, 272–73
- Galileo, 128, 129, 140, 165
- Ganymede, 15, 72, 89–90, 285n43
- Gaulli, Giovanni Battista, 169
Triumph of the Name of Jesus, 261,
286, 301, Fig. 6.5
- Gentileschi, Orazio, *Peace Reigning over the
Arts and Sciences*, 302, Fig. 6.29 (Plate 19)
- George, Prince of Denmark, 307
- George I, King, 309–10
- Geraghty, Anthony, 286
- Gibson, Katherine, 292
- Gigantomachy (and Titanomachy), 26, 44,
74, 81, 112–13, 151, 178, 261, 272, 304
- Giordano, Luca, *Jupiter and the Apotheosis of
the Medici*, 77n101, 260n7
- Giulio Romano, *Jupiter Blasting the Giants*,
315, Fig. 6.35
- Glorious Revolution, 4, 8, 297, 299; as
cosmogony, 305n78
- Goethe, Johann Wolfgang von, 321
- Golden Age, 64, 67, 98
- Grand Camée de France, 86, Fig. 2.2
- Granville, George, 209–10
- Gray, Thomas:
'The Bard', 229
'The Progress of Poesy', 227–30
- Greenwich Hospital, 299–311
- Habington, William, 132n69, 139n87
- Halley, Edmond, 290
'In uiri praestantissimi D. Isaaci
Newton opus', 151–54
- Halliwell, Stephen, 42

- Hammond, Paul, 177
 Hampton Court, 297–99
 Hassell, R. Chris, 130
 Hawking, Stephen, 322–23
 Henri IV, apotheosis of, 275–77
 Henrietta Maria, Queen, 275, 279, 283, 302
 Herbert, George, 133
 Hercules, 12, 39, 77, 241, 258, 267, 273,
 293–94, 297–98, 304; apotheosis of, 78,
 86, 122, 241, 311–13; Choice of, 226
 Hersilia, apotheosis of, 79, 313
 Hill, Aaron, 216
 ‘The Transport’, 147–48
 ‘*homo erectus*’, 12, 46n39, 94, 223
homoiōsis theōi ‘assimilation to god’, 38–39
 Horace, 47–52, 277; and originality, 23
 Hughes, John, ‘The Ecstasy’, 147–49, 157
 Hume, David, 20
 Huygens, Christiaan, 224
 hyperbole, 210

 Icarian pattern, 147, 216
 Icarus, 25, 52, 75–76, 83, 97, 109, 180, 213, 243,
 318–19
 Igel monument, Trier, 85–86
 infinity. *See* boundlessness
 insatiability of desire, 58–59
 intertextuality, 27n

 Jacob’s Ladder, 17–18, 113–14, 186
 James VI of Scotland and I of England, 106–7,
 268–80
 The Essayes of a Prentice, 107
 John, St., 103–5, 202
 Johns, Richard, 310, 313
 Johnson, Samuel, 209
 Jones, Inigo, 268, 302
 Jonson, Ben, 268; interest in new astronomy,
 128
 ‘Elegie on the Lady Jane Pawlet’, 133
 ‘To the Immortal Memory and
 Friendship’, 142n
 Poetaster, 281–82
 Joseph du Chesne, *La Morocosmie*, 186n68

 Julian, *The Caesars*, 297
 Julius Caesar, 13; apotheosis of, 61, 65, 66,
 79, 157, 208, 313–15

 Kant, Immanuel, 42
 Kepler, Johannes, *Somnium*, 129

 Laguerre, Louis:
 Allegory of War and Peace, 197, 311,
 Fig. 5.1 (Plate 18)
 Apotheosis of Julius Caesar, 313–15,
 Fig. 6.34 (Plate 21)
 Lanfranco, Giovanni, 260, 272
 Le Brun, Charles, 290
 Passage of the Rhine, 294, Fig. 6.25
 Legrand, Pierre Nicolas, *Apotheosis of
 Nelson*, 320
 Leigh Hunt, James Henry, ‘Fancy’s Party’, 21–22
 Lemoyne, François, *Apotheosis of Hercules*,
 241, 311
 Longinus, *On the Sublime*, 9, 43; edition of
 by Gerard Langbaine (1636), 10–12
 Lucian, 99–102
 Charon, 100–1
 Icaromenippus, 100, 171
 Menippus, 101
 A True Story, 101
 Lucretius, 2, 7, 12; and originality, 23; and
 the sublime, 10

 MacCormack, Sabina, 98
 Malipieri, Girolamo, *Il Petrarca spirituale*, 17
 Mallet, David, *The Excursion*, 218–21
 Manilius, 22, 45–47, 236, 306; and originality,
 23–24
 Marlborough, Duke of, 197
 Marlowe, Christopher, 13, 119–21
 Martindale, Charles, 184–85
 Marvell, Andrew, 137, 140n89
 masques, 268, 277–79, 281, 283, 286
 medallion portraits, 288, 308
 Medicean Stars, 77n101, 260
 meditation, 6, 17–19
 Mercator, *Atlas*, 125

- Merkabah mysticism, 90–91
- Milton: and the baroque, 169; and fancy and imagination, 20, 186–92; and Galileo, 165; and Lucretius, 165–69, 183–84; and originality, 24; the vertical axis in *Paradise Lost*, 177–92
Ad patrem, 173–74
‘On the Death of the Bishop of Ely’, 171–72
Elegia Quinta ‘On the Arrival of Spring’, 173
Epigrams on the Gunpowder Plot, 170–71
Epitaphium Damonis, 175–76
Lycidas, 175
Mansus, 174
Third *Prolusio*, 173
- Montagu, Charles, 214–15
- Montagu, Ralph, 312, 318
- moon, voyages to, 101, 102–5
- More, Henry:
Democritus Platonissans, 150–51
An Essay upon the Infinity of Worlds, 236
- mountain-climbing, 54, 69, 100, 226
- Mozart, *Il sogno di Scipione*, 58
- Narcissus, 112
- Nelson, Horatio, 320
- Neoplatonism, 14–15, 110–11, 279–80
- Nero, 83–84
- Newcomb, Thomas, *The Last Judgment of Men and Angels*, 192
- Newton, 2, 7–8, 196, 205, 220, 224, 241, 255–56, 306–7; poems in praise of, 149–60, 252;
Roubiliac’s statue of, 149, 255–56, Fig. 3.2;
tomb of, 2
- Nicolson, Marjorie Hope, 10, 128, 134–35, 137, 165
- Norris, John, ‘The Elevation’, 147
- Octavian, cameo of as Neptune, 281,
Fig. 6.16 (Plate 11)
- Ogilby, John, *The Entertainment of Charles II*, 281
- Ortelius, Abraham, *Theatrum orbis terrarum*, 125n49
- Ovid, 40–42, 142
Metamorphoses, 78–83
- Ozell, John, transl. Boileau, *Le Lutrin*, 215
- Palace of the Sun, 81
- Palingenius, *Zodiacus vitae*, 127, 203
- Parmenides, 2, 31–32, 38
- Parnell, Thomas, ‘The Ecstasy’, 147–48
- Paul, St., 92, 140, 235
- Paulinus of Nola, 94–95, 212
- Pegasus, 115, 181n53, 318
- Pellegrini, Antonio, *The Fall of Phaethon*, 317–18
- Pemberton, Henry, 20
- Petrarch, *Rime sparse*, 15–16
- Petrarchism, 16–17
- Phaethon, 12, 25, 40, 81–82, 84n113, 113, 120–21, 122, 172, 183; on ceiling paintings, 316–18; and the sublime, 82, 217
- physico-theology, 7–8, 218
- Pilkington, Laetitia, 163–64
- Pindar, 32, 48, 49, 52, 72, 227. *See also*
Cowley, Abraham, *Pindarique Odes*;
Gray, Thomas, ‘The Progress of Poesy’
- Plato, 32–34
Phaedrus, 14, 33–34, 38–39, 176–77, 185, 280
Symposium, 14, 18, 34
- Plotinus, 3, 17
- Pompey the Great, 55–56, 174
- Pope, Alexander, 195, 200–9, 245; and
Lucretius, 204–5
The Dunciad, 216–17
‘An Epistle to the Earl of Burlington’, 205, 311
‘Epitaph on Newton’, 10, 144n98
An Essay on Man, 201–5
Peri Bathous, or, The Art of Sinking in Poetry, 215
The Rape of the Lock, 207–9
Windsor Forest, 205–7
- Porter, James, 43
- Pozzo, Andrea, 169, 301

- Prescott, Anne Lake, 109
 Primaticcio, Francesco, 267
 Prudentius, 95–96
 Pythagoras, 79–80, 158
quadratura, 169, 301, 302
- Quint, David, 105, 183
- Rapture, the, 92
 Raylor, Timothy, 267–68
remigium alarum ‘oarage of wings’, 75, 144
 Reni, Guido, 282–83
 Richardson, Samuel, 230
Robur Carolinum (constellation), 290
 Roettiers, Jan, medal commemorating the coronation of William and Mary, 318, Fig. 3.18 (Plate 23)
 Romulus, apotheosis of, 62, 72, 79, 207–8, 313
 Ronsard, Pierre de, 108, 124n45, 132n71
rota Vergilii ‘wheel of Virgil’, 63
 Rubens, Peter Paul:
 Banqueting House, Whitehall, ceiling, 106–7, 268–80, Figs 6.9–6.13 (Plate 6)
 The Glorification of the Duke of Buckingham, 286, Fig. 6.18 (Plate 9)
 Maria de’ Medici, cycle on life of, 190, 275–77, Figs 4.2, 6.14–15
 ruler-cult, Hellenistic, 61–62
- Sacchi, Andrea, *Divine Wisdom*, 169, Fig. 4.1 (Plate 1)
 Salmoneus, 74
 Sarbiewski, Casimire, 5, 137–40, 146, 212–13; imitations of Horace, 138n83
 Saumurez Smith, Charles, 318
scala meditatoria, 18
 Schiller, Friedrich, *Der Spaziergang*, 321
 seafaring as image for flight, 40, 59, 75, 101, 139, 184, 220, 248, 249–56
 Sedulius, *Paschal Song*, 90
 Seneca the Younger, 235
 Apocolocyntosis, 61, 84
 Consolation to Marcia, 59–60, 132–33
- Shakespeare, 121–23
 Antony and Cleopatra, 122
 Sheldonian Theatre, Oxford, 286
 Sidney, Sir Philip, 116, 126
sidus Carolinum (star of Charles II), 292–93, Fig. 6.23
sidus Iulium (star of Julius Caesar), 66, 67, 73, 77, 293
 soaring and diving, 32, 110, 123, 218, 224, 243n131
 soaring and sinking, 209–17
 Solkin, David, 288
 soul, godlikeness of, 33–34, 43, 44, 47, 69, 95; wings of, 33
 Southey, Robert, *A Vision of Judgement*, 321
 Spenser, Edmund, 110–16; flight of fame of, 114–16; Garden of Adonis, 119
 Cantos of Mutabilitie, 112–13
 The Faerie Queene, 113–14
 Fowre Hymnes, 110–12
 The Shepheardes Calender, 114–15
 Spurgeon, Caroline, 121
 staircases to the heavens, 299n65
 Steele, Richard, 304
 Stevens, Crosby, 268
 Streater, Robert, *Truth Descending on the Arts and Sciences*, 268, Fig. 6.19 (Plate 8)
 sublimity, Bacchic, 51; judicious obscurity of, 42; and political freedom, 195. *See also* celestial aspirations and the sublime
 sun king, 13, 78, 183, 274, 282, 295, 303
 swans, 66, 105, 116
 Swift, Jonathan, *A Tale of a Tub*, 215–16
 Sylvester, Josuah, *The Divine Weeks and Works*, 107–10, 172, 180, 203
- Tantalus, 112
 telescope, 2, 129, 140, 156, 165, 208, 244
 Tennyson, Alfred, ‘Ulysses’, 249–52
 Teskey, Gordon, 165
 Thamyras, 228
 Theodosius I, 97–98
 Theognis, 48

- Thomson, James, 6, 217–18
 ‘To the Memory of Sir Isaac
 Newton’, 154–58, 162
- Thornhill, Sir James:
 Apotheosis of Hersilia, 313
 The Fall of Phaethon, 317, Fig. 6.36
 (Plate 22)
 A Hero Entering the Temple of Fame,
 197
 Painted Hall, Greenwich, murals,
 299–311, Figs 6.28, 6.30–32 (Plates
 16, 17)
- Tiepolo, Giambattista, *The Four Continents*,
 288
- Titian:
 Assumption of the Virgin, 92, 96
 Bacchus and Ariadne, 62
- Titus, Arch of, 86, Fig. 2.3
- Traherne, Thomas, 134–37
- triumphal imagery, 39, 46, 69, 90, 93, 94, 97,
 151, 155, 168, 234, 272, 275
- Urania (celestial Muse), 2, 24, 107, 110, 172,
 181, 193
- van Honthorst, Gerrit, *Apollo and Diana*,
 283–84, Fig. 6.17 (Plate 7)
- van Veen, Otto, 277
- Verrio, Antonio:
 The Apotheosis of Charles II, 291–93,
 Fig. 6.22 (Plate 13)
 Banquet of the Gods, 297–99,
 Fig. 6.27 (Plate 15)
 *The Glorification of Catherine
 of Braganza*, 295, Fig. 6.26
 (Plate 14)
 The Restoration of the Monarchy,
 293–94, Fig. 6.24
 The Sea-Triumph of Charles II, 179,
 290, Fig. 6.21 (Plate 12)
- Versailles, 291, 294
- Vida, Girolamo, *Christiad*, 177n40
- view from above, 19, 54–55, 59–60, 65, 73,
 78, 80, 100, 118, 125, 138, 238–40
- Virgil, 63–78; *laudes Italiae*, 240; *pax
 Augusta*, 272
 Aeneid, 70–78
 Eclogues, 64–66
 Georgics, 66–70
- volcano, 219
- Walpole, Horace, 75n
- Warton, Joseph, 212
 ‘Ode to Fancy’, 19
- Warton, Thomas, 226–27
- Watts, Isaac, 18–19, 138, 146–47, 195; and
 originality, 24–25
 ‘The Adventurous Muse’, 124–25,
 193–94
 ‘Pindarici carminis specimen’, 146–47
 ‘The Scale of Blessedness’, 18–19
 ‘Strict Religion Very Rare’, 147–48
- Welsted, Leonard, 196
- West, Benjamin, *Immortality of Nelson*,
 320
- Whig sublime, 6, 195–200
- Whitney, Geoffrey, *A Choice of Emblemes*, 116,
 Fig. 3.1
- William III and Mary, 214, 298, 299–307,
 310, 318
- Williams, Abigail, 214
- Wilton House, 318–19
- winds, control of, 305
- Windsor Castle, 290–95
- Wordsworth, William, 252–56, 321
- world landscapes, 188
- Wright, John Michael, *Astraea Returns to
 Earth*, 288, Fig. 6.20 (Plate 10)
- Yates, Frances, 266
- Young, Edward, 7, 195; on fancy and
 imagination, 231–33
 Conjectures on Original Composition, 25
 Night Thoughts, 230–46