Ann Batten Cristall and the Lyrical Sketch:
The Influence of Eighteenth-Century Aesthetics on Lyric Performativity

by

Emily Paull

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For my parents

Abstract

There is only a small body of scholarship on British Romantic poet Ann Batten Cristall who published one collection, *Poetical Sketches,* in 1795. This thesis analyzes the songs of her diverse collection, which have yet to receive substantive critical attention. I clarify the nature of her aesthetic by introducing the "lyrical sketch" as a genre in which she works, reimagining the "irregularities" of her poetry as instances of innovation. The scholarship on Cristall has tended to be feminist as it seeks to repair her literary reputation. Comparisons between Cristall and Blake are common and seek to legitimize her work by arguing that her genius is similar to Blake's. While comparing her to Blake in this manner gives Cristall some credibility, it does so at the expense of recognizing her unique contribution to the lyric genre. I put Cristall and Blake's lyrics in dialogue by placing them on a lyric spectrum with Frye's pictorial and musical boundaries. My hope is that this alternative methodology illustrates the way in which Cristall can help us read Blake as much as he provides insight into reading her poetry. This project and its approach reaffirm the importance of reading poetry by women in a shared tradition with male writers, resulting in a more comprehensive genre study that nuances the construction of the British Romantic lyric.

Although I offer a critique of current strategies to recover the work of women writers, my project shares a similar feminist motivation. Cristall's poetry questions the construction of the solitary (male) lyric speaker. In demystifying the aura of the isolated speaker, Cristall complicates the addresser-addressee relationship, opening up the lyric to the reader. Additionally, she confounds the notion that genius and the role of the lyric "I" are the prerogatives of men.

The first chapter examines Cristall's meter and rhythm in light of late eighteenth-century understandings of the arts to elucidate her key aesthetic principles of verbal immediacy, derivative of the sketch, and lyric performativity. Consideration of the cultures of the visual arts and music combined with formalist readings reveals that Cristall's lyrical sketch is more musical than pictorial. I argue that she achieves these rhetorical effects through her manipulation of genre in the lyrical sketch.

In the second chapter, I contrast her songs to William Blake's "Introduction" to *Songs of Innocence* to better define the lyrical sketch and to highlight Cristall's formal ingenuity. The juxtaposition of Cristall's musical lyrical sketch with Blake's pictorial illuminated lyric demonstrates the dialectical interaction of the rhetorical strategies of the visual arts (immediacy) and of music (performativity). In Cristall's poetry, it becomes evident that lyrical sonority subsumes the visual aspects of the sketch. Finally, I conclude with the hypothesis that the lyrical sketch, and its challenges to traditional notions of the lyric, is not a genre that unique to Cristall, and warrants further study.

CONTENTS

Short Titles

"Introduction": Blake, William. "Introduction." *William Blake: The Complete Illuminated Books*. Ed. David Bindman. New York: Thames & Hudson, 2004. 46. Print.

"Preface": Cristall, Ann Batten. "Preface." *Poetical Sketches*. London: J. Johnson, 1795. Print.

"Cymon": Cristall, Ann Batten. "Song." *Poetical Sketches*. London: J. Johnson, 1795. 142-4. Print.

"Hours": Cristall, Ann Batten. "Song (Tune, THE HEAVY HOURS)." *Poetical Sketches*. London: J. Johnson, 1795. 66-7. Print.

"Repeat": Cristall, Ann Batten. "Song." *Poetical Sketches*. London: J. Johnson, 1795. 113-4. Print.

"Lyric": Culler, Jonathan. "Lyric, History, and Genre." *The Lyric Theory Reader: A Critical Anthology*. Ed. Virginia Jackson and Yopie Prins. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 2014. 63-76. Print.

"Theory": Frye, Northrop. "Theory of Genres." *The Lyric Theory Reader: A Critical Anthology*. Ed. Virginia Jackson and Yopie Prins. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 2014. 30-39. Print.

Poetics: McGann, Jerome. *The Poetics of Sensibility: A Revolution in Literary Style*. New York: Oxford UP, 1996. Print.

RUNM: *Remediation: Understanding New Media*. Ed. Jay David Bolter and Richard Grusin. Cambridge: MIT Press, 1999. Print.

VVS: Sha, Richard. *The Visual and Verbal Sketch in British Romanticism*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1998. Print.

Figures

INTRODUCTION

I.   The Legacy of Irregularity

In 1795, Ann Batten Cristall, then twenty-five years old, published her only book of

poetry titled *Poetical Sketches.* Within a year, several men reviewed her collection. Many of

them channel the voice of benevolent instructor whose job is not only to pass judgment but to

coach poets to make improvements and "foster infant genius" (Griffiths 98). Ralph Griffiths,[1]

writing in 1796, describes this duty as something that reviewers "are always happy to embrace

[… but that] no task is more painful to us than that of censuring precipitation or negligence,

where we discover some traces of originality" (Griffiths 98). His declaration of this blight on

the review's duty is Griffiths' prelude to what would become a scathing dismissal of Cristall's

poetry. For Griffiths, Cristall has one unpardonable flaw: irregularity, which happens to be

exacerbated by her lack of discipline.

Cristall's "irregularity" has proven difficult and unremitting. The diction, grammar and

rhyme schemes that her reviewers read as incorrect are unfortunately considered today with

similar perplexity. Jonas Cope, author of a recent study of Cristall's poetry, describes her verse

as "difficult to classify," but generally identifies her metrical scheme as iambic pentameter

(Cope 18). As for her inconsistency, he describes it as a "range of […] usually shortened lines

with variously rising and falling rhythm" (Ibid.). He reads her meter as variable, comparable to

Cristall's original reviewers. To label her verses such is to not only perpetuate a reading that

marginalizes her work, but to absorb uncritically the words of her contemporary male critics. A

close reading of Cristall's versification reveals that she is a formal innovator. Cristall may have

employed the term "irregularity" herself but for today's scholars to do so is dismissive of her

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[1] Griffiths founded the *Monthly Review* and, according to David Allen, was a "leading
metropolitan bookseller" (Allan *Commonplace* 106).

meter that resists the narrow confines of categorization. When faced with providing a succinct

description of such a style, to resort to calling it irregular, or worse, "bizarre," is to continue to

do this neglected poet an injustice (Nagle 52). Her innovation is not only in combining the

sketch and the lyric; her ingenuity results from utilizing rhetorical styles from two different

genres. By interweaving a variety of poetic feet and line lengths, she creates an acoustically

animated verse that challenges and delights in equal measure.

As Cope's study demonstrates, a critical bafflement for her non-uniformity has become a

lasting legacy for Cristall, with its roots at the start of her reception history. Of those first

critiques, Griffiths' is not typical; out of a survey of five reviews from 1795-6, three critics

suggest that Cristall has prospects for a promising career despite "blemishes" in her poetry

(Kippis; Smollett; *Theological Review*). Like Griffiths, they take issue with her deviations from

set schemes. One reviewer refers to that characteristic as an "irregular species of versification

[… that] is not, in our[2] judgment consistent with the laws of poetry" (Jackson). Another looks

upon her "redundancies" and "inaccuracies" indulgently, writing that "where we clearly

discover the hand of genius, we can easily forgive a little extravagance"[3] (Smollett 286). Even

one review that looks with a critical eye on her "seeming inattention to rhyme and the structure

of verse" still declares that she exhibits "much genius and warmth of imagination" (*Theological

Review* 423). Despite the unanimous critique of her versification as erratic, accompanied by a

smattering of condescending advice, Cristall is regarded as a budding genius.

Griffiths' review is revealing and we have his hostility toward her collection to thank for

the confirmation of the audacity of her poetry for its contemporaneous audience. Griffiths

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[2] Many of the writers assume an authoritative stance via a collective male "we."

[3] The word extravagance echoes of excess, ornamentation and artifice, negative qualities
associated with women in the eighteenth- and early nineteenth-centuries (Price 46-7).

names other aspects of Cristall's work that aggravate him, in particular that she relies on her mind's "own powers, and has given free scope to the suggestions of its own imagination" (Griffiths 98). It is not that her versification is incorrect, that it fails to conform to standardized scansion schemas, but that those rules are so boldly and frequently defied with alternative and powerful verses. Furthermore, one of Griffiths' strongest claims opposes an opinion expressed in another review that is more representative of the reception of Cristall's poetry. An anonymous reviewer writes that Cristall's "ear […] seems admirably attuned to harmony" ("Critical Heritage") whereas Griffiths attacks the musicality of Cristall's verse. In her irregularity he finds "long and short lines intermixed with a variety that excludes all perception of harmony" and that her "regular" poems can barely qualify as poetry (Griffiths 99). For Griffiths, her meter ruins the musical quality of her verse, whereas for others the poetry is musical *despite* the irregularity, thus tying the question of the mellifluous tenor of her verse to meter.

Why the discrepancy between reviews? What is it that provokes Griffiths to write vehemently against Cristall's collection? The different appellations used to address Cristall offer a clue. Generally, the reviewers employ a deliberately feminine title in place of "Miss Cristall." They alternate between calling Cristall lady, young lady, authoress or poetess. The exception to this trend is found in Griffiths' review; he not only delays identifying her work as the product of a female, but when he can no longer avoid referencing her person, he refers to her as "the author" (Ibid.). This belies that the source of Griffiths' discontent is linked to Cristall's gender. He is irked that a woman dares to let her imagination run wild, and he unsexes her, abstracting her mind to an organ with "its own powers" and "its own imagination" (Griffiths 98). His reaction warrants the claim that he disregards Cristall's assertions of

ignorance and naiveté in her Preface; her sees through her demure posturing.

The rest of her reviewers do not. Tobias Smollett heeds her Preface, claiming that "[w]e give Miss Cristall credit for this declaration" of unfamiliarity of exemplary poets and that "her candid confession disarms criticism" (Smollett 287). It is the same reviewer who then extolls her work, despite its flaws, giving Cristall the title, "poetess of nature" (Smollett 292). Thus, her contemporary reviewers not only prematurely judge her work to be irregular, but also chain her poetry to the politics of gender identity, the effects of which still linger as scholars recover Cristall's collection. And so the question persists: Does her verse warrant the condemnation as irregular and how is that feature related to its musicality?

II.   Poetic Identity

Successful publication was no easy feat for a woman such as Cristall, although women had new opportunities to publish during the seventeen-hundreds. The blossoming of the literary market throughout the century had lasting effects on who read and wrote books. Concomitant with the diversification and expansion of the reading public,[4] women writers made gains in popularity. The standards for what was appropriate for women to publish were not loosening in accord with the extension of the readership from the aristocratic to middle-classes. The struggles women writers faced in publishing their work are well-known. Women had less access to education than men and were subject to codes of decorum that limited their expression. Domesticity was their sanctioned concern; being a "public" woman caused unsavory connotations (notably of acting or prostitution) and even writing came precariously close to

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[4] The advent of the lending library during this period saw an expanded readership benefitting from increased accessibility to books (Broadview lx).

trespassing into the public male sphere (Melton 148). Writing was the more respectable

occupation for a middle-class woman to make money (Melton 152).

Women coped with strictures of propriety by developing public personas under which

they could disseminate writing that had to retain an air of the private. Male and female personas

were historically constructed in opposition to one another; the transcendent male poet derives his

superiority from his *spectator ab extra*[5] persona while the female writer or poetess' identity is

fluid and bound up in community (Mellor *Questioning* 31). This distinction was not so neat in

practice, to which Marlon Ross' study of gender can attest. Ross, like feminist scholar Anne

Mellor, acknowledges that male and female identities begin to converge upon each other. Ross

focuses on male writers, which Mellor's gynocentric study complements (Ross 9). He finds that

the male poet's masculine artistry and assertion of cultural dominance is a response to a "fear of

the feminine" (Ross 10). This generates a cycle of anxiety, with male and female writers reacting

to the dominance and influence of one another in turn. Susan Gubar and Sandra Gilbert argue

that female writers have been haunted by an overwhelming male presence in the literary world.

Especially in the case of canon formation, scholars for many years failed to recognize female

literary achievement.[6] Ross initiates a feminist line of thought into the scholarship by arguing

that women came to see themselves as forging their own feminine tradition of literature. To do

so, they created guises[7] under which they could legitimately publish their poetry (Ross 155).

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[5] "isolated spectator" as opposed to community member; requoted by Karen Ann Lang from
Thomas McFarland's book, *Romanticism and the Forms of Ruin: Wordsworth, Coleridge and
Modalities of Fragmentation* (1981) (Lang 241).
[6] Gilbert and Gubar survey the influence of male writers on the development of women's writing
and recognition of women as literary individuals in their seminal book, *The Madwoman in the
Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination.*
[7] In *The Contours of Masculine Desire,* Ross clarifies four categories of writers along the lines of
gender during the late eighteenth-century, which split the male-female reason-sensibility
spectrum into four slices: "[T]he powerful male poet, the feminized male poet, the abnormal

Cristall capitalizes on this strategy, transforming her "author-self,"[8] the poetess[9] persona that she projects for the public, from a socially acceptable woman writer into an inspired poet. She begins by downplaying her efforts, calling her poetry "light effusions of a youthful imagination"[10] ("Preface"). She denigrates the status of her work, indicating that it should not be read as if it were written by a male poet whose literary productions result from an arduous process of refinement. Cristall refers to this superiority of the male poet while discussing her work. She writes that for her "[t]o attempt more in an age like this, enlightened by authors, whose lives have been devoted to the study of metaphysical and moral truth, would be presumptuous," and for Cristall, to be presumptuous would be a detriment to her publishing career (Ibid.).

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bluestocking poet, [and] the normalizing feminine poet" (Ross 189). These were not neutral positions; rather, they were hierarchically organized, privileging the powerful male poet, devaluing the "bluestocking" and leaving the "effeminate male and proper female poet" in-between (Ibid.). These four categories speak volumes about the complicated identities that surfaced during this contentious literary period and challenge the construction of a stable writerly identity, even the one that Mellor claims for the male Romantic poet.

[8] Catherine Gallagher coined this term for the rhetorically constructed identities that women writers created, separate from their private identity, to present writing for public consumption in *Nobody's Story: The Vanishing Acts of Women Writers in the Marketplace, 1670-1820.*

[9] Yope Prins defines the poetess as a "generic figure" that was more widely used into the eighteenth- and nineteenth-centuries (Prins "Poetess" 1051-2). This persona had positive and negative connotations for women. Although the figure of the poetess had many uses, it was often a means of being received by literary publishers and critics (Prins "Poetess" 1052).

[10] Tristanne Connolly takes Cristall's declaration seriously. See "Transgender Juvenilia: Blake's and Cristall's *Poetical Sketches*" for a discussion of Cristall's work as juvenilia. I regard this framework skeptically in light of the infantilizing of women during the period. As Mary Wollstonecraft writes, insufficient education and domestic confinement makes "mere animals of [women], when they marry they act as such children may be expected to act" (Wollstonecraft 13). Men denied women the proper education for maturation, only allowing them to prepare to "dress," "paint, and nickname God's creatures" (Ibid.).

The literary marketplace was run by men[11] and the deference Cristall shows to male poetic authority is typical of Prefaces by women writers.[12] Her approach is to plead ignorance of precepts, claiming that she writes "without the knowledge of any rules. Of which their irregularity is the natural consequence" (Ibid.). Yet Cristall is all too aware of the "rules" of her art; every word in denial paradoxically confirms how acutely she marks her defiant meter. Furthermore, she is "but little indebted" and staunchly "against […] servile imitation" (Ibid.). She breaks with regular versification schemes as a mark of ingenuity, promoting her variation from the norm as the quality which elevates her art. To mask this inventiveness in a veil of propriety, she insists that she has printed "juvenile productions," produced in a "spontaneous and involuntary" manner (Ibid.). Although she acknowledges the gender politics of the literary market and initially plays into those conventions, the end of her Preface complicates her earlier claims, allowing her to preserve a distinct and separate self as poet.

Toward the end of her Preface, Cristall discusses the poetic process. She asserts her own originality in light of the preponderance of artistic copies. Though her work emerged "casual[ly], the "productions" of her artistic "seeds" are, at the least, "genuine" (Ibid.). In saying so, she distances herself from accusations of imitation. Eighteenth- and nineteenth writers on aesthetics[13]

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[11] The legacy of male control over literature is well-established by Gilbert and Gubar in *The Madwoman in the Attic,* where these two authors trace patriarchal literary history and argue that women developed a separate female literary tradition. Marlon Ross corroborates this thinking with his assertion that British Romanticism was a historically masculine movement (Ross 3). The extent to which men were able to control the market is evinced by the male publishers (such as Joseph Johnson who published Cristall's *Poetical Sketches*) and that every signed review of Cristall's collection was written by a man.

[12] James Van Horn Melton, in *The Rise of the Public in Enlightenment Europe,* notes that women, writing in a self-deprecatory tone, reinforced the limiting stereotypes of femininity, but that this was the cost of remaining respectable when embarking on the risky venture of publication (Melton 152, 156).

[13] These writers include Edmund Burke, Edward Young, Richard Payne Knight, William Gilpin, Uvedale Price, Immanuel Kant and G.W.F. Hegel.

complain of the lack of original art, sprung from a general reverence for one's predecessors.[14] Artists did not want merely to imitate. They wanted to surpass the achievements of their teachers to create an original work that attested to their talents.[15] Artists do as Edward Young advises: They make "a departure from [their] great predecessors [… and] the farther from them in *similitude*, the nearer are [they] to them in *excellence;* [they] rise by it into an *Original;* [they] become a noble collateral, not an humble descendent from [their predecessors]" (Young 11). Young's words highlight the difficulty in meeting the expectations of literary convention while improving artistic standards. German philosopher Immanuel Kant describes this process as an artist striving to be the genius who reveals a rule of art from nature that "could not have been inferred from any preceding principles or examples" (Kant *Judgment* 146). The genius thus makes visible the mystery of nature's unfathomable rules. In addressing the issue of genius, originality and imitation in the context of her collection, Cristall implicitly offers her poetry for inspection as another instance of genius breakthrough.

She does not immediately position herself as a poet; rather, she transforms her persona from that of a poetess by shifting the attention from her writerly identity and the aspects of her poetry that could be regarded as typically female. Once she moves away from her feminine identity, and the requisite apology for its flaws,[16] she does not turn back, ruminating on the influence of the Muse in the final paragraph. Cristall has felt the effects of the inspirational

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[14] Examples of influential writers for the Romantics date from as early as the time of Homer, Pindar and Sappho to John Milton, Thomas Gray and James Macpherson.

[15] The issue of genius and imitation was considered a male concern in that the avenues of artistic expression deemed appropriate for women were seen to be private outlets. Published women's writing was regarded as circulating and competing in a separate arena from that of men, and for women imitation was an ideal accomplishment (*VVS* 73, 96 and Ross 4-5).

[16] Sha cites the apology in Cristall's Preface for publishing callow poetry, placing her among other women writers who hesitantly publish (*VVS* 112).

Muse, noting the "warm influence" and the subsequent "flattering and seductive qualities" of it, along with its cultivation of "vanity" and finally "fear[]" ("Preface"). This is a crucial moment in the development of her "author-self" because she stops addressing her readership with acquiescence and starts speaking to her peers, which includes male writers. She contends with the tumult of the Muse's sway, just as the great "ancient or modern poets" do (Ibid.). Her Preface thus runs the gamut of female writerly identities,[17] from the private woman who produces works of "amusement" to the poet whose genius is spurred on by the "Muse" (Ibid.).This play on the word "muse" is further evidence of Cristall's self-conscious construction of writerly identity; as "muse" is hidden within amusement, so Cristall buries her poetic persona, traditionally considered masculine, under the rhetorical poetess role.[18]

Cristall's Preface has caught the eye of more than one scholar. There are only around a dozen secondary sources on her poetry; a majority of them address her Preface to varying degrees, notably its conformity to the conventions of female modesty. This observation leads to a consideration of her work as women's writing. Once made, this categorization locks the scholar into a historicist reading, effectively barring formalist considerations of Cristall's poetry. *Poetical Sketches,* despite its rich variety, is read largely in the context of gender politics and genre. Richard Sha studies the rhetoricity of the "artless" persona Cristall presents, claiming that she critiques the authority of male judgment (*VVS* 123). Tristanne Connolly likewise focuses on gender, arguing that Cristall's Preface is masculine (Connolly 29).[19] Jerome McGann, like Sha, sees through the constructed author-identity that Cristall offers to readers, calling her both

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[17] Refer to Ross' categories in footnote 6.

[18] For more on the poetess identity and other writerly roles that women used in the literary marketplace, see Mellor, Ross and Gallagher.

[19] Connolly compares Cristall's Preface to Blake's in *Poetical Sketches,* reading Cristall's persona as masculine whereas Blake takes on a more feminine stance.

"subtle" and "self-aware" (*Poetics* 196). Donna Landry follows in McGann's footsteps with his work on the poetry of sensibility,[20] recognizing a need to read outside of the critical tradition in order to appreciate Cristall's poetry (Landry 102). What this framework does not allow for is a careful study of Cristall's form. Reading from a strictly historicist position results in considerations of her meter and acoustics that are ultimately filtered through eighteenth-century gender constructs. Recognizing the challenges that women writers faced, while important, has the adverse effect of relegating the work of women to a separate feminine tradition, one that Cristall strove to circumvent in her Preface and that should not eclipse her poetry.

III.   Poetic Innovation

Poetical Sketches is a diverse collection. It contains not only what Sha refers to as verbal sketches, but lyrical sketches, many of which are titled "Song." This study focuses on Cristall's cultural-historical self-consciousness and how it is reflected in the style of her poetry (Larrissy 10; *Poetics* 198; Labbe 156). My purpose here is to elucidate the ways in which Cristall works within the aesthetic climate of the late eighteenth-century. In the lyrical sketch, she brings together the rhetorical techniques of the visual arts and of music in this subgenre that results in a contestation of the lyrical status quo. Jacqueline Labbe suggests that, through formal experimentation, Cristall probes the "nature of poetic subjectivity" and "raise[s] the possibility that the unified poetic self is itself only a mask" (Labbe 155). I assert that it is more than a

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[20] In his book, *The Poetics of Sensibility*, McGann nuances understandings of the poetics of sensibility and sentimental poetry. He explains that sentimentality eventually overshadowed the movement of sensibility, but that "the discourse of sensibility is the ground on which the discourse of sentiment gets built" (*Poetics* 7). He ties lyric poetry to these rhetorical styles (*Poetics* 6). For more on sensibility, see *The Culture of Sensibility* by G.J. Barker-Benfield and *Sensibility* by Janet Todd.

"mask," or cover, behind which the speaker-poet protects her non-public self, but a role to be inhabited by the reader in the wake of the absent poet.

Cristall's contemporaries call her verses irregular, but a close reading of her style reveals the effect of her rejection of standardized meter and rhyme schemes. Focusing on the lyrical sketch as a subgenre presupposes a logic for the poetry's deviation from defined convention. Irregular, on the other hand, means lack of pattern or violation of rules; this is not inherently bad, and in some sense, it faithfully describes Cristall's meter. Yet a simple search for synonyms reveals negative connotations. Among the list of alternative adjectives are purposelessness and, most disheartening, *designless* ("irregular"). It has already been established that Cristall's departures from form are deliberate experiments. Now, it is time to read her poetry as created purposively, as designed, even though it may appear irregular to the impatient eye. Moreover, a silent reading cannot help but obscure the tonal complexity of Cristall's meter. She may leverage the sketch's rhetorical immediacy, derivative of the visual arts, but the lyrical sketch is resoundingly musical. Her lyric is thus visual *and* acoustic, meriting consideration in both regards.

To understand the lyrical sketch's infusion of musicality into its pictorial elements, I contrast it with William Blake's highly visual illuminated lyric from *Songs of Innocence.*[21] Although studies of Cristall are relatively new and few, they agree on a general affinity between Cristall and Blake's poetry. Certain historical connections[22] justify a pairing of these poets and

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[21] I initially knew that I wanted to study Cristall and Blake; I am indebted to Professor Marjorie Levinson for the suggestion to contrast Blake to Cristall.

[22] Ann Batten Cristall was a contemporary of William Blake. Joseph Johnson, the radical publisher who employed Blake as an engraver, published her collection in 1795. Her brother Joshua Cristall was the founder of the Royal Society of Painters in Water Colours and her sister was an engraver, thus Cristall had access to visual arts culture (Linkin 128). She and Blake also

scholars have traced common themes and concerns in their poetry. Tristanne Connolly and Harriet Linkin regard these poets as experimenting with gender and as challenging expectations about sexuality (Connolly 28; Linkin 128). Duncan Wu claims that "there are times when her verse sounds like that of Blake" (Wu 271), an observation that is unsurprising since Stuart Curran classifies Cristall as "rarest of Romantic poets" presumably since she is "a follower of William Blake" (Curran "Something" 28). Jonas Cope builds on this assumption by studying the poets' shared struggle with "Mental Fight," the generative tension resulting from opposites (Cope 18). Despite these commonalities, Cristall must be viewed as distinct from Blake if we are to credit her properly for her innovations. In accordance with this project's focus on Cristall, there is an imbalance between the considerations of these poets. Because the critical work of aligning their poetry has already been done, I use Blake in an illustrative capacity.

The scholarship on Cristall has tended to be feminist in nature in its aim to restore Cristall's reputation, tainted by the condescension of her original male reviewers.[23] One of the strategies that scholars have employed to elevate her literary standing is to argue that her genius takes after that of William Blake's. While this legitimizes her poetry in one regard, it reinforces its marginalized status in another. Such claims construct Cristall as a "women writer," working in Blake's shadow. This approach hinders considerations of Cristall's poetry on its individual merits. I do not propose that the solution is to distance Cristall's work from Blake's. The

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traveled in similar circles, to which her friendship with Mary and Everina Wollstonecraft attests (Linkin 127).

[23] Anne Hartman implies that the questioning of the lyric as a solitary outpouring is partially due to feminist scholarship (Hartman 484). She explains that "[w]ork on women poets is especially inclined to interrogate the performative use of these forms, since the norms to which they refer operate along a gendered axis that tends to exclude the female subject" (Ibid.). Hartman goes on to reject an essential gender difference, but notes that "we tend to become more aware of […] performativity [in writing by women] because of its tendency to expose the constructed nature of the discourse it cites" (Ibid.).

similarities between their verse styles have been established. However, I propose a shift in methodology to prevent Blake from inordinately dwarfing Cristall. I put them in dialogue with one another so that each poet contributes to our understanding of the other. I reject a hierarchical positioning of Blake as the ideal poet and Cristall as an inferior female protégé in favor of placing them on a single spectrum. In this configuration, neither poet is privileged over the other. The result is generative on both ends, for it furthers the scholarship on Cristall, but also substantively contributes to our knowledge of Blake.

Readings like the one I propose attempt to break out of the restraints of the critical history that cannot help but consider all non-canonical work as part of a marginal genre.[24] Only by tempering the historicist framework with serious formal attention can scholars read the work of female Romantic writers out of "feminine" Romanticism and into an increasingly diverse body of texts recognized as culturally significant for the traditions of English literature. Absorbing the eighteenth-century vocabulary used to describe women writers has proven to be a crutch for Romantic scholarship.[25] By attending to the aesthetic qualities and formal inventiveness of

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[24] McGann makes a point about reading poetry written in the style of sensibility, a mode Cristall employs. I feel that his claim is pertinent to reproduce here. He writes that scholarship has tended to "pre-read" this type of writing, thus underestimating its capacity for complexity, as well as implying the need to go back and "read" it on its own terms (*Poetics* 4).

[25] Gilbert and Gubar began a feminist revision of the literary canon by exploring the works of British women writers from the 18th and 19th centuries in the late 1970s. What became their blockbuster study was followed by the work of Mary Poovey in *The Proper Lady and the Woman Writer: Ideology as Style* (1985), wherein she argues that major writers (Mary Wollstonecraft, Mary Shelley and Jane Austen) confronted issues of identity politics in their books (Fowler). The scholarship that followed, by Marlon Ross and then Anne Mellor, analyzes the work of women writers and argues that late eighteenth and early-nineteenth century gender constructions give rise to "masculine" and "feminine" Romanticism, a distinction that borrows from Judith Butler's theories about gender and performativity (see *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*). These studies provide valuable insights into the cultural situation of female writers during the Romantic era. However, this foundational scholarship has resulted in readings of female writing as "women's writing" and thus always, to varying degrees, gives it

Poetical Sketches, I broaden the possibilities for discussing Cristall's poetry and that of her female contemporaries. In doing so, my objective is to encourage readings that do not judge writing by women based on solely on achievements in the face of struggle against gender politics, such as male censorship and the pressure to conform to codes of humility (Melton 148; *VVS* 73, 83). My hope is for scholars to consider this writing on its aesthetic merits in order to appreciate its contribution to Romantic poetics.

Chapter 1 begins with a discussion of genre theory and its uses for elucidating Cristall's poetic style. It investigates the culture of the sketch to understand its rhetorical immediacy. Cristall appropriates the conventions of this genre by combining it with the lyric to upset the literary hierarchies of male and female and of poet and reader. Working within the tradition of lyric, she experiments with meter, drawing out the genre's musical heritage. In doing so, the lyrical sketch becomes a participatory genre, requiring the reader to interpret the ambiguities in its meter, therefore performing the poem.

Chapter 2 further defines the lyrical sketch by investigating the dual pictorial and musical nature of the lyric and by adopting Northrop Frye's lyric boundaries. The technique of the visual is immediacy whereas that of the musical is performativity. I contrast the song "Repeat, O, Muse!" to Blake's "Introduction" to the *Songs of Innocence* to delineate how visual art evokes immediacy and how music initiates performativity. Having made this distinction, I explain that the tension between the two techniques is resolved when the logic of performativity subsumes that of immediacy. This has ramifications for the relationship between the poet and the reader. Immediacy collapses the distance between these positions but performativity preserves the

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special treatment with an eye for rhetorical femininity that separates writing by women from mainstream literary works.

difference between poet and reader. In conclusion, I find that the lyrical sketch, in denying the

unfeasible connection between reader and poet, offers an attainable alternative through its

participatory aesthetic.

CHAPTER 1

THE LYRICAL SKETCH

I.   **The Problem of Romantic Genres**

The lyrical sketch is a Romantic hybrid. It combines the strong voice of personal

utterance that is characteristic of the lyric with the evocative yet indeterminate imagery of the

sketch. What marks the lyrical sketch above all else is the metrical intricacy that begets its

musical rhythm. Common themes of this composite genre include the obstacles of poetic

creation, the poet's bond with nature, and the issue of communicability between poet and reader.

This definition begs the question of whether the lyrical sketch is a useful tool for re-reading

Cristall's irregularity. To answer this, I briefly discuss the critical purchase that genre theory

gives to this project.

The notion of genre has been a means of discussing literature as early as Aristotle's

Poetics (Cavitch 551).[26] In effect, it establishes the framework of literary history against which a

single writer can be understood. Many literary theorists have debated the origin and idea of

genre.[27] Gérard Genette writes that "genres are properly literary categories," which is to say that

they provide a frame for broadly unifying a body of work with shared aesthetic principles

(Genette 26). A genre, he argues, can be comprised of other genres, rendering it a category that is

encompassing yet dynamic rather than rigid (Genette 27). Cavitch affirms this fluid conception

and this allows artists to maneuver within genre, which proves to be generative (Cavith 551).

Genre draws upon shared expectations but can also be used to convey "difference and

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[26] Published in the 4th century BC, Aristotle establishes four "modes" (or genres) of literature:
the tragedy, epic, comedy and parody (Cavitch 551).
[27] See Gérard Genette's "The Architext," Hegel's *Lectures on Aesthetics,* Emil Staiger's *Basic
Concepts of Poetics,* Northrop Frye's "Theory of Genres" and René Wellek's "Genre Theory, the
Lyric, ad Erlebnis."

autonomy," meaning that genre easily becomes socio-politically activated (Cavitch 551).

Deviation from genre, then, works paradoxically; as literary conventions[28] are manipulated, they

are reinvigorated. The failure to comply with a set of rules can make them more pronounced

(Cavitch 553). The study of an author's use of genre often serves to pinpoint her artistic

idiosyncrasies; therefore, genre serves as a point of entry into the study of individual aesthetics.

To say that genres are "open systems" is not to say that they are ahistorical ("Lyric" 65).

Cavitch remarks that genres are "contingent [and] historical" (Cavitch 551). Today, scholars

recognize in romantic genres revisions of and responses to established genres, but during the

period, this conformity was staunchly denied to avoid the accusation of banality (Curran *Poetic*

5). Conflicting narratives of Romanticism and genre have emerged. Early interpretations of the

movement regard it as the period of the rise of the lyric (Duff 1). This view was rejected and

replaced with the "myth" that Romantic-era writers resisted genre and highlighted individual

genius over the learnedness of rules (Curran *Poetic* 5, 12).[29] Stuart Curran demystifies this

repudiation. He recognizes literature's indebtedness to genre and the "ideological constraint[s]"

it places on writers, making it impossible to escape its influence (Curran *Poetic* 12). David Duff,

writing on the same topic after Curran's influential work, explains the tension between the anti-

genre myth, propagated contemporaneously, and literary studies' current insistence on the

pervasiveness of genre in British Romanticism. Romantics trumpeted the skill of genius and

spontaneity of feeling in art; they distanced themselves from the taint of institutionalized rules

and polish, components crucial to genre (Duff 1). In order to sustain the myth of the solitary

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[28] In one sense, these conventions are like open source formulae for authors to appropriate. In another sense, genres accrue so many connotations over the years that their historical complicity limits their accessibility, as is the case with the gendering of genre in the eighteenth-century.
[29] Contemporaneous proponents of moving away from genre include French novelist Victor Hugo (1802-1885) and German philosopher and literary critic Friedrich Schlegel (1772-1829).

genius, the extent to which poets worked within particular genres had to be suppressed. The result of this mystification was a disavowal of innovative uses of genre, something that, ironically, could be construed as a product of genius.

Although poets denied their appropriation of genre, its influence grew in proportion to the burgeoning literary consciousness (Cavitch 552). Evidence for the recognition of genre can be seen in the titles of works that served as sites where "generic affiliations and aspirations are directly revealed or strategically concealed" (Duff 11). Cristall offers a compelling example of this publicizing strategy. Through the title "Poetical Sketches," she aligns her collection with other sketches of the period. Cristall's adoption of this generic mode is more than a marketing strategy.[30] Her use of genre is as much a means of artistic and personal expression as a way to maneuver within the literary marketplace. Under the sign of the lyrical sketch, Cristall provides herself with an outlet for her formal ingenuity. She is certainly not the first poet to combine genres, creating what Curran calls "composite orders" (Curran *Poetic* 205). Looking to poets such as Wordsworth and Coleridge, he explains that when authors pair different genres, it often bridges gaps between oppositional modes (Curran *Poetic* 182).[31] These combinations indicate a manipulation of genre in view of the demands of the marketplace, while giving authors the freedom to experiment.

This understanding of genre as both fluid and historical, and of the paradoxical foregrounding of genre when poets deviate from its standards, provides a necessary reference

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[30] David Duff states that genre was often useful for marketing purposes (Duff 6). Duff's economic critique of the employment of genre seems shortsighted when read in concert with Cristall's poetry.

[31] Curran writes that "the poet who aspires to a formal assimilation is contracting with the reader for a new mode of apprehension created through that assimilation. The mixture of genres naturally calls attention to its larger purposes, the world view it serves, the contexts from the past it invokes as guidelines, the vision of the future that will result" (Curran *Poetic* 182).

point for the political and cultural work of the lyrical sketch. There is a fluctuating power dynamic between the verbal sketch and the lyric. The appellation of "poetical sketches" initially appears to subsume the lyric under the sign of the sketch. However, the lyrical quality of Cristall's verse is just as critical, if not more so, to her aesthetic. In bringing together these two genres, Cristall defies convention while appropriating its legitimizing power to foster communicability, ultimately favoring her own creative genius.

II. Verbal Sketching

Picture this image that Cristall sketches:

The eve descends with radiant streaks,

    Sweetly serene and grandly gay

While western tinges flush the cheeks,

    And insects 'mid the zephyrs play."

("Cymon" ll. 1-4)

These lines evoke a scene, but one that is ambiguous. There are many unanswered questions that this opening conjures but does not seek to resolve: Where is this scene? Whose cheeks are flushed? What color are the "radiant streaks"? The few details create a vision of a breezy sunset and little else; as for the rest, it is left to the reader's imagination to construct. These lines conjure a picturesque image of nature by juxtaposing a panoramic view of the landscape with a selection of ornamental detail.[32] Consequently, the nonspecific "eve […] with radiant streaks" is made more concrete by the miniscule insects at play ("Cymon" ll. 1, 4). Add to this scene woods, "wild-thyme banks" and "blooming roses clustering hung" ("Cymon" ll. 6, 9, 11). This description prefers an economy of language over mimetic attention to detail. The looseness of

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[32] Professor Levinson offered this insight after reading an early draft of the chapter.

this imagery serves a purpose. Cristall sketches this image, providing only enough information for the reader to get the barest sense of the scene. In spite of this minimalist simplicity, the ways in which the sketch signifies naturalness and authenticity are neither straightforward nor unaffected. Ironically, the sketch kindles its artless air by being over-stylized, a technique that female and male writers alike appropriated to the benefit of their poetry.

Richard Sha defines the British Romantic sketch. This genre is the verbal corollary to the painter's sketch of a landscape that captures the appearance of nature in the moment with scanty but particular detail. When writers deploy the verbal sketch, they appropriate visual art strategies. What serves as a visual strategy and an engagement with iconography becomes a rhetorical strategy and a dialogue with literary convention. In contrast to polished academic painting, the sketch revels in its lack of finish and in its irregularity (*VVS* 1). In rejecting artifice, the sketch presents itself as more genuine and immediate form. As Sha states, "[t]he sketcher argues that less is more—that less finish, less labor, and less attention to form is more artful and more truthful" (*VVS* 5). The key to this logic is Sha's use of the verb to argue. The sketch is undoubtedly rhetorical, a point about which Sha is emphatic, hiding behind its stylized conventions and persuading the reader that its constructed naturalness represents reality[33] more truthfully (*VVS* 3-5).

Visual artists wrote treatises and instructional texts revealing the limits of the sketch's privacy[34] and arguing for its artistic value. The sketch was a major genre of the picturesque,

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[33] See Jean Baudrillard's *Simulacra and Simulation* (1981). He theorizes the function of signs and how they mediate our comprehension of what is "real," or, more properly, the fiction of reality. He writes that "it is always a false problem to want to restore the truth beneath the simulacrum," in other words, that there is no truth to be found outside of our construction of it as signs (Baudrillard 375).

[34] While the sketch was widely regarded as a private creation, this notion of intimacy was oftenexploited. Gilpin writes that when a sketch is intended for public viewing, "it should be

championed by art critics such as William Gilpin. Gilpin develops a definition of the picturesque

as a natural and wild beauty[35] (Gilpin 61). He praises the unruliness of nature in rejection of the

smoothness found in manmade art, which is all "preciseness, and formality" (Gilpin 6). Another

major voice in the art community, Richard Payne Knight, describes the picturesque sketch as

"playful and airy" with a "loose and sketchy indistinctness not observable in reality" (Knight

150). What is significant about Knight's description of the sketch's construction of a scene is that

it breaks with the methods of the academy's mimetic techniques. The sketch captures the essence

of nature; it does not reproduce its likeness. Joshua Reynolds, a leading figure of the Royal

Academy, finds that the picturesque is about ornamental detail and surface, lacking the

intellectual rigor to merit cultural prestige (Bermingham 84-5). To Gilpin, the philosophy of the

academy, with its refinement, was problematic in light of his understanding of academic

painting, namely its aim is to satisfy whatever the painter desires to capture (Gilpin 16). His

perception is that academic painting tends to produce art that presents an ideal homogenization

of nature's features whereas the picturesque celebrates nature's irregularities as beauties.

Academic painting sacrifices authenticity of the original idea at the altar of form and technique

(Gilpin 16). The sketch thus aligns itself with the wilds of nature over culture (Copley 5;

Marshall 19; Punter 235; *VVS* 3).

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somewhat more adorned. To [*the artist*] the scene, familiar to our recollection, may be suggested by a few rough strokes: but if you wish to raise the idea, *where none existed before,* and to do it *agreeably*, there should be some *composition* in your sketch" (Gilpin 66).

[35] Gilpin defines this aesthetic in relation to the "beautiful." Edmund Burke's *Inquiry into the Sublime and Beautiful* was hugely influential and his understanding of beauty was a point of comparison for the picturesque (Marshall 18). David Punter writes that Richard Payne Knight, another artist-writer like Gilpin, turns the picturesque into a third category (Punter 220) while Vivien Jones reads Price's picturesque as a rejection of Burke's binary. Ann Bermingham regards the picturesque as a commoditized aesthetic, unlike the sublime and the beautiful (Bermingham 81).

In breaking from the institution, the sketch posits itself as an original mode for capturing nature, even though it turned into cliché (Marshall 38). The artist's relationship to nature was pivotal to aesthetics and determined originality. The connection between art, nature and originality is multifarious and Kant asserts a fundamental difference between art and nature (Kant *Judgment* 135). Nevertheless, they meet on the common ground of beauty, for "[n]ature proved beautiful when it wore the appearance of art; and art can only be termed beautiful, where we are conscious of it being art, while yet it has the appearance of nature" (Ibid.). There is reciprocity here. For the arts philosopher, nature and art began to merge while the recognition of an ultimate difference persisted. Nature is the ideal for art and art the ideal for nature. The distinction comes down to the existence of a rule, which art must have (Kant *Judgment* 137). Yet the rule of the highest art is inexplicable, and thus original, because it is said to be derivative of nature instead of human convention. Herein lies the essential distinction: nature abides by no rule—its creations are truly original in this sense. The struggle for art is to reproduce that artlessness, of creating beauty in the absence of rules or designs. Art presents a fiction of nature, arguing that it is an externalization of the mystery of art's beauty (of beauty created without adherence to principle). This is a tightly wound illusion and the sketch is one method of building that illusion.

Cristall is a proponent of this view of art and nature. Take Eyezion for example, the principle character of the poem "Before Twilight." He is an exemplar of poetic creation, in sync with nature. As "the light poet of the spring," he literally functions as its agent through song ("Before Twilight" 2). "Hied from his restless bed, to sing, / Impatient for the promis'd beams of light," he "wake[s] the morning star" ("Before Twilight" ll. 3-4, 8). He is one with nature; either light shines forth or he compels it to. This is a model interaction between the poet and nature, in

which their roles blend. Both nature and Eyezion can produce light and so both have the power

to spontaneously generate[36] the beauty that art hopes to echo and, in turn, a myth it manufactures

and disseminates.

The sketch's rhetoric of denial made it a useful genre for more than representing nature.

Sha explains that when used by women, the sketch was largely a means of fostering propriety to

deflect attention from controversial topics. Its rejection of rhetoric meant that they could deflect

accusations of artifice and ornamentation, qualities negatively coded feminine. Since rhetoric

was regarded as a type of decorative, frivolous language, the rejection of stylized writing allowed

women to claim rationality in resisting superficial female parlance[37] (*VVS* 13-14). Due to these

qualities, the sketch presented a literary façade behind which women could exercise their critical

and innovative proclivities (*VVS* 81, 105). When used by men, the sketch was a defensive ploy to

combat the difficulty of attaining literary approbation and longevity. In practice, these ends were

not as polarized as they seem. However, Sha's study of this genre, in particular of the work of

"female sketchers," becomes problematic in light of the gender politics of the sketch and of the

picturesque, both of which exploit women as objects of the gaze[38] (Bermingham 92). As blatant

as Cristall's appropriation of the sketch for marketability is to modern scholars, the "female"

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[36] Louis Pasteur did not disprove this biological theory until the nineteenth-century, making it an appropriate metaphor for Romantic artistic creation.

[37] For an example of writing considered to rely on "feminine" rhetoric (as criticized by Mary Wollstonecraft), see Edmund Burke's *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (1790).

[38] Ann Bermingham studies the picturesque and femininity (in the context of eighteenth-century fashion). She states that the picturesque was gendered feminine (Bermingham 81). She also argues that this aesthetic "conformed to essential notions of gender difference)," which positioned the male as consumer of the female object through his gaze (Bermingham 90, 92). Vivien Jones affirms this argument, discussing the picturesque and gender in terms of voyeurism and control (Jones 120). She finds that there is an "erotics" of the picturesque created via a voyeurism that perpetuates a masculinist ideology (Jones 129-30).

sketch is also a means to contain the personal turmoil arising from the ephemerality of poetry.[39]

Cristall's lyrical sketch reminds us that while the uses of this genre are gendered, women such as Cristall could use it for "masculine" as well as "feminine" purposes.

We see this in Cristall's "Song – Cymon." The poem subverts expectation when it depicts the undermining of a male poet figure by the artistic power of a female character. Cymon begins as an authoritative figure. His poetic singing is the driving action of the poem, animating the scene with his voice. This act is generative; he envisions a desirable female object and brings it into being. He "sung,/ Harmonious thither call'd his fair" and in the following stanza, his song captivates a love interest ("Cymon ll. 9-10). She is so affected as to "spe[e]d along, / Her thrilling bosom fir'd with love ("Cymon" ll. 15-6). It is as if Cymon creates this woman through his song, as if she is an image he sketches with his words and whose purpose is to fulfill his desire. Indeed, there is a significant emphasis on Cymon's eyes. He sees his beloved "glowing" but also can see that there is "[a]ffection beaming from her eyes" ("Cymon" ll. 19-20). The objectification of the female to be consumed by the male gaze, one of the elements of the picturesque, is in play in this poem. The female character, unsurprisingly unnamed, only has the capacity to react to him. Her passion for Cymon grows throughout the poem, until "as he gaz'd she deeper glow[ed], / And every look was fraught with love" ("Cymon" ll. 23-4). This submissive figure, called up by his voice and residing in Cymon's gaze, makes this poem an exemplary instance of a "feminine" sketch when the female character defies the dictates of her subordinate status.

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[39] Jerome McGann reads her work in terms of ephemerality and does not see Cristall as striving for monumentality (*Poetics* 205). In other words, women, like men, consciously worked within this genre to counter the highly competitive literary culture.

The conventions of the "feminine" sketch, as defined by Sha, require that its demure subject matter turn polemical. The last two stanzas contain an ironic role reversal between Cymon and the nameless woman, overturning gender norms. It is not Cymon who creates the woman, but she who makes Cymon the poet:

> Her lovely hands a garland bound,
>
> Then on his head she plac'd the wreath,
>
> His locks with flowering myrtles crown'd
>
> ("Cymon" ll. 29-31)

The woman creates and then crowns him with the symbol of artistic excellence, the wreath that is reminiscent of the laurel. This act reveals that the woman is the character with the agency to bestow creative powers.[40] She constructs the crown and chooses who wears it. Here, Cristall channels the authority of antiquity's Muse as an alternative to the male critic who effectively crowned poets with his pen in eighteenth-century England.

This pattern is more than a power play within the literary market. The poem questions the relationship between the poet's creative act and his relationship to nature, typically "masculine" subject matter. This skepticism toward Cymon is evident early in the poem. He "[r]ov'd while his sweet poetic art / From Nature stole its noblest hue" ("Cymon" ll. 7-8). To rove connotes a certain level of leisure, so that when his art steals from nature, Cymon's roving turns to laziness

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[40] Muses were imagined female figures that inspired usually male poets. The Romantic era saw an increase in the invocation of the Muse after a lag during most of the eighteenth-century (Levy 902). Ashley Cross writes that women were often restricted to figures of the Muse, which objectified these women and relegated them to secondary status by denying their ability to make art; rather, they were sources of inspiration (Cross 574). While the unnamed woman acts in the capacity of a Muse, endowing Cymon with the artist's crown, this is an ironic portrayal, highlighting the condescension of the gender construction of the woman as muse to the male poet.

and so does not positively position him under its influence. In turn, Cymon's appropriation of nature indicates a desire for emulation, recreating its "sweet poetic art" ("Cymon" 7). It was common to cite nature as one's source of inspiration, and the picturesque aesthetic could even be viewed as an attempt to collapse the artistry of representation with it (Marshall 20). Cymon, however, in stealing from nature, renders his creation a copy instead of an original work of art.

The issue of originality that Cristall challenges in the "Song" is also a topic investigated by the sketch. It is fitting that the sketch, as the genre of the anti-establishment picturesque style, would be invoked for originality. In order to be original, Fiona Price observes, one had to resist the literary marketplace (Price 46-7). It is not possible to completely adhere to literary trends and be a unique poet. Many writers saw the value of innovation, touted as originality, writing treatises to help identify what constituted an original or unique work. Edward Young, one of many writers on aesthetics, helps elucidate what constitutes an original. He describes its rarity through metaphor, viewing it as a "fairest flower" (Young 6). If the original is the best of the flowers, imitations are abundant and quotidian (Ibid.). Young's notion of originality is closer to innovation than novelty. The original flower is an improvement upon all the rest, but the fairest and foulest flowers are of the same species.[41] The creation of an original, signaling artistic progress, was no easy feat and writers detailed the processes under which it came into being. These considerations revolved around rules or learning on the one hand and genius on the other.

Both Young and Kant consider the original to have ties to genius. Young defines an original as "ris[ing] spontaneously from the vital root of genius" (Young 7). Kant develops a more comprehensive definition than Young, going beyond its relation to originality. His views

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[41] Professor Levinson pointed out that Young's metaphor was odd for that fact that a flower inherently is not original.

only partially agree with Young's understanding of the term. He finds that genius, as a "talent (natural endowment)" or "innate mental aptitude (*ingenium*)," is the way that "nature gives the rule to art" (Kant *Judgment* 136). Interpreting nature is then a special skill of the few that privileges nature over humankind. With this statement, Kant checks the powers of the mind, ultimately locating genius in nature. In contrast, Young is an uncritical proponent of genius,[42] writing that it "can set us right in Composition, without the rules of the learned" (Young 15). Thus, Young mystifies the powers of genius to an extent that Kant does not. It is not that rules and genius are diametrically opposed, but that they interact dialectically; there is a generative tension between the two, resulting in a work of art so exemplary that it reveals a new rule inspired by nature.

Originality, although prized, has its drawbacks. One can be a genius if his or her artistic merit is recognized and in the event that it is not, the artist fails to communicate with the audience. While the figure of the solitary artist is a trope commonly acknowledged today, some writers of the time feared that their originality would alienate them from readers. I want to adapt our understanding of the Romantic artist figure to recognize the construction of the genius persona along with that of the published poet who contended with the demands of the literary marketplace. Catherine Gallagher[43] argues that writers would reject the power structure of the market in favor of personal principles, celebrating "their hard-won freedom, from the shackles of tradition" (Gallagher 311). However, to accept originality and genius as the highest values of the period takes the fictions of author-selves projected in the marketplace too literally, blinding one

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[42] He writes that "[a] *genius* differs from a *good understanding*, as a magician from a good architect; *that* raises his structure by means invisible; *this* by the skillful use of common tools. Hence genius has ever been supposed to partake of something divine" (Young 13).

[43] Gallagher studies precedents, focusing on Mary Wollstonecraft's writing.

to the nuances at play in those constructions and the true difficulties faced in becoming original.

Fiona Price provides the necessary context to temper Gallagher's celebratory claim of the author

over his or her capitalist constraints.[44] Price explains that the challenge of "unconventionality" is

its potential to alienate the reader and the added predicament that "if the desired audience,

capable of independent thought, is created, it threatens the singularity and prestige of the artist"

(Price 169). Thus, the reception of originality plays out on a continuum, from its crowning as

ingenious creation to the failure of the work, resulting in an unbridgeable separation between

reader and writer. Since the reader is the consumer, the commercial reality of supply and demand

reins in the originality of the artistic. It is better then, to think of genius, as we will see in

Cristall's investigation of the topic, as less of a natural talent and rather like another public

persona that writers inhabit.

Isolation was a concern for both sexes, although Price argues that it generated more

anxiety for women, an unsurprising finding in light of the strictures of female decorum (Price

67). The potential alienation of originality could easily rupture perceptions of a female whose

self is bound to her community (Mellor *Questioning* 31). A woman cannot be an immersed social

being if her genius causes her to stand apart from society. Nevertheless, Price pairs

Wollstonecraft and Wordsworth to demonstrate that men and women alike retreated from society

to cultivate their genius[45] (Price 69). Cristall embraces the challenge of wearing both masks in

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[44] Price, too, studies Wollstonecraft, noting that she is as aware of the flaws of genius and originality as its virtues (Price 168). This was troubling for Wollstonecraft, but other writers, notably Kant, had a solution to this problem. For Kant, art reveals universally communicable principles. He writes that genius must have its limits, which culminate in art (Kant *Judgment* 146, 138).

[45] Cristall had connections to Wollstonecraft, who was one of her subscribers (Greene). While little is known about Cristall's life, and so there can be little conjecture as to her personal struggles with independent thought and artistic isolation, the question of the relationship between

her Preface, hovering between deference to the authority of influence and the cachet of one's personal genius.[46]

In "Song—Cymon," Cristall explores the traditionally male problem of genius and originality. While this song is an example of Sha's female sketch in its subversion of male authority, it should not be confined to a sphere designated "women's writing" because such a critical lens biases readings of the work to a narrowly defined set of thematic concerns. The power of the sketch is that it is a medium for expressing the originality of a genius; however, some scholars argue that the sketch was not available to women in this way. If considered a "feminine sketch," "Song – Cymon" reads as "a safe outlet for women's feelings" rather than a work of literary genius (*VVS* 82-3). Once a female writer establishes a demure posturing to deter criticism, she can then leverage the sketch as a proper mode of expression to counter the male artistic establishment, often questioning constructions of female propriety (*VVS* 105). Cristall examines the inspiration of the artist, emphasizing Cymon's parasitic reliance on nature; the choice of the verb "to steal" is indicative of his lack of ability, a fact compounded by the artistic female character introduced in the final stanza. "Her artless eyes still more express'd / Than the wild fervour of his tongue," confirming that not only does the woman have the power to inspire but has in addition a talent for art, the talent of genius ("Cymon" ll. 35-6). This particular poem offers one of Cristall's boldest critiques of patriarchal control, yet Cristall also uses this sketch to question the relationship between artists and nature as well as the challenges of self-expression.[47]

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writers and audience is a pivotal point of exploration in *Poetical Sketches.* See Chapter 2 for a full consideration of this topic.

[46] See the Introduction for more on Cristall's Preface.

[47] Nor is she the only female writer to take an interest in these themes. Fiona Price contests the idea that originality and genius were exclusive to men, a claim that Sha makes implicitly, in studying Mary Wollstonecraft's writing, particularly in her debates with Edmund Burke. She writes that "[i]t is often assumed that women writers have little to say about the Romantic notion

Again, Cristall returns to the link between reader and writer. Not everyone buys into the rhetoric of the sketch that Cristall employs, demonstrated by Griffiths' antagonistic review.[48] As the ideology behind the "female sketch" helps to alleviate the threat posed to a woman's respectability, the sketch also weakens the barrier in communication between reader and writer, an inherent concern for originality. This method is immediacy and it allows the genius' originality to flourish without inadvertent estrangement from society.

Immediacy is a complex term that warrants historicization of the concept and an explanation of its current usage. What did immediacy mean to Romantic poets? Although to apply the term to them is anachronistic, the concept is about propinquity of the author's idea and the reader. There is always a loss of art's essence when expressed. As poet P.B. Shelley explains this phenomenon, "when composition begins, inspiration is already on the decline, and the most glorious poetry that has ever been communicated to the world is probably a feeble shadow of the original conceptions of the poet" (Shelley 50). Art begins with the inspired thought, but the vibrancy of its vision is time-sensitive. Immediately after one has an artistic vision, it begins to dim. By the time of its recording, the expression inevitably loses some of the art's brilliancy. Shelley's words can be better understood through analogy. If one thinks of the idea as ink, when applied to paper it bleeds, distorting the intended marking. The sketch, as a rhetorical strategy to achieve immediacy, stymies the loss of originality of the idea after inception. Yet this effect is merely provisional, containing the damage after the fact. For Romantic poets there was no method to prevent the eventuality of this loss when turning artistic vision into art, only

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of original genius: Wollstonecraft's work belies this claim" and I add Cristall to this list (Price 10).

[48] See the Introduction for a discussion of Griffiths' review.

techniques to diminish the repercussion. Immediacy therefore conveys the artists' spontaneous inspiration, their unmediated genius, as art.

Today's context for immediacy is a consequence of the digital age. Scholars study the mediation of content, how ideas and concepts are communicated via a range of media, and have developed a vocabulary to articulate their findings. Jay David Bolter and Richard Grusin author an overview of the field,[49] focusing on Western culture's prevailing desire to "erase all traces of mediation," to gain immediate and intimate access to content (*RUNM* 5). The concept of immediacy, stemming from this framework, refers to the sense of transparency and trust between audience, creator, medium and material. Authors engineer this candor through rhetorical and technical strategies (*RUNM* 19). Immediacy's falsified transparency is critical because it formulates the conditions under which viewers can believe in the fiction of the real.[50] That is to say, Bolter and Grusin, in discussing immediacy, divulge artistic tactics to fulfill the desire to overcome the container (medium) and provide direct, and therefore authentic, access to the message (content).

In reading older Romantic criticism, ideas about mediation are present, as we see in discussions about the sketch. The sketch collapses the repetition of a thing with the thing itself, for instance by blurring the distinction between the landscape as painting and the natural scenery (*VVS* 12). David Marshall refers to this collapse in terms of concealment, recognition, and

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[49] See *Remediation: Understanding New Media* (2000) for an excellent primer on the subject.

[50] Bolter and Grusin define the real "in terms of the visitor's experience; it is that which would evoke an immediate (and therefore authentic) emotional response" (*RUNM* 53). The implications of this definition are readily apparent for Romantic texts. If poetry is as Wordsworth claims, "the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings," then the poetry of immediacy would strongly cause the reader to authentically feel the poetry's emotions.

visibility.[51] David Punter frames his scholarship in similar language, employing the concepts "framing" and "boundaries" to describe the way the picturesque calls into question distinctions (Punter 225, 233). She describes the sketch's rhetorical immediacy as an artist's assertion of original genius. The quality of immediacy obscures the possibility of detecting its indebtedness to its influences (*VVS* 17). Yet, as Bolter and Grusin affirm, immediate art inevitably borrows material from its predecessors (*RUNM* 5). Ultimately, the sketch convinces readers that it is a mode of expression directly offering the content of the work of art to the viewer (or reader for our purposes). However, immediacy results in illusion. As a rhetorical strategy that cultivates a sense of art as truth and as a work of individual genius, it fails to deliver such a work to its readers. Instead, the immediacy of the sketch substitutes for the unmediated artwork an argument for authenticity and intimacy. It performs this swap by encouraging the reader to complete the sketch's minimalist description as an entry point into the text. Yet this fantasy only lasts until the reader reaches the point where the fiction of originality and genius gives way to the sketch's highly stylized (thus inauthentic) rhetoric of truth.

Cristall cultivates immediacy in "Song – Cymon" through sketched description and, unlike most of Cristall's poems, conforms to a consistent metrical pattern to comment on the dominant male presence in literature. The majority of the lines are written in iambic tetrameter with only a few variations in the type of feet, showing how "correct" Cristall's verses can be.

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[51]He writes that the picturesque hides the artist and her artistry to argue for picturesque art as nature (Marshall 34). This represents a twofold problem: The work of art is either in danger of becoming "invisible" or "too recognizable" (Marshall 38). Ultimately, in the case of the picturesque, the latter scenario came to be as it evolved into a standardized style (Ibid.). A formula of sorts for the picturesque developed. See especially the work of William Gilpin, but also of Richard Payne Knight and Uvedale Price.

This poem thus asserts the female capacity for rational thought;[52] that is to say, the meter of her poem abides by the standards of art and contains artistic passion, an event often indicated by the disruption of metrical schemes (Armstrong 30), within the confines of poetic rules. These two features place this poem in the trend of female verbal sketches, as defined by Sha, wherein conformity to decorum gives way to a strong critique of patriarchal norms without courting censure.

The lack of metrical variation seals off the rhythm from the reader. As generic convention confines the author, so standard meter sends the reader down a narrow path; he or she becomes complacent, absorbing a preset tempo. In "Song – Cymon," the moments when the metrical trance is broken are so few that a reader may not realize that she is travelling a prescribed route. Only those instances of metrical "deviation" call into question the controlled relationship between poet and audience. The same can be said of the poetry's thematic concerns; the briefest moments, such as the one of crowning, disrupt the monotony of the cultural script.[53] As Cristall weaves lyrical elements into the conventional sketch, instances that upset expectation proliferate. Cristall's use of meter is most striking in its ability to emancipate the reader from prescription, allowing them an agency that the sketch, although immediate and engaging the imagination, customarily denies the reader.

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[52] Mary Wollstonecraft is often cited as the example of a woman desiring to be seen as a rational being, something she accomplishes by contrasting herself to Edmund Burke. Catherine Gallagher writes that "[Wollstonecraft] fear[s] that the very effeminacy of Burke's argumentative style, chiming as it does with women's own rational deficiencies, will bind them to him and to the very customs that oppress them" ("History of Precedent" 321). The issue presented here is that women were conceived of as emotional beings whereas men were rational. These gender constructs limited the credibility of female writers. However, when writers such as Wollstonecraft and Cristall demonstrate their rational abilities, it is a statement that they are the equals of male writers.

[53] That script being the figure of the Muse and the poet. See note 13.

III.   Lyricizing the Sketch

Having examined the visual dimension of the lyrical sketch, I now turn to the lyrical and musical dimension. The culture of the lyric is one of deeply-felt emotion and of subjectivity. Like the sketch, the lyric is a genre of private expression. However, the sketch is unfinished, always suggesting the fully formed masterpiece; the force of mind of the artist is present but weak. The lyric is fully realized. The song of the poet in anguish is not art coming into being, but the artwork itself. Furthermore, whereas the sketch borrows from the rhetoric of the visual arts, the lyric is indebted to music. The lyrical sketch is built upon a set of contradictory logics, of pictorial immediacy and of musical performativity, that war with one another, upsetting the poet's control over the poem and reader.

The notorious difficulty of defining the lyric is partially due to its early usage as an adjective. Despite its descriptive purpose, lyric came to stand for all poetry (Jackson 830). By the Romantic era, it had become a distinctly valued genre (Johnson 96), associated with "brevity, subjectivity, passion, and sensuality" (Jackson 826). Unlike the representation of imagery and action in epic poetry or drama (Jackson 831), the lyric is regarded as non-mimetic because it is an outpouring of the speaker's emotions, or "as a burst of rapture" according to Hegel and Goethe (Genette 26). Hegel is a particularly influential figure in the modern construction of the lyric (Culler 66) and defines the genre as fulfilling a "need, namely that for self-expression of the mind in its own self-expression" (Hegel *Aesthetics* 1113). The lyrical is the mode that best allows the artist to convey thought in its superior condition, that is to say, when it is of the mind. The lyric was capacious for Romantics, absorbing other genres to preserve the poetic work in its pure mental state (Jackson 831). Examples of such combinations include Wordsworth and

Coleridge's *Lyrical Ballads* (1798) and Mary Robinson's *Lyrical Tales* (1800). It is in this vein that the lyrical sketch takes shape in Cristall's *Poetical Sketches* (1795), as a means to explore "poetic subjectivity" (Labbe 155).

Compared to "Song—Cymon", "Song (Tune, THE HEAVY HOURS)" is more euphonious because of its lilting rhythm; the poignant voice of the speaker and its multi-faceted meter make it an exemplary lyrical sketch. The first stanza may not seem to meet these criteria. In it, the speaker laments the inability to respond to nature: "Though Nature's sweets around are shed,/ Amid those sweets I mourn" ("Hours" ll. 3-4). The speaker, surrounded by the beauty of nature, cannot experience it. The issue is an insufficient faculty for sensory perception. The speaker tries to take in the pleasures – "[w]ith organs fram'd to taste delight,/ My soul its functions tries" – but a full perception of nature, the assimilation of the delights, is out of reach ("Hours" ll. 5-6). Implicit in the speaker's essay is the ineptitude to embody the feelings and sensations of nature. The lyrical sketch is a powerful vehicle for expressing this incompetence. "The Heavy Hours" conveys the ingenious ideas of art, a frequent topic of the sketch, and grapples with this challenge through the metrical experimentation more common to lyric.

Cristall applies the term "sketch" to her collection as a generic label. "The Heavy Hours" observes the structural and linguistic qualities of the lyric as well as the typical thematic concerns of the sketch, notably the challenge of expression. As Sha argues, for the sketch, the absence of elaborate representation, despite its vague quality, is more realistic than traditional art genres (*VVS* 5). The spontaneity of the poetry, in conjunction with its lack of polish, persuades the reader that it is the "real"[54] inspired thought. The irony is that this was anything but true; the eighteenth-century sketch had its own set of rules to achieve the appearance of naturalness, thus

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[54] That is to say that it is the artistic thought as it is in the mind of the poet.

making it contrived even as it denied rhetoric and artifice (*VVS* 3-5). Cristall writes, "I feel, I see – but from my sight/ The transient landscape flies" ("Hours" ll. 7-8). The dash cuts off the thought as it comes into being, evoking a similar effect to the one created by the sparse imagery of the landscape flashing by. Neither speaker nor reader can finish the thought, just as neither has the time to fully visualize the natural setting. These descriptions capture a fleeting landscape that is already waning at the moment of its recording, providing a frame of reference to access nature as opposed to a faithful reproduction.

The notion of framing, in relation to the sketch and the picturesque, warrants explanation. At the heart of the picturesque is the desire to represent nature in a more truthful way than the tactics of the Academy allow. However, since poets cannot unite with nature, they cannot express the rule it gives to art as their own. This problem is shared by followers of Gilpin as well as of Reynolds. This means that art will always fall short of the natural ideal. When poets attempt to channel nature in their creations, one approach is to avoid mimetically representing it, but this is predestined not to do nature justice. Poets thus serve as intermediaries, facilitating readers' experience of nature. Adherents to picturesque ideology provide the reader with a frame to try to understand nature's beauty even though it is beyond comprehension.

Artists of the picturesque are more successful at projecting themselves onto the landscape than in authentically portraying nature (Marshall 17). This is also the case with Cristall's poem and its ephemeral depictions. Contrary to their naturalistic ambition, artistic creations exhibit the undesirable artificiality of art. This tension between nature and art, and the poets' relegation to the realm of imitative artifice, is masked by the poets' denial of artistry. Thus the paradox of the picturesque emerges (Marshall19). Art becomes a means to access nature, but in viewing nature through the "frame of art," "aesthetic experience" overtakes it (Ibid.). This rhetorical strategy

deflects attention from the shortcoming of artistic disciplines. Thus, the picturesque, through sketching, frames nature as elusive, as having a barely discernable essence. What this framed moment truly represents is the inability of the artist to comprehend nature, to become one with it and reflect its beauty back to the reader. Moments in which "[t]he transient landscape flies" exemplify what it means to be a sketch ("Hours" 8). The representation of nature in "The Heavy Hours" argues that it is enigmatic and ephemeral. However, this description is more so an argument for the poem as an original and immediate creation. Consequently, the logic of the picturesque can only make itself more truthful by molding nature to fit its representational technique. In doing so, the contrivance of sketching becomes nature's truth.

Both the lyric and the sketch comment on the dynamic between the poet and the reader in communicating the emotional yearning to merge with nature. For late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century writers, one's connection to nature was a powerful metaphor for the fraught interaction between poet, via her poem, and the reader. In depicting the speaker's fraught relationship with Nature, the poem ruminates on the issue of reception. Nature's "sweets," its observable expressions, are a treasure that is fleeting and difficult to grasp ("Hours" 3). These sweets are substitutes for the genius poet's inspired thoughts that the reader cannot comprehend because Nature does not make them available for interpretation. Nature also takes on the metaphorical role of the creator and the speaker, in viewing nature, stands in for the reader. This is not a static relationship and the positions of creator/nature/poet and speaker/artist/reader converge, starting in the second stanza. The poem blurs the distinction between these positions by foregrounding their joint expressive inadequacies. Nature's "glimmering beams […] soon o'erwhelm'd […] die," while the poet's

[…] thought in brightness dawn'd

> My passions caught the glow,
>
> Some ray of bliss each cloud adorn'd
>
> Which teem'd with future woe. ("Hours" ll.13-16)

Both nature's light and the metaphorical light of the speaker, her genius, fail to shine in this stanza. The doubly felt loss of radiance links Nature and the speaker as creative agents struggling to communicate. This investigation of the connection between Nature and speaker is also an investigation into the relationship between poet and reader. The poet's confrontation with nature, the archetype for beautiful creation, is a model that shows that the unification of these roles, of poet with nature and of reader with poet, is impossible.

Extrapolating from this relation leads to the issue of comprehension between the poet and the reader, a dynamic in which the lyrical sketch is deeply invested and that the opening poetic sequence of Cristall's collection illustrates most decisively. Cristall's "Before Twilight" offers an ideal of the relationship between the poet and nature. Eveyzion has a strong connection to nature, but his desire to demonstrate this bond is subject to failure. This struggle of expression and reception is metaphorically represented through love and courtship. Viza is Eyezion's love interest and audience. McGann asserts that these two characters are "purely imaginative" and that their love is no commonplace affair (*Poetics* 197, 200). Indeed, their unfolding interaction enacts the challenge of presenting the original genius to an audience. As Eyezion anxiously awaits his artistic inspiration with the morning light, so he ardently seeks out Viza, a figure tied to that light. The uncertainty of the first stanza characterizes the interplay between them; their connection is the basis of the poet's worries over adequacy and artistic legitimacy. The topic of that conversation is musical ability and mental genius, but at the heart of the matter is sound. The moment Viza asks, "'Who sang so early, and so sweet?'" is the instant Cristall shifts to the split

perspective, establishing a generative discourse between Creator (Eyezion) and light (Viza) ("Before Twilight" 48). Eyezion fears that his incompetency will result in his erasure from memory. He is disturbed that Viza questions to whom the voice belongs; her query causes an injury compounded by his belief that "the music she inspires [is] unknown" (50). However, he proves himself by the force of his "mental powers" ("Before Twilight" 52). The effort he exerts in his unbounding ambition makes him worthy ("Before Twilight" ll. 55, 57). Eyezion emerges triumphant in the obstacle of reception.

Yet not every character embodies the artist to the extent that Eyezion does. In fact, there are more figures in Cristall's poetry whose experience in unifying with nature is unsuccessful, and their subsequent artistic expressions voice that failure. This is the case in "The Heavy Hours." The misery with which this disappointment is felt signals the emotive property of the lyric. By the third stanza, the speaker realizes his inability to fully perceive nature. First, the sweets cannot be tasted; then, in the second stanza "[t]he glimmering leaves of opening day" are "delusive" ("Hours" ll. 9; 11). This inability to feel nature's sensations as if they are one's own is infuriating, as the narrator is "[t]orn from each joy" but must ultimately "learn to bear" ("Hours" ll. 17, 24). While this is a personal experience, the poem is not merely an idiosyncratic complaint. As stated above, the lyric is a deeply emotive genre. Abrams states that most lyrics convey feelings (in the first person), usually assumed to be those of the poet (Abrams "Lyric" 140). In the eighteenth-century, the lyric was more popular than its aloof construction as the solitary outpouring of a genius would suggest. Virginia Jackson describes its historical reputation as "the essential poetry of the people," which she qualifies as meaning that the lyric was "original and expressive" (Jackson 831). Indeed, Hegel insists that lyric poetry transcends the inner life of the individual, although the internal spirit is its source. He writes that "however

intimately the insights and feelings which the poet describes as his own belong to him as a single individual, they must nevertheless possess a universal validity" (Hegel *Aesthetics* 1111). Thus, the popularity of the lyric comes from the readers' identification with it. For this to be possible, the feelings expressed must be universally communicable.

The anguish of "The Heavy Hours" is universal, although derived from the inner life of the speaker. In the final stanza, the poet figure reverts to the consolation of art. Only the expressive act of artistic creation can disrupt the forlorn speaker's static existence. This act is compensation for the failure to join with nature, to share in its experiences as if they were his own. The poem conflates the lyrical speaker's struggle to assimilate nature's beauty with the inability to comprehend art and to effectively communicate through poetry. In the last stanza, the speaker realizes that she is "[t]orn from each joy that soothes the heart" because of the failed attempt to capture nature ("Hours" ll. 17-18). The figure seeks to alleviate this pain by using her "thoughts [to] pursue the toils of art, / [her] feelings music try" ("Hours" ll. 19-20). As a result of not understanding nature, the poet begins to make his own art. The speaker "learn[s] to bear" the grief of incommensurability between himself and nature by "[p]our[ing] from thy breast […] songs sublime" ("Hours" ll. 23-4). Personal expression proliferates so that each iteration of an emotion is at once unique to the creator and demonstrative of the general human condition.

The lyrical sketch carefully constructs roles for the speaker and reader in order to transmit meaning. These positions differ from those of the traditional lyric, which predetermines roles for the poet as genius and the reader as passive auditor, although there is freedom to maneuver within these posts. In the case of the lyric, the trope of the secluded speaker is well-developed. P.B. Shelley, in his *Defense of Poetry,* did much to create the fiction of the solitary lyric figure as the poet. In 1821, he wrote that "[a] poet is a nightingale, who sits in darkness and

sings to cheer its own solitude with sweet sounds" (Shelley 36). This image suggests an alienation, melancholy and detachment from worldly concerns. Hegel, explaining the existence of the lyrical figure at a remove from others, writes that the "spirit" of the poet "descends into itself, look[ing] into its own consciousness, and satisfies the need to display, not the external reality of the matter, but its presence and actuality" (Hegel *Aesthetics* 1111). Hegel's construction not only anchors lyric poetry in the interiority of the poet but acknowledges the exhibitionist impulse to share one's subjective experience, a concession Shelley is hesitant to make. He characterizes the poet's audience as "auditors […] entranced by the melody of an unseen musician, who feel that they are moved and softened, yet who know not when or why"[55] (Shelley 36). Those who hear the lyric enjoy the poet's delightful song without fully comprehending it. Both Hegel and Shelley emphasize the work of the poet, while the auditor or reader is treated in a secondary fashion.

Additionally, both writers underscore the deeply personal nature of the utterances voiced in the lyric, which creates a tension between Hegel's demand that the feeling expressed be universal and the fiction of the lyric as private enunciation. The picture that emerges of the lyrical voice and of the poem's audience is of a poet who is passionately moved to express himself[56] in song, and of an unseen and unheard individual who hears this private expression; in a word, the audience is a sort of voyeur. John Stuart Mill, conflating poetry in general with the lyric, is emphatic about these roles. In his essay "What is Poetry," he defines it as "*over*heard," and he elaborates that "[p]oetry is feeling confessing itself to itself, in moments of solitude;"

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[55] In this statement, there is an echo of the discussion of genius in connection to the picturesque, where the audience cannot fully grasp the art, leaving an air of mystery in its power of to signify.
[56] I say himself here because the construction of the lyric figure is traditionally male.

therefore, the poet must have an "utter unconsciousness of a listener" (Mill 95).[57] Thus, lyric

poetry must be disinterested, which is to say, disconnected from the external pressures and

influences of society (Zimmerman 1). Only then can poetry truly be an original product of

genius.

        This understanding of the auditor's voyeuristic glimpse into the poet's intimate

expression has since been assimilated by twentieth-century lyric theorists. Northrop Frye paints a

startling picture of the lyric poet who "turns his back on his audience" ("Theory" 33). According

to Frye, the poet conceals him- or herself from the reader, actively rejecting any consideration of

reception in favor of exploring the world in reference to the self ("Theory" 32). Many have

complicated this image, such as Abrams, who does not hold the isolation of the poet to such rigid

standards (Abrams "Structure" 77). The alienation of the poet remains a critical trope of the

lyric, but Abrams acknowledges that the lyric figure communicates with his or her auditors

(Abrams "Lyric" 107).

        While readers should evaluate these constructions of the solitary (and more often than

not, male) lyric persona skeptically, the peek into the private thoughts of the poet garnered

popularity for this genre in the late eighteenth century (Zimmerman ix). However, some lyrics

were overtly social, such as odes and songs to be performed (Jackson 830). Thus, the issue of

public and private was exactly the aspect of the lyric that drew readers to it. In recognizing the

voyeuristic desire on the part of the reader, the lyric stylizes its privacy in such a way that denies

such artistry. One can look to the sketch for a model of this paradox. Not all sketches were

private and preparatory, as some were made for exhibition and Gilpin instructs the sketcher on

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[57] Mill contrasts this private expression to eloquence (which is meant for "intercourse with the world") and oratory (for the "purpose of voluntary communication") (Mill 95-6).

how to produce a sketch for the public eye in his treatise.[58] Similarly, the lyric is simultaneously private and public artifact. Generally, it leverages immediacy, the same rhetorical technique as the sketch, to maintain the fiction that it remains under the purview of the poet (Zimmerman 31). But the lyricism of the lyrical sketch diverges from the effects of immediacy. The basis of the lyrical sketch is performance in more ways than one, as it trumpets the ingenuity of the speaker as well as subtly recruiting the intellect of the reader.

The tension between public and private plays out in the final stanza of "The Heavy Hours," and the public wins. The voice, speaking to herself, says "O my soul, thy pow'rs divine," in order to "[p]our from thy breast, in songs sublime,/ Thy grief – and learn to bear" ("Hours" ll. 21, 23-4). She draws from within to purge herself of sorrow, for this is how one bears. The focus on the interiority of the spirit attests to the intensity of this private and emotional moment, yet the "[p]our[ing]" of song indicates that this lyric speaker knows it is a performance ("Hours" 23). While its deeply personal nature evokes privacy, the consciousness of expression shatters this illusion. Presented here is Wordsworth's "spontaneous overflow of powering feelings," a moment in which feeling must be released but which is also predicated on a presence to receive those emotions (Wordsworth 242). Both the sketch and the lyric grapple with the binary tension between public and private, which is the burden of the artist. The rhetoric of these genres allows the poet to have both by turning the reader into the voyeur. Once the poem has constructed a voyeuristic reader, the public consumption of the poetic utterance is paradoxically reinforced.

Cristall's lyrical sketches navigate the space between the poet and audience, testing the limits of intimacy and distance. Each of its comprising genres takes a different approach. While

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[58] See Gilpin's third essay, "Sketching Landscape."

performativity is generally considered on the part of the poet, the meter of the lyric provides an opportunity for readerly performativity. Meanwhile, the immediacy of the sketch obliges the reader to complete the scene. The sketch invites the reader, on a visual and imaginative level, to engage with the poem, whereas the lyric encourages the reader to grapple with its complex meter by reading it aloud. The poem calls upon the reader to perform its acoustics orally as a musician interprets a composer's work. The lyrical sketch is therefore aware of its audience even as it is an outlet for privately felt emotion. The concept of performativity is not new to the lyric, although it is most commonly discussed as a performative act of the poet. Such discussions revolve around meter and in the case of Cristall's poetry, it is performative because of complexities in its rhythm.

Lyric meter frequently operates as anti-meter (Frye "Lyric" 33); that is to say that it rejects the mathematical precision set by accentual-syllabic patterning that we associate with metrical language. Cristall's poems satisfy this lyric criterion of the genre's lack of metrical unity. Yet the difficulty of Cristall's meter (and the slew of scholars who have left a thorough consideration of it for another day)[59] makes it not only intriguing but an imperative subject for investigation. Cristall sets up a scheme in the first two stanzas of alternating tetrameter and trimeter, composed of iambs to subvert that scheme at the end of the poem. In these stanzas, the speaker describes his woe because he cannot internalize nature's sensations. Around the eighteenth-century and into the Romantic period, "unpredictable and irregular" scansion became the mode of expression for feeling and Cristall employs it here (Frye "Lyric" 34). The frustration

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[59] The majority of scholars writing about Cristall make a point of mentioning her meter, but do not attempt to define its particularities. Christopher Nagle describes her poetry as having "bizarre formal innovations and thematic excesses" (Nagle 52) and Jonas Cope writes that she writes in irregular iambic pentameter (Cope 18).

of nature's proximity yet of its insurmountable distance is exhibited visually through the dash in the lines at the end of the first stanza and again at the end of the poem when Cristall writes, "[p]our from thy breast in songs sublime, / Thy grief – and learn to bear" ("Hours" ll. 23-4). In each instance, the faculty (of perception and of learning to bear) is separated from the object upon which it acts ("my sight" and "thy grief"), a fact emphasized by the dash and enjambment. One can also hear frustration in the tone of regret that pervades the poem. As the speaker ruminates on the past saying, "'[t]was thus my youth" and when the loss of "balmy comforts" "[t]o me no more return," there is a sense of somber finality ("Hours" ll. 13, 1-2). This retrospective despair threatens to pervade the whole lyric, an emotional experience the poem explores through its meter.

As its meter is stuck in its fixed way, so the speaker dwells on old torments, confusing past and present. In stanza one, verbs are conjugated in past tense passive voice; comforts "are fled" and sweets "are shed" ("Hours" ll. 1, 3). By the end of the stanza, the speaker shifts to present tense to describe the inaccessibility of the natural scene. "The transient landscape flies" from the speaker, as if she is trapped in this traumatic moment of failing to internalize nature. With the opening of the second stanza, the verbs shift to past tense, with the exception of descriptive gerunds that keep the presence of nature alive as a specter of sorts, with "glimmering beams of opening day" and "delusive glowing tints display" ("Hours" ll. 9, 12). Nature's presence lingers for the speaker, even as she cannot fully comprehend it, haunting the mind.

As the plot becomes dynamic, so does the poem's meter; the speaker's switch from passive to active voice complements this enlivening of meter. In the poem, actions are expressed in the present tense as the speaker's "pleasures fly," his "thoughts pursue the toils of art" and while her "feelings music try" ("Hours" ll. 18-20). This happens in real time; the only verb in

past tense ("strengthen'd," line 22) is part of a phrase modifying a noun. Thus, the reader is called to attention by the force of active verbs. The meter subtly shifts in the first line of the last stanza. Instead of an iamb, the line begins with a spondee, although it still conforms to the baseline schema. Spondees occur at the beginning of lines 21 ("Then, O") and line 23 ("Pour from"). There is no pattern to the intervals between the uses of the spondees, but the effect shakes the reader from the trance of a regular meter. As the adjustment in verb tense indicates the speaker's escape from depression, so the introduction of a new poetic foot liberates the reader.

The meter of "The Heavy Hours" offers an occasion to investigate the role of the reader in reciting the poem. In foregrounding the meter, the lyrical sketch becomes an acoustic event, in addition to a printed artifact. The song alternates between hexameter and octameter, but the injection of an additional poetic foot in the final stanza does not impede a silent reading of the poem. In this instance, the small change signals a resolution. Yet it requires an active listener to register the spondee that alerts one to the poem's end. This is an auditory not a visual cue; if not read aloud, it loses its efficacy. This lyrical quality, derived from a manipulation of the poem's form, invites the reader to engage with its sound as the sketch did with its descriptive minimalism. The lyric, asking the reader to read the work aloud and interpret its metrical variety, is participatory. It does not present an illusion of immediacy for consumption. By calling on the reader to perform its rhythm, the reader must take up the role of the poetic speaker whereas the sketch's immediacy reproduces the fantasy of the satisfaction of the voyeuristic desire for content.

To reiterate, the lyrical sketch is participatory because the reader recites the poem aloud, inflecting its acoustics through the interpretation of meter. Generally the poet has the sole agency to craft the poem. Indeed, the lyric is regarded as an overheard utterance. Yet the reader, turned

performer, stands alongside the poet-speaker. In so doing, the lyrical sketch facilitates the

collapse between the traditional role of the poet and of the auditor. Recent studies have begun to

probe the dynamic between reader, poet and text in the lyric, turning to the construction of reader

as silent listener. Culler reads the lyric as a performative act of enunciation with the generative

capacity to "create what it names" ("Lyric" 68). Implicit in this argument is the audience's

function in the confirmation of the lyrical utterance. The presence of a listener validates the

private expression and provides a necessary witness for the creative act of naming. This

relationship is seemingly one-sided because it is not considered from the point of view of the

reader, only that of the poet. As long as studies of the lyric neglect the reader, she will remain the

passive listener of Mill's description.

Zimmerman, seriously considering the reader's position, writes that the lyric, that shares

the poet's emotions, "invites the readers of sensibility[60] to respond in kind" (Zimmerman 32). It

is easy to read this technique as a corollary to the operation of the sketch's immediacy, inviting

the reader to mentally complete its minimally described scenes; Zimmerman even describes this

effect in terms of immediacy (Zimmerman 31). To see a direct correspondence between the

sketch and the lyric, although both have been described as immediate, is to overlook the

importance of meter in the construction of the lyrical sketch. It is on the level of metrical

precision that the readerly position becomes invigorated. Although the lyric and the sketch have

a mutual interest in the topics of emotion, originality and genius, they do not, in fact, solicit the

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[60] Zimmerman's argument is illuminating because she bases it on historical cultural trends. Her use of the term "sensibility" refers to the eighteenth-century cult of sensibility. G.J. Barker-Benfield explains that this term was "synonymous with consciousness, with feeling, and eventually identifiable with sexual characteristics" (Barker-Benfield xvii). For more, see Barker-Benfield's study *The Culture of Sensibility: Sex and Society in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (1992) and Janet Todd's *Sensibility: An Introduction* (1986).

reader's attention in the same way. The lyric does not create a myth of intimacy with the poetic content; it asks the reader to take on the task of interpretation. In contrast, the immediacy of the sketch does not require the reader to bring to life the poem. It engages the reader but does not call for her interpretation. The reader remains silent, albeit an imaginatively invested viewer. The sketch instills in the reader an illusion of proximity by extending the opportunity to finish the scene. This is a fragile fiction that mediates the boundaries between art and audience, poem and reader in such a way that convinces the audience that there is no mediation.

Despite the affinities of the sketch and the lyric, the combination of the two is uneasy. The sketch, as discussed, is indebted to the visual arts while the lyric, with its metered language, attaches itself to music. Their rhetorical differences, of immediacy and of participation, arise from the juxtaposition of the pictorial and the musical, affecting reader reception. Because Cristall innovates upon metrical schemas, she draws upon the musicality inherent in the lyric. In maximizing the musical capacity of poetry, she complicates the rhetoric of immediacy. The result is that the musicality of the verse, culminating in a participatory aesthetic, interferes with the immediacy of the visual. In the next chapter, I consider the poet's rhetorical construction of the readerly position. The dualism between immediacy and participation proves to be a generative pairing in reimagining the constellations between reader, speaker and poet. How the rhetoric of immediacy and of participation comes together in Cristall's innovative poetic style will be the subject of the next chapter.

CHAPTER 2

DESIGNING POETICS

I.   **The Lyrical Spectrum: from the Pictorial to the Musical**

The innovation of the lyrical sketch is its reimagined dynamic of the speaker and reader. By bringing together Frye's musical and pictorial "boundaries" ("Theory" 35), Cristall reconstructs the poet's failure to merge with nature as a reader experience. While the lyric is largely associated with music, there is an important pictorial, or visual, element at play. As Frye writes, there is "music on one boundary of lyric [… and] a relation to pictorial on the other side which is equally important" (Ibid.). While the meter and rhythm are distinctly musical, the look of the poetry on the page and the visual imagery it evokes equally constitute the lyric. Frye succinctly describes these two parts[61] as making the lyric "overseen as well as overheard" (Ibid.). This chapter juxtaposes two types of lyric, the lyrical sketch and the illuminated lyric, falling on opposite "boundaries" of Frye's spectrum, to elucidate the ways in which Cristall borrows from the rhetorical styles of music and of the visual arts to reconfigure the readerly position. I thus contrast the "Introduction" to William Blake's *Songs of Innocence* to Cristall's Song, "The Heavy Hours," to shed light on how the pictorial differs from the musical. Putting the lyrical sketch in its musical context makes clear how experimentation with musical meter creates a participatory aesthetic.

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[61] Frye coins the terms babble or charm (melos) and doodle or riddle (opsis) to indicate the "subconscious association" of lyric with the musical and the pictorial ("Theory" 36, 38-9). Babble is indebted to such literary techniques as rhyme and alliteration; he glosses doodle as "rough sketches of verbal design" ("Theory" 37). Doodle is manifest in stanza arrangements, punctuation, indentation and actual pictures in the case of Blake ("Theory" 35). Doodle is a condition sprung from print culture; the lyric offers critical information to the reader via visual cues. Therefore, opsis is a more recent development of the lyric, although Frye does not specify its inception.

There is a case to be made for reading Cristall and Blake's lyrics in the cultural context of music as well as in visual culture. The Romantic era saw the rise of the periodical, the circulating library and the book club (Broadview lx). Authors and publishers actively wielded the techniques of printing to personalize texts and to forge an intimate link with the reader,[62] notwithstanding the authoritative and "rationalizing force" of the medium (Flint 8, 10, 12). Despite these developments, reading was a privilege of the middle-classes and above (Allan *Commonplace* 4).[63] Consequently, literature as an oral art still had a strong presence in the literary mindset (Broadview lxii). Reading texts aloud was a form of social enjoyment[64] and the image of the solitary reader was not yet in vogue (Allan *Commonplace* 143). Consequently, writers and publishers adapted to and explored the artistic possibilities of the print medium in response to evolving reading trends, while the importance of writing's sounds persisted.

The affinity between the lyric and music[65] is evident in so far as both are mathematically indebted to meter. Their common history has garnered more attention than that of the lyric and the pictorial arts. As Sha teases out the relationship between the verbal sketch and its visual arts corollary, so I draw connections between the lyrical sketch and the culture of music, illustrating how poetry assumes the styles and rhetorical maneuvers of musical media.

In 1775, Charles Avison, a founder of music criticism, wrote that

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[62] Flint's book, *The Appearance of Print in Eighteenth-Century Fiction*, focuses on novels but provides useful insights for the study of poetry collections.

[63] For women and members of the working-class, literacy was a marker of distinction and an opportunity to exercise independent thought pertaining to political matters (Allan *Nation* 224).

[64] Interestingly, general audiences preferred poetry for note-taking purposes and texts with "strong metrical structures" when reading aloud (Allan *Commonplace* 141, 144).

[65] See the following for more on the history between the lyric (poetry) and music: Schueller's "Correspondences;" Stewart's *Poetry and the Fate of the Senses;* Wood's *Romanticism and Music Culture;* Stafford's "Sweet Sounds;" and Lawrence Kramer's scholarship, in particular *Music and Poetry.*

> The force of *harmony*, or *melody* alone is wonderful on the imagination. *A ful*[*l*] *chord*
>
> struck, or a beautiful succession o[f] *single sounds* produced, is no less ravishing to the
>
> ear, than just symmetry or exquisite colours the eye (Avison 2).

Throughout the eighteenth-century, an active debate that aimed to categorize and rank the arts took place. Avison's words typify understandings of the power of music and its emotional capacity on a theoretical level. Music, for Avison, has an innate emotional force that can easily move the listener. In the final sentence of this quote, he asserts its equality to another commonly studied medium, painting. However, not every commentator was as enthusiastic about music as Avison, for reasons both theoretical and cultural.

Hegel, like Avison, holds music in high regard. He also sees the connection between music and the visual arts, but for him music is endowed with a special ability to relay an artist's subjectivity. He writes that music is "the center of the romantic arts," as a "medium for mental inwardness" (Hegel *Introductory* 95). It thus has strong connections to delivering the original thought that is so highly prized. The apex of musical power is its liberation of "the ideal content from its immersion in matter" (Ibid.). In other words, music comes closer to pure expression than any other art form so that the loss of inspiration once recorded, as Shelley describes, is attenuated. These ideas are familiar to us by way of immediacy.[66] Hegel argues for music as an unmediated art. That he sees a correlation to visual art, which suggests immediacy, is intriguing. Music signifies, becomes meaningful, when it transforms "abstract visibility […] into audibility," when it makes what is hard to visualize, because of its abstract qualities, more easily accessible as sound (Ibid.). Music exists in an "inchoate" form and manages to be "sensuous,"

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[66] James Winn also comes to this conclusion about the meaning of music to the romantics in his broad study of the period. He writes that an inaccurate notion of music circulated as "an immediate language of the passions without syntactical or formal restraints" (Winn 238).

felt in the body, but as abstract as the imagination (Hegel *Introductory* 94). It is therefore easy to

see why songs and singing birds are common in romantic poetry, since they are considered pure

expressivity.[67]

James Winn's study of music during the era exposes Hegel's myth of music as a

prestigious medium (Winn 238). While having a following, not everyone bought into this

mythological cachet. The ambivalence toward music sprung from its culture, as Gillen D'Arcy

Wood argues. While Kant's objection is to an exclusivity of the form (Kant *Judgment* 158), the

main quandary is music's connection to artifice by way of performance. Music was a communal

form of entertainment and its professionalism was regarded as distasteful (Wood 16, 9). Writers

such as William Wordsworth, Jane Austen[68] and music connoisseur Charles Burney wanted to

distance writing from this vulgarity as well as the theatrical and insincere concert hall (Wood

10). Music additionally suffered from its association with femininity, positing it as contra-reason

(Weber 680). Ultimately, the similarities between music and poetry prevailed, especially in the

case of the lyric. The power of music to express emotion[69] overruled the negativity of its culture

of superficiality and panache.[70] Indeed, the application of song to poetry raised it to a status of

divinity (Kramer *Music* 2). This became possible because the immediacy of music was

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[67] See Fiona Stafford's chapter "Sweet Sounds" in *Reading Romantic Poetry* for more on music in British Romantic poetry.

[68] Austen's endorsement or rejection of theatricality is a topic of discussion (Pinch "Mansfield"). Though this question has not been decided, the confusion as to her opinion is a testament to theatricality as a point of contention for romantic era writers.

[69] Music had a reputation as being particularly expressive because of its immateriality, which is to say that it was not wedded to its materials as a painting is to paint and canvas (Schneider 55). In addition, progress was made in musicology during the Romantic era that expanded harmonic possibilities (Schneider 56). As a result, composers wrote pieces with greater complexity and with more "feeling and color" (Ibid.).

[70] Wood describes this culture as one of virtuosity, which is to say that the assumption was that music valued technical exhibition over substance and subjectivity (Wood 3).

magnified by that of poetry, forging a powerful alliance through which the genius of the artist could be preserved (Kramer *Music* 8).[71] Poetry's linkage to music therefore had its benefits and drawbacks. However, in distinguishing between music and musical culture, poetry could leverage the powerful rhetoric of music's capacity to convey feeling. The cleverness of the application of musical rhetoric to the lyric is not simply that it exploits a shared foundation in meter, but that it manages to suppress the public nature of music. Once the lyric has shed music culture and its theatrical performances, it benefits from music's demonstrative abilities while avoiding its negative reputation of publicity over artistic subjectivity.

Poetry and music take place in time as sound, but one can derive pleasure from the transcription of poetry's oral event, the written poem. In contrast, music is enjoyed through performance, not from silently reading a score. The written poem, a converted speech-act, alludes to its acoustics via visual cues.[72] Silent readers imagine the sounds of poetry so that the printed lyric "solicits the ear" in the sense that the absence of sound, marked by the printed word, lingers (Armstrong 49). However, reading poetry aloud reinforces the performativity of metrical language. Each reader shapes a particular poem when "performed," or recited, out loud. Isobel Armstrong explains that reading in "real time" results in "variation within rule-bound patterns" of meter (Armstrong 27) and so myriad readings are an inevitable consequence of individual intonation. It is therefore not only poets who influence rhythm.

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[71] Kramer notes that the audience's desire for the original was "made on behalf of the consciousness of the artist, not the work of art" (Kramer *Music* 59). However, it is important to remember that the solitary artist of genius is a persona that poets project and that it plays a critical function in constructing the fiction of immediacy.

[72] Kramer fleshes out this thought, postulating that "[i]f writing [… is] a sign for speech, then italics and a few punctuation marks – a small but hardy band of visual signals – are signs for intonation. What the italics and so on signify is a change of voice, which readers must somehow hear" (Kramer *Expression* 23).

Meter and rhythm are essential devices for a poet's emotional expression, but these tools can also be a powerful point of contact between the reader and the poem. According to Kramer, poetry's rhythm evokes the voice of the speaker, usually foregrounded in lyrical genres (Kramer *Music* 11). This rhythm is cathetic and the other devices that contribute to romantic meter, such as repetition, further the suggestion of emotion (Kramer *Music* 21-1; 25). Frye holds onto the uncanny effect of lyrical rhyme and meter. Since poetry is an "associative rhetorical process,"[73] requiring the brain to actively link words and sounds to make sense of them, different types of rhythm can emerge from reading lyrics ("Theory" 34). In his study, Frye finds that an "oracular rhythm" is the "predominating initiative" of lyric ("Theory" 33-4). His claim is that there is an unconventional rhythm that distinguishes lyric verses through their "meditative, irregular, unpredictable, and essentially discontinuous rhythm" ("Theory" 33). Although these twin rhythms are the poet's subjective creation, they open up the lyric to the reader. The duality of the rhythm fashions the lyric genre around the relationship between addresser and addressee, not just the lone voice.

Culler taps into the exhibitionist impulse of the lyric when he refers to it as enunciation, citing the driving necessity for display ("Lyric" 68). For him, Frye's depiction of the lyric figure is somewhat of an "embarrassment" because the ambition of lyric is "extraordinarily arrogant" in its creative assurance and self-absorption ("Lyric" 66, 68). The ethos of the lyric speaker, of solitary genius, affirms Culler's claims to a degree. The oversight in his scholarship is that he

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[73] James Winn asserts that the "subjunctive verbs, dangling participles, adverbial clauses, incomplete sentences and other loose constructions so typical of English Romantic verse encourage us to read in an associative way" (Winn 262). The myth of music that permeated also regarded the medium as being "moved by loosely associative connections from idea to idea" (Winn 270). Consequently, the notion of association is another point of comparison for music and poetry and is an important part of the construction of these media as capable of conveying intense emotion and abstract thought.

does not fully examine the addresser-addressee interaction. Indeed, the need for a listener to validate the utterance belies the hauteur of the lyric speaker while confirming a certain narcissism. That is not to say that Culler's claims about the lyric "I" and the construct of its ego are incorrect, but to point out that the flip side of lyric performativity is an anxiety about the reception of art and the role of the reader as a participant in its performativity.

Culler provides a close reading of Blake's "The Sick Rose" to demonstrate his claims. He argues that the speaker "*presupposes* an animate listener," that the lyric creates its audience ("Lyric" 69). It does so by way of formal address that constitutes an "I-thou relation" ("Lyric" 69-70). This leads him to ponder the necessity of a lyric "you" ("Lyric" 75). Indeed, I argue that the presence of the "you" in lyric is as significant as the speaker, but not because the lyric necessitates a passive "silent auditor." In the instance of complex meter, the lyric becomes a performance on the part of the reader. The tendency is to discuss the lyric speaker's or poet's performativity, but this study of the genre reconsiders the construction of the lyric in terms of a more nuanced understanding of the reader. The ways in which musical meter calls on the reader to perform its complexities becomes evident in the lyrical sketch when meter and the rhetoric of music are compared to that of the visual and immediacy. First, I turn to Blake to examine the effects of the visual in the construction of roles for the speaker and the reader. I juxtapose Blake's "Introduction" to the *Songs of Innocence* to one of Cristall's songs with musical rhythm, "The Heavy Hours." In doing so, I distinguish between the participation that musical meter and visual immediacy require. This investigation then clarifies the relationship between speaker and reader, and thus of public and private, on which the lyrical sketch innovates.

II.　Blake's Illuminated Lyric

The aesthetic of Cristall's lyrical sketch comes down to a distinction between immediacy and metrical performativity. The lyric is capacious enough to evoke both stylistic effects. However, the question of immediacy and performativity is one of privacy and publicity, intimacy and distance. These binary states share an uneasy coexistence and one gives way to the other. The performative nature of Cristall's lyrical sketch overshadows its moments of immediacy. To understand how these rhetorical strategies interact in the lyrical sketch, how the one subsumes the other, I examine the function of immediacy and performativity on the pictorial and the musical lyric boundaries. I turn to a study of the rhetorical strategies of the pictorial in lyric, considering the most image-based of them all, Blake's illuminated lyric.

Blake's illuminated lyric stands at the end of the spectrum emphasizing the pictorial, with its use of the visual producing immediacy, and I posit the lyrical sketch as a musical counterpoint that foregrounds the potential for readerly participation in the genre.[74] I position these lyrics at different points on the continuum, but they both discursively apply the visual arts and music to poetics. Whereas Blake's lyric becomes a visual art object, Cristall's lyrical sketch borrows from the discipline to deflect attention from rhetoric's artifice and to cultivate immediacy. Additionally, Blake's use of line constitutes a finished quality that directly contrasts the sketch's invocation of imprecision. In bringing to light the nuances in these visual strategies, the

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[74] While I do regard the illuminated lyric and the lyrical sketch as tending toward opposite boundaries of Frye's spectrum, I want to acknowledge that Blake's poems are ultimately *songs,* as are the majority of Cristall's poems that I read in this thesis. Indeed, there certainly is an important musical element for Blake. Osbert Burdett explains that even though Blake lacked formal music training, he set his poetry to music; Blake did not record his tunes, although some friends of the Blake's are said to have recorded his melodies (Burdett 43). Thus, similarly to Cristall, Blake's lyric has connections to both the visual arts and to music.

illuminated lyric serves as a foil to the lyrical sketch, illustrating the distinction between a poem's appropriation of the visual and the picture-poem as an entity.

Implicit in a discussion of rhetoric is a consideration of its efficacy, the extent to which it has the desired effect on the audience. This returns to the issue of communicability, which is a primary facet of art. Blake's frontispiece and "Introduction" to the *Songs of Innocence* probe this subject allegorically by depicting the interaction between a Piper and a child, a relationship echoing that of poet and reader. The Piper is the primary figure, centrally located and framed by trees, but the Piper points the gaze upward toward the cherub-like figure, as if redirecting the focal point. In addition, there is a literal hierarchy in the picture which subordinates the Piper to the youth floating above him. The image offers two contradictory formulations wherein either the Piper or the child is empowered, arguing that this interaction is in no way straightforward.

Bound up in the figure of the Piper is a simultaneous pushing forward and out of the image and a pulling inward. At the bottom right of the image, the powerful tree trunk frames the scene, demarcating the picture's limits. In effect, this draws a distinction between the space outside of the image, belonging to the reader, and the space contained within, under the purview of the poet's imagination. The Piper's right foot, slightly forward, begins to protrude into the reader's zone. This motion is suspended as he looks up and over his shoulder at the child.[75] His body is therefore pulled in opposite directions. He reaches inward to the imaginatively-crafted space of the picture and externally toward the viewer. The dual tension, between the interiority of the imagination and the exterior presence of the audience, is visualized in this frontispiece and explored in the "Introduction." The frontispiece argues against the lyric associations of privacy.

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[75] It worth noting that the child is contained within the wispy branches of the trees at the top of the image and so does not transgress the image's boundary. The child is completely contained in the picture, while the Piper is both within and without.
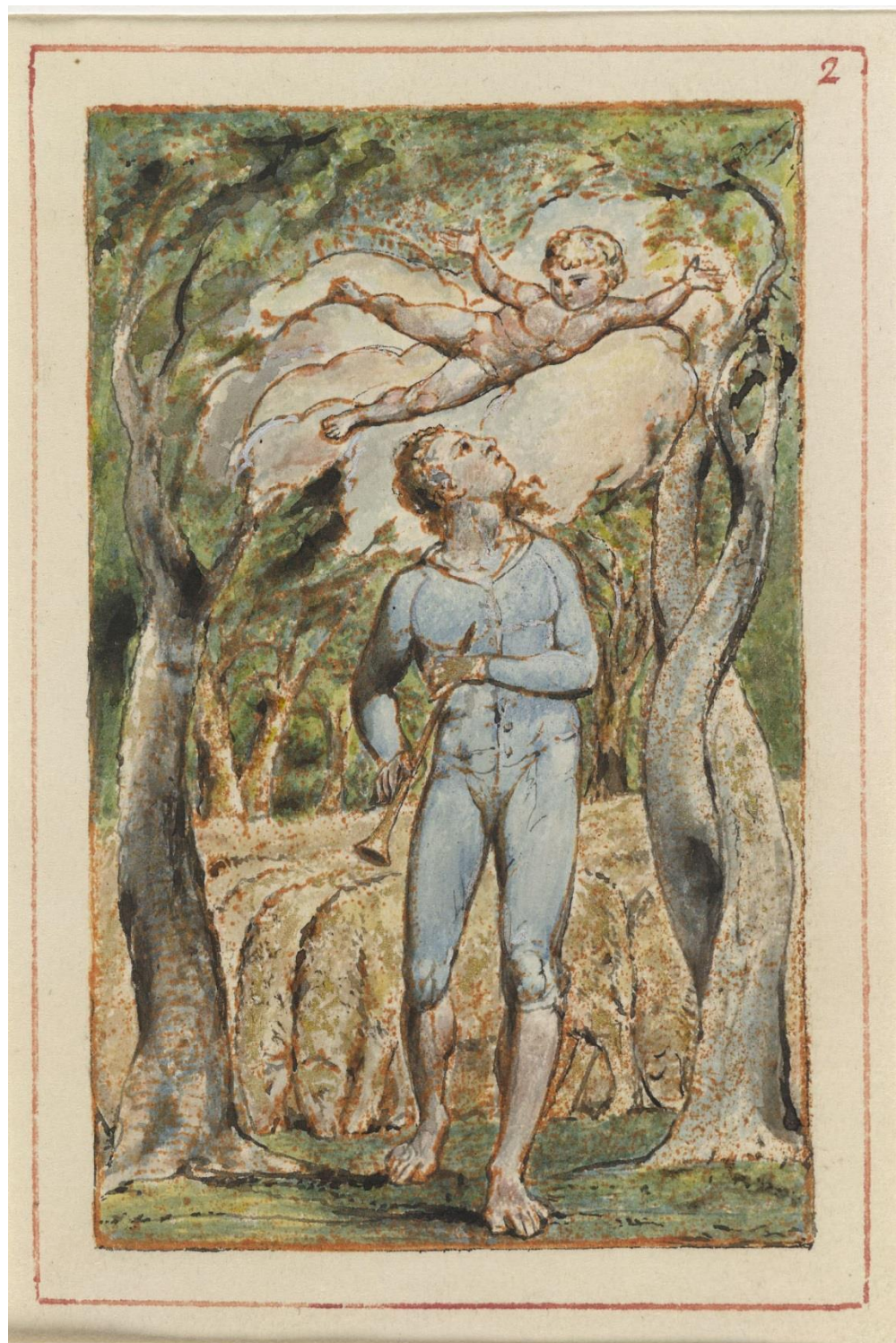
Figure 1:
William Blake
"Frontispiece"
Songs of Innocence, 1789
Copy T, Plate 2
Hand-colored relief etching on paper
© Trustees of the British Museum

The motion of the Piper is arrested in this moment, as he must choose to continue forward or remain within the confines of the image. His song cannot be both private and public and these contrary states cause the Piper's progress to stagnate until a state of reconciliation is reached. In conclusion, private effusion is impossible. The Piper will either continue his song or will turn the musical event into a text that everyone may read.

The Piper must confront this choice, as do all artists, and decide to keep his genius private or translate it into communicable form. This recording process is problematic for Blake (Glen 31). The child's demanding presence provokes the question of whether the transformation of one's genius into poetry means a reduction of that genius and thus of the poet's integrity. This abatement of self is a high price to pay for expression, but Blake acknowledges the role of society in identity formation (Makdisi 8). We see this belief in the character of the Piper. Heather Glen explains that the Piper takes on new meaning from an "original expressiveness […] as it confronts another" (Glen 65). When the child enters the scene, the Piper's action shifts from the casual playing of the pipe to that of a musician or performer. In other words, he fits his private self to a public persona. This confrontation results in distance, both of the Piper from the child but also of the Piper from his song. This alienating process that makes genius communicable is read by some scholars as a sacrifice on the part of the author. Robert Gleckner describes it as involving "a knowledge of both ugliness and loveliness […] done by means of mature conceptual creation in which both joy and sorrow are present, yet do not exist independently" (Gleckner *Piper* 88). This ambivalence is found in the imagery of the "rural pen" that "stain'd the water clear," for to stain is in to some way blemish or taint, as well as to make permanent ("Introduction" 18). This moment of darkness is requisite to provide joyous songs for "[e]very child […] to hear" ("Introduction" 20). According to Gleckner, the Piper's decision to taint the
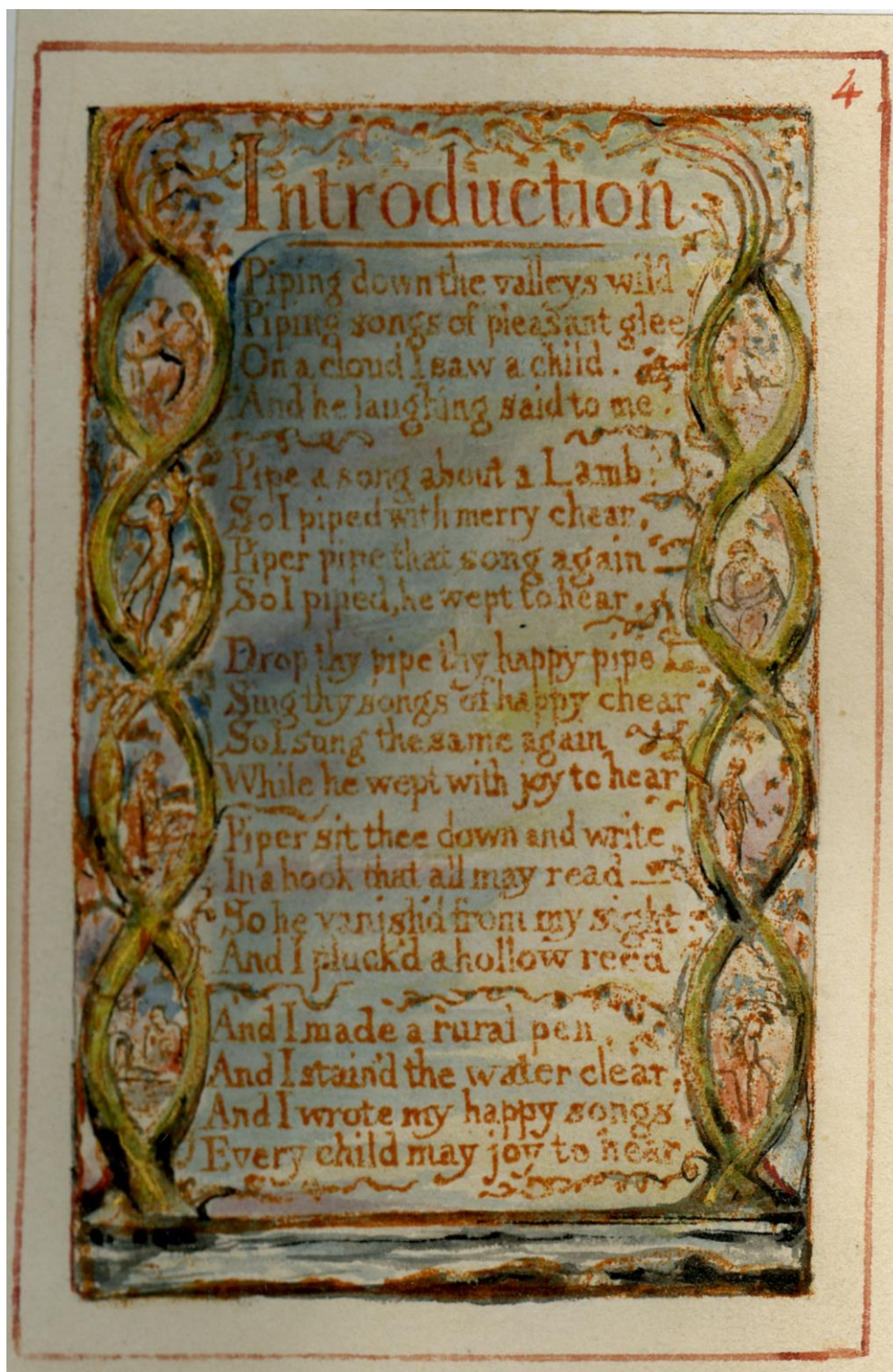
Figure 2:
William Blake
"Introduction"
Songs of Innocence, 1789
Copy T, Plate 4
Hand-colored relief etching on paper
© Trustees of the British Museum

water, transmuting his verses into ink markings for the pleasure of others, is selfless (Gleckner *Piper* 90-1). To make the question revolve around the selfish or selfless nature of the act is to turn a blind eye to the fact of the poet's agency in disseminating her writing. The Piper does not fully relinquish his verses to an audience, nor does Blake his poem.[76] The "Introduction" carefully configures the roles of the reader, with her liberties and limits of interpretation, and of the lyric speaker, as a creator-figure, through its images.

What is critical to note about Blake's use of imagery is how tightly it controls the gaze. The poetry's images orient the reader, exploiting its compositional architecture to lead the eye. This is an implicit facet of the interaction between reader and poem, and by extension the poet. As I have stated, there is a power dynamic at play in the "Introduction," in which the child's desire for the Piper's song interferes with the private expression of genius. Blake turning his songs into a book of *Songs of Innocence* for a readership is analogous to the interaction between the Piper and child. Although it may seem as though the reader, or child, wields considerable sway in convincing the poet to make a record of his genius, it remains the creator's production. Likewise, the Piper is the one who crystallizes the melody of his songs "[i]n a book so that all may read" ("Introduction" 14). Thus, agency ultimately rests with the Piper, as it does with the poet. The viewer therefore confronts the mediated artwork. When the child vanishes from the Piper's *sight* (though I might add, not necessarily from his mind), the Piper continues to transcribe his songs to share them (Ibid. 15). The Piper is the responsible agent for his written verses and he owns them when declares they are his "happy songs" (Ibid. 19).

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[76] Although I do not wish to directly contribute to the discussion of whether Blake is the Piper in this thesis (a claim that has been made by Northrop Frye (*Fearful* 4), Jean Hagstrum (78), Morris Eaves (174) and Robert Gleckner ("Point" 10)), it is worth noting that Blake's labor-intensive method of publication meant that he retained more control over his readership because of the subsequent cost of *Songs of Innocence and of Experience* (Glen 71).

The meeting ground between the pictorial and the musical is the printed page. In this shared space, words paint invisible pictures, be it the characters of letters or images, and sound unheard melodies (Keats 852). Blake's composition guides the eye of the viewer. The markings of texts—dashes, italics and punctuation—facilitate readings of the poem,[77] just as the time and key signatures provide instructions to decipher musical compositions. Therefore music, making meaning out of sound, also has a visual manifestation. Furthermore, Isobel Armstrong, who studies prosody, asserts that "meter is often paradoxically foregrounded in print culture," a mode of signification that evokes the verbal through the visual (Armstrong 49). Blake capitalizes on the possibilities of a blank page to visualize his poetry, whereas Cristall relies heavily on textual indicators to acoustically craft her poems.[78] For instance, she staggers the lines of her lyrics, whereas Blake's illuminated lyric is linear, aligning the text on the left (Raine 22). But, unlike Cristall, Blake complicates his elaborate visual designs with symbolic language.[79] In doing so, he devises more traditional roles for the poet and reader than does Cristall. He articulates this relationship through the nuanced interplay of text and image.

Blake's picture-poems are by no means typical and so it is unsurprising that one cannot anticipate a standard meter in his lyric. However, the artist who envisions Beulah and the Four Zoas also formulates a metrical idiom in the "Introduction" to the *Songs*.[80] There are three transitions in the poem and each resembles a contained unit with a set of metrical conventions. These similarities allow the grouped lines to cohere, yet be distinct from the latter phases of

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[77] Lawrence Kramer writes that these are "signs for intonation" (Kramer *Expression* 23).
[78] Northrop Frye writes that one historic distinguishing characteristic of lyric poetry is its staggered arrangement of lines whereas epic poetry is linear ("Theory" 35).
[79] It is generally believed that Blake started with images and then wrote the words of the poems (Hagstrum 4).
[80] This is just one of the "rhetorical […] traps" that Harold Bloom argues that Blake sets for the reader but with a reward of a broadened sense of the capabilities of poetry (Bloom 35).

development in the poem. Blake establishes a pattern of trochaic tetrameter in the first stanza that

he does not disrupt until the second stanza when he introduces an anapest at the start of line six.

Shifts in meter coincide with shifts in the tone of the poem, such as when the child gleefully

commands the Piper but then weeps at the sound of his song.[81] At this moment, repetition as a

new unifying formal feature takes over, a modification signaled by the exchange of trochees with

the occasional anapest. The child commands and the Piper acts: "Piper pipe that song again / So I

piped, he wept to hear," followed by variations of that interchange ("Introduction" ll. 7-8).

Curiously, this first interaction is the only one in which the child is not described as weeping. It

is when the Piper plays his tune a second and third time that the cherub reacts so strongly that he

cries. The scheme is then subverted again when another major event takes place, the

disappearance of the cherub from the Piper's "sight" (Ibid. 15) and, accordingly, the lines of the

poem indicate change, now beginning with anapests. The Piper performs a series of silent actions

that result in his writing his songs in a book so that "[e]very child may joy to hear" (Ibid. 20).

Although the meter may seem inconsistent, it frames the entire poem as much as Blake's spiral

border contains the accompanying illustration.[82] Gleckner discusses the alteration in the second

stanza, writing that "the lilting beat of the regular trochees is reinforced by the initial anapest of

the second line," but this is a last reminder to cement the pattern in the memory's ear before it

shifts in tempo to the action of the poem (Gleckner 87). The fluctuation between the trochee and

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[81] Harold Pagliaro asserts that the commands of the cherub are unself-conscious, but this argument could only be true for the first utterance of the angel (Pagliaro 8); once he repeats his request and the Piper obeys, the child is moved by the music, provoking an intentional change in meter.

[82] W.J.T. Mitchell, author of an excellent study that combines visual and textual analysis to comprehend Blake's "composite art," writes that "the figure looking up at a child on a cloud in the frontispiece to *Songs of Innocence* [….] *does* have an explicit verbal equivalent: it serves as an illustration to the song of the Piper "piping down the valleys wild" and seeing a child on a cloud" (Mitchell 5).

the anapest conforms to a relation of thesis and antithesis. As a result, Blake provides the vocabulary for this poem early on, enabling the reader to follow the stanzas from one phase to another, moving between types of poetic feet.

Blake's metrical cuing and pictures are declarative, but his poems are nevertheless interrogative in nature (Glen 72). The poetry moves the reader to question, not to adopt didactic dictums. In short, the reader is expected to read into Blake's composite art, both into text and image. Through this reflection, the reader accesses the poem's immediacy. Whereas Cristall's poetry asks the reader to complete the verbal imagery, Blake renders the visual image for the viewer. Likewise with the lyrical sketch, the illuminated lyric requires a response from its reader, mobilizing him to challenge the text's assumptions having grappled with its illustration.

An effect of the pictorial is to reify mediation. The illuminated sketch highlights its framing; in other words, the poem calls attention to the ways in which it presents poetic content. As Glen writes, Blake's *Songs* "set out to awaken those readers to a sense of 'the temporal flux and contradictory verbal usages' which have shaped their language, and to expose the mystifying half-life which it has taken on" (Glen 71). The reader's cognizance of the art's media is the consequence of this transparency. Once the reader is aware of the media, she can *see* the poetry, in addition to hearing it, for the illumination reproduces the experience of envisioning a poem's imagery in the mind. In this way, the illuminated lyric declares to the reader its mediation and that knowledge paradoxically creates a more immediate experience of the art. This dual engagement, through language and engrossing visuals, overturns the model of the reader's passive acceptance of content. This paradigm of active reading corroborates Glen's assertion that the reader must rely on their "imaginative energy" to derive meaning from the work of art (Glen 72). If the sketch enlists the viewer to fill in the details of a representation imaginatively, then

Blake's illuminations, instead of asking the reader to complete the visual, cause the viewer to internalize his imagery. To internalize Blake's pictures is to bring the imagery into the self, at which point it undergoes personalized association and comes alive for the reader. In spite of the presence of media, the reader derives meaning from this intimate encounter with the artwork.

Between text and image, the reader is fully engaged. Blake's composite poetry recruits the faculties of hearing and sight as well as the imagination. However, the illuminated lyric differs from the immediacy of the sketch in its production of intimacy. Gleckner writes that "[t]he setting in the first stanza is most vivid though it is sketched in with only a few bold strokes," referring to such lines as "Piping down the valleys wild" and "On a cloud I saw a child" ("Introduction" ll. 1, 3). As in Cristall's sketch, the mind's eye envisions the details of the scene. However, the majority of the poem's language and illustration reiterate its printed existence. On the whole, this makes the illuminated lyric *hyper*mediated because it is experiential and multi-media.

The double mediation of text and image cannot be simplified to multiplication. The presence of one medium negates the other so that the media do not seem to impose on the reader's experience. This logic is oppositional to the way that the immediacy of the sketch turns its back on the fact of its mediation (*RUNM* 11). Hypermediated art, in employ in the illuminated lyric, delights in the combination of media (*RUNM* 12, 14).[83] The contiguity of these two modes strikes a false note. Bolter and Grusin state that hypermediacy "tries to reproduce the rich sensorium of human experience," a phrase that is also apt for Blake's composite art (*RUNM* 34). By way of illumination, Blake raises awareness of the duality of poetry's signification, a

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[83] Bolter and Grusin cite the medieval illuminated manuscript as an example of hypermediation (*RUNM* 34). The similarities between Blake's illuminated books and medieval manuscripts have been noted by W.J.T. Mitchell (Mitchell 34).

combination of the visuals of the printed page and the audio of its language. Hypermediation revels in its media and loves the sense of immediacy in equal measure (*RUNM* 9). But as Bolter and Grusin note, hypermediacy at times undercuts the longing for immediacy (*RUNM* 34). Indeed, Blake's art forces the reader to question the desire to penetrate into the private world of the artist and the possibility of accessing that genius. As one confronts the lyric, the reader realizes the distance between him and the art, which is a realization of how remote the artist is in the privacy of her mind.

Blake's "Introduction" to the *Songs* depicts the separation of reader and artist. Distance ultimately prevails in this poem. The encounter between the Piper and child, as allegory for that of poet and reader, results in a unique publication. The child interrupts the Piper's song to request a record of it for his enjoyment. Of course, this copy is not the original Piper's song. Therefore, a double refraction from the lyric takes place. Both Piper and child are at a remove from the private lyric materialized. Distance as an insurmountable obstacle is a fact of writing, which makes the personal (the original) public. This loss of originality, a requisite of the material visual and textual record of the lyric, is the cost of fulfilling the child's desire to immediately experience the Piper's "authentic" song. The hypermediation of the illuminated lyric therefore reconstructs the reader's reaching for the art work and the cost to the poet for this inconceivable dream.

Blake has fitting language to describe the relationship between immediacy and hypermediacy: "Without Contraries is no progression. Attraction and Repulsion, Reason and Energy, Love and Hate, are necessary to Human existence" (Blake *Complete* 34).[84] Blake's words point to the generative reconciliation of opposites. The tension that arises from an

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[84] From Plate 3 of *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*.

oppositional pair is revealing in that it forces one to narrow the gulf between the two, finding some common ground. In confronting these binaries, one is compelled to synthesize them. The newfound state at which one arrives from this exercise is the progression. Immediacy and hypermediacy are likewise Contraries, each revealing the other's attempt to reach the "real" content of art. Hypermediacy is that "alter ego" to immediacy, emphasizing the fact of mediation to immediacy's propounding of the fictional lack thereof (*RUNM* 34, 41). The hypermediacy of the illuminated lyric convinces its reader that she is more closely connected to the art because, in her knowledge of mediation's presence, she can circumvent it. The intimacy that the illuminated lyric forges with its audience is one of intellectual[85] self-reflexivity. The reader does not externally contribute to the lyric, but does so intellectually when he internalizes it. In absorbing the poetry into himself, he achieves the intimacy of immediate identification with the work.

The immediacy of the sketch, evinced by Cristall's lyric, creates the illusion of intimacy whereas the hypermediacy of the illuminated lyric does so by foregrounding its mediation. Whether through immediacy or hypermediacy, rhetorical denial or declaration, the visual strives to suppress the interference of rhetoric in the reading experience. In a sense, the pictorial argues that it is a "natural," more truthful, mode of expression. However, the visual, in conjunction with the participatory nature of the lyrical sketch, derived from its musical meter, obstructs this budding illusion. Instead of immediacy's false proximity, the lyrical sketch acknowledges distance in its performativity.

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[85] Hazard Adams writes that, for Blake, when the "outer world is seen, it is the projection of an active intellect" and that therefore "[i]magination is intellectual" (Adams 70). In reading the illuminated lyric, one then makes Blake's projection one's own, drawing on both one's reasoning and imagination to personalize his poetry's meaning.

III.   Performing the Lyrical Sketch

Blake's illuminated lyric, pictorial in nature, cultivates immediacy and helps distinguish between different types of this effect and their implications for reader engagement. The musicality of the lyrical sketch, the focus of this section, creates a performative space for reading its verses aloud in addition to its projection of immediacy. The logics of immediacy, of the pictorial and of the sketch, and of performativity, of the lyric and its music, are not compatible. Immediacy strives for proximity through an exclusive connection to the art (and by extension, to the originating mind of the artist). It offers the fiction of open access. Performativity, as public act, posits the reader in the privileged position of performer; it compels an active response. Despite the incongruence between the two styles, the lyrical sketch leverages both techniques.

To explain how this is possible, I look to Frye. He uses the terms babble and doodle to describe the "two elements of subconscious association" in play in the lyric ("Theory" 36). These terms refer to the mind's processing of poetic content. They are not equivalent to the musical and pictorial boundaries of lyric. Babble and doodle function on the subconscious level while the musical and pictorial are consciously distinguishable. While it is helpful to think of the pictorial and musical as forming a spectrum, babble and doodle cannot be separated in the same way, since "[t]he first rough sketches of verbal design ("doodle") in the creative process are hardly separable from associative babble" ("Theory" 37).[86] I highlight this distinction because the simultaneous associations of babble and doodle explain how performativity and immediacy

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[86] Frye refers to babble and doodle as associative processes for the poet, but I find that these terms are also applicable to the reader because I consider the reader to have a certain amount of agency when confronting a text. Consequently, these terms are useful in articulating the reader's process of drawing meaning from poetry.

can both be present in a poem. Meaning can be derived both from "sound-associations" and from the visible organization of those words ("Theory" 37-8). However, the lyrical sketch falls on the musical boundary of the lyric spectrum and so its performativity has a stronger impact on the reader.

As I have stated, performativity arises out of metrical ambiguity. One of the songs of the collection, "Repeat, O, Muse!," is intensely musical and thus metrically intricate, serving as a clear illustration of the performative rhetoric of the lyrical sketch. The four introductory lines of the song are particularly acoustic in quality, but the lines that follow employ the descriptive strategies of sketching. After its opening, a boisterous storm at sea unfolds with lines such as "Upborne the sounding waves among, / While winds the boiling ocean sweep, / And lightenings dark their fires along" ("Repeat" ll. 10-12). These verses offer a glimpse of the turbulent setting, but leave much to the imagination. Meanwhile the meter of the poem poses an interpretive challenge to the reader. This "Song" therefore combines a musical technique with a visual representation, classifying it as a lyrical sketch.

Christopher Nagle writes that there is a performative quality to Cristall's verses, but he neither elaborates on this claim nor considers it on the part of the reader (Nagle 60-1). At the level of poetic feet, Cristall's poetry presents the reader with interpretive choices that are particularly pointed when the poem is read aloud. "Repeat, O, Muse! the virtuous song" leads with a spondee followed by two iambs and an ending anapest ("Repeat" 1). However, it is easy to elide "virtuous" into "virt'us" to neatly complete the line with a final iamb. This makes the enjambment into line two flow more easily as the second line continues in iambic tetrameter. Even though the second line can be categorized as such, it is complicated by the presence of a

caesura, indicated by the comma.[87] After the line, divided by the punctuation, the assonance, which McGann notes is frequent in Cristall's verse (*Poetics* 200), aids a reading of the line that takes its acoustics into account:

Whose

Bos / om

Knew / no

Art (2)[88]

This second configuration is an example of the underlying "meditative" and "discontinuous" rhythm" that typifies the lyric ("Theory" 33). I assert that it is also distinctly musical in nature. "Whose," staring a new phrase, functions like anacrusis, akin to an upbeat in music, that prepares the reader for the following stressed syllable, which in this case is the first half of "bosom" ("Repeat" 2). Line two, when read in concert with the rest of the prelude, becomes difficult to perform.

Repeat, O, Muse! the virtuous song

Of him, whose bosom knew no art;

Whose native measures, wild and strong,

Pour'd the free dictates of his heart. ("Repeat" ll. 1-4)

The reader must decide how to group the syllables into feet; how to voice the markings of intonation; and how to transition between types of poetic feet that often invert the order of

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[87] The comma, as a visual cue, helps the reader find meaning in the poetry and is comparable to Blake's illustration to and use of the dash in the "Introduction." In both poems, visual markings function as instructions to facilitate reading.

[88] I base my formatting off of Northrop Frye's to illustrate this division of the line, as I apply his assertions about the lyric to the lyrical sketch ("Theory" 33).

stressed and unstressed syllables. The introduction to this lyric proves that meter is as much a point of entry for the reader to participate as its pictorial counterpart immediacy.

As the reader confronts the meter, so he confronts the lyric speaker. The reader must "perform" the meter, which is also to play the role of the lyrical voice. In other words, an interpretation of the poem's meter requires the reader to take on the position of performer. The reader becomes a musician of the poetry, reading the verses aloud. In doing so, she creates a unique recitation of the poem, turning it into a musical event. In the context of the lyric, this means that the reader has a creative capacity as a secondary architect of the poem's sounds.

A comparison of the lyrical sketch's construction of the reader as interpretive performer with the illuminated lyric's understanding of the reader as audience member brings clarity to the way that the music of the lyrical sketch creates a space for reader agency. The different levels of participation in these two constructions of the reader can be seen in Cristall's "Song" and Blake's "Introduction." Both poems initially challenge notions of the power dynamics of poetry. That is to say that the hierarchy of poetic genius is inverted. In Cristall's "Song," the speaker commands the Muse to repeat a mortal tune. This scenario is unexpected; usually it is the human who mimics the otherworldly song of the Muse. Yet in this poem, it is the Muse that reproduces the "virtuous song," subverting the expectation that the lyric inspiration derives from the Muse ("Repeat" 1). The interaction between the Piper and the child is likewise surprising. Not only does the child command the adult, but in interrupting the song of the poet, the cherub influences artistic production. In each instance, the characters in the customarily subordinate role, the human poet to the Muse and the cherubic listener to the Piper, assert their will. These representations fundamentally question the poet's control over her poetry and her acknowledgment of the reader's importance.

While both Blake and Cristall's poetry recognizes its audience, they diverge on the extent to which the poet allows the reader to partake in crafting the poem. The figure of the Muse conventionally bestows the poetic impulse on an individual. In the "Song," the Muse becomes a figure through which human creativity is conveyed. The Muse publicizes the song of the man "[w]hose native measures, wild and strong, / Pour'd the free dictates of his heart" (Ibid. ll. 3-4). This is contrary to expectation, signaling a role reversal. In the "Introduction," the hierarchy between the Piper and the child is ultimately preserved. The Piper follows the child's commands, but the figure that the child is meant to represent is ambiguous. Could this child floating on a cloud be the figment of the Piper's imagination? Or could he be a representation of the Piper's psyche, combining individual imagination with the desire to share his lyric? Perhaps the cherub is his vision of one of the children that "may joy to hear" his songs ("Introduction" 20). Regardless, this presence vanishes and the Piper's subsequent act of creating a book out of his songs is his own. Thus, Cristall presents a scenario in which the notion of hierarchy is more flexible than in Blake's "Introduction." Both poems bring up the issue of power and hierarchy for examination, but a consideration of this issue is as far as Blake's poem means to go. The "Song" carries this inquiry further, by envisioning the inversion of these roles. Blake presents the anxiety of publication and the poet's knowledge of the reader's presence but does not veer from the author's perspective. Cristall probes more deeply into that readerly presence. She presents the hypothetical "what if" of the traditionally subordinate figure wielding agency, similarly to the figure of superior genius. These readerly roles are reflected in Blake and Cristall's work respectively in the different participatory scenarios that their poetry affords. Blake enlists the viewer's intellect in an immediate experience of his art. Cristall calls on the reader to participate

by performing the poem's meter, breaking open the rigid distinction between reader and artist, lyric "I" and implicit "you."

The logic of performativity has an overriding effect in the lyrical sketch, but immediacy still plays a role in its aesthetic. The sketch's immediacy recruits the imagination and convinces the reader that before him is the unmediated poem. Typically the lyric, as overheard by an auditor, similarly enchants the audience by perpetuating this intimacy. However, intensely musical moments, wherein metrical ambiguities can only be resolved by a reader, break down this myth. The intimacy for which immediacy argues is not sustainable once the reader has the ability to affect the poem's rhythm, arising from decisions pertaining to metrical interpretation. By resolving uncertainties in meter, the reader performs the poem. In doing so, the reader merges with the lyric speaker. As she voices the utterance of the "I," she inflects it with her personalized acoustics. The reader absorbs the lyric voice when reading "Repeat, O, Muse!," so that her voice, fused with that of the speaker, takes on the poetry's emotional outpouring. This performance of the poem explodes the notion that the lyric voice be identified with the poet. The voice of the lyric is an inhabitable position, a malleable container that adjusts to its reader. Thus, the poet has long since fled the work and has relinquished control over the poem. The just out of reach presence of the poet that immediacy cultivates does not exist, and the performativity of the lyrical sketch frustrates the reader's desire to forge that connection.

In *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell,* Blake writes that contraries are necessary for progression. In the case of the lyrical sketch, the development produced by the contrary pairing of immediacy and performativity is the empowerment of the reader. The combined effect of these rhetorical strategies promotes her from audience member to performer. To understand the agency of the reader, I make one final distinction between the participatory nature of acoustic

performativity and pictorial immediacy, contrasting Blake to Cristall to do so. Blake's finished

forms demand an imaginative act of seeing. The reader brings the image into his being, imbuing

it with meaning. This differs from the completion of a sketch. The point of entry into the

illuminated lyric entails pictorial collaboration between the reader's imagination and the poem's

powerful imagery. This act, while performative and participatory, is intellectual. In contrast, the

lyrical sketch presents itself for fellowship with the reader, and so is a sympathetic act. Blake's

composite art, as finished object, does not display itself in this frank manner.[89] It requires the

viewer to intervene. The reader animates the poetry with her intellect, determining her sensory

experience of it; the mind thus constructs her awareness of the world and its art. With Cristall's

lyrical sketch, the materialization of its acoustic pattern requires participation of the reader. Her

meter creates an opportunity for him to make decisions about the poem's rhythm, whereas the

reader brings Blake's illuminated lyric into the mind. The reader fashions the sounds of the

lyrical sketch and shapes the vision of the illuminated lyric. Thus, the hypermediacy of the

illuminated lyric engages the reader that so she becomes engrossed in the poetry. This is not akin

to the openness that the participatory experience of the performative lyrical sketch. The

vocalization of the poetry creates an opportunity for the reader to alter a fundamental facet of the

art, how it sounds. While the existence of the lyrical sketch is proof of the co-existence of these

two effects, the urgency to interpret its musical ambiguity overshadows the imaginative

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[89] Blake has been described as "an honest man uttering his opinion of public matters" (Erdman viii). Blake, in the illuminated lyric, does not put himself on display to be deconstructed as the lyrical sketch does. That is not to say that one subgenre requires an active response while the other does not. The reader must act on both genres in order for them to have meaning, but the roles through which they do so are different. With the illuminated lyric, the reader is an audience member and with the lyrical sketch, the reader is a musician.

completion of its imagery. The lyrical sketch exploits both the rhetoric of its musical and pictorial "boundaries," but its performativity ultimately subsumes its immediacy.

The upstaging of immediacy by performativity thwarts the traditional construction of the relationship between the poet, as lyrical speaker, and the reader. The immediacy that the sketch evokes argues for the poet's lingering presence in the work of art. As nature "gives the rule to art," so the artist gives the rule to the reader (Kant *Judgment* 136). Yet, in terms of meter, the rule is markedly absent, leaving the reader to develop his own rule of interpreting the poem to decide how to read its meter. Thus, the lyrical sketch discloses the infeasibility of attaining intimacy with the poet through her poem. This realization is especially pointed when the poem is read aloud and the reader places herself in the position of the lyrical voice. The rhythm of the emotional utterance takes shape based on her interpretation of the meter. The participatory act in the process of signification, choosing how to sound the poem, allows the reader to transcend the passive role as silent auditor. It is true that the poet leaves behind a record of her idea for the reader, always already mediated, but the illusion of further proximity between reader and poet is rhetorically produced. For the lyric, this means that the "I" is a construct, a persona donned and discarded by each reader. In this way, the lyric is always an individual performance, but one intended for consumption. The lyrical sketch constructs its privacy as artifact and, in this way, designs the lyric utterance to be universally communicable.

Cristall's complex interweaving of the dual logics of the sketch and of pictorial immediacy and of the lyric's capacity for musical meter and performativity creates the participatory aesthetic of the lyrical sketch. This subgenre is subversive because it not only frustrates the readerly desire to unite with the poet, but shatters the hope of that unification coming to fruition. The lyric myth argues that the poem retains some essence of the artist's

genius. Yet once the personal expression is committed to a medium, such as the printed page, only a shadow of that genius remains; the idea lives a diminished existence. Art is that idea made communicable and the best of art strives to preserve the vitality of the idea as it exists in the mind of the poet. Consequently, the private thought, still locked in the recesses of the mind, accrues an elevated status. The reader yearns for access to the idea in this sacrosanct state. The rhetoric of immediacy supplies the reader with the fiction that he experiences the art directly from the artist's mind, not as a mediated work of art made public. The lyric typically perpetuates this fantasy, but Cristall's lyrical sketch shatters this dynamic that enshrines the poet and mesmerizes the reader.

The failure to connect with the poet is at the heart of the lyrical sketch, as the poet's failure to connect with nature is the basis of art, but the compensation for this disappointment is an increase in creative and interpretive agency. Keats writes, "[h]eard melodies are sweet, but those unheard/ [a]re sweeter" (Keats ll. 11-12). The reader longs for these unheard melodies that are of a sweetness and brilliance beyond her own imagining, just as the beauty of nature is beyond that of the poet. The lyric, in its oracular reproduction of the state of the speaker-poet's mind, is the manifestation of those "soft pipes, play[ing] on; / Not to the sensual ear, but, more endear'd, / Pipe[s] to the spirit ditties of no tone" (Ibid. ll. 12-14). The lyrical sketch is aware of this illusion. As entrancing as it may be, the subgenre disrupts this sweet delusion, alerting the reader to its design. The lyrical sketch recognizes that to be unsung is to exist only to the poet. Herein lies the sorrow of art. In one sense, to record the idea is to sacrifice its vitality to a medium. On the other, for the thought not to undergo that distortion is to never have existed.

Cristall's work does not turn its back on this paradox. As McGann keenly observes, "her work celebrates the losses that poets like to imagine they might save" (*Poetics* 205). The lyrical

sketch confronts the diminution inherent in art, countering this disappointment with the creative possibilities of interpretation. Instead of recreating the scenario of the reader longing for the poet's genius, this genre affords the reader the agency to apply personal meaning to the text. The participatory aspect extends the poet's experience of frustration with nature to readers. Because it opens up the position of the lyrical speaker, it does not imitate that interaction, but rather creates an analogous similar experience. In this way, creator and reader stand side by side before the content of the art, transcending the respective boundaries of their roles. The lyrical sketch does not just compensate for its curtailed immediacy. Instead, it offers the same alternative to this desire that the artist uses as a coping mechanism for her failed connection to nature – the creation of art. This is what is meant by the consolation of art. It is the outlet through which one can express the unending struggle to recreate nature's beauty as one's own. As the poet fails to be natural, so the reader cannot be one with the poet's mind or her poetry. Consequently, the subgenre repurposes the reader's longing for immediacy to generate a lyrical expression of her disappointment, creating a consolation of art for the reader.

CONCLUSION

In her Preface, Cristall writes that her "versification is wild, and still incorrect, though I have taken much pains to reduce it to some degree of order, [the lines] were written without the knowledge of any rules, of which their *irregularity* is the natural consequence" (italics mine). In this context, Cristall references the "rules" of literary convention, such as regular rhyme schemes and consistent metrical patterns. She owns her departure from these standards and claims that the resultant "irregularity" is "natural." It is fair to argue against the substitution of irregularity for innovation since irregular is a term Cristall uses, but to do so would be to ignore the duality of her statement. The lines above disclose awareness of the negativity of the term irregularity. There is nothing inherently wrong with their "wild" nature until Cristall qualifies this adjective with the term "incorrect." When she finally calls the versification irregular, she continues to admit the ways that her verses defy expectation. But we must not forget that this irregularity, the wildness of these verses, is natural. In the last poem of her collection, Cristall writes that "Whate'er the path, whatever means be tried, / Nature and Truth your steps must always guide" ("Ode on Truth" ll. 23-4). This is the conscious choice to emulate nature as a means to achieve authenticity in art over representational artifice. Cristall strives to be one with nature, to create as nature does, not to merely reflect its beauties. To be irregular to the literati of her time is to be flawed. For Cristall, variety creates a poetry that is truer to Nature and thus closer to the ideal beauty of art. I therefore reaffirm the necessity to redefine the conversation in terms of ingenuity. As long as negativity remains attached to irregularity, it is not an appropriate descriptor for Cristall's poetry.

The argument of this thesis is that Cristall's musicality posits the reader as a lyric participant, performing its metrical intricacies. I problematize the use of the term "irregular" to

describe her poetry, a word that clashes with Cristall's deliberate experimentation with form and its implications for lyric theory. To supplant this word, I develop the "lyrical sketch" as a more precise way to describe a subgenre in *Poetical Sketches* that is indicative of Cristall's style. In this generic category, she brings together the rhetorical strategies of music and of the visual arts to rethink the roles of the speaker and the reader. There is a distinction between the pictorial and musical influences on the level of lyric as well. Frye establishes a pictorial boundary and a musical one. Since Cristall's lyrical sketch appropriates both pictorial and musical rhetoric, untangling the musicality of the lyrical aspects from the visual of the sketch reveals aesthetic differences. The pictorial lyric, despite immediacy's claims to the contrary, preserves the distance between speaker and reader so that the privacy of the poet goes undisturbed. The musical lyric evokes the poetry's sounds rendered silent on the printed page, in effect serving as a reminder that the private utterance has been made public. These rhetorical modes work in opposition to one another and in the instance of the lyrical sketch, the performativity of the lyric is the more decisive of the two. Multiple rhythms can be found in this subgenre because it does not conform to a regular metrical scheme, requiring the reader to interpret the poem by performing one of its rhythms. In this way, the reader participates in the construction of meaning. Cristall's lyric foregrounds the necessity of a "you" and so calls into question the extent to which the lyric is a solitary utterance whereas theorizing has tended to suppress the reader's agency. What began as a specialized term, the lyrical sketch, has blossomed into a Romantic subgenre that challenges the traditional power dynamic between the lyric speaker as poet and the reader.

  The main topics of this thesis, namely genre and gender, are not new; however, I have tried to take alternative paths to rethink what questions to pose and how to answer them. I have studied the historical debates in eighteenth-century aesthetics and asked how the culture of the

arts is evinced in the formal qualities of Cristall's verse. I have approached Cristall's "irregularity" as an innovative generic style and discovered the lyrical sketch. Doing so has led to an investigation of Frye's lyric boundaries and the rhetorical effects of one the musical over the pictorial. While poems that would clearly illustrate these boundaries were chosen, the distances between the pictorial and the musical and between immediacy and performativity on this spectrum are not always as great as perhaps suggested in this thesis for explanatory purposes. In addition, building off the work of scholars such as Culler and Zimmerman, this thesis focuses on the lyric reader to reclaim the significance of her presence. In sum, my approach has been to read Cristall's work with an eye and an ear to the potential of its prosody, the result of which nuances understandings of the Romantic lyric and confirms Cristall's cultural contribution.

The practices used to study Romantic poetry have undergone several revisions since the mid-twentieth century. There are two lines of thought that are relevant to this undertaking, one of which is historicity. Although the focal point of this study has been prosody, its conclusions have firm roots in Cristall's historical situation so that formalist critique is tempered by cultural awareness. I have found the historicist model to be fundamental and equally limiting. This has particularly been the case in projects with strongly feminist motives, such as my own. Of all of the approaches in this thesis, the most challenging has been to modify the methodology to recover the work of a female poet. The danger of historicism is the absorption of its prejudices and a paradoxical affirmation of the very beliefs scholars mean to question. Anne Mellor establishes feminine Romanticism as a corollary to the canonical male Romantic poets[90] (Mellor

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[90] William Blake, Lord Byron, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, John Keats, P.B. Shelley, William Wordsworth

Questioning 29). Although clamoring for women's equality, this division cements their status as "other" and marginal. Marlon Ross recognizes common interests between male and female writers, but that the lived experiences of women differed from that of men to such an extent that women's writing forms "its own ideological patterning" (Ross 6). This is the point at which historicism overshadows the clarity of temporal distance.

Combining these two frameworks, formalism and historicism, is an attempt to mitigate the downsides of one with the advantages of the other. This task requires sensitivity in light of the juxtaposition of Cristall and Blake. Previous studies of Cristall compare her poetry to Blake's and they implicitly position her as his inferior while arguing for the strength of her poems. The justification for comparison here is to delineate between genres and styles. Consequently, understandings of both poets benefit from this exercise.

In forging ahead despite the problematic nature of the endeavor, I think it is appropriate to judge its efficacy. I turn to Culler's parameters for the utility of genre theory in an evaluation of this methodology. He writes, "[t]he test of generic categories is how far they help relate a work to others and activate aspects of works that make them rich, dynamic, and revealing" ("Lyric" 66). The differences between Blake's illuminated lyric and the lyrical sketch become clear by contrasting Cristall and Blake, which is to pinpoint differences between Frye's pictorial and musical lyric boundaries. Furthermore, the function of immediacy and performativity are highlighted when put in opposition in this way. Cristall illuminates Blake's pictorial lyric, revealing how it engages the reader and how it communicates the artist's vision. Blake's pictures highlight Cristall's musicality in instances of metrical complexity and ambiguity. Yet those moments, open to interpretation, are opportunities for the reader to construct her own meaning.

In effect, these generic categories demonstrate how the metrical intricacy of musical verse creates an avenue for re-envisioning the readerly position in Cristall's lyrical sketch.

      The understanding of Cristall's poetic style is still in the formative stages. Space did not permit an analysis of her syntax, arguably as complex as her meter and just as compelling. While *Poetical Sketches* may continue to challenge our grasp of her poetics, the commitment to its study has its rewards. Cristall's poetry offers the researcher her own consolation of art–the art of scholarship. As Cristall writes, "[…] to the calms of solitude [withdraw], / Nature exploring, and with music fir'd, / Lost in research [… wander] as inspir'd" ("Thelmon and Carmel" ll. 25-8).

<u>Appendix</u>

SONG
Tune, THE HEAVY HOURS.

THE balmy comforts that are fled
      To me no more return,
Though Nature's sweets around are shed,
      Amid those sweets I mourn.
With organs fram'd to taste delight,   *5*
      My soul its functions tries,
I feel, I see—but from my sight
      The transient landscape flies.

The glimmering beams of opening day,
      Shot through a watery sky,   *10*
Delusive glowing tints display,
      But soon o'erwhelm'd they die.
'Twas thus my youth in brightness dawn'd,
      My passions caught the glow,
Some ray of bliss each cloud adorn'd   *15*
      Which teem'd with future woe.

Torn from each joy that soothes the heart,
      All other pleasures fly,
My thoughts pursue the toils of art,
      My feelings music try.   *20*
Then, O, my soul! thy pow'rs divine
      Strenthen'd in virtue rear;
Pour from thy breast, in songs sublime,
      Thy grief—and learn to bear.

SONG ["Song—Cymon"]

THE eve descends with radiant streaks, *1*
    Sweetly serene and grandly gay,
While western tinges flush the cheeks,
    And insects 'mid the zephyrs play.

Young CYMON, with a rapt'rous heart, *5*
    Whom woodland scenes and pleasure drew,
Rov'd while his sweet poetic art
    From Nature stole its noblest hue.

On wild-thyme banks the poet sung,
    Harmonious thither call'd his fair, *10*
Where blooming roses clustering hung,
    And every sweet perfum'd the air.

Attentive to the well-known song
    Whose warbled sounds pervade the grove,
Blushing she heard, and sped along, *15*
    Her thrilling bosom fir'd with love.

As on the odorous bank he pours
    A lover's song, a lover's sighs,
He saw her glowing, deck'd with flowers,
    Affection beaming from her eyes. *20*

As summer suns unfold the rose,
    Or heightening sweets embalm the grove,
So as he gaz'd she deeper glows,
    And every look was fraught with love.

While o'er her face the zephyrs play, *25*
    A thousand charms delight each sense,
Join'd to the blushing bloom of May
    The sweeter hue of innocence.

Her lovely hands a garland bound,
    Then on his head she plac'd the wreath, *30*
His locks with flowering myrtles crown'd,
    Laurels and roses wav'd beneath.

The vivid fires thrill'd through his breast
    As energetic strains he sung;
Her artless eyes still more express'd *35*
    Than the wild fervour of his tongue.

SONG. ["Repeat"]

Repeat, O, Muse! the virtuous song   *1*
      Of him, whose bosom knew no art;
Whose native measures, wild and strong,
      Pour'd the free dictates of his heart.

SONG.

"TOSS'D 'midst life's terrific storms,   *5*
      "My soul on Nature's centre clings,
"Striving to taste each scatter'd bliss,
      "And loudly grateful anthems sings.

"When flying o'er the billowy deep,
      "Upborne the sounding waves among,   *10*
"While winds the boiling ocean sweep,
      "And lightenings dart their fires along;

"Absorb'd, unmov'd, resolv'd of mind,
      "I dare the elements assault,
" 'Midst roaring oceans plough'd by wind,   *15*
      "While thunders burst thro' heaven's high vault.

"On Virtue's base, and buoy'd by Hope,
      "I see peace beam through every cloud;
"Benumb'd upon the shatter'd rope
      "Still grateful is my song, and loud.   *20*

"Grateful, for being rais'd from nought
      "To scenes where Nature's blessings shine,
"Endued with fancy, love, and thought,
      "And dawnings of a soul divine!"

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